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Running Head: INTERRUPTING THE PATTERNS

INTERRUPTING THE PATTERNS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN REPURPOSING LEADERSHIP
VIA THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF PLATO AND
CRITICAL RACE THEORY

By

ROSLYN R. HARTMAN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA
Division of Education and Counseling

MAY 2018

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INTERRUPTING THE PATTERNS

Xavier University of Louisiana
New Orleans, Louisiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

ROSLYN R. HARTMAN

has been approved by the examining committee for the dissertation requirement for the Doctoral Program in Education Leadership in the Division of Education and Counseling,
May, 2018.



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ACCEPTED



Associate Dean of Graduate Programs

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord; He is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in Him, will I trust.

(Psalms 91:1-2)

I am truly humbled by this experience, one which has been ordained and ordered by God. To each one who directly and indirectly participated in this process, thank you.

My mother, who submitted to God's plan, thank you for being my transporting vehicle, may God richly reward you.

My father, who passed before this project materialized, I pray that he entered communion with our merciful God.

My maternal grandmother who traded time in November 1999 for the great reward God has promised. She now sleeps waiting for that Great Day. My grandmother introduced me to Psalm 91 as a comforting passage of scripture, teaching me the peace that was readily available for those who trusts in God. I wish she could see my transformation.

My aunt Laverne, who stepped up in sacrificial ways.

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INTERRUPTING THE PATTERNS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
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CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Abstract

by Roslyn R. Hartman, Ed.D.
Xavier University of Louisiana
2018

Chair: Renee Akbar

This phenomenological qualitative research explored the effects of race and gender on the capacity of five African American women leaders. Although women are occupying more top posts in the American workforce, leadership opportunities for African American women remain elusive despite record post-secondary degree attainment. The purpose of the study was to examine how each woman navigated leadership and derived meaning from the journey through the metaphorical lens of Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave," and the intersectionality of Critical Race Theory. The researcher collected data via questionnaires and interviews. Results of the analysis revealed four themes: leadership etiquette, leadership preeminence, leadership tenacity, and leadership truths. A finding confirmed that culture influenced the African American woman's approach to and definition of leadership responsibilities. The results indicate a need to expand leadership theory that includes the realities of a diverse nation.

keywords: African American women (AAW), bridge, cave, critical race theory, fire, intersectionality, leadership theory, metaphor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAWAfrican American woman/women

AAWL.....African American woman/women leader

CRT.....Critical Race Theory

WOC Women of color

Dedication

Camyron Jacoby Brown and Brianna Ruth Bernard, I dedicate this project to you. Cam, you have always believed in me. Your words kept my feet to the fire. Bri, you are such a bright, beautiful soul. Both of you are designed and destined for GREATNESS. I love you more than life. Never allow anyone or anything to keep you from God's path. You may stray, but never abandon what you know is right. For every dark cloud, there is a silver lining. Thank you for being two of my silver linings. Find every silver lining God has for you!!!!

I also dedicate this writing to every African American woman equipped with the desire to alter life's course for those who experience racism, sexism or any other "ism" in America. It is our time to lead. With hearts of thanksgiving and powerful expressions of empathy for humanity, African American women leaders will transform status quo. Leadership is love. Love changes situations and circumstances and expects nothing in return. Love forgives people for transgressions and seeks not to restore them to previous positions but elevate them to unknown heights. Love finds God in every person and place. I pray I can reflect and reciprocate the love I have received during the conception, gestation, and birth of this project.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Plato, in symbolic form, explains that all experiences originate in darkness (Bishan, 2010). The darkness is a way of life for many citizens. Citizens who escape the darkness and enter light acquire a different knowledge of the world. According to ontological truths, it is impossible for light and darkness to coexist simultaneously. However, the epistemological fact is, the light reveals reality, whereas the darkness conceals the truth. Light and darkness are metaphors that offer simplification of the complex world. Humans make sense of the world by establishing and recognizing patterns. Repetition of processes creates opportunities for people to acquire behaviors, language, culture, and so on. Those patterns form the foundations for societal institutions.

Practically any significant advancement in the history of civilization had a leader at its helm. Inversely, the fall of many nations resulted in reduced leadership (Manning & Curtis, 2012). Leading people is not an easy task, but it is necessary. Axiological leadership takes responsibility for others by rejecting selfish motives to provide better opportunities for all. One cogent argument of the sacrificial leader is found in Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" which is an extended metaphor that juxtaposes how different people conceive reality. Plato taught why one must lead in the spirit of service and devotion, not ego (Yoo, 2014). Leadership is for the good of the followers. Between male and female leaders, the latter sex tends to be more compassionate than the gender counterpart. Women possess leadership traits that are undervalued and sometimes, misunderstood (Llopis, 2014).

Context of the Problem

American leadership's contemporary portrait reflects unethical transgressions and questionable transactions. The nation's top leaders often embody racial and gender exclusion. This exclusionary practice can potentially destroy the national philosophical assumption that all are afforded opportunity regardless of race, creed, color, religion, or national origin. Current allegations of sexual misconduct by male leadership place America at a crossroads. The solution to the nation's leadership issues may lie in placing more women in positions of power. Coretta Scott-King's words, "Women, if the soul of the nation is to be saved, I believe that you must become its soul" are most relevant as the #TimesUp and #MeToo movements gain momentum in American society (Smith, 1970). The #TimesUp movement, founded by Hollywood women celebrities in January of 2018, gives voice to women in the fight against sexual harassment. The #MeToo movement aimed to show how many people are affected by sexual assault in the nation.

America, a nation of immigrants, is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse countries in the world (Zimmerman, 2017). With a population of 309 million people, U. S. Census Bureau (2010) statistics reported America's racial composition as 72.4% Whites (Hispanic and Latino Americans, of any race, comprise 16.3%), 12.6% African Americans, 4.8% Asians, 0.9% Native/Alaskans, 2% Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, 2% two or more races and 3.2% some other race. The nation's diversity has contributed to one African American male leading two successful presidential campaigns, in 2008 and 2012, and a Caucasian woman securing a major political party's nomination for the 2016 presidential campaign. Although more women are in leadership roles, there is much work to do until American leadership is representative of all (Llopis, 2014).

Women comprise 50.8% of the United States population and earn 60% of undergraduate degrees, 60% of all master’s degrees, 47% of all law degrees, 48% of all medical degrees, 38% of MBAs and 48% of specialized master’s degrees (Warner & Corley, 2014). Although women hold 52% of all professional-level jobs, women lag behind men in attaining leadership positions.

Table 1 below represents women in corporate, American leadership jobs. It illustrates the disproportionate percentage of women representation in labor force to top leadership positions. In S&P 500 companies, women comprise 44% of the labor force, occupy 36% of mid-level positions, 25% of senior-level positions, 20% of board seats and 6% of chief executive officer positions. In the S&P 500 financial division, women comprise 54% of the labor force but occupy 29% percent of senior-level positions and 2% of chief executive officer positions (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

Table 1

Women in Corporate America

Women in	% of the labor force	% of first or mid-level officials	% of senior-level officials and managers	% of board seats	% of CEOs
S&P 500	44	36	25	20	6
S&P 500 (financial)	54	-	29	-	2

Women of color (WOC) were 38% of the nation’s female population and 20% of the United States population in 2015. Table 2 depicts WOC representation in leadership in corporate America. Women of color experience significant exclusion from top level positions in comparison to participation in the labor force.

Table 2

Women of Color Participation in the Labor Force

Women of Color Participation	% of the labor force	% of first or mid-level officials	% senior-level officials and managers	% of board seats	% of CEOs
S&P 500	16.5	-	3.9	-	0.4

Abrams (2016) reported women make up more than half of the U. S. population and hold 23% of leadership jobs in government. Table 3 below illustrates the number of women in governmental leadership positions. Supreme Court has five members of which three are women, and none of those women are African American. The Senate has 100 members of which 21 are women, one of whom is of the African American race. The House of Representatives has 435 members of which 84 are women, and 18 of those women are African American women. There are six female governors of which none are African American. Of the 100 largest American cities with mayors, 19 are women, and four of those women are African American.

Table 3

Women in Government, 2016

	Total Number	Total Women	Total WOC	Total African American
Supreme Court	5	3	1	0
Senate	100	21	3	1
House of Representatives	435	84	38	18
Governors	50	6	2	0
Mayors 100 largest cities	100	19	6	4

The National Center for Education Statistics reported 1.6 million faculty (52% full time) at degree-granting post-secondary institutions as of Fall 2015. Faculty includes professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, adjunct professors and interim professors. Table 4 below summarizes the percentage of full-time professors who are women. Of the thirty-three percent of female professors, African American women make up two percent.

Table 4

Full-Time Women Professors

	% women	% WOC	% African American women
832,000 full-time professors	33	6	2

The opportunity for qualified women to gain coveted, male-dominated leadership positions is higher than ever. More than any other ethnic group, in the American population 9.7% of African American women (AAW) enrolled in college in 2016. National Center for Education Statistics reported that, between 2009 and 2010, of all degrees awarded to African American students, African American women earned 68% of associate's degrees, 66% of bachelor's degrees, 71% of master's degrees and 65% of doctorate degrees. African American women may be educating themselves in greater proportion than other groups, but they hold only 8% of private sector (comprised of organizations run by individuals or groups who seek to generate profit for owners) as leaders; AAW occupy less than 2% of executive-level leadership roles in the public sector (McGregor, 2015).

This study investigated the lived experiences of five African American women leaders. Plato's caves symbolically represented the lived experiences. The cave was a metaphor for one's vantage point: the position from which one navigates and views life. Each participant

experienced leadership simultaneously through the interlocking systems of race and gender (caves) which served as boundaries for inclusion in the study. The individual experiences provided meaning for how leadership unfolded and what happened throughout the process, which was characterized by the fire metaphor. The bridge metaphor served as the explanation of how African American women leaders transferred cultural meanings and connected organizational expectations to the leadership experience.

The intersectionality of Plato and Critical Race Theory provided a framework to examine the unique qualities that African American women leaders possess and their processes of leadership acquisition. This unique analysis can offer a different perspective on leadership literature. Plato's prisoners lived experiences are influenced by the shadows reflected on cave walls. These shadows are mere reflections of what they think is reality. Plato taught that enlightened citizens escaped the dark realities of the cave to acquire understanding and wisdom. The African American woman's reality is influenced by a world that sees race and gender as defining traits of leadership. The intersections of race and gender are realities that are inescapable for the African American woman leader.

Statement of the Problem

The body of literature on leadership acknowledges and offers explanations for White America's leadership experiences, however, the African American woman's voice is disproportionately absent from the dialogue concerning matters relating to leadership. Interestingly, past studies provided solutions for African American woman (AAW) to excel in supportive leadership environments, but the answers have not facilitated change in executive-level diversity. White, male leaders play a pivotal role in determining whether AAW reach top leadership positions (McGirt, 2017). The investigation of the AAW leader's lived experiences

plays an instrumental role in mediating cultural realities and promoting a much-needed conversation in hopes of creating opportunities for other AAW leaders. Today's American leadership portrait illustrates society's negligence of its obligation to provide diverse representation for its citizens. Women comprise half of all professional jobs today, but only 4% of Chief Executive Officers in the Standard and Poor's (S & P) Fortune 500 companies and 12% of top education leadership positions; this percentage has held steady for the past ten years (Heath et al., 2017). The AAW's leadership contributions are understudied and undervalued in America (League of Black Women, 2007). Ursula Burns (retired Chief Executive Officer at Xerox) was the only AAW to lead a Fortune 500 company (Beckwith et al., 2016). Burns' rise to the top executive level shows that different leadership is essential in a global society.

Each generation of Americans faces a different set of economic, political and social conditions; there are no natural formulas for challenging injustice and promoting democracy (Dreier, 2012). Developing people requires creating environments of respect, value, opportunity, and trust. Leaders who operate in the spirit of truth and possess the ability to link life experiences are more likely to impact followers. African American leaders face a different kind of challenge in the workplace because the path is neither clearly defined nor always destined for success (Tekola, 2016). AAW leaders who have made cracks in the glass ceiling should provide opportunities for others to shatter the leadership glass ceiling. Giving meaning to the lived experiences of AAW is critical for America to understand the relevance and value of diversity.

Purpose of the Study

Current leadership theory captures how experiences of the dominant culture negate the influence of AAW leaders' lived experiences on leadership theory and practice. Traditionally, researchers have focused on the effects race and genders have on leadership, not on developing

theories that explain the lived experiences of AAW (Dunbar, 2015). The purpose of this study was to examine through the metaphorical lens of Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" how each woman navigated leadership and derived meaning from the journey. Current literature does not provide in-depth analysis of the African American women's lived experiences, a perspective often marginalized and excluded from the leadership development narrative.

Research Questions

The goal of leadership is to be able to "see" the bigger picture to create a vision that impacts those who follow. Seeing the bigger picture requires an intimate knowledge of one's core values. The purpose of this study was to examine through the metaphorical lens of Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave," and the intersectionality of Critical Race Theory how AAW navigated leadership and derived meaning from the journey.

The following questions guided the study:

1. How could African American women leaders' lived experiences transform leadership theory?
2. What lessons of African American women leaders provide increased leadership opportunities for other African American women?

Answers to these questions will lead to a greater understanding of the AAW's complex, lived experiences and will reinforce the need to develop a holistic leadership theory that captures the essence of African American female leaders. Consequently, giving voice by examining the African American female leader could provide a perspective of leadership currently missing from the literature, therefore, supporting the increased representation of AAW in the nation's top leadership positions.

The Significance of the Study

Women's representation in leadership will not increase substantially without significant changes in organizational culture, policies, and practices (Hill, 2016). Educated, experienced, and eager-to-lead are precursors for success in obtaining leadership positions. Unfortunately, this is not the current reality for the AAW. Women must function in a male-dominated leadership culture; this makes it difficult to break through and succeed against the glass ceiling. AAW leaders who have shattered the glass ceiling carry out responsibilities by defying resistant organizational cultures.

This study contributes to the literature by examining how AAW make meaning of and navigate leadership. African American women leaders draw on racialized, professional and personal experiences to interrupt the patterns that keep the women locked out of influential leadership positions despite possessing stellar credentials. There exists a need for AAW leaders to create opportunities for others to develop leadership potential in a culturally diverse nation. AAW leaders successfully integrate cultural traditions and organizational expectations by linking the two to attain and create life-changing opportunities.

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative inquiry is open-ended and exploratory which aids in understanding a phenomenon as it relates to people's lived experiences. The researcher employed a qualitative approach utilizing a phenomenological design. Phenomenology provided a lens to view the leadership phenomena as meaningful, because as humans feel, experience, and then commit to conscience an event, the event becomes a part of the experience, and in many ways influences actions and behaviors (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology describes how one adjusts to lived experiences. The essential model of this approach is a textural reflection on the lived

experiences and real-world actions of everyday life with everyday people. It contains an active philosophical component linked to the works of Edmund Husserl (Creswell, 2013). Two approaches to phenomenology are hermeneutic and transcendental. This study employed transcendental phenomenology which focused more on a description of the experiences of participants as opposed to the interpretation of the researcher (hermeneutical).

Delimitations/Limitations

Delimitations are identifying factors that narrow the scope of the research and define research boundaries (Creswell, 2013). Initially, this study confined to interviewing AAW who led in P12 (Preschool to twelfth grade) school organizations from the position of principal with at least ten years of experience. As the study evolved, the researcher refined the scope to include AAW who served in any leadership capacity (P12, higher education and or nonprofit organizations) with at least five years of experience. Historically, leadership attainment and tenure for the AAW is short-lived. By broadening the scope of the investigation, the researcher collected a wealth of data from different perspectives.

A qualitative researcher's dilemma rests on the participants giving a true account of what each experienced with the investigated phenomena and how the phenomenon unfolded in the lived experience. By employing a small sample size (n=5), the researcher can spend more time investigating the lived experiences of each participant. Also, a close association with each participant enhances the validity of the data collection.

Definition of Terms

"The Allegory of the Cave" - an extended metaphor that juxtaposes how different people conceive reality. The AAW's current truth is leadership positions are difficult to attain despite possessing stellar qualifications and capabilities.

Bridge - the metaphorical divided line that separates the realm and the realm. The bridge metaphor served as the explanation of how AAW leaders derived meaning from lived experiences of cultural upbringings to connect organizational expectations relating to leadership.

The cave - a metaphor for one's vantage point: the position from which one navigates and views life.

Critical Race Theory - an analytical framework stems from the field of critical legal studies that addressed racial inequities in society. In 1994, education adopted the theory as a tool to assess inequity.

Fire - a metaphor for how and what the AAW leader experienced throughout the leadership process.

Intersectionality - the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, and discrimination.

Leadership Theory - commonly categorized by which aspect is believed to define a leader the most.

Platonic Philosophy - the belief that physical objects are impermanent representations of unchanging ideas and that the ideas alone give true knowledge as they are known to the mind.

Organization of Document

Chapter one gave an important overview of this qualitative phenomenological research study which questioned the lived experiences of AAW related to leadership theory and practice. The problem was that the literature acknowledged and offered explanations for White America's leadership experiences. However, the AAW's voice is disproportionately absent from the dialogue concerning matters relating to leadership. Despite post-secondary degree attainment, AAW lag behind other demographics in obtaining leadership positions. The purpose

of this study was to examine through the metaphorical lens of Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" and the intersectionality of Critical Race Theory how each woman interviewed for this study navigated leadership and derived meaning.

Chapter one includes the research questions, the significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, delimitations and limitations, definitions of key terms, and tables. Chapter two includes the introduction/overview of the study and the literature review. The review addresses the history of leadership theory, race and gender in leadership, the AAW's culture and the leadership glass ceiling, Platonism, metaphors, "The Allegory of the Cave," Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, and a summary. Chapter three includes the methodology section, which describes the research design, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, population and sample descriptions, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness of the research. Chapter four includes findings and Chapter five offers a discussion of the research. The document culminates with pertinent references and appendices utilized in the development of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction/Overview of the Study

Due to ideological and political shifts in the definition of justice, there is promise for those who have historically experienced exclusion from positions of authority (Jackson-Dean, 2014). Northouse (2016) wrote about “leadership as a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 7). As a universal theme, leadership is an idea that applies to anyone regardless of culture or gender. Opportunities to become leaders are minimal; often the people who are encouraged to take leadership roles may not be the best qualified, but fit society’s stereotyped view of how a leader looks, talks, and walks (Vardiman, 2002). Idealized images of leadership in America are stereotypical of upper-middle-class, White men (Jackson-Dean, 2014). These idealized models provide the foundations of current leadership theory.

Organization of Chapter

Chapter two includes a review of current literature related to historical and present, lived experiences of AAW. The literature review provides a foundation for the remainder of the research study in which the researcher gathered evidence from reliable sources for conducting a valid study (Jackson-Dean, 2014). The remainder of this chapter informs the researcher about the topic. This literature review addresses the history of leadership theory and the eight categories of theory. An explanation of each category explains how and when the theory developed. Race and gender in leadership is another explored topic. The researcher uncovered the historical relationship among race, gender, influence, and power. The African American woman’s culture and the leadership glass ceiling explained the challenges and status of the

women in America. Platonism, metaphors and “The Allegory of the Cave,” provide meaning for the conceptual framework. Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality are the theoretical frameworks for the study. The chapter closes with a summary.

Leadership Theory

The earliest examinations of leadership explored birthright rulers. The Great Man Theory, popularized during the 1840’s and Trait Theories that emerged during the 1930’s-1940’s theorized people, namely men, inherit certain qualities and traits suited for leadership (Northouse, 2016). Behavioral theories appeared during the 1940’s-1950’s focused on the belief that great leaders are made, not born. Contingency theories appeared during the 1960’s focused on variables related to the organizational environment. Transactional theories emerged during the 1970’s based leadership on a system of rewards and punishment. Transformational theories appeared during the 1970’s focused on the connections formed between leaders and followers.

People live in an age of transformation, where freedom to change has become a cultural preoccupation (Hudak, 2005). Current transformational leadership theory asserts that power is a necessary tool to initiate and cultivate change. Without authority, one cannot influence others. Bennis and Nanus (1997) characterized transformational leadership as the wise use of power. Transformational leadership theory contributions are varied and widespread and focused on doing good work instead of focusing on the rewards associated with doing a good job (Denton, 2009). Transformational leadership helps followers achieve more. Leaders, working from a transformational perspective, are tasked with having a higher body of knowledge that might even be considered spiritual (Pitre, 2014).

According to Day & Gu (2009), successful leaders encourage followers to collaborate with others, celebrate each other's achievements, and build trust. Successful leaders have a

vision, are committed to their organization, and are determined to coach others while making a competent team (Denton, 2009). Like transformational leadership, visionary leaders develop followers morally by constructing organizational cultures that benefit others (visionary leadership). In contrast to other perspectives of transformational leadership, visionary guidance defined the character of the leader in addition to the leader's behaviors and context (Kisling, 2007).

Robert Greenleaf coined the term servant leadership to explain the real work that leaders undertake when given positions. Servant leadership is rooted in love. A real leader who recognizes followers' value and worth as a priority epitomizes service. Love as the basis of leadership has the power to eradicate social injustice. Servant leaders align with the characteristics of authentic leadership. Northouse (2016) wrote that five features of authentic leaders are: passion (understanding purpose), behavior (strong values), connectedness (trusting relationships), consistency (self-discipline), and compassion (acting from the heart).

Authentic leadership is a pattern that draws upon and promotes positive psychological capacities, a positive ethical climate to foster self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency of leaders working with followers to encourage positive self-development (Northouse, 2016). Fulfilling society's expressed need for real leadership in an uncertain world is a strength of authentic leadership. Leaders are shaped by critical life events that lead to growth and greater authenticity (Maxwell, 2011). If the former argument is valid, AAW are the most authentic leaders in American society due to having experienced the critical effects of racism and sexism.

Leadership is a vehicle to influence others by modeling ideas and actions socially. Leadership is more than managing people. It requires more than setting things in place and

allowing events to run the course. Leadership involves establishing and guiding the vision of an organization, empowering subordinates, demonstrating competencies and excellence with necessary skills, motivating, teaching, coaching, and being an example for all to follow (Manning & Curtis, 2012).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated in legal scholarship during the 1970's. Attorneys, perplexed by the slowness of national reform in the United States, argued that traditional approaches to fighting racism were yielding minimal results (Milner & Lomotey, 2014). CRT examines society and culture relating to race, law, and power. It acknowledges that racism is ingrained in the fabric of American society and pinpoints power structures grounded in White privilege, which perpetuate the marginalization of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). CRT, introduced in 1994, was an analytical tool to measure inequality in education. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) tailored CRT to unveil the educational disparities that plagued marginalized citizens.

Significant CRT tenets describe racism, as usual, not aberrant, and constitutive of the fabric of American life and culture. Much of reality is socially constructed story-telling. Counter storytelling is a way for marginalized groups to address their marginalization. It is used in critical social science as a tool for analyzing inequity in the society and as a tool for moving civil rights agendas forward.

Researchers illuminate the struggle to break the oppressive chains by establishing criteria and conditions for equal access to systems of power. CRT delves into the moral fiber of a country that exploits marginalized citizens. CRT refocuses the conversation to include the lived experiences of marginalized people in a racialized society that is defined by the distribution of

wealth and power (Milner & Lomotey, 2014). CRT provides a mechanism for marginalized groups to access those power structures.

The AAW's marginalized status limits access to social connections in predominantly White organizations (Byrd, 2009). According to Gostnell (1996), access to power and authority are intricately woven in social networking systems, which have historically and continuously denied membership to the AAW. Society's construction of the AAW has for centuries stemmed from the manipulation of truth, linking it with standards of beauty, sexuality, etc. (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

One of three stereotypes typically characterizes AAW. Mammy portrays an AAW as cold, overweight, jolly, unattractive, with a dark complexion, and uncaring for her own family due to being forced to raise slave owners' children. Sapphire depicts an AAW as bossy, bitchy, hateful, and stubborn. Jezebel, who was an attractive, light-skinned AAW with an unquenchable sexual appetite, used her sexuality to manipulate men (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These distorted images have led to belittling perceptions of AAW as unworthy of influential positions in society (Ladson-Billings, 2009), which hinders the serious considerations of AAW as leaders.

Race and Gender in Leadership

Race is a social construct devised as a system to control nonwhites (Pitre, 2014). The association of masculinity with power, leadership, and authority has historically assumed that White men are more natural leaders (Sheeler, 2000). Women seeking leadership often abandon personal ideas and identities to gain a seat at the traditional power table. Adaptation of the dominant philosophy of authority and power automatically gives credibility to the concept that men are better suited for leadership. Traditional leadership models utilize a top-down authoritative structure. According to May (2004), in measuring liberation, a bottom-up

leadership model benefits society. Firsthand experience is critical to be able to confront and correct societal ills. Rather than focusing on African American, male elite scholars, exploring the conditions of working poor African American women is advantageous when challenging the status quo (May, 2004).

AAW possess exclusive knowledge from which to observe society and its oppressive systems (May, 2004). As a primary recipient of the perils of oppression, the AAW's voice is most relevant when confronting and correcting these oppressive systems. The AAW's lived experiences place her in a unique position to have a distinctive voice, influence, and contribution to make the African American race significant to the nation and to the world (May, 2004). Women of color have dramatically altered the American economy by penetrating a workforce previously dominated by White men (Jackson-Dean, 2014). Race and gender simultaneously affect AAW seeking to gain leadership positions.

Leadership, official positions with a measure of power and influence, are vital to an organization's success. Women view the world through a transformative lens as it relates to social justice issues (Katz, 2012). Reclaiming emotions within current educational discourses and practices had significant effects not only on how lives shaped out but also on how to rethink what women can do (Tamboukou, 2006). A significant gender difference is the perception that female leadership should be more relational and democratic as opposed to dictatorial and autocratic (Merchant, 2012).

The League of Black Women, a non-profit organization, designed a survey to examine the professional lives of AAW to offer a solution for the problem of gender and race exclusion in leadership positions in corporate America. The 2007 report highlighted America's

misunderstanding of the AAW and discussed what defines AAW leaders. The organization explored three areas: engagement, cohesion, and bicultural leadership.

Engagement characterized the institutions that had the most significant impact on AAW's overall satisfaction with life. Those institutions were the family, the workplace, the community, and relationships with other AAW. Researchers examined areas where AAW spent time and energy, the people and things that brought AAW joy and fulfillment, and the barriers to joyful living. Various factors influenced engagement. Underrepresentation of AAW within professional places affected their sense of power and comfort and conforming to society's image diminished the sense of self (League of Black Women, 2007).

Cohesion characterized AAW's relationships with each other. AAW bring more value to companies that recognize the importance of AAW bonding. Researchers looked at AAW satisfaction with relationships with other AAW, the benefits of relationships with other AAW, and the barriers that keep these women from having close ties with one another. Competition and a lack of trust most often prevent AAW from forming close relationships with each other and can hinder cohesion. Opportunities remain limited for AAW. Therefore, competition among AAW becomes more adversarial (League of Black Women, 2007).

Bicultural leadership often characterized circumstances in which AAW exuded authority in the workplace. Researchers considered the role that race played in defining AAW as leaders, the groups most likely to follow AAW 's leadership, and the groups most challenging to lead. A significant factor influencing bicultural direction was that White males were the most challenging group to lead; ironically, AAW was the second most challenging group to lead (League of Black Women, 2007).

White males resist diversity policies because they feel that it gives an advantage to people of color and negates their belief that they are entitled to leadership positions (League of Black Women, 2007). America must take an active stance against resistance behaviors to cultivate the AAW's leadership value. Accommodating entitlement behaviors and avoiding conflict undermines the legitimacy of the leader and sends a message to AAW about who belongs and who does not (League of Black Women, 2007).

Intersectionality

Feminist research's approaches center on and problematize women's diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations (Creswell, 2013). The researcher looked for what was absent in social science writing about women's lives and examined how women struggle with social devaluation and powerlessness (Stewart, 1994). Formerly rooted in Black feminist epistemology and critical race theory, intersectionality is an analytical concept and methodological approach aimed at understanding and addressing relationships of power and inequality within social institutions (Crenshaw, 1989).

AAW experienced deprivation in ways that often do not fit within the legal categories of racism or sexism but functioned as a combination of both (Crenshaw, 1989). The legal framework frequently rendered AAW invisible and negated all recourse to challenge oppressive systems. Intersectionality encompassed the simultaneous experience of multiple oppressions encountered by Black women (May, 2004). Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, an influential thinker on Black Feminist Thought, articulated insights about the Black woman's experience in America, particularly the South (May, 2004).

Dr. Cooper became the fourth woman in the United States to earn a Ph.D. Born in 1858 to an enslaved mother, Cooper spent her life re-envisioning the restrictions and options for AAW

in a society structured for the marginalized group's disempowerment and subjugation. Cooper took an intersectional approach to examining the interlocking systems of race, gender, and class oppression, explicitly articulating how racism and sexism simultaneously impact AAW (May, 2004). Eliminating intersecting oppressions can empower AAW. Society needs sociocultural theories that move beyond a dominant positivist way of thinking. Embracing a multi-perspective approach to theory and practice gives voice to a silent segment of society (Byrd & Stanley, 2009).

African American Women: Culture and the Leadership Glass Ceiling

Society rarely associates Black and privilege as related concepts. Consequently, AAW's lives seldom originate from a position of power. AAW indicated that access to career advancement is more restrictive for them than for White men and White women who are the usual recipients of appointed leadership jobs (Jackson-Dean, 2014). Many AAW come from a cultural foundation supported by personal perceptions of blackness, spiritual heritage, community pride, and self-awareness (Hughes, 2014). These cultural foundations, riddled with stereotypes, make it difficult for AAW to obtain leadership positions.

Stereotypes coupled with historical mental anguish continue to discourage AAW in America. AAW endured segregation and the constant violation of civil liberties due to inhumane treatment. Forced to become the family's fortress of protection, AAW developed survival instincts to lead families and improve communities. AAW possessing leadership qualities of self-efficacy, mental and physical endurance, and pride is problematic in the workplace. Ironically, for all other segments of society possessions of these qualities are precursors for obtaining leadership positions (Hughes, 2014).

Societal and research inequities compromise the AAW leader's real value. The marginalized status limits access to social connections, which hinders power and authority for the group (Byrd, 2009). A national survey of African American school leaders found most women of color were assigned challenging urban environments and that AAW in leadership positions tend to be older than White counterparts (Doughty, 1980). Beyond the practicalities of a lack of minorities in leadership positions, there is a void in research from the minority perspective. Tillman (2004) stated that the research gap regarding AAW exists for three reasons: 1). It becomes difficult to obtain a legitimate sample size because of underrepresentation in leadership: 2). Teacher leaders rather than school administrators narrate the AAW studies: and, 3). Research from the African American perspective is considered untrustworthy (Tillman, 2004). AAW also endure racial and gender discriminatory experiences that are not often shared by male peers.

Organizations who understand the culture that shapes AAW will develop a greater understanding of the complexities that define the individual. Good leaders view individuals by skills and not solely membership in an identity group. AAW face double standards more than any identity group in America. AAW trying to balance personal and organizational culture causes exclusion from the path of career success. Paradoxically, assimilating to corporate culture creates perceptions of superficiality, and again exclusion occurs (Hughes, 2014).

Although more AAW have entered the middle to senior level jobs, a difference still exists between African American and other women in corporate America (Jackson-Dean, 2014). AAW often end up in support positions rather than in the operational roles that lead to chief executive officer jobs. Ursula Burn's 2009 appointment to Xerox's C-suite (the title of top senior executives which tend to start with the letter C; i.e. Chief Executive Officer) was considered a

milestone for AAW leadership. However, it has now become an anomaly (McGirt, 2017).

Burns, who retired in 2016, is the only AAW to become a Chief Executive Officer at a Fortune 500 company.

Reared by a single mother on New York's Lower East Side, Burns was the middle child of three children. The following quote illustrates how Burn's mother believed education could change present circumstances:

My mother would always remind me: where you are is not who you are. I grew up in a poor neighborhood in New York City. My mother saw education as the way up and out for her children. It didn't take long for me to see the wisdom in her beliefs. (Burns, 2014)

CEO Burns earned a math scholarship to college and interned at Xerox during the summer months of her collegiate years, which proved beneficial in the quest to obtain a top leadership post. Research statistics reveal it takes twenty years of educational experience to prepare an entry-level employee (McGirt, 2017).

The question remains why are qualified AAWs not occupying top leadership positions, predominantly held by males? Burns argued that AAW haven't emerged as leaders, because of a lack of preparation to get into the C-suite (McGirt, 2017). Not enough African American children, especially girls, exit from the system ready to climb the corporate ladder. One of the most critical steps toward diversifying the American workforce involves removing entry and attainment roadblocks for those who are not both White and male. This removal is known as breaking the glass ceiling (Jackson-Dean, 2014). Women leaders are making cracks in the glass ceiling, but AAW encounter a sound barrier, labeled as the black ceiling (McGirt, 2017).

Several complex socio-economic factors define the black ceiling. Firstly, AAW are at a disadvantage in forming close relationships with White men in positions of power (McGirt, 2017). AAW are double outsiders (neither of White race nor male gender), which often keeps them shut out from the informed networks that help other people find jobs, mentors, and sponsors (McGirt, 2017). Corporate America has a responsibility to devise a policy to remove the barriers that keep AAW from top leadership positions. Women's representation in leadership will not increase substantially without significant changes in organizational culture, policies, and practices (Hill, 2016).

Secondly, the group is demoralized in the workplace and society. While most people of color are perceived through a distorted lens, AAW are routinely defined by a specific set of ugly depictions that are reductive, inaccurate, and unfair. These depictions cause the group to continually reimage appearance in addition to fighting injustices within organizational cultures. Injustices include upper management stifling AAW leadership by overlooking credentials, diminishing accomplishments, and piling on cultural slights about hair, appearance, and even parenting skills.

Thirdly, AAW often have strained relationships with White women, who tend to take the lead on women and diversity issues (McGirt, 2017). These relationships contribute to the labeling of AAW as uncooperative and hard to lead. Resistance makes the leadership path difficult. A study conducted in South Africa examining the impact of leadership by different ethnic and gender groups found that AAW experienced challenges of resistance due to perceptions that middle-class AAW were often aggressive and frustrated (Chisolm 2001). White women also have trouble moving up the corporate ladder, and though they experience the feeling

of subordination less acutely than White men, they feel it more vigorously than African American men and AAW (Chisolm, 2001).

Human beings are inherently compelled to be of significance, to matter, and know that their lives matter in the grand scheme of things (Berry et al., 2015). In the context of preparation, practice, and research, the leadership cornerstones (power, control, authority, and influence) have historically been used to marginalize, silence, and erase the underrepresented AAW leader's accomplishments (Alston, 2012). Right, reason, truth, and the power associated with goodness were the cornerstones of a just society in Plato's *Republic*.

Platonism

Platonic philosophy (Platonism) teaches the creation of a just society as one founded on ethical principles and grounded in sound leadership. Plato, the Classical Greek philosopher, founded the first institution of higher learning in the Western World. Plato's four stages of cognition and human development reveal a path to awareness, by which the most virtuous and distinguished acquire the right to lead. The *Republic*, Plato's most famous and widely taught work, philosophically established the ideal state that would stand as a model for emerging societies (Ramsey, 2009). Plato steeped his writings in metaphors.

Metaphors

Metaphors function to make abstract ideas concrete, to clarify ambiguity, and to assist in expressing the subjective (Williams, 2013). It is through these processes that metaphors can influence the way individuals interpret, organize and react to information. The following quote by the philosopher Aristotle emphasizes the value and the importance of mastering metaphors:

The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot

be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in the dissimilar. (Aristotle, trans. 1909)

Metaphors are a powerful learning tool and a method of confronting social justice.

Metaphors can help to elucidate the following: (a) choice ethics, (b) moral ethics, (c) identity ethics and (d) care ethics (Williams, 2013). Metaphors provide fresh insights into familiar concepts, act as bridges between known and unknown ideas, and aid in grasping unfamiliar concepts by linking them with familiar concepts (Wilsey, 2013).

Metaphors assist in contextualizing the world in ways that one may fail to imagine.

Organizational theorists have posited that metaphors are relevant and useful for managers and leaders within several regulatory domains: corporate analysis and change, persuasion, problem-solving, creativity, and communication (Anastasia, 2008). Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" represents a complicated model that illustrates how humans travel through life in search of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

"The Allegory of the Cave"

Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" is a direct representation of human conditions, circumstances, beliefs, and typical behaviors in society (Hinchliffe, 2006). The prisoners in the allegory view an object as only a reflection of its pure form. The images are mere reflections of the truth that lies outside the cave (Koontz, 2014). Leaders in the analogy see the absolute reality because of the positions outside and inside of the cave. Plato's images symbolize ideas that characterize leadership, such as possessing the ability to use reason over perception to approach, view, and judge all things (Zahn, 2015).

Ramsey (2009) wrote that the *Republic's* structure has Socrates outline what justice looks like in society. Plato defined truth as a human virtue that made a person self-consistent and

socially competent (Hinchliffe, 2006). Plato's four cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage) came from Egyptian mysteries (Nobles, 2008). Platonic philosophy regards education as a venue to achieve justice, individually and collectively. The leader communicates the vision and imports morality to the rest of society for the good of all (truth at its core).

The cave is necessary because the enlightened will acquire a deeper philosophical understanding of the problems of the state. Consequently, without experiences of the cave, leaders could not efficiently transform lives (Ramsey, 2009). In Plato's view, if the leader is not a person of principle, culture, constitution, and education, then those who experience this leadership and guidance will be intellectually and socially led astray to anarchy and tyranny (Philippoussis, 1999).

Martin Luther King conducted a nonviolent movement in America during the 1960's that shed light on the national travesty of slavery that continued to oppress a race of citizens, Black America. Although slavery had ended on paper, the mental anguish proceeded to delineate the lives of the oppressed. Blacks could only attend school and own property in some states. The premise was that anyone who worked hard could become successful in America. However, the distribution of wealth and power remained in the hands of White America.

Summary

The whitening of history phenomenon suggests that there is a definite relationship between intellectualism and White America. Unfortunately, in systems of inequality, exploitation, and domination, education is used as a hegemonic tool to perpetuate feelings of inferiority, inherent inadequacy, helplessness, reverence of society's dominant class, and acceptance of one's oppressed status (Nobles, 2008). Understanding historical events which

have influenced White supremacy is crucial if one desires to alter the realities that keep people locked out of the American Dream. Intricately intertwined with the fabric of American society, these oppressive systems are a continued reality.

W.E. B. DuBois's study of 20th century political structures clarified how race and class work to dehumanize and control the population of the "dark world" (Pierce, 2017). The question of whether race matters continues to raise concern in public and private organizations, as do questions regarding the best approach toward achieving a just and equitable society where race no longer determines life's chances (Vue et al., 2017). Formulating theory that disrupts the marginalization of people of color is imperative in promoting diversity. True progress transpires when the dominant class abandons a perceived threat by the presence and racial identities of minorities (Vue et al., 2017).

Concerning issues of reality, the question becomes whose existence forms truth in a diverse nation that has historically oppressed people of color. The teaching of the relationship of African intellectual contributions to the historical development of Western civilization offers insight into and establishes credibility for the significance of Black people (Nobles, 2008). Some educational researchers have given voice to challenge oppressive structures and to create conditions for equal access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Educational research must serve as a critical, reflective, and professionally-oriented tool (Lopez-Alvarado, 2017), used for examining issues, offering solutions, establishing policies that benefit all people, and refining practices that build socially just and humane societies.

The philosopher Plato wrote extensively about the nature of reality and the ability to create humane societies. Plato's *Republic* employed a myriad of metaphors, myths, and symbolism to explain social phenomena in the city (Ramsey, 2009). "The Allegory of the

Cave,” a conversation between two philosophers, functioned as an extended metaphor that juxtaposed how different people conceive reality. It rendered a distinctive view of how fact plays a vital role in life and how one becomes conscious of the qualifications for leadership. The perceived fundamental tenet was that that reality is merely an imperfect shadow of the truth (Hinchcliffe, 2006). Imperfect shadows then form the foundation for truth. If the foundation relied on ideological beliefs that marginalize people, the structure is inherently flawed. One such structure in American society is the institution of leadership.

The 2008 and 2012 elections of Barack Obama, America’s first Black president, led society to hypothesize that the country had finally entered a post-racial era; however, this notion changed after the 2016 presidential election and the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter movement (Vue et al., 2017). Martin Luther King’s “The American Dream” theorized that every man is heir to the legacy of worthiness (Beem, 2001). King believed passage of civil rights legislation was mandatory if America was to live out the true meaning of its creed that propositioned that all men [people] are created equal.

Marginalized voices remain silent when seeking solutions for dismantling institutions of oppression. Often White elite narratives exert the leading authority when developing social policies that affect people of color (May, 2004). Interestingly, in addressing these oppressive systems, the dialogue is controlled by the same group that designed the systems. Unfortunately, race and other modes of oppression continue to act as determining factors in obtaining opportunities for social influence, namely leadership. White males continue to dominate private and public-sector leadership jobs.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction/Overview of the Study

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of five AAW: a retired professor/principal, a retired principal, a teacher leader, an educational leader/attorney, and a nonprofit chief executive officer/owner. The researcher applied a qualitative descriptive methodology utilizing phenomenology that allowed the participants' voice to emerge to provide descriptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The researcher conducted a pilot before the present study. The purpose of conducting a pilot study was to improve the interview protocol, clarify and refine the interview questions, and check the reliability and validity of the research instrument (Yin, 2009). The following questions guided the study:

1. How could African American women leaders' lived experiences transform leadership theory?
2. What lessons of African American women leaders provide increased leadership opportunities for other African American women?

The purpose of the study was to examine, through the metaphorical lens of Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave," and the intersectionality of Critical Race Theory how each participant navigated leadership and derived meaning from the journey. Current literature does not provide in-depth analysis of the AAW's lived experiences, a perspective often marginalized and excluded from the leadership development narrative. Chapter one gave an important overview of this qualitative phenomenological research, the context of the problem, and the significance. In chapter two the literature review uncovered gaps in the underrepresentation of African American women and its negative impact on leadership and diversity implementation.

Organization of Chapter

Chapter three defines the research methodology, discusses the adequacy of the research design, and reviews the related procedures used in this study. Additionally, the chapter discusses conceptual and theoretical frameworks, the identified sample under study, the sampling technique, data collection and analysis procedures, and trustworthiness measures. Ethical considerations such as study permission, methods of obtaining informed consent, and measures taken to ensure confidentiality conclude the chapter.

Research Design

The qualitative researcher is very much like an artist at various stages of the design process, situating and recontextualizing the research project within the shared experiences of the researcher and the participants in the study (Janesick, 1998). The researcher conducted a pilot study to improve the interview questions and ensure questions were clear (Coopers & Schindler, 2006). The researcher desired to understand a complex social phenomenon (leadership) and therefore utilized a qualitative design that allowed exploration of lived experiences.

Phenomenology

As Creswell (2013) explained, phenomenology provided a lens to view the leadership phenomena as meaningful because as humans feel, experience, and then commit to conscience the event, the event becomes a part of the experience, and it in many ways, influences actions and behaviors. Phenomenology describes how one adjusts to lived experiences. The essential model of this approach is a textural reflection on the lived experiences and real-world actions of everyday life with everyday people. The two approaches to phenomenology are hermeneutic and transcendental. This study employed transcendental phenomenology, which focuses primarily

on a description of the experiences of participants, as opposed to the interpretation of the researcher (hermeneutic).

According to Moustakas (1994), defining features of transcendental phenomenology include an emphasis on a phenomenon to be studied, the exploration of the phenomenon with a group of individuals who have experienced it, and a philosophical discussion about the basic ideas involved in conducting a phenomenology. Additionally, the researcher brackets out (epoché) of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon, data collection procedures for interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, data analysis follow systematic procedures, and the researcher ends with an explanation of the essence of the phenomenon.

To employ transcendental phenomenology, the researcher engaged in a series of detailed steps. In the first step, called epoché or bracketing, the researcher set aside all preconceived notions to best understand the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the researcher engaged in "phenomenological reduction," the development of a list of significant statements (horizontalization). This stage required the researcher to study the data and highlight substantial comments, sentences, or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the researcher clustered the comments into themes or meaning units, removing overlapping and repetitive comments (Moustakas, 1994). Analyzing textural descriptions, explanations about what the participants experienced, was the next step of the analysis.

The fourth step, referred to as imaginative variation, included structural description analysis, which addressed how the phenomenon unfolded for each participant. This step involved searching for meaning, looking for different perspectives, and varying the frames of

reference about the event (Moustakas, 1994). The last step in phenomenological data analysis is called essential, invariant structure or essence. It is the phenomenologist's goal to reduce textural (what) and structural (how) meanings of experiences to a description representative of the study's participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, and beliefs, in which graphics or propositions link broad, abstract ideas to guide a research study (Maxwell, 2013). The conceptual framework helps researchers generate a systematic order to the flow by focusing and setting boundaries in the research study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A conceptual framework pulls together the entire research process and validates the research study's significance and academic rigor (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012).

Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" (APPENDIX A) served as the conceptual framework for this phenomenological study. Plato's writing explained the process of becoming a philosopher and looking beyond surface explanations to acquire a clear understanding of the affairs of the state. According to Plato, philosophers were the only people with the wisdom to carry out leadership duties. Plato did not trust the senses to perceive reality reliably (Ramsey, 2009).

In the allegory, fire provided light for the prisoners. The light allowed the prisoners to acquire knowledge through the visual sense. One could train their senses through a process of enlightenment. Enlightened citizens operated in two realms (the visible and the intelligible) and therefore could bridge the experiences to facilitate change for ordinary citizens. Plato emphasized that true leaders could provide meaning for social phenomena in the cities. Ultimately, this derived meaning laid the foundation for just societies.

This study investigated leadership through the lived experiences of five AAW leaders. Life transpired through a series of caves. The cave is a metaphor for one's vantage point: the position from which one navigates and views life. Each participant experienced leadership through the interlocking systems of race and gender, which served as boundaries for inclusion in the study. The individual experiences provided meaning, describing how leadership unfolded and what happened throughout the leadership process, which is characterized by the fire metaphor. The bridge metaphor serves as the explanation of how AAW leaders derived meaning from leadership positions.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the social sciences, theories are credible interpretations about the social world; a theory implements concepts, systems, models, structures beliefs, ideas, or propositions to analyze events, consequences, actions, processes, or observations (Savin-Baden & Major, 2012). The researcher uses a theoretical framework to interpret data, confirm a gap in knowledge, and provide justification for conducting a study. The theoretical framework is a vehicle to represent the “why” and “how” of a study (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines how racism entrenched within the fabric of American society affects marginalized people. A goal of CRT is for people of color to give a perspective about discrimination through qualitative case studies and interviews (Creswell, 2013). Since many stories advance White privilege, counter stories by people of color can help to shatter the dominant discourses that serve to suppress people on the margins of society (Creswell, 2013). CRT has a storytelling nature that allows study participants to share lived experiences (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). The second goal of CRT is to demonstrate that

race is a social construct, meaning race is fluid, continually shaped by political pressures and informed by individual lived experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Implementing CRT as a research methodology means the investigator foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. The researcher challenges the traditional paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color and offers transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination in societal and institutional structures (Creswell, 2013). Unlike master narratives that operate to maintain traditional power and privilege structures, counter stories unveil conditions of marginality and inequity by channeling the voices and experiences of people of color. Counter stories can disrupt the ideology that makes social conditions appear reasonable and fair (Delgado, 2000).

Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by many discriminations and disadvantages. Feminist scholarship with an intersectional approach argues that gender, race, and class interconnect as "intersecting oppressions (Crenshaw, 1989). The goals of feminist research are to establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study to avoid objectification and to conduct transformative research. Intersectional feminism aims to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position (Creswell, 2013).

Procedures

Population

The research is generalized to a population that has experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The researcher selected participants based on leadership experience, gender, and race. The researcher employed purposive sampling: non-probability sampling focuses on

sampling techniques (Laerd dissertation, 2012). The number of participants selected is the investigator's choice. Participants were required to have served in a leadership position for at least three years. Race and gender constructs were African American and female. The researcher solicited participants based on education leadership experiences in P-12, higher education, or nonprofit organizations. The literature review focused on women in public and private sector jobs in America. The target population consisted of a sample of five AAW who have held or are currently holding leadership positions in organizations.

Sample

The sample size depends on the kind of study the researcher is completing (Patton, 2002) and should capture the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A small sample size allowed the researcher room to identify the patterns and themes during the research collection phase (Creswell, 2013). To participate in the study, participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: fell between the ages of 30 -75, have worked in a leadership capacity for a minimum of three years, and identified with the Black race and the female gender.

Participant Selection

After the researcher received IRB approval (APPENDIX B), the process of securing participants for the study began. The researchers sent seven emails to potential subjects, asking for participation in the study along with a brief explanation (APPENDIX C). Of the seven emails, two subjects responded to the request. The researcher sent a second copy of the initial email to the five who did not respond and to five more potential participants. From the second email, five responded that they wished to participate.

The researcher sent an email (APPENDIX D) that contained nine demographic items for the participants to answer to begin the researcher/participant relationship. Five participants

responded to the email, which also asked for a date and time to conduct a 45-minute interview. After receiving the demographics, the researcher emailed the IRB approval (APPENDIX B), consent form (APPENDIX E), and interview protocol (APPENDIX F) to the participants. Via text messages, the participants agreed to a date and time to conduct the interview utilizing FreeConferenceCall.com, an online meeting service designed for screen sharing, web conferencing, product demonstrations, webinars, and more.

Participants provided the following: call in number, an access code and a date and time for an interview. Each participant had the option to interview as an audio call or video call. The researcher recorded all calls. It is crucial for the researcher to record the participants during the data collection process and to take notes (Creswell, 2013). The researcher listened and interjected questions based on the participant's response to the interview protocol.

Data Collection

Participants expressed interest by responding to the researcher's initial email (APPENDIX C) or by calling the cell phone number provided in the communication. After initial contact, the screening process began to determine if the potential subject met the inclusion criteria for the study. All who met the conditions to participate were emailed an informed consent form (APPENDIX E) along with a demographics questionnaire (APPENDIX D). The participants were asked to choose a pseudonym utilized for the remainder of the data collection phase and all other interactions.

Instruments

The researcher employed journaling, interviews, and questionnaires to collect data. In phenomenological research, interviews are a recognized source of data (Spradley, 1979) and interviews satisfy the counter-storytelling component of CRT. Interviews allowed AAW leaders'

voices to emerge, which provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Counter-storytelling levels the playing field by allowing diverse perspectives to emerge, challenging White males' conceptualizations of leadership, which literature historically advantages. Framed from literature and pilot-tested, interview questions elicited themes that explained the lived experiences of AAW regarding leadership.

Guiding Interview Questions

The following dialogue initiated and facilitated the data collection, Researcher Script (APPENDIX G):

This researcher will record interview to facilitate note-taking. Release forms, will be provided via email, for your signature. Remember all information will be held confidential, your participation is voluntary, you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and there are no intentions to inflict any harm. Again, thank you for agreeing to participate. This interview has been planned to last no longer than 45 minutes. Your selection fulfilled the study's boundaries relating to leadership. This research project focuses on the lived experiences of Black women leaders in hopes of developing theory that will provide a framework for other Black women who desire to become leaders. There exists a need for Black women who have cracked the leadership glass ceiling to provide lessons for others who desire to become leaders. A goal of this project is to collect data that will inform the research in developing theory that captures the true essence of Black women leaders. Thank you for completing the demographics questionnaire before this interview. (R. R. Hartman, personal communication, February 8, 2018)

The interview began with a significant statement from the demographics followed by the interview questions (APPENDIX F) in no order:

1. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences relating to leadership?
2. What path did you take a leadership position?
3. How would you characterize your leadership experience as an AAW woman?
4. What have you experienced regarding leadership?
5. How does one find an authentic voice regarding leadership?
6. What advice do you have for AAW seeking leadership positions?
7. How does a leader stay motivated despite leadership challenges?

Table 5 presents an alignment of the study's research questions, interview questions, metaphors, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks. Transcendental phenomenological data analysis reduces the participants' lived experiences to "how" and "what" descriptions. The research questions were formulated to collect the data to satisfy each component of the analysis strategy. Interview questions 1, 2, 4, and 7 addressed the "how" aspect and questions 3, 5, and 6 addressed the "what" aspect of the phenomenon. Table 5 connects the conceptual and theoretical framework to the study's metaphors in addition to the research and interview questions.

Table 5

Alignment of Research and Interview Questions Based on Conceptual and Theoretical

Frameworks

Research Question	Interview Question	Conceptual Framework	Metaphor	Theoretical Framework
1. How could African America women leaders' lived experiences transform leadership theory?	<p>1. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences relating to leadership?</p> <p>2. What path did you take a leadership position?</p> <p>4. What have you experienced regarding leadership?</p> <p>7. How does a leader stay motivated despite leadership challenges</p>	<p>Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave"</p> <p>Plato's Simile of the Sun</p>	Bridge, Cave, and Fire	Counter storytelling (CRT) and intersectionality
2. What lessons of African American leaders provide increased leadership opportunities for other African American women?	<p>3. How would you characterize your leadership experience as an African American woman?</p> <p>5. How does one find authentic voice regarding leadership?</p> <p>6. What advice do you have for AAW seeking leadership positions</p>	Plato's Analogy of Divided Line	Bridge, Cave, and Fire	Counter storytelling (CRT) and intersectionality

Upon identification, the researcher began the interaction with the script (APPENDIX G). The researcher started the data collection with a significant statement from the participant's demographic profile. As the interview naturally progressed, the researcher used clarifying questions and asked participants to explain further lived experiences bounded by the open-ended interview protocol (APPENDIX F). The remaining course of this document references participants as philosophers.

Table 6 displays the dates and time of each participant's interview. Data collection spanned six days. The length data collection varied, with a range of 24 minutes between the longest and shortest interview. The time of each interview appears in the table.

Table 6

Interview Data Collection

Participant	Interview Date	Scheduled Time	Length of Interview in minutes
AAWL1	Feb 12	8:30 am	35
AAWL2	Feb 13	7:30 am	55
AAWL3	Feb 13	1:00 pm	49
AAWL4	Feb 8	2:00 pm	44
AAWL5	Feb 9	10:00 am	31

Protection of the Participant's Privacy

After completing interviews, the researcher emailed a release form (APPENDIX H) to each participant, instructing to sign and return. The researcher, identified as the host by FreeConferenceCall.com, downloaded the audio files onto a flash drive used only for this study and labeled each mpg3 audio file according to the chosen pseudonym of each participant. After

the researcher secured the release of records form (APPENDIX H), the researcher transcribed the interviews personally and used a paid transcription service via email.

The researcher saved the transcribed files and audio files on USB flash drive and locked the USB flash drive in a personal cabinet. The researcher is the only person with access to the files. The researcher created folders for each participant. Each folder contained the following documents: informed consent form, signed a release of records form, demographic data, and a paper copy of the transcribed interview. After seven years, the researcher will shred all study documents, delete all computer files related to this study, and destroy the USB flash drive containing information from this study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this qualitative research consisted of preparing and organizing the data, reducing the collected data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally presenting the data in tables and discussion (Creswell, 2013). The data analysis began after each participant returned, via email, the signed records release form. The researcher used two sources to transcribe the interviews. After receiving all transcripts, the researcher checked each document for accuracy by comparing the audio files with the written text. Listening to the audio and reading the transcript to check for accuracy also satisfied the validity and reliability criteria of qualitative research. After completing this verification process, the researcher emailed participants' their transcripts to substantiate the data further. The researcher asked each participant to check the accuracy of the document, a practice known as member checking, also referred to as participant or respondent validation. This technique is used for exploring the credibility of data and results (Birt et al., 2016). Each transcript contained words evolved during the data collection phase that would be coded to identify emerging themes.

After participants returned the transcripts with all corrections (additions, deletions, comments) verifying accuracy, the researcher reread all transcripts merging all codes from transcripts. The researcher developed detailed descriptions and themes to analyze the data further.

Verification

Throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study, verification aids in the trustworthiness and accuracy of the qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). This process is also known as triangulation. Yin (2009) stated that with data triangulation, one could address the potential problems of construct validity because multiple sources of evidence essentially provide various measures of the same phenomenon. According to Creswell (2013), the following validation strategies contributed to the credibility and dependability of this phenomenological case study: rich, thick descriptions, clarification of the researcher role and potential bias, description of the participant, and identification of methods for data collection and analysis. Triangulation of data included researcher journaling, administering questionnaires, and conducting semi-structured interviews.

The Researcher's Role in Data Collection and Analysis

The disclosure of a qualitative research study is reflexive and subjective; one must understand self in research (Berger, 2015). Many disciplines that participate in qualitative research discuss how important it is to self-monitor, arguing that this helps avoid bias when engaged in research. It is essential to engage in epoché (bracketing), to set aside any prejudgments regarding the phenomenon. The act of bracketing is a significant activity in phenomenology (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing does not remove experiences from the study. Instead, the interview may assist in noting areas of bias; therefore, a researcher could

conduct the interviews without influencing the responses of the participants. A phenomenologist must listen (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Validation

To address ethical issues that could arise when conducting qualitative research, the researcher engaged in the following:

1. Before doing the study, the researcher obtained IRB approval obtained from university (APPENDIX B)
2. Steps for acquiring participants found in following documents:
 - a. Initial participation email, informed consent (APPENDIX C)
 - b. Consent form (APPENDIX E)
 - c. Interview Protocol (APPENDIX F)
 - d. Interview script (APPENDIX G)
3. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants and developed a composite profile.
4. Multiple perspectives were implemented to analyze the data.
5. Composite stories were implemented to report the data, and further protect the identity of the philosophers.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This qualitative examination utilized questions and interviews to uncover the essence of leadership for African American women (AAW). The purpose of this study was to examine how each woman navigated leadership and derived meaning from the journey. This study required a precise understanding of each participant's lived experiences.

Organization of Chapter

This chapter contains the detailed findings and the support evidence that emerged during the data analysis. Also included are the participants' verbatim responses that assisted in composing textural and structural descriptions of leadership and the emerged themes.

Researcher's Epoché or Bracketing

The lived experiences of AAW leaders inspired this research. The researcher set aside all preconceived notions to understand best the participants' lived experiences (epoché). Employing transcendental phenomenology required the researcher to follow a specific protocol (Creswell, 2013). It was essential to explore the lived experiences of AAW leaders to gain an understanding of the role that each played in assisting others who aspire to become leaders. The researcher was reared by a village of AAW who never transcended to a paid leadership role, but whose experiences ignited the current research. The researcher identified with the participants because the researcher possessed the inclusionary conditions for participation in the study, which could have caused the researcher to form preconceptions and biases that could influence the phenomenon under investigation. To set aside the researcher's preference for this topic, the researcher implemented epoché, to disassociate preconceptions before conducting interviews.

Researcher's Background, Training, and Experiences

Years after experiencing many professional and personal adventures, the researcher's life's work began to unfold during a failed attempt at collective bargaining by local educators. The school district hired people with degrees to serve as classroom teachers during the strike, and the researcher was one of the persons hired. This event initiated the researcher into the Field of Education. While teaching in rural schools, the researcher noticed that each organization's culture was distinct and very diverse. After teaching and leading in three different districts, the work became monotonous. In the summer of 2008, a former administrator, who was instrumental in laying the foundation for an urban district state takeover, suggested the urban setting would be an ideal match for the researcher's skillset and the takeover's mission.

Pilot Study Results

The researcher conducted a pilot study before this investigation. A pilot study helps to improve and clarify the interview questions (Coopers & Schindler, 2006). The lone participant, Case Study 1, was a retired principal who practiced in a rural district in a southeastern territory of the United States. Findings from the pilot study included: a leader's voice is important because it gives credence to the work performed in the organization. Also, followers must hear a leader's voice in everything tied to the vision of the organization, a leader expects to maintain order, a leader must allow teachers to complete their work, and a leader must build resilience in motivating followers despite adversity.

Description of the Participants

Five AAW leaders, identified by the acronym AAWL followed by a number participated in this investigation. Descriptions of the five participants follow:

AAWL1

AAWL1 is thirty-four years old, the eldest of three siblings whose parents attained post-secondary training, and she is married with two young children, ages two and six. Getting baptized and taking communion for the first time were the most memorable experiences for AAWL1. Uncle Don is the most significant influence in AAWL1's life because of his positivity despite his circumstances. Uncle Don faced cancer twice but managed to be a source of encouragement for others. He grew up poor but worked to become a millionaire with the belief that nothing in life is free. Uncle Don believed that mistakes were inevitable. He taught AAWL1 not to linger on the errors, and that life's overarching goal should be to finish strongly. AAWL1 experience in the workforce includes being a daycare teaching assistant, bank teller, customer service associate, business manager, cafeteria worker, and adult education teacher. AAWL1 is currently a teacher leader serving as a tenth-grade level chairperson. AAWL1's life motto is *failure is not an option because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

AAWL2

AAWL2 is thirty-one years old, an only child whose parents attained post-secondary training, and currently, she is single without children. The effects and memories of being an outcast in school have lingered the longest for this participant. Not understanding why people bully others made school difficult, but AAWL2's important home environment kept her encouraged and thankful. The most impactful event in the life of AAWL2 was the divorce of her parents. AAWL2's work history includes academic tutor, research assistant for law school dean and healthcare law firm, high school teacher, volunteer. AAWL2 is currently a curriculum writer for youth programs, the head of a nonprofit, the leader of a university honor society, and

the founder of a university journal. AAWL2's life motto is *there will never be enough hours in a day to do what God didn't call you to.*

AAWL3

AAWL3 is forty-one years old, the second of four siblings whose parents attained post-secondary training, and she is married with two young children, ages 4 and 5. The most memorable experience of AAWL3's life was living abroad for six months and learning what being thankful meant. While in a foreign country, AAWL3 met a family of sixteen who lived in a three-room house (two bedrooms and a kitchen) without electricity. Receiving a special needs diagnosis for a child impacted AAWL 3, causing a quick, unselfish maturity. The experience defined AAWL3's life purpose, helped AAWL3 identify character strengths, and helped build AAWL3's determination to become a voice for all children with special needs. This participant has worked as a customer service associate, booking specialist at a sheriff's office, a teacher in private schools, and foreign language chairperson. She is currently a CEO/proprietor of a nonprofit. AAWL3's life motto is *allow adversities to build, develop and strengthen you.*

AAWL4

AAWL4 is seventy years old, the second of three siblings whose parents completed a middle school education and divorced with two adult children. A memorable experience was receiving a doctorate despite a husband who wasn't necessarily supportive of his wife pursuing higher education. AAWL4's brother has and continues to be the most considerable influence in her life. Their brother-sister bond is grounded in honest, difficult to hear but necessary instructions that have added so much value to AAWL4's professional and personal life. This participant's work experience includes being a K-12 teacher, K-12 administrator, and higher education faculty. AAWL4's life motto is to *treat others the way I want to be treated.*

AAWL5

AAWL5 is sixty-one years old, the youngest of twelve siblings. Her parents completed a middle school education, and she is married with two adult children. The most memorable experience of her life was growing up playing school. She was always the teacher. AAWL5 stated that her mother's compassion had the greatest impact on her life. Despite having six children, when AAWL5's uncle died, her mother raised her brother's six children as well. Her mother was a leader, educator, philanthropist, and a godly woman. This participant's work experience includes being a teacher, disciplinarian, literacy strategist, and principal. AAWL5's life motto is *God gave us the gift of life, the life I live in return is my gift back to God.*

Table 7 contains demographic data collected via questionnaire. All the participants attained advanced degrees. Two participants earned doctorates in education or law, one is currently enrolled in a doctoral program, another who earned a specialist in education has delayed doctoral acceptance for one year, and the other has a master's degree plus additional thirty course hours. Leadership experience ranges from five to more than twenty-five years, collectively the participants possess more than 60 years of leadership experience.

Table 7

Participants' Demographic Data

Participant	Degrees	Leadership Experience (# of years)
AAWL 1	BA (Political science), MBA, Ed.S (Curriculum and Instruction)	5
AAWL 2	BA (Political Science), JD, MA (Education Leadership) MA (C&I) (in progress)	6
AAWL 3	BA (Political Science), MA (Teaching), Ed.D (Educational Leadership) (in progress)	5
AAWL 4	BS (Mathematics), MA (Administration and Supervision), Ed.D	25+
AAWL 5	BA (Elementary education), MA (Administration and Supervision) 30+ years	20+

Presentation of Findings

The researcher engaged in data analysis by developing a list of significant statements (horizontalization). This required the researcher to study the data and highlight substantial comments, sentences or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher extracted forty-five original significant statements from five verbatim transcripts. After completing horizontalization, the researcher clustered the comments into themes or meaning units, removing overlapping and repetitive comments.

Table 8 includes examples of significant statements taken from the participants with formulated meanings and assigned codes. Initial codes (IC) were H (how) and W (what). Statements then placed in two categories, the researcher grouped the statements by assigning subthemes (ST). The researcher grouped all subthemes and assigned a final code (FC) for

similar statements. Final codes include LE (leadership etiquette), LP (leadership preeminence), LT (leadership tenacity) and LTr (leadership truths) which emerged as themes.

Table 8

Horizontalization of Data

Significant Statement	Formulated Meaning	IC	ST	FC
Poor leadership experiences motivated me to create an environment where best practices were engaged in daily.	There is a certain way that AAW carry out leadership responsibilities.	W	standard	LE
I am extraordinary, supernatural in some of the things that I need to do that the Lord chose me to do.	Something more significant than self exists that drives the AAW's approach to leadership responsibilities.	H	chosen for leadership	LP
Don't be afraid to change course.	Leaders struggle with people and situations.	H	adversity	LT
I stay true to who I am and what I know is right.	Leaders present their real self to the world.	W	authenticity	LTr

Table 9 contains the themes and subthemes derived from the data analysis. Leadership etiquette defined by nineteen subthemes that AAWL are collaborative leaders who empower followers. Leadership preeminence developed from six subthemes that AAWL acknowledge a higher power in the leadership process, which in turn leads to excellent work environments. Leadership tenacity defined by eleven subthemes that illustrated AAWL are held to higher standards than counterparts when seeking leadership positions, additionally AAWL hold themselves to higher standards by seeking advanced degrees. Leadership truths developed from eleven subthemes signaling that AAWL share similar qualities influenced by family, faith and educational attainment.

Table 9

Themes from all Subthemes

Themes	All Subthemes
Leadership Etiquette for AAW (LE)	standards, excellence, focus, transparency, communication, resources, shared decision-making, reflective, empower, complimentary, listening, flexible, balance, accountability, risk-taking Sister-bond, encouragement, difficult conversations, collaboration
Leadership Preeminence (LP)	inspiration, spirituality, discernment, visionary, faith, humility
Leadership Tenacity (LT)	resilience, perseverance, adversity, time, confidence, barriers to change, challenges, obstacles, racism, patience, change
Leadership Truths (LTr)	assumptions, perceptions, reality, meeting people where they are, urgency, honesty, relatable, trust, authenticity, buy-in, unbiased

The researcher divided responses into what participants experienced (textural) and how they experienced the phenomenon (structural).

Textural Descriptions

Gaining an understanding of each participant’s definition of leadership assisted the researcher in data analysis. The following are the participants’ verbatim counter stories.

AAWL1:

Leadership is both a learned and innate characteristic. Leaders have to be firm but compassionate, knowledgeable about your craft but having room for growth via professional development, self-reflective, and able to receive constructive criticism.

AAWL2:

Leadership means creating an opportunity for individuals to fulfill whatever their callings are. I believe that it takes a visionary to be a leader because I do think that it takes seeing

something long before anybody else believes it to create these opportunities for other people to thrive. And to also anticipate challenges that might arise so that as the leader I can coach people through the process.

AAWL3:

Leadership is a sacrifice. Leadership means hard times. Leadership is hard, and it's difficult because the one thing I've realized is that so many people depend on you, and it's tough to please everyone. You're not going to please everyone...you must find peace...within yourself when you begin to make decisions about how you're leading.

AAWL4:

Leadership means being able to work with others to achieve a goal. I think that the individuals who possess leadership skills can accomplish goals with others in a very positive way.

AAWL 5:

Leadership is undertaking an active role in guiding people to a particular goal or target that will be beneficial for all stakeholders or everyone involved, especially in any decision-making process for all. African American women feel the need to be over qualified than their White counterparts when seeking leadership roles. The literature indicated the leadership path for an AAW is not clearly defined despite the women possessing stellar credentials. The participant's lived experiences captured in the following verbatim counter stories.

AAWL1:

I received my teacher certification through an alternative teacher preparation program. After landing my first classroom job, I would volunteer for committees in the

organization and take on roles no one wanted. After the administrators saw how focused I was and always put my all into each task, I was considered for other leadership roles within the building. My experiences as a leader have been from the teacher leader perspective despite possessing credentials for administrative positions.

AAWL2:

I was blessed to be my class valedictorian, but for some reason, that just wasn't enough for me, so I decided that I would talk to my principal and see which students were struggling and offer my lunchtime as an opportunity for students to get tutored.... I was going to go to law school, and I was going to litigate my way to change...created a health student organization with some friends. I started working with a nonprofit healthcare law firm that's no longer in existence. I landed a research assistantship with my dean after I proposed a need for a healthcare law certificate program. So, I worked as a research assistant designing that program...working at a mid-sized social security disability law firm.... I became a substitute teacher, and on the days where there was no need for substitute teaching, I volunteered to tutor students who were struggling academically...also started a nonprofit because I felt like the faith community wasn't doing enough...so during the summertime, I ran summer camps out of the churches. I often say I didn't choose this, it chose me, and I say that because I had no idea what I wanted to do. I know that I love advocating for people, and I love listening to what other people want to accomplish and helping them figure out how to get there. Naturally, in helping them figure out how to get there and being uber-opinionated, I ended up asserting myself into the leadership role almost by accident, even though I hesitate to use to the

word accident because I believe God knew what I didn't, but I see myself as a catalyst for creating.

AAWL3:

I started as a Spanish teacher and remained a Spanish teacher for twelve years during my tenure I held other positions: department chair, assistant disciplinarian...a sheriff's department teacher...teaching deputies Spanish. From then on, I began working with businesses...someone approached me...you need a nonprofit; there's money out there for you to teach children languages. Teach children about culture. I said, okay. So, we started the nonprofit process, and from then on, this is where I've been. I've administered leadership through the nonprofit, education and my other business.

AAWL4:

My path was awkward.... I never aspired to be a leader. I was a teacher, and an administrator encouraged me to begin teaching in the summer program. As all leadership paths, it takes being around those people who have that ability to give you those opportunities. So, by me doing those summer workshops, that is when other people in administration noticed me and began encouraging me to do other things. From that point on, I was out of the classroom doing workshops, working at the central office, and...from there I entered a doctoral program. All of that just wasn't planned. For me, I feel like I was in the right place, the right time, with people who had the ability not only to encourage me but also to show me the path that would be the best one I could take at that time.

AAWL5:

My leadership role began when I was in grade school. At the end of the school year, teachers would give away papers. I would bring them home and be the teacher for my cousins, nieces, and nephews. I took college-bound classes in high school. I completed high school early and went to college and completed it in three years. I started teaching at a very young age but wasn't satisfied, so I returned to college to earn a master's degree. I went on to earn additional hours beyond my master's. I got leadership job twenty years after receiving these advanced degrees.

When building relationships, a leader must possess a distinctive manner that speaks to who one is and what is important. Authentic leadership is a process that unfolds over time. Participants reflected on tailoring leadership to reflect the person more than the position. Authentic African American females are collaborative leaders who empower followers by giving them a voice in the decision-making process. Verbatim counter stories follow.

AAWL1:

I strongly believe one unique leader is nonexistent. All leaders have borrowed good or bad practices from former leaders. However, utilizing best practices and finding out what works within your field is key to acquiring an authentic voice. A true leader sharpens a skillset to fine tune that authentic voice and then helps others who are struggling to find authenticity in leadership.

AAWL2:

Being busy stops us from really thinking big picture and creating things that make life easier or steer us in paths that we want long term. We get caught up in the motions if you will. I think that leadership for me means never getting caught up in that trap and always

being creative enough to say okay, so day to day making it through is not enough. I came to thrive, and that is the mindset that I try to keep in being an authentic leader and guiding others.

AAWL 3:

You find an authentic voice by being true to yourself and understanding that you are who you are because God made you that way. A lot of people sell themselves out just to get a voice, or to get an image, and it doesn't last. But when you're true to yourself, true to who you are, taking trial and error, having integrity, these things begin to build upon your authentic voice, modeling and demonstrating what you're saying. It becomes your authentic voice.... Just to have a quick short-term feeling, because anything that comes quick, a lot of times that isn't good, but when you build yourself by investing in others when you build up long term... I think this is how authentic voice becomes you, modeling your life....

AAWL 4:

For me, that is difficult, but honestly, this is how I would describe finding my authentic voice: by working collaboratively with a variety of people. Going outside of my comfort level, accepting challenges even though I might have been afraid of what might happen. Afraid that something might be incorrect and that I was always trying to do the best for whatever situation.

AAWL 5:

Paying attention to them that are under your leadership and getting to know each person to make them feel valued. I had to be attuned to the needs, individually and collectively.

Knowing when to coach, direct, or mentor is important in establishing yourself as an authentic leader.

Composite Textural Descriptions

The age difference between the oldest study participant and the youngest study participant was 39 years. Collectively participants possessed more than fifty years of leadership experience. Each woman defined leadership as a process that involved working with people. Leaders create opportunities, maximize the potential of followers, and encourage growth. Collaboration is an essential strategy for AAW leaders. Participants conveyed the importance of staying true (adhering to cultural familiarity) to oneself throughout the leadership tenure. The AAW leader connects cultural practices to organizational expectations and history to future. In a global society, connections are vital in remaining relevant. Six degrees of separation, the premise that everyone in the world is six steps away or fewer, supports the argument that AAW leaders are essential for globalization. Although cultural practices are complex, the ability to navigate leadership without abandoning AAW's uniqueness is valuable. The participants believed that leadership was about people. Leaders are attuned to the needs of the people. They also believe that professional development is an essential practice for leadership. Leaders build stamina by developing a repertoire of tested strategies.

Structural Descriptions

Understanding "how" participants experienced leadership is the phenomenologist goal in qualitative research. A good leader possesses not only self-determination but also the ability to inspire followers to work through organizational strife. Individually and collectively the participants acknowledge a higher power that supports the leadership process. Each leader's

motivation to understand how problems become manageable appears in the following verbatim responses:

AAWL1:

Networking with other leaders is a good way to stay motivated despite leadership challenges and praying. Being able to share with others and gain some insight into finding solutions relieves some of the stresses. Attending professional development gives leaders an opportunity to learn best practices. Staying abreast of trends and current in the literature is key to motivation.

AAWL2:

I like to fix things. I think that is my motivation. I think problems are fixable if people think hard enough. So, when I see a problem, my natural go-to is how do we fix it? What resources are there?

AAWL3:

Well one, you must have a prayer life. You must find a way to go and meditate. You release everything, the Lord says, cast all your cares on me. You must just cast all, release everything on Him, or whomever your higher being may be. You must know yourself. You must continue to be an intentional leader, questioning what I can do, what else can I do, what else works? You also must know your strengths and your weaknesses.... Knowing that you cannot do it alone. You must have a great support team. You must build a team that reflects you and your strengths and builds around your weaknesses.

AAWL4:

Number one for me is having faith. Faith provides me with that grounding that I am trying to do the best thing for those people involved. So, therefore, feeling good about what you are doing. Being able to admit if something needed to change. Change if you can. Having faith and being positive about what I have been doing has brought me to comfort level that for some people they don't understand.

AAWL5:

Leaders have a balance, have faith and believe that all things are possible. Private meditation to release pressure and stay focused. Keeping family as the number priority keeps me motivated knowing I have others to celebrate and encourage me. Developing trust with followers keeps all motivated and allows me to show my vulnerable side.

People have to know that the leader is human too.

The participants said that leadership included difficult periods in the organization.

Challenging times require leadership aptitude that understands difficulties are a part of the job.

AAWL1:

Working in my current position has presented challenges: lack of colleague motivation and low participation, difficulty embracing new ideas. I believe my gender and race add to the obstacles I encounter. Many schools do not consider young, Black women as an ideal candidate for leadership. My academic prowess, education, personality and proven track record of student achievement is still not enough to gain employment outside of the teacher leader/volunteer status.

AAWL2:

People do not see the picture or underestimate the potential—I'm not even going to say my potential, but the potential of whatever the goal is. They do not see. People have a hard time believing that amazing can happen. I love working with younger kids because they still believe—and I think some of it may have to do with them reading so many fairy tales, I do not know—but they still believe that impossible things can happen. Adults many times, especially those in leadership, have become so scared of taking chances that they frown at anything that seems even slightly pushing the envelope or anything that could warrant criticism from the higher-ups and so for me, it is been proving that things can work and get support from people. I have found that often when small feats are successful, the bigger ones are not as hard to overcome. So, the challenge becomes proving myself in every new arena.

AAWL3:

I was not prepared... I have never worked with a nonprofit, and I did not know what it entailed. Everything I have learned, I have learned through trial and error, which I think is very important... leadership is not about saying that I was born to be a leader. Anyone can be a leader, but there are some sub-qualities that you need to have when you accept this position.... I may not have been ready, but I had tenacity, determination, I had the will to bring myself up, to be able to fill those big shoes that I'm wearing now. To say that I'm not going to fail at this, I'm going to continue to research and read so I can grow and build myself—position matters.

AAWL4:

There were a limited number of Black women in leadership or aspiring to leadership during my time coming up, especially in middle and high school. You look through the literature; it is as if we were a point 00 something, not even one percent...not that many in higher ed where I was. However, although there were a few, I do not feel as though those few were encouraging. So, for me, I feel maybe I threatened them because I would be moving into their turf, which at that time; their turf was big because there were so few of them. I felt as though I had to be the opposite and not whether it was only me in a situation. Maybe I was just so bullheaded that I looked like I knew it all. I do not know, but I did not get the kind of encouragement, the kind of assistance from a Black female. It was always a White male or a White female who provided in my professional career.

AAWL5:

I worked in a district that politics played a role in who obtained positions. The attitudes of the higher-ups were horrible. I interviewed many times for different positions. I refused to let the experiences make me bitter. Instead, I decided to learn the lesson from each one and continued to apply for different roles. I decided I would use the leadership platform to empower others, maintain consistency but be flexible as needed and to develop other leaders.

Leadership involves creating a vision and getting people to believe that a goal is achievable. Leaders influence followers to achieve organizational goals. The researcher was interested in what or who influenced the participants to become leaders. The African American female leaders share similar qualities one of which leadership is influenced by family. Verbatim counter stories follow.

AAWL1:

Having worked in so many challenging organizations and not having the best example of leadership has influenced my approach to leadership and how I envisioned carrying out leadership. Poor leadership can make you bitter, but I used it to build a repertoire of best practices for my students and those I lead in the organization.

AAWL2:

I say, as a leader, as far as people that I know, my mother influenced leadership. Because I have seen her navigate life as a single parent mom, and always find a way to make things happen. She sets a goal and then she achieves it. It is the most beautiful thing to watch because it is systematic. She always devises a strategy and then executes it. When problems arise, she still executes it.

AAWL3:

I do not want to say they influenced me, but I want to say that they pretty much brought me to the door because I already knew that I was supposed to be doing this on the community level. I was not prepared, as in knowing what you needed to hold a position. I have never worked with a nonprofit, and I did not know what it entailed. Everything I have learned, I have learned through trial and error, which I think is very important. I have allowed that to build me to where I am. So, leadership is not about saying that I was born to be a leader. Anyone can be a leader, but there are some sub-qualities that you need to have when you accept this position.

AAWL 4:

There was an urgency, a need for something which, so many times, that happen. I always tried to relate to the people around me, no matter what it was.... I felt like being able to

communicate about the situation, the urgency of the situation, all the variables...that setting at that time so that we could make an informed decision.

AAWL 5:

I used every experience and opportunity as a lesson to be taught or learned. Staying open to the values others bring into the organization keeps me humble and able to freely share power in the organization. I have experienced inequality in so many situations that I made it my mantra to fight against injustices imposed on my building.

Composite Structural Descriptions

Each participant provided stories of the people or events that influenced their leadership. Influence is a necessary aspect of leadership. It can produce stellar results when used effectively. Influence assists in defining one's life purpose. The family had an essential role in the lives of all the participants. AAWL1 iterated the power of mistakes, which confirmed that participants believe that leaders are risk takers. Leadership is trial and error. Each woman acknowledged that leadership mandates a belief in a higher power that guides them in knowing how to treat people and approach the work. Because the participants possessed faith, the researcher concluded that the participants' leadership epitomized service. However, a difference exists between the servant leadership theory and the acknowledgment that leadership is orchestrated and grounded in power bigger than the self. Participants agreed that leadership could not transpire in silos. Race and gender affect how leadership unfolds for participants. Leaders must acknowledge what is happening in the organization. Failure to address reality in organizational culture resulted in poor leadership experiences. Challenges are standard for the AAW leader. It is necessary to build a thick skin to lead in challenging times. Leadership requires preparation. Training is important for effective leadership. The researcher asked

about how leadership reflects the personality of the leader. Even though each participant's path was different, each path reflected the challenges that AAW encounter when aspiring to and attaining leadership. Faith, persistence, and determination are some of the defining factors of AAW leaders.

Themes

Qualitative research utilizes themes to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013). The investigator reduces the data to significant statements and codes the data which form subthemes. From the subthemes, data formed into clusters of meaning units, which form the themes. The following themes emerged from the study.

Theme 1: Leadership Etiquette. Etiquette is a standard set of polite behavior in society. Leaders should engage in a specific protocol. AAW leaders must adhere to excellent standards of etiquette. Each defined standard signal that the organization is accountable to people and outcomes. Part of leadership etiquette is transparency. There should be no hidden agendas. Part of leadership etiquette is the leader's focus, listening, and communication, which ensures that followers have input. Giving followers, a voice is important to gain buy-in, and people are empowered when they feel connected to organizational decision making. Leaders need to be flexible and forthcoming about complimenting those who are working for organizational success and encouraging to those who need assistance. Quality leadership seeks out ways to empower others. Table 10 contains the coded statements used to develop the theme. The initial codes of W defined what the participants experienced in leadership. Poor leadership experiences often defined what a woman focused on remedying during her leadership tenure. AAWL engage in difficult conversations to assist people to grow. The participant stated that

AAWL engaged in specific behaviors that relate only to them. AAWL are responsible for developing other leaders, and that relaxing outside of the organization promotes balance.

Table 10

Theme One and Significant Statements

Theme 1: Leadership Etiquette for AAW	
Poor leadership experiences motivated me to create an environment where best practices were engaged in daily.	There are certain traits that relate to women, and I think there are certain traits that relate to only Black women.
I am not sure that we have done enough about Black women and how Black women have overcome, have to change.	Don't be afraid to take risks because this is trial and error; this is how you are going to make it, you build upon leadership.
Leaders add to their knowledge continuously.	Provide opportunities for others to learn about leadership in the organization.
Operating procedures are necessary.	People want to hear when they are doing good things.
Sometimes I had come to Jesus meetings because people were out of order.	Learn to relax outside of the organization.
Leaders have to be firm but compassionate, knowing when to coach or reprimand.	Leadership is not stagnant.
Leaders do not talk all the time; they take time to hear the followers.	Create environments for growth.
Newsletters informed every one of organizational activities.	Networking with other leaders is a good way to stay motivated.
There is only one standard for Black women leading in organizations.	Embrace the commonality as a strength, not a weakness.
Leaders act ethically at all times.	

Theme 2: Leadership Preeminence. Strong leadership is grounded in integrity, which, for the AAW, encompasses acknowledgment of a higher power. Belief in something more significant than oneself determines the AAW’s approach to leadership responsibilities. Leaders pay attention to all resources because resources do not last forever. True leaders provide resourceful streams for the next generation by serving others. African American women leaders’ work embodies spirituality. Organizational practices reflect beliefs tied to religious practices. Table 11 contains the coded statements used to develop the theme. A participant stated discernment is necessary to sift out those people who are true to the leader. AAWL inspire others by helping people to find personal purpose and provide an opportunity to work for that purpose. Understanding that AAWL possess the power to perform lofty goals is unique to the AAWL.

Table 11

Theme Two and Significant Statements

Theme 2: Leadership Preeminence	
It is up to us to inspire other people to dig deep down and figure out what it is that they are called to.	I am extraordinary, supernatural in some of the things that I need to do that the Lord chose me to do.
You sift out sincere resources and become that same resource for other people.	A leader must have faith and know that all things are possible.

Theme 3: Leadership Tenacity. There are times when leaders struggle with people and situations. Adversity builds muscle and resilience. Resilient leaders develop transformative leadership patterns. Leadership is about building muscle for tough times which are inevitable. Leaders know preparation is vital to success. Preparation includes investing in personal growth through professional development. Great leaders invest in personal abilities which increase influence. Persuasion is a powerful tool in leadership. It takes time to build

powerful systems in an organization. Good leaders offer stability to the organization.

Organizational stability signals direction. Skilled leadership takes time. Table 12 contains the coded statements used to develop the theme. Participants stated going out of comfort level, having a take-charge personality, and allowing adversity to strengthen you as subtheme statements.

Table 12

Theme Three and Significant Statements

Theme 3: Leadership Tenacity	
Going outside of my comfort level, accepting challenges even though I might have been afraid.	Gain insight into problems and create solutions.
I came to thrive by any ethical means necessary.	Delayed doesn't mean denied forever.
I have a take-charge personality.	Allow adversity to strengthen you.
Don't be afraid to change course.	The other organization led by Whites got more resources.

Theme 4: Leadership Truths. Leaders must present their real self to the world. Leaders who conceal inadequacies by pretending to be someone other than their authentic self can create a culture of mistrust. Followers trust leaders who acknowledge help is welcomed and accepted. AAWL must find a model that is representative of personal attributes. Meeting people's need to create opportunities for growth is necessary for real leaders. Leaders are fallible and don't have all the answers. AAWL build expert teams that reflect organizational culture. Leaders clarify followers' perceptions by being relatable and honest in all transactions. The following table contains the coded statements used to develop the theme.

Table 13

Theme Four and Significant Statements

Theme 4: Leadership Truths	
Leaders must exhibit human qualities that allow followers to see when they have bad days.	You have to work hard so that someone’s perception of you is the way you want them to perceive you
You have to build a team that reflects you and your strengths and builds around your weaknesses.	Using wisdom and letting people earn the right to be trusted.
I stay true to who I am and what I know is right	Tell people what you expect.

Summary

A transcendental phenomenological approach required the researcher to engage in specific behaviors throughout the study (Moustakas, 1994). Coding, horizontalization, and bracketing are essential steps in performing distinct data analysis. The researcher bracketed out experiences for this study to present an impartial method of collecting data. Tables presented participants demographic data and the significant statements that led to the study’s four salient themes. The researcher reported five African American women’s lived experiences that related to leadership. Textural and structural descriptions presented a deeper understanding of the phenomenon via participants. Themes emerged that suggested the need for the development of leadership theory that captures the essence of African American women.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Introduction/Overview of Study

Qualitative inquiry is open-ended and exploratory which aids in understanding a phenomenon as it relates to people's lived experiences. The researcher employed a qualitative approach utilizing a phenomenological design. Phenomenology provided a lens to view the leadership phenomena as meaningful, as humans feel, experience, and then commit to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Counter-storytelling allowed diverse perspectives to emerge, challenging White males' conceptualizations of leadership, which literature historically advantages (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

The answers to each interview question elicited themes that explained the lived experiences of AAW regarding leadership. Each participant provided a description of leadership, what influenced them as leaders, the double standards they encountered as leaders, and their faith in a higher power as the foundation of their leadership. The researcher used questionnaires and interviews to gain information. The researcher also journaled reflections and kept field notes to better understand the lived experiences of the participants as leaders. The study's purposes are to gain a clearer understanding of leadership experiences of African American women by exploring their lived experiences, and to provide lessons for present and future AAW leaders, so they are empowered to interrupt the traditional patterns that determine opportunities for leadership.

Organization of Chapter

This chapter addresses the study's results, conceptual and theoretical orientations, and analyzes the literature that is reviewed in chapter two. Recommendations for future research are

also addressed and the chapter closes with the study's implications.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

Leadership is personal, reflective and has many measurable and observable actions. Effective leaders are ethically and socially responsible when designing structures of change in culturally diverse organizations. AAW leaders consider the multiple life experiences of the marginalized and create policies that are equitable and enlightening. AAWL fight racial inequality by embracing and empowering all aspiring leaders, according to study's findings. The findings also uncovered AAWL challenge the status quo by eradicating the social injustices that have been produced by policymakers, corporate leaders, or in short, the architects of leadership. Four themes emerged from the study's findings: leadership etiquette for African American women, leadership preeminence, leadership tenacity and leadership truths.

A socially just organization meets the needs of all its recipients. Transformative leaders become strategic in thinking about the process and implementing bold approaches to combat social injustices. Effective leadership in the age of accountability can break glass ceiling barriers and invigorate opportunities for marginalized people by abandoning the White supremacy mindset of leadership theory. A theoretical framework that defines the path and interrupts the historical patterns of exclusion for African American women aspiring leadership must materialize.

Summary of the Study

The researcher employed an allegory as the conceptual framework to bind the study. An allegory is a representation of human existence (literary or visual) that depicts a hidden meaning. These meanings depend on the interpreter's experiences. Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" served as the conceptual framework for this study. A conceptual framework is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, and beliefs in which graphics or propositions link broad,

abstract ideas to guide a research study (Maxwell, 2013). The conceptual framework helps researchers generate a systematic order to the flow by focusing and setting boundaries in the research study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The metaphorical bridge links innovative thinking and collaborative practices to understand the complexities of how culture impacts the reality of leadership. Experiences are the stepping stones to a leadership position. This researcher used metaphorical bridges to link the disparate experiences that made up participants' paths to leadership so that others who possess same caves can identify patterns and replicate these paths. AAW are collaborative leaders who empower followers by giving them a voice in decision making which bridges the disconnect between power structures in organizations and society.

This researcher used fire as a metaphor for how and what the AAW leader experienced on the path to leadership and during the leadership process. Leadership, like fire, can be hazardous if entered for egotistical reasons. Uncontrolled fire becomes volatile. Volatility signals instability, causing fear of growing in organizations. Organizational cultures become toxic and explosive when leaders are not intentional. Intentional leaders create a vision that focuses their followers. A good vision is rooted in the leader's past, deals with today's reality, and addresses future possibilities (Kise, 2014).

Leadership fire is a powerful force when embraced and controlled. Fire is charismatic and compelling, but if left untended, flames can bring down an entire organization. Flame can be both a powerful servant and a cruel master. Taming fire benefits humanity, just as a leader's influence increases after they have mastered the metaphorical flames that ignite within organizations. Leadership requires watchfully tending fires (people, policy, and practices). The fire can polish authentic leadership or consume the entire experience.

Initial leadership actions may begin with a single sparkle. However, a burning flame is necessary for organizational metamorphosis. Flames empower others to become leaders. AAWL3 compared leadership to sacrifice. Sacrificial fire builds trust in leadership. When followers know leaders have forfeited personal gains for the betterment of the whole, healthy cultures evolve. AAWL4 shared that despite personal fears, the organization's collective goal remained front and center in her mind. There existed a stark difference in leadership longevity between the novice to the seasoned leader. Novice leaders decided to avoid organizational challenges by changing course, suggesting that young AAW leaders are choosing to close doors on traditional institutions and traditional employment. Seasoned AAW leaders are more tolerant of adversarial organizational cultures and remained as employees longer than novice AAW leaders.

Plato explained the process of becoming a philosopher and looking beyond surface explanations to acquire a deeper understanding of the affairs of the state. Philosophers were the only people who could carry out leadership duties in *The Republic* because of each possessed wisdom concerning knowledge and leadership. The ultimate way to understand other perspectives is to enter a metaphorical cave that is not your own and work collaboratively with the people. Plato distrusted the senses when it came to perceiving knowledge because senses were untrustworthy (Ramsey, 2009). Leaders understand their organization by acknowledging the perceived reality of the followers (Koontz, 2014). In the "Allegory of the Cave" Prisoners were watching life unfold on the wall, accepting all perceptions as truths. The following counter-story illustrates perception and how it unfolds accordingly:

Someone's perception is theirs. It is not yours, and unless you try your best to make sure what they perceive is your reality, that falls upon you. You must work hard so that

someone's perception of you is the way you want them to perceive you. So, I put that buck on me all the time, and I have worked very hard to try to be honest so that the trust can be built between me and those who are around me, whether it is professionally or personally. Now that did not come easy because that is like letting your guard down. I grew into this reality. I would not say this is how I was early on in my career. Again, as I am repeating the experiences should play a big part in the leadership skills that one emulates.

In "The Allegory of the Cave," fire provided light for the prisoners. The light allowed the prisoners to acquire knowledge through the visual sense. Training of the sense was called enlightenment. Enlightened citizens operated in two realms (the visible and the intelligible). The two realms were the basis for knowledge. Philosophers could bridge the two realms to facilitate change for ordinary citizens. Plato emphasized that true leaders could reason and learn from social phenomena to create meaning. Ultimately, this derived meaning laid the foundation for just societies.

In the social sciences, theories are credible interpretations of the social world. A theory implements concepts, systems, models, structures beliefs, ideas or propositions to analyze events, consequences, actions, processes or observations (Savin-Baden & Major, 2012). The researcher used Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to interpret data, confirm gaps in knowledge, and provide justification for conducting this study. This study creates a new kind of leadership literature by giving voice to AAW's lived experiences. The participants' multiple identities defined how leadership unfolded for them. The researcher used counter storytelling, a component of CRT, to study leadership experiences from marginalized voices.

The literature revealed AAW stigmatized by the double consciousness of race and gender must endure the discrimination that follows both. The following counter-story from AAWL4 illustrates this phenomenon:

We relate to people who identify with us. I was reading all this literature about leadership, and I did not see myself. It was not until I got deep into my doctoral coursework to realize that this is all about men.

AAW leaders bridge cultural practice and organizational expectations to provide opportunities for others. It is imperative for AAW to form alliances and become resources to help each other. One participant said she loved the picture of one hand pulling another hand over a wall because it symbolized what AAW leaders should cultivate.

In this study, leadership was a phenomenon investigated through the lived experiences of five AAW. Each participant experienced leadership through the interlocking systems of race and gender (caves) which served as inclusive boundaries in the study. Race and gender affected leadership for most of the participants. Four of the participants were dark-skinned women, and one was a light-skinned woman. Four of the five AAW believed the leadership experience could produce different results if they were White males, White female, or even Black males. Interestingly, the only participant to receive an invitation and assistance to leadership from the dominant culture was the light-skinned woman. Verbatim counter stories that support race and gender influences leadership are as follows.

AAWL1:

If I was a male, White or Black, I strongly believe my leadership experience would not be so limited. Even in 2018, gender discrimination still exists. In leadership, males are looked upon as individuals who automatically demand and receive respect because of

their dominant nature of being in control. In education, the educated Black male is a prized possession and in...and surrounding areas, a rare entity. If I was a White female, my leadership experience might not be so different. However, my educational and professional development opportunities would increase because of the networks I would affiliate with because of my skin color. Therefore, making me more marketable when an opportunity for leadership position becomes available and a male is ineligible or unavailable. Over time the African American woman has decreased in value because of the perceived threat to society. She possesses the ability to play a dual role of the mother and father figure. Therefore, making the ability to lead a threat instead of an asset effectively. Her White counterparts strive to solidify their role in society by segregating leadership opportunities making it difficult for the African American female to take her rightful place in leadership.

AAWL2:

If I was White, I doubt whether I'd be as conscious of the inequities faced by African American youth. Even though I'd likely still have the same religious beliefs, which would contribute to my ability to sympathize with others, there's nothing like experiencing things first hand. If I were a White male, I'd likely be better positioned to make impactful changes. The catch-22 is that I'd likely not feel the same drive to do it.

AAWL3:

If I was White, there's a possibility, a high possibility I would be further. I do not believe that being a Black female is a terrible thing because I believe that we are powerful, and I believe that God implanted in us some things that no one else has. I believe that if other Black females catch on to another Black female, that we change everything. That is why

the enemy is always attacking Black females, whether it becomes jealousy or strife which causes separation and we cannot form this great alliance. I do believe if I were White, I would not have to work as hard as I do now.

AAWL5:

I do not think I was valued as they were. I was not given the same resources to improve the quality of the company where I resided. Not given any of my requests. When I thought they were going to provide the same to another company, they trained my followers and then stated that the other company scores were lower than our scores, so they took everything back. It was though they wanted this company to fail. I was not given the opportunity to hire who I thought would be an asset. I had to take what they sent me, and we all know what that meant. I did not see equality, and the more I pushed, the more it was obvious something good was not going to happen. I enjoyed my people, but it was unequal compared to the other companies lead by White counterparts.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Individually and collectively the participants acknowledge a higher power that supports the leadership process. Leadership preeminence, theme two, supports the notion that AAW leaders believe in a higher power; therefore, they engage in behaviors that promote fair, unbiased decisions for all. Leadership preeminence supports excellent work environments. Authentic African American women are collaborative leaders who empower followers by giving them a voice in the decision-making process, supports the study's theme one, leadership etiquette for African American leaders. The AAW's lived experiences reinforce the need to develop a holistic leadership theory that captures their essence concluded the results. The findings as they relate to the research questions are as follows.

Research Question 1

How could African American women leaders' lived experiences transform leadership theory?

One finding that surfaced was African American women are held to higher standards than their White counterparts when seeking leadership positions. The literature acknowledged that African American female school leaders are assigned more challenging urban environments and tend to be older than White counterparts (Doughty, 1980). Although the literature acknowledged the delayed leadership acquisition for AAW, a gap remains regarding a specific reason. The gap does not present a plausible reason why AAW are required to possess credentials that surpass the requirements of leadership positions.

One of the five participants reported despite possessing the necessary qualifications for leadership, attaining a position is challenging. AAWL1 holds certification in early childhood education and secondary social studies. She has earned advanced degrees: Masters of Arts in Business and Education Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction, but can't obtain a leadership position beyond the classroom in the current local education agency. The participant holds certifying credentials in two states. AAWL1 has applied for a social studies content specialist coordinator, academic dean and just recently education diagnostician intern. AAWL1 stated the school's leadership team, comprised of four White females, three White males, one African American male and one African American female. Only one leadership team member, African American male holds a doctoral degree. AAWL1's credentials surpass all other team members. African American women leaders are persistent and determined to impact traditional power structures.

Theme three, Leadership Tenacity, emerged from subthemes that showed AAW leaders understand that leadership comes with challenges, but each battle won signals that winning the war is achievable. AAW leaders bring passion to the organization. Passion erupts within AAWL to motivate others to work for change, without passion, the mission becomes unattainable. The women's passion is often misconstrued as anger. One participant shared that anger (attributed to passion) motivated her to fix things. When Plato's freed prisoner sees the sun for the first time, it is painful because their eyes must adjust from darkness to light. Until the prisoner's eyes adjust and they begin to understand the sun's purpose, only then can they begin to appreciate light. The AAW leader, marginalized by race and gender, experiences leadership in the same complicated way, however, persistence is vital to success. The theme is supported by AAWL3's counter-story:

I was not prepared, as in knowing what the position, what was needed to hold a position. I have never worked with a nonprofit, and I did not know what it entailed. Everything I have learned, I have learned through trial and error, which I think is very important, and I have allowed that to build me to where I am. Anyone can be a leader, but there are some sub-qualities that you need. I had the tenacity, and I had determination, I had the will to bring myself up, to fill these big shoes that I'm wearing now, to say that I'm not going to fail at this, I'm going to continue to research and read so I can grow and put myself in the right position to get where I need to be.

Finding two surfaced from the participants' lived experiences of engaging in prayer and meditation. The researcher uncovered AAWL are led by a higher power that supports the leadership process. There exists no current model that illustrates reliance on faith when undertaking leadership positions. The researcher clarified the intent of Servant Leadership as a

model that entails how one should lead as opposed to led by a higher power. Byrd (2009) conveyed that leadership is generally associated with an individual being in a position of authority and holding a certain measure of power and influence within an organization. Northouse (2016) illustrated the paradox of servant leadership as service and influence. Influence diminishes when followers see the leader as a servant who caters to the needs of individuals instead of collective organizational needs.

Theme two, Leadership Preeminence, is a broad concept that encompasses many perspectives. The basic tenet is that African American women leaders acknowledge a higher power that is bigger than human beings. The higher power defines the purpose for the AAWL. Purpose gives meaning to life. When one operates in purpose, transformation is inevitable. The literature described transformational leaders as spiritual people. Plato's freed prisoner experienced knowledge as a process. Knowledge requires understanding. Those who understand the knowledge process, obtain wisdom. This study found that AAW lead by faith and not by ego. AAWL connect to a source higher than self to gain direction and meaning. The theme is supported by the following counter-story:

You got to have faith. You got to be grounded and feel good about what you are doing in helping others whether it is in your professional career or working in a club, an organization, a nonprofit...wherever it is.

Byrd (2009) reiterated that many of the experiences that AAW face are not located within separate spheres of race, gender, or social class. Rather these independent spheres converge and form an interlocking system that shapes structural and political aspects of individual experience not captured within mainstream leadership discourse. Furthermore, this interlocking system can

intersect with the presumed right of the African American woman leader to exercise power and influence (Crenshaw, 1989).

Research Question 2

What lessons of African American women leaders provide increased leadership opportunities for other African American women?

Finding three of the study was that African American women are collaborative leaders who empower followers by giving them a voice in the decision-making process. Northouse (2016) stated a benefit of transformational leadership is focusing on followers. Including the voice of followers motivates organizational change in positive ways. One participant felt like being able to communicate about the situation, the urgency of the situation, helped in gaining buy-in. The participant said that working in any organization, when people feel like they have a voice, whether leader's final decision is what followers wanted or not, they are okay with it because they have trust that you considered their input as well.

Theme one, Leadership Etiquette for African American women, emerged from subthemes that suggested there is a certain way, tied to familiar and cultural traditions, that African American women approach and engage in leadership. The literature reported that specific behaviors define a leader's style. Transactional leaders engage in a series of exchanges between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2016). These behaviors must be defined for AAW. For AAW leadership responsibility epitomizes Plato's freed prisoner returning to the cave to encourage prisoners to seek true knowledge by escaping the false perceptions of reality. Just as the freed prisoner seeks to alter the lives of the prisoners who remain in the cave, so does the AAW leader seek to clear the path for those aspiring to leadership. Leaders clear the path by

developing strategic goals and objectives that align with a guiding vision. The theme is supported by AAWL4's counter-story:

Yes, certain traits do relate to women, and I think there are certain traits that do relate to Black women. Do I think that there is a distinct path for the Black women? Yes, I do. I think that people who look at what you are doing will tend to sway for it because they are Black women who are aspiring to leadership, and I am going to be biased, or because White women are trying to help Black women. My day of White men pulling and helping me, I do not think that day is here anymore. I think women now are sticking together more.

Although there existed a wide age range (70-31= 39 years difference) among the participants, finding four revealed that AAW share similar leadership qualities that are influenced by faith, family and educational attainment. Many AAW come from a cultural foundation that is supported by personal perceptions of blackness, spiritual heritage, community pride, and self-awareness (Hughes, 2014). The literature supports culture shapes AAW leaders and AAW face double standards more than any identity group in America. AAW trying to balance personal and organizational culture causes exclusion from the path of career success (Tekola, 2016). Paradoxically, assimilating to corporate culture creates perceptions of superficiality, and again exclusion occurs (Hughes, 2014).

Theme four, Leadership Truths, emerged from subthemes of reality, assumption, and perception, to name a few. The path lacks a definition for the AAW leader. The literature reflected that leadership narratives celebrate the experiences of White males, the group that dominates American leadership. The AAW's voice is absent in the literature. Just as Plato's chained prisoners receive information from puppeteers, so does the AAW receive false

information about leadership relating to current literature. In a global society, it is important for all people to find a personal reference to self. The literature confirms that educational research must serve as a critical, reflective, and professionally oriented tool (Lopez-Alvarado, 2017) used for examining issues, offering solutions, establishing policies that benefit all people, and refining practices that build socially just and humane societies. Historical depictions validate the significance of one's existence. The theme is supported by AAWL4's counter-story:

Then, as I got in school and started reading the literature, oh you are talking about getting real upset because all the literature was written by White men and about White men. So that is what got me to say, if I am going to go on in my career, I have got to do some writing on my own. I got to collaborate with people and do writing. I have even gotten upset because using the reference guide, the APA guide; you do not know the writer is a woman. So, I would tell my classes: after you put that first citation in your article, or whatever you are writing, you refer to the person by a pronoun so we can see that she did this. When you see [researcher omission to protect the identity of the participant who used a real name], being able to identify with individuals so that hopefully you can see yourself in the future.

Individually and collectively, the participants' lived experiences solidified finding five: the need for leadership theory that encapsulates the lived experiences of African American women. It is imperative that AAW understand fully the experiences of those women who came before them. Only then can AAW hope to change the future (direction) of leadership development. Lessons learned from the study's participants tell of the struggles AAW have endured, are experiencing and will encounter if leadership theory continues to exclude their

voice and not recognize their value as leaders. AAWL4's words speak of what must take place before and during the tenure of AAW leaders in the following excerpt:

Again, many times the reason has been: oh you are a Black woman. You have not had these experiences. You do not know what to do. You are not valued for your knowledge. You are not valued for the length of time that you have had in situations. You are not valued because of the varied experiences that you have had. Starting to teach in the early seventies, during segregation and early integration, working in school districts that were trying so hard not to integrate and going to a school where you are the last person hired, and you are Black. You are the last person hired. When they are forced to reduce staff, then you are the first person to go. I would write down these places I taught at; some people might look at that and say, "Oh my goodness, look at how often she moved." I describe it as such a wonderful experience because I worked in so many schools throughout the county. By going from north to south of the county and seeing different leadership styles, which were majority White men in middle and high school settings, it built my character, my demeanor, in the way that I wanted to see myself working with people.

Recommendations for Policy, Practice, & Future Research

Despite the roadblocks that AAW experience as they strive for advancement, there still exists an insatiable appetite to learn and prepare for leadership (McGirt, 2017). Leadership is an extensive topic that covers a vast array of writings and definitions (Vardiman, 2002).

Historically the research relating to leadership is most often presented from a White male perspective (Mertz and McNeely, 1998). The research claims to represent all people equally.

This claim is not the case, but it has been skewed for so long that over time it has been accepted

as fact. This skewed research has compromised the valuable contributions of marginalized people to the social phenomenon of leadership. Attention must be paid to how AAW approach and carry out leadership.

Beyond the fact that few minorities occupy educational leadership positions, there is little to no research from minority perspectives. The research gap regarding AAW exists for three reasons. First, it is difficult to obtain a legitimate sample size because of underrepresentation in leadership. Second, studies involving AAW in education are from the perspectives of teacher leaders instead of school administrators, and lastly, research from an African American perspective is untrustworthy (Tillman, 2004). The previously cited literature explained AAWL1's lived experience as a teacher leader who possesses stellar credentials, unable to obtain a leadership position outside the classroom.

Northouse (2016) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. The vast arrays of leadership theories offer insight into the patterns, attitudes, and experiences of the dominant White male culture in America. Recently, the African American male experience has been accounted for in current leadership theory by considering the variable of race and how it appears in practice. Giving voice to the AAW will not only play an instrumental part in nullifying cultural misunderstandings or stereotypes that occur in education, but it will also facilitate a much-needed conversation about gender and race by displaying different views on leadership (Dunbar, 2015).

Instruction about how to lead more effectively is available in record amounts. Leadership is a growth process that transpires over time (Vardiman, 2002). An understanding of what conditions need to be present for leadership is an important way to cultivate the soil for

America's next crop of leaders. Developing and establishing a culture that promotes important leadership qualities at all levels of the organization is critical in a global environment (Vardiman, 2002). This research fills that gap, but AAW lived experiences are not enough, intellectual contributions are essential in a diverse nation. The participants recommended that current and aspiring leaders engage in certain behaviors. Verbatim counter stories follow.

AAWL1:

Pay it forward. Mentoring other Black women is a must to break the cycles of exclusionary leadership. Instead of feeling threatened by women who look like you, embrace the commonality as a strength, not a weakness. Black women are strong, beautiful and intelligent. Let us use these traits for good and not as a hindrance to stop others who look like us from participating in leadership positions.

AAWL2:

Number one, pray first.... Think about something that helps society...take yourself out of the picture. Think about it from the perspective of starting something that you may or may not even live to see finished, and get that vision ingrained in your head such that you can move forward even if you do not accomplish the whole thing in your lifetime. The second piece of advice I would give is to write the vision out so clearly that you or anybody else who is following you can see it and work at it. Even though you are leading it, it is their lives too, and they are also on an equal playing field with you, and they deserve to know what they are working to accomplish. Number three...be willing to change tactics as many times as you need to, but never change the end game. The last thing is, no matter how disciplined you are, no matter how you plot your course, be

prepared for curveballs, and some curveballs come at you, so strongly that you have no choice but to deal with obstacles.

AAWL3:

I go back to my motto. Know that adversity will come. It is nothing you can dodge, or hide from, but don't allow it to bring you down. Let it build you. Two, have realistic goals. Many times, when we become leaders, we have great big dreams, and that is fine. Continue to dream big but have realistic goals. Many people get caught up in these big old goals, and then they fail... get a great support team...know that you cannot do it by yourself. You need a support team, people who have your back.... Don't be afraid to take risks because that is what leadership is.

AAWL4:

I think it is imperative to, number one, be focused.... I believe it is just as important to have resources. Resources that can support you as you go forward. Sometimes that will not be a Black woman. Sometimes that will not be a Black man, sometimes it will be a White woman and in my case.... My biggest supporters were White women.... So, I would say having faith that persistence, determination, and to know you are working to do the right thing. You cannot be out there alone. You sift out real resources and then become that same resource for other people. You must determine not just who, but what books you can channel to other people to assist them to be the best that they can be. You cannot do it alone. You must have faith, persistence, confidence..."

AAWL5:

Choose your battles wisely; there is a reaction for every action. All decisions have consequences. People are watching you when you are least aware, always make good

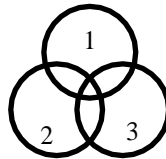
choices, your future depends on it. Don't wear feelings on your sleeve. Learn to forgive others and move on.

Recommendations for further research include the following:

1. Develop leadership sister circles. Leadership sister circles will be the framework to collect data to support a leadership model that includes the perspectives of AAW. Leadership sister circles will transpire in three spheres. Sphere one provides training for sisters who aspire leadership positions. Sphere two provides mentoring for novice sisters in challenging leadership positions. Sphere three solidifies the leadership experience with seasoned sisters bonding and devising policies to transform the circles. The following diagram illustrates the leadership sister circle model and the mission of each circle.

Figure 1

Leadership Sister Circles



2. This study should be undertaken, with a larger sample of AAW leaders, in a rural setting to see if lived experiences mirror the experiences of the urban participants, further illustrating the need for a model that captures the essence of AAWL.

3. Conduct a longitudinal study of African American women in doctoral leadership programs to explore the outcomes of the program concerning acceptance, retention, and completion. Implement leadership sister circles as a support tool for AAW students. Support for the doctoral candidates includes writing workshops, emotional support and help to locate resources for success throughout the program.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

Historically, leadership theory accounted for the White male's perspective. From the Great Man to Transformation theories, researchers examined the attitudes, behaviors, and patterns of White males to offer explanations for the leadership phenomenon. Power, authority, and influence are in the hands of White America. Policies have failed to create opportunities for AAW to gain male-dominated leadership positions. As of 2015, AAW represent eight percent of private sector senior-level jobs and two percent of American government leadership roles.

From a research perspective, the personal and professional lived experiences trump intellectual contributions in the literature relating to AAW. Anna Julia Cooper, daughter of an enslaved mother, wrote extensively about the benefits of studying the lives of the middle class and poor AAW in forming anti-discriminatory policies. Dr. Cooper, the fourth African American woman to earn a doctorate in America, believed AAW could obliterate oppressive structures if granted the opportunity to address the racist and sexist culprits that plagued AAW. Dr. Cooper's academic prowess failed to bring about the creation of a leadership model that encapsulates the AAW leader's lived experiences.

Individually and collectively, AAW's lives provide critical information to form policy that celebrates diversity. Eleven years before this study, The League of Black Women investigated AAW in corporate America via survey. The results yielded solutions that could potentially diversify the business. According to the literature, White women tend to take the lead on diversity initiatives (McGirt, 2017). One participant reported that in pursuit of a doctorate, it became apparent that she would not find representations of herself in the literature.

People desire to belong to something in society and unceasingly seek validation in personal and professional feats. Current literature does not provide in-depth analysis of the

AAW's lived experiences, a perspective often marginalized and excluded from leadership development narratives. To interrupt these patterns of practice, lived experiences of AAW must provide a foundation to challenge the traditional leadership narratives. Leadership theory that captures the essence of AAW creates change that is inclusive, not exclusive. The verbatim response of participant follows.

AAWL4:

So much in the literature is done by men on men and on White men. In the last fifteen to twenty years, more research has been done by women with women. But I am not sure that we have done enough about Black women and how Black women have overcome challenges. I think that it is interesting when you speak with a Black woman who says nothing happened, it was wonderful for me, I was just able to go through this that and the other and I am not going to say that is not true or that is just not reality. I think that those individuals who are in the leadership positions now, Black women, they need to realize that they should be doing something to help others to follow their path.

The myth of an America where all people have opportunities to prosper is a theoretical construct that is unsubstantiated by findings. The counter story of AAWL2, who was the novice leader in this study, follows verbatim:

After Hurricane Katrina, I asked my mother why they lied to me? Because I had always been told you could be whatever you want if you work hard and stay prayerful and just take the opportunities presented to you. Then I realized that all people are not presented with the same opportunities. So, I was a little bit perplexed by that and, quite frankly, infuriated by the level of disadvantage that existed in my community that I did not even realize existed until I went to school with some more privileged students.

It is 2018, and the effects of discrimination are more prevalent than ever for AAW leaders. Transformation of oppressive structures ingrained in American society requires AAW to unite and speak with one voice. One participant characterized the AAW as a powerful force. When powerful forces unite, the possibilities for change are endless. Forming an allegiance to support each other by engaging in cohesive speech and creating opportunities for “sisters” would say to the world that AAW leaders are formidable foes.

Plato’s metaphors demonstrate that leadership must come full circle. It is necessary for leaders to rise above their circumstances and acquire the necessary dispositions that can build just societies (Hinchliffe, 2006). It is incumbent upon leaders to return and lead others out of the “cave” ascertaining the true meaning of education/enlightenment. If America wants to operate from an inclusionary perspective, increasing AAW participation in pivotal, influential roles is paramount. Plato argued that education involve turning away from illusions and experiencing truths and realizing that this may be a painful process and only certain people rise to the challenge (Hinchliffe, 2006).

This study offers insight into the lived experiences of African American women who have broken through cultural chains to leave a legacy that is worthy of replicating. This legacy will serve as a model for developing feminine leadership patterns for upcoming leaders. Carastathis (2008) stated that the possibility of unified theory (as opposed to an intersectional one) is needed in the concrete articulation of race, gender, and class.

Michelle Obama said, “We should always have three friends: one whom we look up to and follow, one who is with us every step of our journey; and one whom we reach back for and bring along after we have cleared the way.” Leadership etiquette, preeminence, tenacity, and truths will alter the undefined path by providing clarity and direction for African American

female leaders; subsequently interrupting the patterns that have formed exclusionary institutions in America. Including the perspectives of AAW with the leadership literature validates the notion that complexity never diminishes significance. Qualified AAW leaders are emerging from the cave ready to occupy top leadership positions in America. The following passage conveys the importance of the AAWL's contributions in a diverse nation.

I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. (Ecclesiastes 2:13)

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INTERRUPTING THE PATTERNS

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave," *Republic* VII, 514a, 2 to 517a, 7

Translation by Thomas Sheehan (2011)

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

SOCRATES: Next, said I [=Socrates], compare our nature in respect of education and its lack of such an experience as this.

PART ONE:SETTING THE SCENE: THE CAVE AND THE FIRE**The cave**

SOCRATES: Imagine this: People live under the earth in a cave-like dwelling. Stretching a long way up toward the daylight is its entrance, toward which the entire cave is gathered. The people have been in this dwelling since childhood, shackled by the legs and neck. Thus they stay in the same place so that there is only one thing for them to look that: whatever they encounter in front of their faces. But because they are shackled, they are unable to turn their heads around.

A fire is behind them, and there is a wall between the fire and the prisoners.

SOCRATES: Some light, of course, is allowed them, namely from a fire that casts its glow toward them from behind them, being above and at some distance. Between the fire and those

who are shackled [i.e., behind their backs] there runs a walkway at a certain height. Imagine that a low wall has been built the length of the walkway, like the low curtain that puppeteers put up, over which they show their puppets.

The images carried before the fire

SOCRATES: So now imagine that all along this low wall people are carrying all sorts of things that reach up higher than the wall: statues and other carvings made of stone or wood and many other artifacts that people have made. As you would expect, some are talking to each other [as they walk along] and some are silent.

GLAUCON: This is an unusual picture that you are presenting here, and these are unusual prisoners.

SOCRATES: They are very much like us humans, I [Socrates] responded.

What the prisoners see and hear

SOCRATES: What do you think? From the beginning people like this have never managed, whether on their own or with the help of others, to see anything besides the shadows that are [continually] projected on the wall opposite them by the glow of the fire.

GLAUCON: How could it be otherwise, since they are forced to keep their heads immobile for their entire lives?

SOCRATES: And what do they see of the things that are being carried along [behind them]? Do they not see simply these [namely the shadows]?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now if they were able to say something about what they saw and to talk it over, do you not think that they would regard that which they saw on the wall as beings?

GLAUCON: They would have to.

SOCRATES: And now what if this prison also had an echo reverberating off the wall in front of them [the one that they always and only look at]? Whenever one of the people walking behind those in chains (and carrying the things) would make a sound, do you think the prisoners would imagine that the speaker was anyone other than the shadow passing in front of them?

GLAUCON: Nothing else, by Zeus!

SOCRATES: All in all, I responded, those who were chained would consider nothing besides the shadows of the artifacts as the unhidden.

GLAUCON: That would absolutely have to be.

PART TWO: THREE STAGES OF LIBERATION

FREEDOM, STAGE ONE

A prisoner gets free

SOCRATES: So now, I replied, watching the process whereby the prisoners are set free from their chains and, along with that, cured of their lack of insight, and likewise consider what kind of lack of insight must be if the following were to happen to those who were chained.

Walks back to the fire

SOCRATES: Whenever any of them was unchained and was forced to stand up suddenly, to turn around, to walk, and to look up toward the light, in each case the person would be able to do this only with pain and because of the flickering brightness would be unable to look at those things whose shadows he previously saw.

Is questioned about the objects

SOCRATES: If all this were to happen to the prisoner, what do you think he would say if someone were to inform him that what he saw before were [mere] trifles but that now he was much nearer to beings; and that, as a consequence of now being turned toward what is more in being, he also saw more correctly?

The answer he gives

SOCRATES: And if someone was [then] to show him any of the things that were passing by and forced him to answer the question about what it was, don't you think that he would be a wit's end and in addition would consider that what he previously saw [with his own eyes] was more unhidden than what was now being shown [to him by someone else].

GLAUCON: Yes, absolutely.

Looking at the fire-light itself

SOCRATES: And if someone even forced him to look into the glare of the fire, would his eyes not hurt him, and would he not then turn away and flee [back] to that which he is capable of looking at? And would he not decide that [what he could see before without any help] was, in fact, clearer than what was now being shown to him?

GLAUCON: Precisely.

FREEDOM, STAGE TWO**Out of the cave into daylight**

SOCRATES: Now, however, if someone, using force, were to pull him [who had been freed from his chains] away from there and to drag him up the cave's rough and steep ascent and not to let go of him until he had dragged him out into the light of the sun...

Pain, rage, blindness

SOCRATES: ...would not the one who had been dragged like this feel, in the process, pain and rage? And when he got into the sunlight, wouldn't his eyes be filled with the glare, and wouldn't he thus be unable to see any of the things that are now revealed to him as the unhidden?

GLAUCON: He would not be able to do that at all, at least not right away.

Getting used to the light

SOCRATES: It would obviously take some getting accustomed, I think if it should be a matter of taking one's eyes that which is up there outside the cave, in the light of the sun.

Shadows and reflections

SOCRATES: And in this process of acclimatization he would first and most easily be able to look at (1) shadows and after that (2) the images of people and the rest of things as they are reflected in the water.

Looking at things directly

SOCRATES: Later, however, he would be able to view (3) the things themselves [the beings, instead of the dim reflections]. But within the range of such things, he might well contemplate what there is in the heavenly dome, and this dome itself, more easily during the night by looking at the light of the stars and the moon, [more easily, that is to say,] than by looking at the sun and its glare during the day.

GLAUCON: Certainly.

FREEDOM, STAGE THREE: THE SUN**Looking at the sun itself**

SOCRATES: But I think that finally he would be in the condition to look at (4) the sun itself, not just at its reflection whether in water or wherever else it might appear, but at the sun itself, as it is in and of itself and in the place proper to it and to contemplate of what sort it is.

GLAUCON: It would necessarily happen this way.

Thoughts about the sun: its nature and functions

SOCRATES: And having done all that, by this time he would also be able to gather the following about the sun: (1) that it is that which grants both the seasons and the years; (2) it is that which governs whatever there is in the now visible region of sunlight; and (3) that it is also the cause of all those things that the people dwelling in the cave have before they eyes in some way or other.

GLAUCON: It is obvious that he would get to these things -- the sun and whatever stands in its light -- after he had gone out beyond those previous things, the mere reflections and shadows.

Thoughts about the cave

SOCRATES: And then what? If he again recalled his first dwelling, and the "knowing" that passes as the norm there, and the people with whom he once was chained, don't you think he would consider himself lucky because of the transformation that had happened and, by contrast, feels sorry for them?

GLAUCON: Very much so.

What counts for "wisdom" in the cave

SOCRATES: However, what if among the people in the previous dwelling place, the cave, certain honors, and commendations were established for whomever most clearly catches sight of what passes by and also best remembers which of them normally is brought by first, which one later, and which ones at the same time? And what if there were honors for whoever could most easily foresee which one might come by next?

What would the liberated prisoner now prefer?

SOCRATES: Do you think the one who had gotten out of the cave would still envy those within the cave and would want to compete with them who are esteemed and who have power? Or would not he or she much rather wish for the condition that Homer speaks of, namely "to live on the land [above ground] as the paid menial of another destitute peasant"? Wouldn't he or she

prefer to put up with absolutely anything else rather than associate with those opinions that hold in the cave and be that kind of human being?

GLAUCON: I think that he would prefer to endure everything rather than be that kind of human being.

PART THREE: THE PRISONER RETURNS TO THE CAVE

The return: blindness

SOCRATES: And now, I responded, consider this: If this person who had gotten out of the cave were to go back down again and sit in the same place as before, would he not find in that case, coming suddenly out of the sunlight, that his eyes are filled with darkness?"

GLAUCON: Yes, very much so.

The debate with the other prisoners

SOCRATES: Now if once again, along with those who had remained shackled there, the freed person had to engage in the business of asserting and maintaining opinions about the shadows -- while his eyes are still weak and before they have readjusted, an adjustment that would require quite a bit of time -- would he not then be exposed to ridicule down there? And would they not let him know that he had gone up but only in order to come back down into the cave with his eyes ruined -- and thus it certainly does not pay to go up.

And the final outcome:

SOCRATES: And if they can get hold of this person who takes it in hand to free them from their chains and to lead them up, and if they could kill him, will they not actually kill him?

GLAUCON: They certainly will.

End

Appendix B

IRB Letter of Approval

TO: Roslyn R. Hartman, MA, Principal Investigator

FROM: Charles A. Gramlich, PhD
Chair of the Xavier University IRB

DATE: September 5, 2017

RE: Research Proposal entitled: "DECONCEPTUALIZATION OF PLATO'S METAPHORICAL "CAVE": PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY ENCAPSULATING AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES' LEADERSHIP JOURNEY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE."

The above named study poses no more than minimal risk to the participants and is eligible for expedited review. The following actions have been taken:

1. The proposed study is approved.
2. The request to waive written Informed Consent is approved. However, the oral consent script must be emailed to the potential participants.
3. The Interview questions are approved.

This study is approved for a period of one year from the date of this memo. Any changes to the proposal that might affect the wellbeing of participants must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please inform the Chair of the IRB when all data collection has been completed.

This project is assigned study number #649 in the IRB files. Please refer to this project number in future correspondence regarding the study.

Reviewed and Approved

Charles A. Gramlich
Chair of the Xavier University IRB

FWA00004443

cc. Dr. Deborah Marshall, Associate VP Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix C

Initial Email Seeking Participation

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a doctoral student at XULA, and I am asking for you to participate in my research project by interview. The information gathered from the interviews will be used for research on the lived experiences of African American females in leadership positions. Data collected from the initial interview will be used for completion of a doctoral study in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Xavier University of Louisiana. The participants will be asked to respond to questions.

There are no risks or benefits in participating in these interviews. Your identity will remain confidential because you will be identified by a pseudonym. You may choose to participate or not. You may answer only the questions you feel comfortable answering and may stop at any time. If you do not wish to participate, simply say so, with no penalty.

If you choose to participate, setting a date and time to meet indicates your consent to the above conditions. Should you have any questions concerning this research, please feel free to contact me at (504) 405-8125 or via email at rhartman@xula.edu.

Additionally, if you have any questions concerning your rights as a human participant in research, you may contact the office of Xavier University IRB, Dr. Charles Gramlich at (504) 520-7397 or cgramlich@xula.edu.

Appendix D

Email Request for Demographics Information

Please provide the following information to satisfy demographic information:

1. Age
2. Parents' levels of education
3. Parents' professions
4. Life motto
5. Your level of education
6. Most memorable childhood experience (positive or negative)
7. The experience or person that impacted you the most
8. Number of siblings?
9. Number of older siblings?
10. Number of younger siblings?
11. Marital status
12. Number of children
13. Anything else you want to share

Appendix E

Consent Form

Dear Prospective Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at Xavier University in Louisiana. This communication is an invitation to participate in a research study exploring the lived experiences of Black women leaders. This segment of society is disproportionately absent from the leadership literature. Giving voice to Black women leaders can potentially impact theory and increase the number of Black Women in top leadership roles in America. The information gathered from interviews and questionnaires will be used for research. Data collected from the initial interview will be used for completion of a dissertation study in a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Xavier University of Louisiana.

Your involvement in this project entails an interview and a possible follow-up if it is needed for clarification. The interview (30-45 minutes) will take place face-to-face at an agreed upon place and time. At that time, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

There are no risks or benefits in participating in these interviews. Your identity will remain confidential because you will be identified by a pseudonym. You may choose to participate or not. You may answer only the questions you feel comfortable answering and may stop at any time. If you do not wish to participate, simply say so, with no penalty. If you choose to participate, setting a date and time to meet indicates your consent to the above conditions. Should you have any questions concerning this research, please feel free to contact me at either (504) 405-8125 or via email at rhartman@xula.edu or my dissertation chair Dr. Renee Akbar at rvakbar@xula.edu.

Additionally, if you have any questions concerning your rights as a human participant in research, you may contact the office of Xavier University IRB, Dr. Charles Gramlich at (504) 520-7397 or cgramlic@xula.edu.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been received and approved by the XULA Institution Review Board under tracking number: #649

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

1. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences relating to leadership?
2. What path did you take to a leadership position?
3. How would you characterize your leadership experience as a Black woman?
4. What have you experienced in terms of leadership?
5. How does one find authentic voice regarding leadership?
6. What advice do you have for Black women seeking leadership positions?
7. How does a leader stay motivated despite leadership challenges?

Appendix G

Initial Script

After the participant has dialed into the conference call and utilized previously given access code:

RESEARCHER: (Greetings pseudonym.), This researcher will record interview to facilitate note-taking. Release forms, provided via email, for your signature. Remember all information will be held confidential, your participation is voluntary, you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and there are no intentions to inflict any harm. Again, thank you for agreeing to participate. This interview has been planned to last no longer than 45 minutes. Your selection fulfilled the study's boundaries relating to leadership. This research project focuses on the lived experiences of Black women leaders in hopes of developing theory that will provide a framework for other Black women who desire to become leaders. There exists a need for Black women who have cracked the leadership glass ceiling to provide lessons for others who desire to become leaders. A goal of this project is to collect data that will inform the research in developing theory that captures the true essence of Black women leaders. Thank you for completing the demographics questionnaire before this interview.

Appendix H

Release of Records

Dear Participants,

You were selected as a participant because of your leadership experience. The purpose of the study is to investigate the lived experiences of Black women leaders. You agreed to be in this study and were asked to do the following things: complete a demographics questionnaire via email, participate in a 45-minute interview and answer any follow-up questions via email.

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in the study. This study is anonymous. I will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity (I will use your agreed upon pseudonym.). The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. I will not include any information in any published report that would make it possible to identify you. The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you.

You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigator. Your decision will not result in any losses or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer refrain from using your interview material.

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study at any time, feel free to contact me, Roslyn R. Hartman, at rhartman@xula.edu or by telephone at (504) 405-8125. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to

you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that has not been answered by the investigator, you may contact Dr. Charles Gramlich Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (504) 520-7397 or at cgramlic@xula.edu. If you have any problems or concerns that occur because of your participation, you can report them to Dr. Gramlich at the number above or to my dissertation chair, Dr. Renee Akbar at (504) 520-7536 or via email at rvakbar@xula.edu.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You also authorize the release of the interview for transcription purposes. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the investigator.

Subject's Name (print):

Subject's Signature:

Date:

Investigator's Signature:

Date:

Appendix I

Email Communication

Dear Participants,

Now that all interviews are completed, I have provided you with the release form that was communicated in the data collection phase of this process. Please review and sign. I provided the form as a PDF to ensure that your signature is authentic. Once I have received the signed form, I will be able to send the audio file of the interview to the transcriber. After I receive transcriptions, I will share the document along with your audio file so that you can check for accuracy.

Thank you for your continued support as I journey to the end of this chapter and the beginning of a new one.