Beyond the Skin: How African American Women Senior Administrators Describe

Their Experiences of Developing an Authentic Leadership Style

by

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Abstract

Using a qualitative multiple case study approach, this dissertation study seeks to examine how African American women in senior administrator roles at a member institution of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) in Alabama describe their experiences as to how they developed a leadership style. Historically, the number of African American women in senior leadership roles lag drastically compared to their Caucasian male and female as well as African American male counterparts (Benjamin, 1997; Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Duggar, 2001; Parker, 1996; Sandberg, 2013). Because of this, research shows that African American women have been underrepresented in the leadership literature (Almquist, 1987; Carter & Peters, 2016; Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015) as well as in senior leadership and management positions (Counts 2012; Duggar, 2001; Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018).

Therefore, this study uses the authentic leadership framework (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) to describe how African American women senior administrators at a member institution of APLU develop a personal leadership style. This adds to the public administration literature on leadership and cultural competency, giving a voice to African American women by understanding their backgrounds through their stories. Following previous studies and recommendations for future research (Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Milner, 2006; Pace, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Wiggs-Harris, 2011), the following research question guides this work: How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing a leadership style? To conduct this research, purposeful sampling is used to select African American women senior administrators, particularly in the president's cabinet, who work in a member institution of APLU in the State of Alabama. The results of this study revealed

six common themes are related to the leadership style development of African American women: (a) they describe a transformational leadership style as their preferred leadership style; (b) qualities modeled by their parents guided their leadership style development; (c) understanding and connecting with people is important in their process; (d) their gender and race required them to work hard at leading; (e) mentorship is a priority; and, (f) being authentic and true to themselves is imperative in the workplace. Code-switching was also an interesting element that emerged from some of the interviews, which may impact how some of them may present themselves and are perceived by others. The conclusions of this study relate to the components of an authentic leadership style development where personal experiences, triggering events and identity are all vital components when trying to stay true to self and maintain self-awareness. In relation to the findings, theories of authentic leadership and intersectionality are discussed along with suggestions for future research.

My darling grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Woody, affectionately known as Paw-Paw and Nanny. You two are my rocks. The way you two love me and pray for me make my heart smile. I am quite blessed to have you as spiritual pillars in my life, always there for me whenever my faith was tested. Every time we talk, I get a glimpse of God's love and I am reminded of our purpose while here on earth – to spread his word to all the nations. Paw-Paw and Nanny, I love you.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

APLU   Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities

HBCU   Historically Black College or University

IRB   Institutional Review Board

PWI   Predominantly White Institution

SEC   Southeastern Conference

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Characteristics such as nice, kind, and compassionate have been commonly ascribed to women (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Sandberg, 2013; Wright, 2017). Although endearing, these characteristics have also contributed to challenges women face in obtaining leadership positions (Koenig et al., 2011). Because of this, over the past two decades, research has sought to explore the experiences of leaders, particularly women, in their ascendency to senior leadership positions (Milner, 2006; Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018). However, there has not been a clear study on how the experiences of African American women influence them to develop a certain leadership style (Campbell, 2010). Caucasian men, Caucasian women, and African American men are often included in the literature and called to higher leadership positions (Loden, 1985; Parker, 1996). However, African American women have been left out of the literature on this topic (Alderfer, 1990; Carter & Peters, 2016; Catalyst, 2012). Because of this, there are still significant gaps in the literature regarding African American women who hold senior administrator roles in higher education (Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Holmes, 2004). This is partially because the number of African American women in senior leadership positions remains low, whether that be in the public or private sectors (Holmes, 2004; Huang, 2012; Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018; Parker, 1996), limiting their representation in the literature (Bell, 1990; Benjamin, 1997).

As a result, researchers know very little about the development of African American women leadership (Milner, 2006) or how their leadership looks within different organizations (Robinson, 2017). Although the culture, environment and strategic goals of the institution can play vital roles in determining which leadership style is a best-fit, there are other mechanisms the literature should seek to explore as well (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). Thus, studying the experiences

of African American women leaders are important because their type of leadership style in organizations can influence other areas of performance, where ascendency to senior level positions is one of them (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). A closer look at this relationship can inform the public administration researchers as well as practitioners understand the experiences of African American women and how to better prepare them through training to attain top leadership positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Davis, 2016; Pace, 2018; Robinson, 2017). This dissertation aims to contribute to understanding the development of leadership styles in African American women.

Background of the Study

The interest on this topic emerged from the researcher being mentored by senior level African American women at different academic institutions and organizations. Through ongoing conversations, the researcher began to ask questions about the path to ascendency to their positions. Although there are more African American women who obtain advanced degrees and become thought leaders in organizations (Byrd, 2008; Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015), they are seldom represented in senior leadership roles (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Therefore, of the women represented in these roles, including mentors, the researcher became curious as to what types of leadership styles they prefer and in what way their experiences relate to their preferred style.

To learn more, the researcher began to collect surface level data on African American women senior administrators – individuals that are in positions at the highest level of the organization's leadership team – at schools in the South Eastern Conference (SEC) as well as

those that are a part of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU),

previously referred to as the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges,

in the State of Alabama. The researcher collected this information by going to each school's

individual website. In this surface level data collection, the researcher learned that only ten out

of the fourteen institutions in the SEC had African American women senior administrators at

their institutions. There was a total of eleven women senior level administrators across the SEC

and eight of them were chief diversity officers. On its face, this surface level data was quite

telling to the researcher as their positions would not be as diverse as the researcher would expect

them to be. In addition to this, at the time the study was conducted, there were no African

American women senior level administrators who held a position higher than that of a vice

president. In contrast to the SEC, among member institutions of the APLU in Alabama, six out

of the seven schools had an African American woman in a senior role. This pool consists of

those who hold the title of president, interim provost, chief diversity officer, general counsel,

chief human resource officer, and etc. Therefore, the researcher would be able to investigate a

more diverse population of participants for this dissertation study and there was no research

discovered on this target population of people.

APLU, is a research, advocacy, and policy organization that is committed to strengthen as

well as advance the work of public institutions. Comprised of over 239 members, APLU has

member institutions spanning across all fifty states, the District of Columbia, four US territories,

Canada, and Mexico. Of these, there are seventy-five US land-grant institutions, or land-grant

colleges, twenty-three are historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and nineteen

HBCUs which are land-grants. These are higher education institutions located in the United

States that have been designated by the respective state to receive the benefits from the Morrill

Acts of 1862 and 1890 (Miller, 2019). These Morrill Acts were established to fund these institutions. Talk of these institutions first rose to national attention in the 1840s by way of Jonathan Baldwin Turner (Miller, 2019). However, it was Justin Smith Morrill, a representative from Vermont, who introduced the first land-grant bill to Congress in 1857 that was passed in 1859, but was later vetoed by President James Buchanan (Geiger, 2017). Nevertheless, Representative Morrill continued to persist, and presented his bill again in 1861. On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill into law, and now there is at least one land-grant institution in every state and territory in the United States (Miller, 2019). As a response to the Industrial Revolution, the first Morrill Act of 1862 reflected a growing demand for both agricultural and technical education in the United States (Miller, 2019). Under this act, the mission of the institutions was to focus on edifying learners on basic science, military science, engineering, and agriculture (Geiger, 2017). These institutions are commonly referred to as the "1862 land-grants."

As time progressed, a second land-grant act, entitled Morrill Act of 1890, was proposed and passed in Congress. This act was introduced to target the former Confederate states, better known as the Confederacy (Geiger, 2017). The Confederacy, an unrecognized country located in the lower southern region of the United States, existed from 1861 to 1865. It was formed by seven secessionist slave-holding states: Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas (Gallagher, 1999; Robinson, 2005). During this era, the economy was heavily dependent on agriculture, specifically cotton, that was grown on a planation and highly dependent on the labor of African American slaves (Gavazzi, 2018; Geiger, 2017). The provisions of the act required that each state affirm race to not be an admissions criterion or the

state must designate a separate[1] land-grant institutions for people of color[2], primarily blacks or African Americans (Gavazzi, 2018). This requirement sought to extend greater access to higher education by providing additional endowments for all land-grants and denying funds to those states that made distinctions based on one's race (Miller, 2019). However, the states that provided a separate land-grant institution for people of color were eligible to receive these additional funds (Miller, 2019). Because of this, there are many HBCUs, commonly referred to as the "1890 land-grants."

From this brief background information on land-grants, this information reveals how the historical presence of these institutions are meaningful in many ways. First, land-grants were initially created to enforce a more technical and agricultural education for people, which inadvertently served the industrial classes of people who wanted a higher education but were maybe too poor to afford one (National Research Council, 1995). In addition to this, the second Morrill Act of 1890 underlined the significance of African Americans receiving a higher education, thereby creating some of the HBCUs that are still present today (Miller, 2019). Last, the 1862 land-grants institutions were granted land, typically around 30,000 acres that was presented to each senator and representative at the time (Miller, 2019). During this period, land was, and arguably still is, a revered possession symbolizing high socioeconomic status and wealth (O'Connell, 2012). However, for the "1890 land-grants" they were not granted land, but

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[1] In terms of separating whites from others, this became more prevalent in the landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). In this case, the US Supreme Court ruled that separate, that is segregated, facilities for blacks and whites was constitutional. In other words, the US Supreme Court ruled that this segregation was not in direct violation of the constitutional guarantees exposed in the thirteenth (abolition of slavery) and the fourteenth (rights guaranteed for citizens of the US) amendments (Holmes, 2004). As a result, the term "separate but equal" became widely acceptable (Fleming, Gill, and Swinton, 1978). Although the ruling from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) would later be overturned in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1964), it set the foundation for future policies that would exclude African Americans, and white institutions would only accept a token number of blacks, while also refusing to hire them as faculty members (Fleming, Gill, and Swinton, 1978; Holmes, 2004).
[2] People of color refers to African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino/Latina Americans and Native Americans (Holmes, 2004).

instead they were given cash to purchase the land for their institution. This is an important point to include because although the Morrill Act of 1890 was ostensibly passed to add people of color in the conversation, they were *still* not treated equal and granted land as the "1862 land-grants." Instead, they were put in position to purchase land, which later helped them provide "colored people" with a foundation for higher education (National Research Council, 1995).

Currently, there are seven institutions a part of APLU in the State of Alabama: 1) Alabama A&M University, 2) Auburn University, 3) Tuskegee University, 4) The University of Alabama, 5) The University of Alabama at Birmingham, 6) The University of Alabama in Huntsville, and 7) University of South Alabama (Miller, 2019). Of these institutions, Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, and Tuskegee University, are land-grant institutions as designated by the state legislature. Furthermore, Alabama A&M and Tuskegee University are the only HBCUs a part of APLU in Alabama. For the remaining institutions, they had to gain membership to be a part of the APLU. To gain APLU membership, prospective institutions must meet certain criteria as exposed in the membership criteria and bylaws (Miller, 2019). According to Article III of the bylaws, to be eligible for membership, the institution must: 1) qualify under section 115(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or is exempt from income taxation from the Federal government and 2) be within the US, US territories, Canada or Mexico (Miller, 2019). Once the eligibility criteria are met, the institution either receives automatic and discretionary membership. On the one hand, to receive automatic membership, the institution must either be a land-grant, a public institution that has been recently classified by the Carnegie Classification of Instructional Programs in one of the two basic classifications for doctoral universities that represent the two highest levels of research activity or be a current APLU member in good standing (Miller, 2019). On the other hand, discretionary membership is for institutions that do

not meet the automatic criteria, but satisfy the following four thresholds: 1) total research

expenditures must be greater than thirty five million in total research and development

expenditures and the research intensity must by greater than twenty five thousand in total

research and development expenditures per faculty fulltime equivalency (FTE), 2) must be

included within the appropriate Carnegie Basic Classifications3 as well as Graduate Instructional

Classifications4, 3) must have an average annual, unduplicated student headcount of 10,000

students, and 4) must show a substantial as well as sustained community engagement effort

outlined by the 2000 Kellogg Commission report (Miller, 2019). As can see, the institutions that

are a part of the APLU are quite unique as there is both eligibility and institutional criteria to join

the association, which highlights and gives credit to the institution's historical presence, research

focus and/or community engagement, which helps to lay a structured foundation to echo the

mission5 of the APLU.

In an effort to learn more information regarding senior level leadership in organizations, a

survey of the literature was conducted. The primary literature on leadership has largely focuses

on two aspects, such as: 1) leadership styles of women compared to those of men (Eagly &

Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990) and 2) examining leadership theories that

explain motivation of followers (Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey, 2012). Therefore, there are

gaps in the literature as to how leaders develop their style in the first place (Campbell, 2010). In

addition to this, the research on leadership style development has primarily been concerned with

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3 Must be a doctoral institution and have a special focus within the following sub-categories: medical schools and centers, other health profession schools, engineering schools, other technology-related schools, and business and management schools (Miller, 2019).
4 This classification includes research doctoral in the following: comprehensive programs, with medical/veterinary school, comprehensive programs, no medical/veterinary school, humanities/social sciences-dominant, Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)-dominant, and professional-dominant (Miller, 2019).
5 The mission of the APLU is to: "expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally" (Miller, 2019).

understanding race and gender as obstacles in advancing to senior leadership positions (Seevers & Foster, 2003). Campbell (2010) argues research on leadership style has been based on race and gender privileges historically reserved for Caucasian males, which means there is a clear need to explore the contributions of women, more specifically those of African American women (See also, Milner, 2006; Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017), and in particular those who are senior leadership roles at academic institutions (Davis, 2016). In this same line of thinking, although African American women have made strides to achieve leadership positions, their contributions have been distantly communicated (Alderfer, 1990; Allen, 1997; Almquist, 1987; Bell, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Benjamin, 1997; Byrd, 2008; Campbell, 2010; Counts, 2012; Holmes, 2004; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017). As a result, mainstream literature has not thoroughly explored their experiences of developing a leadership style, but instead have associated their physical characteristics such as race and gender to obstacles that have hindered them (Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013).

Scholars suggest that additional research should seek to understand how African American women develop a leadership style (Alderfer, 1990; Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Milner, 2006; Wiggs-Harris, 2011). As there are many factors that condition the development of a leadership style and little has been done to understand how African American women develop their style has not been thoroughly studied (Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Robinson, 2017). Therefore, there has been ongoing requests from researchers and practitioners for more research on African American women leaders (Campbell, 2010; Milner, 2006; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013; Wiggs-Harris, 2011) as they have been historically ignored and devalued in the workplace (Carter & Peters, 2016). To answer the call, this study intends to address salient gaps in the literature noted

by scholars (Davis, 2016; Robinson 2017; Wiggs-Harris 2011), which are: 1) exploring how African American women develop a leadership style that is "authentic and true to self," and 2) examining leadership style development of African American women who are senior administrators in higher education institutions. As Counts (2012) notes, "these gaps can only be filled with the persistent efforts to gather and record the experiences of Black women, undiluted and unrestrained" (p. 17). In addition to these stated gaps by other scholars, this dissertation study also introduces an unexplored segment of African American women, which are those who are in senior administrator roles at APLU member institutions in Alabama.

Need for the Study

African American women leaders encounter different interactive effects such as race, gender, personality, and leadership constraints, that scholars have found bring unique challenges to their credibility and leadership authority (Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Because of this, questions tend to arise with regard to their leadership style and whether they are a good fit (Pace, 2018), and they are often considered invisible (Parker, 1996)[6]. According to Parker (1996), "Power and authority are not yet terms associated with African-American women in the leadership literature" (p. 189). As a result, African American women may likely address these issues as they attempt to ascend into senior leadership roles (See also, Davis, 2016; Robinson, 2017; Williams & Multhaup, 2018). To which Parker (1996) notes, they "have broken through the 'glass ceiling' and climbed over the 'concrete wall' to assume positions of power and authority in dominant culture organizations" (p. 189-190; See also, Baskerville, Tucker, &

[6] The traditional model of leadership was based on the study of white men (Parker, 1996). White men were considered ones who managed successfully, while women and blacks were considered ineffective leaders or intentionally left out of the conversation completely (Loden, 1985).

Whittingham-Barnes, 1991; Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Morrison et al., 1987). Therefore, research intends to improve the understanding of leadership style development in African American women in order to increase the number of African American women who are in senior administrator positions or seek to obtain higher authority in higher education institutions (Davis, 2016).

According to Toossi and Joyner from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, African Americans represent 19.6 million or 12% of the total labor force. Of this number, 53% are African American women (Toossi & Joyner, 2018). Of this number, less than 6% are in senior administrator roles at higher education institutions (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019). When compared to non-African American women in senior administrator roles, the data reveals that 21% are Caucasian, 3% are Hispanic, and less than 1% are Asian American or American Indian (American Council on Education, 2012). It is evident that as these minority women are compared to their Caucasian female counterparts, the numbers lag drastically behind them. However, despite the fact there are over seven thousand colleges and universities in the United States, the leadership at these institutions are *still* far more of men, primarily Caucasian men (American Council on Education, 2012).

This decline in representation is also evident in the private sector as only 5.4% are in upper level management positions (Catalyst, 2012). In *Fortune* 500 companies African American women represent approximately 1.9% of women who hold executive level positions. So, despite the significant number of women who occupy upper managerial and professional positions (Catalyst, 2012), African American women have not excelled up the employment ladder at the same rate of their Caucasian female counterparts (Carter & Peters, 2016; Pace 2017; Pace, 2018; Williams & Multhaup, 2018).

Because of this, scholars (Bell, 1990; Milner, 2006; Seevers & Foster 2003), exclaim that more research needs to be done on leadership style development to help the trajectory of African American women to acquire more senior leadership positions (Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018; Williams & Multhaup, 2018). More specifically, there should be qualitative studies that use the multiple case study approach (Counts, 2012). This helps researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon (Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Pace, 2017; Robinson, 2017), making another demand for this study clear. As a result, this research plans to increase the knowledge on this topic where the results can be used to create diverse leadership training programs and mentorship strategies for African American women who desire senior leadership positions whether that be in the public, private or nonprofit sectors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to give a platform to African American women who have historically been marginalized, devalued, or ignored from the literature as well as society (Crawford & Smith, 2005). This research looks to provide them with a solid platform to share their stories, as stories are something a person will always have – it's what they own (Obama, 2018). It is also meant to edify scholars on the experiences of African American women who are in senior leadership roles and fill gaps in the literature of African American women in leadership positions who have historically been left voiceless in the mainstream leadership research (Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013). In addition to this, the expectations of the results from this study intend to provide implications on how leadership training can be initiated to diversify leaders in senior leadership positions, which can potentially increase the number of African American women in these highly-regarded roles.

Significance of the Study

Significance #1: Strengthening the Discipline

As a highly borrowing discipline (Fry & Raaschelders, 2013), public administration has gained its roots from other social science disciplines. Literature from fields such as business, social work, economics, management, psychology, political science, and sociology (Gill and Meier, 2000) are present throughout public administration. Because of this, there are scholars who criticize borrowing from other disciplines (Fry & Raaschelders, 2013) and reluctantly accept it as a discipline (Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010).

However, dating back to the 1880s, seminal scholars such as Woodrow Wilson and Frank Goodnow made a deliberate quest of paving the field as a separate discipline. As a result, it has grown to consist of different practical skills, theoretical concepts and unique methods that help scholars and practitioners understand aspects of American public administration (Vigoda-Gadot, 2002). Therefore, although the field of Public Administration is traced back to Woodrow Wilson's (1887) essay on *The Study of Public Administration*, there have been significant developments and contributions over the last century following his pioneering work. Of these, the study of leadership has grown in importance in both public and private organizations (Fairholm, 2004; Pace, 2017; Park & Rainey, 2008; Sorenson, 2000; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012; Wright & Pandey, 2009) However, studying the development of leaders in senior leadership roles remains an understudied concept in the discipline (Campbell, 2010; Kim, 2002; Pace, 2017; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017), especially related to women (Knott & Natalle, 1997; Oakley, 2000), most notably, African American women (Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Milner, 2006; Parker, 1996;). Thus, this study aims to diversify our understanding on the nuances of leadership, while being inclusive in mainstream research. It also adds to concepts such as leadership and

cultural competency (Norman-Major & Gooden, 2014) – concepts that are becoming well established in the field – to bring more credibility to public administration as a discipline.

Significance #2: Strengthening the Leadership Literature and Practices

Leaders can be seen and are needed at all levels of an organization, which means studying the concept of leadership is important because it provides the organization with direction (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010), encourages a healthy environment (Bennis & Nanus 1985), and it sets the standards for others in the organization to refer to (Bass, 1985). It is essential in public and private sectors because it serves as a representation for how others should lead (Bass, 1985; Northhouse, 2016), and how African American women grow to lead (Milner, 2006; Pace, 2017; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017). The literature on the leadership literature will benefit tremendously if researchers get away from "White researchers studying White people and acting as if the findings apply to all racial groups" (Alderfer, 1990, p. 494). This study intends to bring diversity to field and add African Americans in the primary narrative.

Additionally, as Sun and Henderson (2017) exclaim, the "[c]oncepts of leadership are omnipresent in public administration research, yet our understanding of these concepts remains incomplete" (2017, p. 562). King et al. (1994) and Brady and Collier (2010) would argue that this is because of the inconsistent measurement in the field. Therefore, this study uses previous measurements and recommendations (i.e. methodological approach and instrument) from prior studies (Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Milner, 2006; Robinson, 2017) in efforts to continue to lay the foundation of a path of consistency in the leadership research; so scholars as well as practitioners can gain a richer understanding of the literature and inclusive practices when implementing in organizations (Turner, 2002; Turner & Mavin, 2008).

Research Questions

The research is intended to understand the development of African American women leadership styles who are in senior administrator positions at a member institution of APLU in Alabama. The guiding research question for this study is: *How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style?* The supporting research questions are:

1.) What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity?

2.) How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders?

Table 1: Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Authentic Leadership	Authentic Leadership is defined as "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development." (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243). More on this later.
Autocratic Leadership	As an extreme form of transactional leadership, this leadership style gives little room for the input of other staff members to make decision (Lewin, Lippitt, and White, 1939).
Democratic Leadership	Also referred to as participative leadership, this type of leadership style includes team members in the decision-making process and seeks to include the opinions of other employees.
Intersectionality	The interconnection of a social categorization by race, gender, class as they apply to groups or individuals, creating overlapping systems that bring disadvantages or discrimination (Shields, 2008; Cole, 2009).
Laissez-faire Leadership	Fazzi & Zamaro (2016) define this as "identifying absent leaders who avoid taking responsibility or making decisions" (p. 862).

Leader	A person uses his or her power, personality, and provision to steer and motivate other people (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1999; Corson, 1980).
Leadership	This is "the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 4).
Leadership Style	A process that leader's go through to provide direction, motivate people, and implement plans. For this study, this refers to a person's authentic or natural style, which consists of "personal values, convictions, aspirations, and motivations…the best possible match of heart and mind with actions of the leader" (Toor, Ofori & Arain, 2007, p. 33).
Leadership Style Development	Robinson (2017) defines this as "the process individuals go through to develop a leadership style" (p. 7).
Mentor	An experienced individual who provides support, guidance, direction, opportunity, and advice to a less experienced individual. This person helps to positively influence the socialization skills and career development of the person they are training (Bauer, 1999).
Transactional Leadership	A person who embodies this leadership style voices expectations to followers and provides them with rewards in exchange for their performance (Bass, 1985; Jung & Avolio, 2000).
Transformational Leadership	This leadership style can encourage followers to search beyond their immediate self-interest to achieve a larger goal (or organizational goal) (Kouzes & Posner, 1987) and provide them with "more principled levels of judgement" (Burns, 1978, p. 455). Put simple, transformational leadership, a value-based framework, (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010) is "the leader's *intent* to activate employees' higher order needs" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 5).
Senior Administrator	This term refers to the individuals that are in positions at the highest (or top) level of the organization's leadership team. They are responsible for formulating, articulating, and executing the strategic and tactical vision at a high institutional level (Counts, 2012).

Organization of Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation provides rich description as to how African American women describe their development of a leadership style. Chapter two thoroughly accounts the

history and theories of the leadership literature including leadership styles, and the theoretical foundation for this study. Chapter three articulates the research design, data, and methodology. Once the design was been implemented, chapter four was developed to present the results of the study, and chapter five provides a discussion, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature on leadership, traditional managerial leadership styles, and the theoretical foundation for this study, authentic leadership. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the literature and acknowledge the gaps that this research aims to fill. As previously discussed, this research adds to the public administration literature on leadership and cultural competency, giving a platform for African American women to share their stories. It also seeks to understand the ascendency of African American women in senior leadership roles by detailing their experiences that shaped the pathway to achieve their position.

Brief History of Leadership

Leadership has been around for thousands of years, and is arguably, one of the most researched, but least understood phenomenon of today (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Silva, 2014). As Corson (1980) notes, early scholars such as, Confucius, Plato, and Plutarch all wrote about leadership, "explored where leaders came from, how they were developed and how they led followers without being wholly led by followers" (p. 56). However, since their time, many scholars have felt the need to re-explore this area regarding the experiences of individuals and how they may shape their leadership style (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Campbell, 2010; Counts, 2012; Milner, 2006; Robinson, 2017; Waring, 2003; Wiggs-Harris, 2011).

As a result, the literature has seen a wide range of thoughts surrounding this topic as well as definitions to describe this phenomenon (Northouse, 2018). Revered leadership pioneer, James Burns (1978), defines leadership as

"the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers" (4)

In other words, leadership is the ability to guide or lead one in a way that successfully articulates the goal and encourages others to want to follow. It is about setting the stage, not being the stage.

Not only is leadership salient in general, it is keenly important in organizations. It is important to businesses, organizations, and the like because it

"provides higher-quality and more efficient goods and services; it provides a sense of cohesiveness, personal development, and higher levels of satisfaction among those conducting the work; and it provides an overarching sense of direction and vision, an alignment of the environment, a healthy mechanism for innovation and creativity, and a resource for invigorating the organizational culture" (Wart, 2003, p. 11-12).

Good leadership helps take the organization to newer heights, fosters a healthy environment in the workplace, and is an essential component of organizations. Leadership matters because organizations call on leaders to "perform, develop followers, align their organizations, and foster the common good" (Wart, 2003, p. 22). Therefore, developing a leadership style is important when looking to effectively lead an institution as well as an organization. For this study, leadership style is defined as a leader's "natural or personal authentic style" (Robinson, 2017), where developing this natural style is based on "personal values, convictions, aspirations, and motivations…the best possible match of heart and mind with actions of the leader" (Toor, Ofori & Arain, 2007). This is relevant for discussion as the type of leadership style a person employs can drive: individual performance (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Paarlberg & Perry, 2007; Vandenabeele, 2014), organizational performance (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Sun & Henderson 2017), public service motivation (Andersen, Bjørnholt, Bro, & Holm-Petersen, 2016; Bellé, 2013; Perry & Wise, 1990; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012), and as this study contends, advancement to senior leadership roles (Parker, 1996;

Robinson, 2017; Sandberg, 2013), which are all important in public, private, and non-profit organizations (Pace, 2017).

Traditional Styles of Leadership

As the literature on leadership styles has emerged, there are many types of leadership styles scholars have sought to explore. These styles include: autocratic (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939), democratic (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939), laissez-faire (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939), servant (Greenleaf, 1970), transformational (Burns, 1978), transactional (Bass, 1985), administrative (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Terry, 1998), situational (Hersey & Blanchard, 1999), spiritual (Fry, 2003), and authentic (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Although there are many different types of styles and theoretical approaches to explain leadership, in the management leadership literature, there are five traditional managerial leadership styles research has thoroughly discussed – autocratic, laissez-faire, democratic, transformational and transactional leadership.

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership, also known as directive leadership, is often contrasted with democratic (or participative) leadership and typically attributed to men (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). This type of leadership involves the use of commands from the leader and expected compliance from the follower (Bhatti, Maitlo, Hashmi, & Shaikh, 2012). In an experimental study led by Kurt Lewin in the late 1930s, he and a team of researchers sought to identify different styles of leadership and how they are birthed in different social climates (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). In this style of leadership, the leader tells the employees what

to do, how to do it, when to do it, without inviting their perspectives into the conversation (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). This belief is parallel to Douglas McGregor's (1960) philosophical view of humankind in his Theory X point of view. Theory X posits that humans are indolent, and do not want to work. Therefore, they must be forced to work, threatened, controlled and punished if they do not get it done. McGregor's (1960) Theory X argues that the average human prefers to be "directed and told what to do" as they prefer security over anything (p. 108). In contrast to this, McGregors's (1960) Theory Y suggests that man does want to work and needs to be motivated to do so. McGregor (1960) argues that for workers to not be forced to work, there are other motivational factors needs that to be met, which can attribute to a worker being productive in the organization.

Nevertheless, leaders that are described of embodying this Theory X type of approach are characterized as dogmatic and they use their power to give or withhold punishments from their followers (Carpenter, 2008). Through deciding without consultation, autocratic leaders are highly concerned about structure, performance, and the completion of tasks (Bass, 1985). Dyer (1986) notes they are "action-oriented" and "doers" and their followers obey instructions without revealing dissent. These leaders are less likely to provide an explanation for those instructions or any rationale to any tasks. Eagly and Johnson (1990) note that, autocratic leaders "behave autocratically and discourage subordinates from participating in decision-making" (p. 236). They make all the rules and decisions in the organization, and it is expected that they will lead, and their followers will follow without question. However, although efficient at times, many scholars have argued that this type of leadership is becoming obsolete in today's world (Bhatti et al., 2012). Eagly & Carli (2007) and Parker (2005) note that this aggressive leadership style is less

relevant to African American women leaders as well as other marginalized leaders as compared to their Caucasian colleagues.

Laissez-faire Leadership

Often referred to as mission leadership, non-leadership and passive management, laissez-faire leadership was also introduced in Lewin, Lippitt, and White's (1939) study. This leadership style allows freedom of choice in decision making (Avolio, Bass, and Jung, 1999; Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997; Druskat, 1994; Lewin, 1945). The type of leaders that embody this leadership style are not interested in employee engagement as compared to democratic leadership. Fazzi and Zamaro (2016) define this as "absent leaders who avoid taking responsibility or making decisions" (p. 862). They are characterized as being avoidant leaders as they are indifferent towards their follower's tasks (Nahavandi, 2009). They neglect expressing their views, they are not related to the performance of their followers, they are absent when they are needed, and they delay responding or do not respond at all (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008). Eagly et al. (2003) found that this leadership style is more common in men, as women tend to be more engaged and invested in their follower's performance.

Nevertheless, Judge and Piccolo (2004) suggest that scholars should study laissez-faire leadership more in-depth as the literature on it is sparser than any of the other leadership styles. Scholars such as Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, and Hetland (2007), would agree with these sentiments as they found in their empirical study that "laissez-faire leadership behavior is a destructive leadership behavior" that needs more research (p. 80). Therefore, although laissez-faire leadership appears to lack motivation and intentionality among their duties and subordinates

needs (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008), this is *still* a form of leadership that does have authority but fails to use it effectively.

Democratic Leadership

Dating back to the 1940s, democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, has been around for some time now and is one of the most effective styles of leadership (Gastil, 1994). Democratic leadership capitalizes on the shared perspectives of others, allowing them to use their talents and skills rather than conform (Likert, 1967). Also introduced by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), this leadership style involves the group, empowers their members, and distributes responsibility among the team. Although the definition of democratic leadership is unclear, these leaders "allow subordinates to participate in the decision-making" and they make their subordinates feel as though their opinions matter (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p. 236). They intentionally invite team members to not only join but contribute to the decision-making process as they look to value the input of others (Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1990; Yukl, 1999). For women that embrace this leadership style, ideas are exchanged freely, everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, and the diversity of perspectives is appreciated (Bryman, 1999).

The individuals that democratic leaders seek to engage in discussion are typically ones that have been deemed unequal by hierarchical standards. However, with a democratic leader, those in the group have shared power in decision-making (Bavelas & Lewin, 1942; Choi, 2007). In this sense, the leader promotes teamwork, collaboration, participation, and company morale when the democratic leader allows employees to have autonomy with their thoughts and provide input beyond their regular scope of their day to day duties. Kim (2002) further argues that participative management can improve a person's job satisfaction and empower them to produce

22

more quality work. Simply put, these leaders are fair-minded, forward-thinking, team-oriented, adaptive, and consensus builders (Likert, 1967). However, although inclusive, the final decision remains with the leader (Bryman, 1999; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Kim, 2002).

Transformational Leadership

In James Burns' (1978) seminal piece, he introduces the concept of transformational leadership also referred to as charismatic leadership. Charismatic leadership (Tucker, 1968) can go as far back to the 1920s as it was first introduced by Max Weber (1946), but greatly expanded upon in the 1970s by Burns. As Burns was the first to argue a difference between transformational and transactional leadership style, he contends that the two leadership styles must be considered as extremes on a continuum: on one side, transformational leaders provide their followers with needs, aspirations, long-term goals, and values that they can identify with; on the other side, transactional leaders promote a "give-and-take" relationship that is beneficial to both sides. However, transformational leadership was founded before transactional leadership. This new paradigm of transformational leadership can encourage followers to search beyond their immediate self-interest to achieve a larger goal or organizational goal (Kouzes & Posner, 1987) and provide them with "more principled levels of judgement" (Burns, 1978, p. 455). Simply put, transformational leadership, a value-based framework, is "the leader's *intent* to activate employees' higher order needs" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 5).

Transformational leadership is fundamentally built on four dimensions: charisma (or idealized influence), individualized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). At its core, a person who exemplifies a transformational leadership style motivates his or her followers to transcend their immediate self-interest "for the

23

sake of the team, the organization or the larger polity" (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993, p. 579). When experienced at a high level, transformational leadership can make a substantive difference in those that are subjected to it (Benjamin, 1997; Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Manning, 2002). A transformational leader embodies transparency, confidence, inclusive decision-making, optimism, empathy for followers, and consistency between her words and deeds (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Campbell, 2010). As a result, "followers typically come to admire their leaders, want to identify with them, and demonstrate a higher degree of trust in them in part for the commitment they personally demonstrate to achieving the vision" (Jung & Avolio, 2000, p. 950).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is characterized as a contractual relationship or mutually beneficial exchange between leaders and followers (Denhardt & Campbell, 2006; Jung & Avolio, 2000). A person who embodies this leadership style voices expectations to followers and provides them with rewards in exchange for their performance (Bass, 1985; Jung and Avolio, 2000). As Bass (1985) states, "transactional leadership is contingent reinforcement" (1985, p. 121), and is built on exchanges of pecuniary and nonpecuniary rewards (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). A pecuniary reward can be bonus pay and/or perks, whereas a nonpecuniary reward is praise (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). Ideally, the leader and her followers discuss and come to an agreement on what needs to be done to get rewards or avoid punishment (Jung & Avolio, 2000). When done this way, there is no intentional effort from the leader to change the followers' personal values, nor from the followers to develop a deep sense of trust and commitment to the leader. (Jung & Avolio, 2000).

Nevertheless, some might argue that this exchange-based leader can acquire 'conditional trust' from one's followers (Bass, 1985; Jung & Avolio, 2000). Conditional trust is when the leader consistently recognizes followers' performance through a reliable execution of contracts and exchanges (Jung & Avolio, 2000). This means that the transactional leader works with the followers' current needs and tries to satisfy them with desired, agreed upon outcomes.

Albeit, both transactional and transformational leadership styles are focused on achieving organizational goals, there are distinct differences between these two widely studied theories (Burns, 1978). According to Jensen et al. (2016), "transactional leadership behavior [is] intended to create employee self-interest in achieving the goals, while transformational leadership theoretically is on an intention to encourage employees to transcend their own self-interest" (2016, p. 10). A transactional leader rewards a person's high effort or good performance; however, it also punishes the subordinate for weak or unsatisfactory results (Bass, 1985; Jensen et al., 2016).

Theoretical Foundation for the Study

Although the literature on the five traditional managerial leadership styles are important in the discussion of leadership, they are not useful in studying the leadership *development* of individuals when determining their respective style of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). For example, according to Carli and Eagly (2007), autocratic leadership is not used as often in modern times nor is it one that accurately helps describe the development of leadership styles in women. They argue that many of these traditional leadership styles are less applicable to the leadership style development of African American women leaders and other marginalized groups as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. However, these styles are useful to understand as

some African American women leaders may embody a certain style when they are determining the type of leader they want to become (Robinson, 2017).

So, to understand the *development* of the leadership style African American women embrace, a more inclusive framework is desired, which is why authentic leadership serves as the theoretical framework for this study. Authentic leadership is

> "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development" (Luthans & Avolio 2003, p. 243).

Although authentic leadership can be applied to other races, it is particularly beneficial for this study on African American women leadership style development due the literature characterization of these women (i.e. independent, strong, resilient, self-aware and self-confident), the perception of their followers on their genuineness, genetics and environmental influences, parenting influences, and their mentorship experiences (Collins, 1990; Collins, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Wiggs-Harris, 2011). These factors have arguably provided strong guidance and support that has profoundly impacted their development as leaders (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). As pivotal forces in these leader's personal growth, these mechanisms have been found to provide them with more self-awareness, relational transparency, and essential components of an authentic leadership style development. For these reasons and among many others, the authentic leadership style framework is most appropriate for this study to understand the development of a leadership style in African American women.

Authentic leaders seek to establish and maintain great self-awareness as well as self-control regulation of positive behavior (Illies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). Authentic leaders are motivators, "visionaries of the future who understand their purpose," and have a unique leadership style that is parallel to their character and personality (Toor, Ofori & Arain, p. 620).

Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens (2011) suggest that they take ownership of their personal experiences, including any beliefs, desires, thoughts and emotions. An authentic leader is self-aware (Zukav, 1989), true to themselves (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005), and self-referent (Maslow, 1968) about her thoughts and beliefs.

Scholars often describe authentic leadership as being the root for informing all positive forms of leadership (i.e. transformational, servant, and spiritual) (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). It is inherently different from all other forms of leadership due to its focus on self-awareness and self-regulation. When developing an authentic leadership style, the individual owns their personal experiences and acts in accordance with their "true self" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004). This is why it is a fundamental leadership style development tool for leaders to develop meaningful workplace relationships as well as to establish a positive and ethical work environment (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Davis, 2016; Gardner et al., 2005).

According to Gardner et al. (2005, p. 6) and as seen in Figure 1, there are two different aspects of authenticity: authentic leadership and authentic followership. Both of these aspects consist of two fundamental components, which are self-awareness and self-regulation. However, prior to both, there are antecedents, such as personal history and trigger events, to authentic leadership style development (Gardner et al., 2005). For this study, the focus is on authentic leadership development. In particular, the antecedents (personal history and self-regulation) as well as identity, which is an element of self-awareness.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework for Authentic Leader and Follower Development
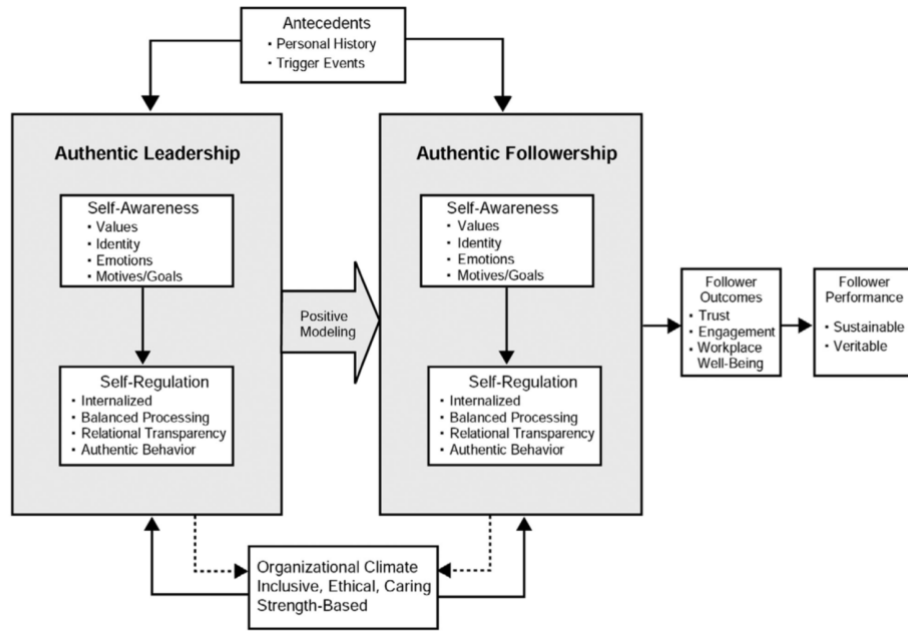
Source: Gardner et al., (2005)

Personal history consists of the stories that provides the leaders with a "meaning system" (Turner & Mavin, 2008). This "meaning system" may include "family influences and role models, early life challenges, educational and work experiences" (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 6). The "meaning system" lays the foundation for the leader to act in certain ways that gives a person's actions particular meaning, whereas trigger events are oftentimes dramatic, subtle changes in a person's circumstance that encourages personal growth and development (Gardner et al., 2005; Turner & Mavin, 2008). Trigger events can be internal or external that challenge the leader, which may require an unconventional solution. For the leader, these can be seen as catalysts that increase their sense of self-awareness (Gardner et al., 2005).

Self-awareness, which Gardner et al. (2005) define as "an attention state where the individual directs his or her conscious attention to some aspect of the self" (p. 7), is a "process

whereby one comes to reflect on one's unique values, identity, emotions, goals, knowledge, talents, and/or capabilities, oftentimes triggered by external events" (Gardner et al. 2005, p. 10). Within the self-awareness component of authentic leadership there are values, identity, emotions, and motives/goals. For this study, the focus is on the aspect of identity, which "involve self-categorizations based upon one's unique characteristics, including traits and attributes, which specify how one differs from others" (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 12; See also, Banaji & Prentice, 1994). This identity forms over time as a consequence of the leader's reflection and her interaction with others. In other words, identity is related to social groups (Collins, 1998), in which the leader sees him/herself being a member of certain socially constructed groups, while considering the value and significance of each group.

History of Authentic Leadership

The term authenticity goes as far back to the ancient Greek times, as it "is reflected by the Greek aphorism 'know thyself'" (Gardner et al., 2011, p. 1121). According to Gary Zukav (1989), many humans are on a quest towards this sense of authenticity, authentic empowerment, and authentic power, which "is why each human struggles so deeply with power: the lack of it, the acquisition of it, what it is really, [and] how one should have it" (p. 147). This is partially because the journey towards authenticity or wholeness requires a person to "look honestly, openly and with courage into yourself, into the dynamics that lie behind what you feel, what you perceive, what you value, and how you act." (Zukav 1989, p. 147). According to Chester Barnard (1948), for organizational executives, authenticity is particularly important in such a sophisticated environment as it is often challenged by a leader's responsibilities, their followers, and the public. In short, authenticity is moving beyond personality to a place that is real, true,

and full of meaning (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010).

To become an authentic leader, it is important to achieve authenticity through self-acceptance, self-awareness, authentic relationships and authentic actions (Gardner et al., 2005). Scholars note that authentic leadership may have been derived from the studies on transformational leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). However, when compared to the other leadership theories (i.e. transformational, spiritual, and servant), authentic leadership, a relationally-oriented model, is relatively new in the mainstream leadership literature, "first appearing in the 1990s in the fields of sociology and education" (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010, p. 65). George (2003) notes that in contrast to transformational leadership, authentic leaders may or may not be charismatic or necessarily strive to actively transform their followers into a leader, which are both core components of transformational leadership. This is because authentic leaders "build enduring relationships, work hard, and lead with purpose, meaning and values" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 329). Because of this differentiation from other theories and it being relatively new to the leadership literature, there has been ongoing discussion on what constitutes authenticity and there is not a uniform definition of authentic leadership (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). This is why Luthans & Avolio (2003), who are typically credited with the starting point of the research on authentic leadership, urge scholars to use a consistent definition to better strengthen its presence in the leadership literature. For this purpose, Luthans & Avolio's (2003) definition is used for this study.

In other words, authentic leaders are described as being "originals, not copies" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 397). They enact roles and display leadership characteristics on the basis of their values, convictions, beliefs, and what they believe to be true as they have experienced them to be

true. Through self-awareness and self-regulated behaviors, authentic leaders look within to gain self-meaning and to determine the type of leader they desire to become (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). By revisiting their life stories, authentic leaders are able to construct, develop, and revise their leadership characteristics in a reflective way that remains true to self, which helps create a positive energy and meaning for their followers (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Although discussion began about authentic leadership in the 1990s, prior to 2005, the leadership literature did not offer a lot of diverse perspectives on the construct of authentic leadership, nor were there discussion on the implications of it in the workplace (Robinson, 2017; Roche, 2010; Seligman, 2002). Nevertheless, since the early 2000s, the literature on leadership has begun to include more studies on authentic leadership emerging from diverse perspectives, including ethics, organizational behavior, vulnerability, and positive organizational scholarship (See, Illies, Morgeson, & Nahrang, 2005; Irvine & Regger, 2006; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Pace, 2017; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Brown (2018) notes that adding to the leadership literature on topics such as these are vitally important because

> "…we desperately need more leaders who are committed to courageous, wholehearted leadership and who are self-aware enough to lead from their hearts, rather than evolved leaders who lead from hurt and fear" (p. 4).

However, what many scholars have failed to clearly address regarding the concepts of authenticity and authentic leadership are the challenges of changing demographics in the workplace (Roche, 2010). Because of this, many scholars have urged scholars to conduct more research on the intricacies of authentic leadership style development as it related to leaders in different organizations (George, 2003; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Seligman, 2004). There have

been instruments developed such as the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Copyright © 2007 by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Garnder, and Fred O. Walumbwa) and the Authentic Leadership Inventory (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011) to empirically study this theory. However, there are not many of qualitative studies that provide an in-depth examination of this concept (Robinson, 2017). This is important because due to the "unique stressors facing organizations throughout the world today [there is a] call for a renewed focus on what constitutes genuine" guidance, or authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 316; See also, Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005). If leaders want to have an impact on their followers, they must be vulnerable and open up to a place that allows their followers to see deeper into who they are as a person Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Therefore, practitioners and scholars continue to call for more research on authenticity and the process of authentic leadership development (Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa, 2007; George, 2003; Irvine & Reger, 2006; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Pace, 2018; Zukav, 1989).

Authentic Leadership and African American Women Leadership Development

As the number of African American women in senior level positions slowly increase (Byrd, 2008; Catalyst, 2012), these women look to for personal fulfillment and a greater level of self-awareness in the workplace (Pace, 2018; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013). Irvine and Reger (2006) argue that this is an important goal for individuals in these positions because having an impact on the world starts with being more authentic. This is because the term authenticity rests on a continuum where "the more people remain true to their core values, identities, preferences and emotions, the more authentic they become" (Avolio et al., 2004, p. 802). Therefore, when an authentic leader is honest about her story, identity, and

confident in her presence, she awakens her soul to what matters most and learns how to serve those that serve her (Irvine & Reger, 2006). Because of this, it is important for practitioners and scholars to understand as well as examine how authentic leadership is mirrored in the stories and experiences of African American women leaders (Counts, 2012). This helps us understand their unique journey towards a leadership style development, and how authentic leadership relates in this process.

First, many African American women are characterized in the literature as having embodied traits such as independence, resiliency, strength, autonomy, and self-confidence as they are taught this at an early age (Epstein, 1973; Giddings, 1984; Ladner, 1971; Malson, 1983; Parker, 1996). Petty & Miles (1976) contend that when they are in leadership positions, they are known to be caring, supportive, considerate, true to themselves, and inclusive to others in the room. Wiggs-Harris' (2011) explore leadership development and authentic leadership through the experiences of African American women. She did so by studying this dynamic of these women working in different organizations with leaders that are predominantly white males and found that African American women embodied both male and female model leadership traits, both nurturing and assertive. In other words, African American women tend to develop traits that are true to themselves, authentic, self-aware and also understand how to provide sound direction, echoing the premise of authentic leadership.

Second, authentic leadership relates to African American women leadership style development in senior administrator positions in how these leaders' feel they are perceived by their followers. African American women not only tend to look to understand how their knowledge, values, morals, and strengths apply to their preferred leadership style, but they also consciously use them based on these precepts (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007). African

American women leaders are conscious of their actions and how they influence their subordinates (Parker, 1996). This is a key aspect as it is important that leaders be virtuous, "otherwise they cannot inspire trust and have true followers" (Silva, 2014, p. 2).

Authentic leadership represents a concept where both leaders and followers play crucial roles in the authentic leadership development process (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) studies of authentic leadership found there to be correlation between the follower's perception of the leader's "authentic leadership, follower job satisfaction, and individual job performance" (p. 117). As this relationship develops overtime between the leader and the follower they become more authentic towards one another (Gardner et al., 2005). Walumbwa et al. (2008) study echoed how a leader's authenticity can influence the trust the follower has in them and how trust can impact job performance and job satisfaction.

Third, authentic leadership relates to African American women through genetics and environmental influences. In the leadership literature, the question continues to remain as to whether the environment or genetics influences a person's leadership style. Of the many studies that have asked this question, the Minnesota Twins Study (Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2009) aimed to address this question. They found that genetics accounted for 30% of how a person developed a leadership style and 70% was from environmental influences including: education, diverse role models, and training (Illies, Gerhardt, & Le, 2004; Arvey, Rotundo, Johnson, Zhang, & McGue, 2006). For example, in the slavery era, the enslaved were forced to grow in inhumane conditions (Lerner, 1992; Feagin, 2010), constantly exposing them to develop a foundation of community-building, self-actualization, and creative resistance (Hine & Thompson, 1999). Through history, onlookers have witnessed African American women, such as Harriett Tubman, Rosa Parks, Loretta Lynch, Condoleezza Rice, Michelle

Obama, among others serve as "examples of bravery, tenacity, resiliency and dedication" (Robinson, 2017, p. 30). This has been evident due to both their genetics and environmental influences molding them to be authentic to themselves as well as those around them.

Fourth, there is a connection between authentic leadership and African American women leadership style development through parenting influences. In African American families, positive self-confidence characteristics have been instilled in both boys and girls (Scott-Jones & Nelson-LeGall, 1986). African American mothers are often characterized as tough disciplinarians and overly protective who "manage to raise daughters who are self-reliant and assertive" (Parker, 1996, p. 195; See also, Collins, 1990). Their mothers teach them how to be self-confident, determined, bicultural, independent, and their true self "because they are determined to mold their daughters into whole and self-actualizing persons in a society that devalues Black women" (Wade-Gayles, 1984, p. 2). Therefore, African American women developing an authentic leadership style is important and is often true to self as well as "similar to the style exhibited by an important and admired early influence such as a parent" (Hartman & Harris, 1992, p. 164). This means her early childhood experiences and how she was reared, contribute to the emergence of a leadership style later in life (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Parker, 1996)

Last, authentic leadership links to African American women leadership style development through mentorship. Mentorship is a reiterating process that involves experienced individuals who provide support, guidance, direction, opportunity and advice to a less experienced individual. This person helps to positively influence the socialization skills and career development of the person they are training (Bauer, 1999). Oftentimes African American women "are excluded from important organizational networks, forcing them to create other

strategies for gaining access to information" (Parker, 1996). As a result, they expand their

boundary (Bell, 1990) to establish mentors that will guide them in career development (Thomas,

1990). Research has found that African American women in executive positions not only have

many mentors, but the "data indicate that Black women cross gender and race boundaries to

create resource relationships" and build their level of cultural competence (Parker, 1996, p. 198).

In other words, African American women seek mentorship from people that look like them as

well as those who do not, creating a foundation of trust, transparency, openness, and awareness,

which are all characteristics of authentic leadership.

The authentic leadership framework is important in the leadership development of

African American women. Although the literature on leadership has grown to include this

construct, there is much more work that must be done to help edify researchers on the

applicability of this framework in diverse settings. Therefore, using this framework as the

foundation for this study adds value to the knowledge already present in the literature, but also

expands our understanding on this phenomenon as it relates to African American women.

Intersectionality

In addition to the authentic leadership framework to help explain leadership style

development, it is also pertinent to involve intersectionality to further explain the multiple

aspects of their identity. First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality is the

interconnection of a social categorization by race, gender, class, nationality and etc. as they apply

to groups or individuals, creating overlapping systems that bring disadvantages or discrimination

(See also, Cole, 2009; Shields, 2008). Figure 2 provides a clear depiction of the overlapping

socially constructed groups that one can possibly identify with. This is important to include in

this discussion as intersectionality refers to people being affiliated with more than one social

group (Collins, 1998; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Robinson, 2017). For example, those who

identify as being a woman and African American are a part of more than one socially constructed

group.

Figure 2: Intersectionality
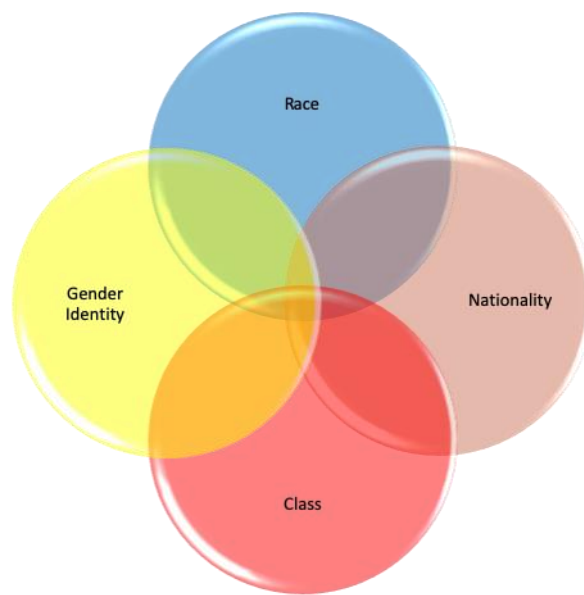
African American women, or better yet, women of color, succumb to many complexities that are

quite different from their Caucasian female counterparts. For white women, sexism is a primary

factor that results in discrimination from senior administrator positions (Robinson, 2017).

However, other than gender discrimination being one of the key foci for African American

women, they also find themselves subjected to battle racial discrimination as well (Suyemoto &

Ballou, 2007). This is largely because the skin color of white women is typically the same as that

of many of the male leaders. Therefore, their race, background, and ethnicity are often

overlooked (Suyemoto & Ballou, 2007). However, this is not the same for African American women as they can possibly experience gender discrimination from being a female and racial discrimination from being black. As Szymanski & Lewis (2016) argue, it is vitally important to include intersectionality in the discussion when exploring experiences as gender and racial discrimination are relevant to African American women (See also, Collins, 1999).

There is intense discussion in the field of whether or not intersectionality should be categorized as a theory, approach, perspective, concept or nothing at all. Because of this, scholars like Else-Quest & Hyde (2016) urge researchers to go beyond using a specific method when discussing intersectionality. Instead, they argue a more in-depth examination to understand the complexities of person's identity. Therefore, although intersectionality is not used as the theoretical basis for this study, primarily because of discussion as to if it is a theory or not, it is included to further analyze the experiences of African American women in senior administrator positions. This helps to broaden our perspective on the topic and increase our understanding of cultural competency (Simms, 2018).

Critique of Previous Research Methods

The majority of literature on authentic leadership uses a quantitative approach to illustrate the leadership style development in white males, so they fail to establish depth in their investigations and inclusiveness in their findings (Davis, 2015; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017; Wiggs-Harris, 2011). For so long, African American women were left out of the leadership literature (Milner, 2006; Pace, 2017; Pace, 2018; Robinson, 2017), which is why the findings that were concluded from those studies cannot be applied to African American women leaders (Parker, 2005). As a result, the research on African American women leadership style

development and how they develop as authentic leaders is limited. This study provides a means by which African American women leaders can share their stories on how they developed an authentic leadership style.

Summary

The research on leadership style development for women has increased over the past few decades. However, scholars continue to bypass inclusion of African American women leaders as compared to their white counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This is also seen in their ascendency to higher leadership positions (Catalyst, 2012). Therefore, this succinct review of the literature on this topic reveals the need for more studies and provides evidence on the unique attributes that African American women embody, which contribute to their multilayered identities as well as their authenticity as leaders (Toor et al., 2007).

This chapter addresses some factors that may attribute or hinder the leadership style development of African American women senior administrators at a member institution of APLU in Alabama. It provides discussion on both internal and external influences that are salient in leadership style development, especially to African American women. Chapter three provides a clear overview of the methodological approach to be used in the dissertation research. Chapter four discusses and analyzes the results of the study, and, chapter five offers conclusions, implications, and recommendation for future research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the following: research question, research design, methodology, data collection, measures, analyses, as well as strengths and limitations. It concludes with an outline of strategies to be implemented in the study to ensure completeness of research and protect the anonymity of participants.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to acquire a sound understanding of the experiences of African American women senior administrators, particularly in the president's cabinet, at an APLU member institution in Alabama experiences as they cultivate a leadership style at their institution. This research is intended to fill the gaps in the literature in public administration on leadership development as well as the mainstream leadership literature by adding the voices of African American women. The goal of the results is to have implications that are relevant to scholars as well as practitioners on leadership and management principles, as it can potentially provide insight on leadership training programs and cultural competency, respectively. This could provide a better understanding of the leadership styles of African American women administrators at these institutions as well as be a reference for those at similar institutions and organizations.

The guiding research question: *How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style?* The supporting research questions are as follows:

1.) What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity?

2.) How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders?

Research Design

To conduct this research, a qualitative multiple case study approach is used in an effort to gain a more in-depth understanding on the experiences of African American women in senior level positions at an APLU member institution in the State of Alabama (Creswell, 2007; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Yin, 2009; Yin, 2014). A qualitative design provides a comprehensive understanding of an understudied population of the leadership literature (Yin, 2014). Case studies are needed because they provide descriptive understanding of an event or phenomenon (Brady & Collier, 2010), and are useful when several individuals are chosen to participate in the study (Stake, 1995). Using case studies helps practitioners in both public and private sectors understand the historical components behind developing a leadership style. For researchers, a case study provides thick description (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994) and a deeper understanding of what is happening, why it is happening, and how to address it. It also helps both practitioners and researchers see how the type of leadership style makes a difference. Case studies are the best choice for this research design as they are dynamic in regard to external validity and they do not disrupt the preexisting research setting allowing the researcher to examine intact groups as they are (Brady & Collier, 2010).

One of the goals of case studies is to determine if the variables vary to see if they make a difference, in terms of spuriousness, or confounding variables (Kellstedt &Whitten, 2013). Since case studies can be filled with thick description, the researcher can account for any other

variables she failed to control for. This helps address omitted variable bias, which can be a major issue for any researcher.

In addition to this, Yin (2009) argues that "case studies are the preferred method used when *how* or *why* questions are being posed and when the focus is on real-life context" (p. 11). Therefore, the researcher elected to use the multiple case study approach because of the why and how questions that surround the leadership style development of African American women (Robinson, 2017). Yin (2014) notes that "the more your questions seek to explain some present circumstance, how or why some social phenomenon work, the more that case study research will be relevant" (p. 4). Therefore, a multiple case study approach is used for this research.

A multiple case study approach can be defined as being organized around two or more cases where data is collected from interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), this approach is useful in comparing the case studies to one another and they have more analytic benefits as compared to a single case study. This approach takes comparable cases and parallels them to show similarities as well as differences. Using this method to examine leadership style development in African American women, the researcher can meticulously investigate themes that emerge from the interviews. A multiple case study analysis (Yin, 2009) is most effective because it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of each of the experiences of the African American women in how they develop their leadership styles (Counts, 2012; Pace, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Simms, 2018; Turner & Mavin, 2008).

Credibility, Dependability and Transferability

In qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that it is critically important to establish credibility, dependability, and transferability within the data. These integral components help the researcher demonstrate a solid understanding of the research methodology by focusing on the truth of the findings as they relate to the accuracy of the data. Qualitative research is a great approach to data collection as it provides a greater description on the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the results (Roger & Halas, 2012).

Credibility

As an integral part of qualitative research, credibility shines light to the internal validity of the research as well as the purpose of the research. Credibility is centered on the competency, skills, and thoroughness that is displayed by the researcher conducting the fieldwork. The premise for it is that the participants in the study are in the optimal position so that study results indeed reflect the experience described by the research. In this dissertation study, credibility is increased through the use of digitally recorded interviews that are transcribed verbatim. In addition to this, the use of member checking, or respondent validation, allows the participants to provide any additional information that is missed (Bickman & Rog, 2008; Brown & Hale, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This opportunity for them to look through what transcribed provides them with the chance to share information that was not provided in the initial interview as well as elaborate on their stories (Bickman & Rog, 2008). According to Riccucci (2010), this is also a way to triangulate qualitative interview data.

Dependability

Consistency helps qualitative researchers demonstrate dependability in their research. This study is to provide reliable, detailed, and sequential descriptions of all procedures, methods, data collection, and data analysis in a clear way so that other scholars and researchers can replicate the process (Bickman & Rog, 2008; Brady & Collier, 2010). Through a thorough case study database, a digital recording of the interviews, and verbatim transcription, the researcher is able to provide dependability of the research.

Transferability

To establish transferability, the researcher shows how the participants in the study represent the target population of people. The chosen participants have been sought to have the knowledge, expertise, and experiences that is desired to add value in meaningful ways to the dissertation topic. In this study, African American women in senior administrator roles at a member institutions of APLU in the Alabama are selected to participate in an effort to understand how they describe their leadership development. The data collected from these women contribute to transferability as they represent the target population and provide information on their experiences that is highly relevant to the guiding research question.

Target Population and Sample Population

The target population for this research study are African American women who are currently in senior administrator roles, in particularly in the president's cabinet, at an APLU member institution in the State of Alabama. The sampling approach used is purposeful sampling as this strategy allows the researcher to choose the sample. Following previous research (Davis

& Maldonado, 2015; Robinson, 2017), five to seven African American women that are information-rich were sought for this research study. This researcher obtained approval from Auburn University's Institutional Review Board prior to conducting this study.

Procedures

The recruitment process that was employed was sending emails to African American women who are senior administrators at an APLU member institution in Alabama. The email provided an overview of the research and all necessary information required by Auburn's Institutional Review Board. For those who sought more information or who were interested in the research study were encouraged to contact the researcher via her Auburn email address to answer any further questions. After the individuals agreed to be participants in the study, a telephone consultation was arranged to screen each woman. Following Robinson's (2017) study, for each African American woman to participate in this research, they must affirmatively answer the following questions:

1) Are you an African American woman at least 30 years of age?

2) Have you held a senior leadership position for at least 5 years?

The African American women who met the criteria and wanted to participate in the study received a follow-up email with a consent form attached. The participant was encouraged to print and sign the consent form and return it to the researcher via electronic email, United State Postal Service, or fax machine. Once the form was received and reviewed, an in-person or telephone interview was scheduled.

Field Test

Field test interviews are one approach to ensure sound data collection in qualitative research. Because of this, the researcher contacted three women leaders to review the interview questions prior to conducting the research on the intended participants. This step is important to develop clear questions that are appropriately worded for the interviewees. These three women reviewed the questions to affirm that the questions asked in the interview are clear, open-ended, appropriately worded and aligned with the main research question of this dissertation study. For each reviewer, the researcher provided an overview of the dissertation topic, criteria of participants to join the study, and the purpose of the field test.

Journaling

Because interviews provide researchers with rich information, journaling is vitally important to capture the behavioral and verbal responses of the participants. Journaling is a reflective strategy that helps to record the participant's thoughts, reflections, reactions, and responses to each of the questions used in the interview process (Ortlipp, 2008). The researcher maintained a journal throughout the research procedures as directed by guidelines for research of this type.

Data Collection

To conduct these interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five to seven African American women who are senior administrators at a member institution of the APLU in Alabama. The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A) is to be implemented. However, probing questions were also be used to go beyond the interview guide to gain more

relevant information that would have not otherwise been shared (Brady & Collier, 2010; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013). Yin (2014) argues that when the researcher includes probing questions this allows the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding about the personal experiences of each participant.

The personal information that was collected from these interviews were the participant's race, gender, age, job title, years in their senior level role, and contact information. However, all identifying information is only available to the researcher and her committee. This information is not be used in the data analysis that reveal emerging themes of the interviews.

Data Analysis

In qualitative case study research, data are analyzed by obtaining rich, detailed description of each case. After each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim, and sent to each participant to ensure the transcription is accurate, commonly referred to as member checking (Yin, 2014). The participants were requested to review the transcript, acknowledge any needed changes, or approve as is. If there are changes that need to be made, the participant is asked to note them within the document and return the amended file to the researcher. Once the researcher reviews, the changes were made based on the participant feedback. If there are no changes that need to be made, the participants are asked to reply back to the researcher indicating the transcript accurately captures what they said. Once all transcripts are deemed accurate by the participants, a within-case and cross-case analysis of the data is to be completed.

During this process, the data go through three rounds of coding (Brown & Hale, 2014). First, there is open coding, which is the first run through that consists of making a list of all possible themes (Strauss, 1987). Second, is axial coding, which uses the themes, note frequency,

adds additional themes if necessary, and determines if some of the initial themes need to be collapsed (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Last is selective coding, which is where the researcher looks for quotes or examples that illustrate the theme.

Instrument

After the information is gathered, the researcher transcribed the data using a computer software called NVivo ®. This computer software helps to analyze unstructured and non-numerical data by organizing, sorting and arranging information in a coherent fashion that produces easy to read reports and visuals for the researcher to analyze. Once NVivo ® places the data in appropriate categories, the researcher analyzed the data for themes of how African American women describe their experiences in developing a leadership style. The researcher plans to examine the data for meaningful patterns that are congruent to Yin's (2014) case study approach.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher intends to provide all proper data security and management to protect any personal identifiable information from each of the participants. The following procedures are implanted to protect the data and privacy of each participant:

- All personal identifiable information was removed in the transcripts as well as the digital recorder.
- The participants who opted in the study are denoted as Participant 1, 2, 3, etc.
- The tapes from each participant's interview are locked in a file cabinet located in the researcher's home.

- The transcripts are stored electronically on a secure hard drive that is password protected. Any hard copies of the transcripts are locked in the file cabinet along with the tapes in the researcher's home.

- The documents used in this research will be kept for five years in a locked file cabinet.

Guiding Interview Questions

For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher conducted five to seven individual interviews consisting of ten questions with each participant. Patton (2002) notes that, in a "qualitative inquiry there are no rules for sampling size; the size of the sample depends on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, and what is at stake" (p. 244). The goal is for each interview to be held for approximately one hour to respect the participant's time and the researcher's ability to capture succinct data. A semi-structured interview tactic is effective because the researcher can develop a trustworthy relationship with the interviewee and ask them open-ended questions about issues, events, or people, that a survey would be unable to acquire (Brady & Collier, 2010; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013; Yin, 2014). Compared to a structured or unstructured interview, a semi-structured interview is most appropriate because the researcher can have a set of relevant questions (see Appendix A) for the interviewee but also be flexible in conversation. The goal of the interview is to get the women to talk about the experiences that led them to develop their leadership style and for the interviewee to be comfortable in reciting their values, relaying their thoughts, and recounting their stories. In addition to these things, a semi-structured interview provides us with an outline to stay on course with room for relevant deviation (Brady & Collier, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained approval from Auburn University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). All research guidelines provided by the IRB are abided by to be compliant with all ethical standards. There is respect for each participant to protect their anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.

Informed Consent

Each of the African American women involved in the study received an informed consent form to print, sign, and return. The informed consent form included permission to record voices and images needed to transcribe the interviews. In the introductory phone call that was made to all of the participants, the researcher reviewed the informed consent form to ensure they understand all information. The researcher also relayed to each of them that although no study is risk-free, proper measures have been taken to ensure their anonymity and that they are not distressed or harmed by participating in this study. All participants were ensured that any personal identifiably information, including name, age, address, etc., will be kept confidential and not be used to analyze the results.

Benefits and Risks

The benefits and risks of the participants involved in the research study are extremely low or insignificant. The direct benefits are with providing the participants with a platform to articulate their experiences through their stories. Another benefit would be in understanding the leadership style development of African American women to potentially increase their presence in senior administrator roles at higher level institutions and provide inclusive leadership training

programs. As for risks, there is a risk of breach of confidentiality. However, no study is without

risks and proper measures have been taken to ensure ethicalness or any confidentiality measures

that may possibly arise from this research.

Summary

This chapter provides a clear overview of the methodological approach to be used in the

dissertation research study. The sampling process, procedures, instruments, data collection, and

data analysis are discussed. A section on confidentiality is also included to ensure anonymity of

the participants in an effort to abide by research ethical standards. The strengths are also included

to address any concerns regarding the soundness of the study. In the coming pages, chapter four

iscusses and analyze the results of the study. And, chapter five offers conclusions, implications,

and recommendation for future research.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA

Chapter one provided a succinct overview of the research problem, background of the study, the purpose of the research and the need for the study. Chapter two explored the salient literature on the salient component relevant to the leadership style development of African American women. Chapter three outlined the methodology used to properly conduct this research, describing the multiple case study approach along with the research design, procedures, target population, sample population, and methods used for both data collection and analysis. Chapter four intends to provide rich information on the research participants and sampling procedure that was used while also presenting the results from the seven interviews. The seven interviews were conducted with African American women senior administrators at a member institution of the APLU in Alabama in an effort to answer the guiding research question: How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style? And, the supporting research questions are: What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity? and How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders? This chapter ends with a presentation of the data collection process used for the interviews along with a table that displays the six main themes that emerged from these participants. There is also supporting excerpts from the interviews to support the themes that are discussed in the table.

The Researcher

The interest of this subject emerged from the researcher being mentored by prominent African American women leaders who were and still are important change agents in the field. She had a conversation with one mentor in particular and asked probing questions like, "How did

you in your position?" and "How do you lead such a cadre of people?" She then began to wonder about the type of factors that may or may not have contributed to the development of her leadership style. She wondered about her personal story, in particular those personal experiences and the people that may have helped shape and mold her to become the leader she is today.

As an African American woman who has been a leader in varying organizations, the researcher wholeheartedly understands the many challenges African American women encounter when seeking to attain, maintain and advance in leadership positions in homogenous organizational cultures. With this said, the researcher is acutely aware of her own biases that she brings to the analyzation of the findings. Therefore, the researcher intentionally worked to bring an open, non-biased mindset to the data analysis to avoid interjecting her own perspectives and biases during the interview and analyzation process. Although the experiences of the researcher have shaped her beliefs and contributed to her knowledge about organizational climate, it is important to lead a research process with the utmost integrity. For this reason, the researcher did not overly emphasize with the women so that she could be an unbiased sounding board that allowed for them to share their stories without any reservations. Nonetheless, the researcher made sure each participant felt at ease during the interview process and the professional relationship was established and maintained.

The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the leadership development process of African American women as they evolve in the workplace environment. The authentic leadership development framework was used to explore this topic by examining the experiences of African American women senior administrators who work at APLUs in Alabama. As an African American woman, the researcher is keenly aware that there are preconceptions of women who are African American that are organizational leaders. Because of this, there must be

an intentional balance between authenticity and remaining true to self because organizational

goals and productivity are vital components that must be achieved.

Description of the Sample

For this dissertation study, seven African American women who are senior administrators

at APLU institutions, particularly in the president's cabinet, in the State of Alabama were chosen

as the research sample. To gain rich information, prior to joining the studies, each of the

participants affirmatively noted that they had held the position as a senior level administrator for

more than five years and they were at least thirty year of age. The pool of women who met the

criteria and were available to participate in the study received an email from the researcher that

invited them to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The email provided a brief overview of

the research study along with the criteria again to participate. Any of the interested individuals

who needed or required more information to participate in the research study were warmly

encouraged to contact the researcher at her Auburn University email address, and a phone

conversation would be arranged. None of the interested participants contacted the researcher to

ask questions, provide comments or address any concerns. The screening process of the

participants consisted of the individuals responding back via email to the following questions?

- Are you an African American woman at least 30 years of age?

- Have you held a senior leadership position for at least five years?

The researcher contacted thirteen African American women senior administrators via

email to be a part of the research study. However, after the phone consultations, only nine met

the criteria and only seven responded to the follow-up email and signed/returned the informed

consent form. Each of the seven research participants provided high level information and insight

into the research, therefore saturation, termed by Creswell (2007) was reached. Creswell (2007) defines saturation as a process where the researcher must continue to search and interview until the new information acquired no longer furthers the insight into the topic. Since seven of the participants met the established criteria, there was no need to seek additional participants as saturation had been achieved. Each participant was a senior level administrator in the president's cabinet, over the age of thirty, in a senior role for more than five years, and represented a myriad of roles at their respective institution (i.e. presidents, vice presidents, general counsels, and chief officers).

From this point forward, all participants will be referred to in the order in which they were interviewed. This means the interviewee for the first interview will be referred to as Participant 1, and so on. Again, this is done to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality for each of the participants to ensure this research maintain integrity and that it adheres to all guidelines explicated by the AU IRB.

Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis

The interviews took place over a period of two weeks and there were both telephone and in-person interviews conducted. During the data collection phase, there were no unexpected interruptions in the interview process that influenced or manipulated the findings in this study. Out of each of the seven interviews, only two had to be rescheduled due to a work conflict. However, the researcher was very understandable and rescheduled the interview for a later date to fully accommodate each of her participants and be considerate of their demanding schedule, which seemed to be much appreciated by the participants.

To conduct these interviews, the researcher used semi-structured interviews only after the informed consent forms were received. Yin's (2014) interview approach was used to clarify responses by asking probing questions to better understand the topic and gain more information. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to ask open-ended questions that were thought provoking and allowed for opportunities for each of the participants to share their stories in an intimate one-on-one interview. The interviews were recorded on an EVISTR L157 16GB Digital Voice Recorder. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the data by herself to remain close to the data and make sure the responses accurately reflected the conversation. This was beneficial to the researcher because she was reminded of their pitch, voice tone, hesitation and pauses which suggested there was deep thought and contemplation of the questions that they answered.

Each interview was transcribed within 24-48 hours after the conversation. Once the transcription was complete, the researcher emailed each of the participants their transcription via email and they were asked to verify if the if it accurately captured what they said. If it did not or they wanted to add something that was missing, they were asked to note it in the document using Microsoft® Word's track changes feature and send it back. The researcher would then make the requested changes, assuring the integrity of the conversation was maintained, and send the transcript back to them to verify. Out of the seven participants, four of them had minor edits they wanted to make to what they said, either giving credit to a mentor by adding in his or her name or briefly expounding on an answer to a question to finish a thought. However, the content of the interview was not altered, and each participant was impressed at how accurate the transcription was and the speed at which they received the dictation. This type of member checking is important in qualitative research to ensure soundness, validity, accuracy and credibility of the

information collected. It is also a way to triangulate the data when conducting interviews in qualitative research (Riccucci, 2010). All of the participants were so thankful and very appreciative of the invitation to be a part of the study and many requested to be updated on the findings and wanted to keep in touch. This suggested to the researcher that they each had a positive experience and were grateful they had a safe space to reflect and share their stories.

Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis

A multiple case study approach was used for this research study. Due to the gaps in the literature on this topic, there was more research needed on this particular population of women using a qualitative approach. This method was also appropriate to answer the guiding research question: How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style? as well as the supporting research questions, such as: What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity? and How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders?

After each of the participants affirmed the transcript accurately captured what they said, the researcher reviewed each transcript several times and also listened to the recordings alongside the transcript several times to ensure the participants words were accurately captured. During this iterative process, the researcher investigated the similarities and differences between each of the participant's stories.

To analyze the data, the researcher went through numerous steps to analyze the data. First, she coded each participant by participant 1, participant 2, etc. in the order they were interviewed. Next, she also placed the participants in table to better see their age, the type of

institution they worked at, either a Predominantly White Institution[7] or a HBCU, and how many years they have been in a senior role. This is important to capture because it provides a context to the data collected from the participants allowing the researcher to further understand their leadership style development process as it relates to these categories. The participants range from 35 years of age to 67 years of age, where the average age at these institutions is 52 ½ years old. In terms of years in a senior level role, the range is from a minimum of 6 years to a maximum of 21 years, where the average years in a senior level position is 12.

Third, the researcher inputted all of the information into Nvivo® 12 for Mac and ran queries to tabulate word frequency, including stemmed words (e.g. talking). Fourth, each of the interviews was read line by line and quotes from the participants were coded and categorized by a specific node[8], otherwise referred to as open coding (Strauss, 1987). Once all interviews were coded for a first time, the researcher reviewed the themes to capture the frequency, added additional themes if it was necessary and grouped like nodes together, which this second run through is also referred to as axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Last, she performed selective coding, where the six central themes emerged allowing the researcher to pull quotes and examples that illustrate the themes. Table 2 lists these themes as well as indicates each of the participants that exhibited that particular theme.

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[7] A Predominantly White Institution is an institution that has a study body made up of mostly whites, which count for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Harvey, 1999).
[8] In Nvivo®, a node is the theme or topic from the source material that is being coded. It allows for the researcher to gather all of the related material in one place to better examine the data for similar patterns and emerging ideas (OSR International, 2019). Nvivo® notes this process as grouping child nodes under a similar parent node that creates an emerging theme. In other words, quotes from the participants were given a theme and was either categorized into an existing node or a new parent node was created.

Table 2. Leadership Style Development of African American Women Senior Administrators at APLUs in Alabama

Pseudonym	Preferred Transformational Leadership Style	Qualities Modeled by Parents	Understanding and Connecting with People	Impact of Gender and Race	Mentorship is a Priority	Authentic and true to self
Participant 1	X	X	X		X	
Participant 2	X	X	X	X	X	X
Participant 3	X	X	X	X	X	X
Participant 4	X	X	X	X	X	X
Participant 5		X	X	X	X	X
Participant 6	X		X		X	X
Participant 7	X	X	X		X	X

As displayed in Table 2, the following themes materialized during the data analyzation process: (a) they describe a transformational leadership style as their preferred leadership style (b) qualities modeled by their parents guided their leadership style development; (c) understanding and connecting with people is important in their process; (d) their gender and race required them to work hard at leading; (e) mentorship is a priority; and, (f) being authentic and true to themselves is imperative in the workplace. These themes highlight many of the factors that African American women consider in their role as senior level administrators and developing a leadership style that is authentic and true to themselves. In the following sections each of these themes are described more in-depth and paralleled with quotes from the participants to support the findings.

Preference to Operate within a Transformational Leadership Style

The majority of the participants described a transformational style of leadership or verbally said they preferred a transformational leadership style. This style was largely preferred because of some of the work they do and types of positions they are in. A few of them were

diversity and inclusion officers, and they expressed how a lot of the work they do is transformative work due to culture shifts, generation changes, climate issues and being in an institutional setting, where new strategic goals often emerge. They each noted how a democratic leadership style is important and including others in the conversation is useful, but it is not effective. They state how they appreciate the insight from their internal team and oftentimes from the community and constituents they serve, but they understand the final decision rests with them. And, in order for their office to make a lasting impact, they must be keenly aware of this and make sure there is action behind the vision. Many saw themselves or was told that they are visionary, innovative, change agents and inspiring as leaders, which are all characterizations of transformational leadership. For many, it was definitely important to include others, specifically their team, in the process, but to orchestrate organizational level change and communicate vision, they felt that being a transformational leader was most important. For example, Participant 1 stated, "I would say transformational because…I think as a leader you have to see the end-goal, you have to see something greater and beyond our day-to-day operations."

Participant 4 stated:

> I'm somebody who likes to listen to people, understand where they're coming from, to connect with them about my vision and my concerns and really get their buy-ins so that we can move forward. I think more transformational. And, maybe that's more hopeful.

She goes on to say, this style is important for her leadership acumen and "being able to communicate that vision of a greater place" in regard to her institution.

In her interview, Participant 6 exclaimed:

> You know, I'm always one that is asking the question[s]: "Why?", "Why do we do it this way?", "Can we do it better?", "Is there something that we can improve?" I always want

to start with, "what's the big picture?" Our blue sky in place of what we'd like to have. I'm always looking for change, I'm always trying to encourage people to, you know, let's do it better, let's do it differently, let's not stay in a status quo, and so, recognizing that that is a part of who I am. I'm always looking for change. I'm always looking for improvement. And, that…because I am…more of I guess like…Because I am, like you would call, that transformational leader of big change, or big ideas, or that…you know, I may check the box too quickly because I am ready to go on to the next big idea.

Along these same lines, Participant 7 stated:

Transformational is it. By default, this work that we do in diversity is transformational work. And, it requires all hands-on deck. And, the only way you can do that is that you have to be willing to do the things that you want other people to do.

Although the majority of the participants did not initially use the term *transformational leadership style,* instead they would describe their leadership style in different ways that reflected the transformational leadership style. For example, Participant 2 shared that:

I've been told that I'm pretty visionary and innovative. So, I like innovating in my leadership that certainly includes the type of leader I am being, a leader of inclusion and diversity on a campus. So, really looking for innovative ways to change culture, innovative ways to make progress on some really important institutional fronts.

Participant 3 proclaimed that she has:

Always been very involved and always been genuinely interested in the things that the team was interested in as well and so I consider myself to be a builder and certainly value teams and having functional teams. So, I tend to spend some time investing energy on really having a strong foundation and building leadership.

Some of this was due to ancillary training, which has helped her to evolve to become more of a transformational leader. She went on to say, "And, so because of that training and just with the nature of that role I always just led by example. I'm empowering leader as well and just leading by example."

The majority of the participants described characteristics of their leadership style as being a transformational leader. Although, many did confess that their leadership style is oftentimes a combination between other styles (i.e. democratic leadership or servant leadership), they agreed that the transformational far outweighed the paired leadership style. This was a shared theme by all of the participants, where six out of the seven agreed that embodying a transformational leadership style in their role is salient and helps them advance the needle in their role of work.

Participant 5 confessed her preferred leadership style being servant leadership. In Greenleaf's (1970) book *The Servant as a Leader*, he coined the term 'servant leadership.' According to him, "servant leaders are those who strive to serve individuals under them, develop those being served, and benefit others in society" (Miao et al. 2014, p. 728). This type of leader is service-oriented and strives selflessly as well as altruistically to put others before themselves. This person develops his or her followers' greatest potential by serving as role models who demonstrate ethical behavior, provide encouragement, offer support, and build followers' self-confidence. Clearly stated, a servant leader is genuinely concerned about the well-being of his or her subordinates (Miao et al., 2014). Although, servant leadership is not characterized as a traditional managerial leadership style, this is important to include being that this is an aspect of her that is reflective of her leadership style. However, she did say that her "…transformational leadership kicks in more when I'm not on campus."

Additionally, many of the participants did mention how there were certain instances in which more direct leadership style was needed to ensure the organization's strategic goals were being met in an efficient and effective manner. This was largely done to ensure work assignments and deadlines were achieved. Therefore, although they preferred a transformational leadership style, they also would adjust their styles at time depending on the situation and what needed to be done. This style of leadership for most of the participants was modeled for them either by someone in their past, a previous supervisor and/or by watching the way their parents led.

Qualities Modeled by Parents

Six out of the seven leaders said the style of leadership they have preferred to use in the workplace was modeled by both or one of their parents. Because of this direct influence, the participants modeled their styles off of many of them and wished to emulate those characteristics.

Study participants disclosed that their parents provided them with a level of independence and showed them how to be resilient, developmental and understanding of people in their thoughts as well as their actions. Participant 1 indicated that:

> So, one of the things that my dad...my parents taught me that I was upset about growing up, but I value so much right now is independence. And, they really allowed us room and space to learn on our own and make decisions on our own. And, they gave us a great amount of trust in order for us to have a safe place where we could fall.

She articulated that a lot of the qualities she uses in her leadership today is largely stemmed from her parent's approach to leadership, which influences the way she leads her team today. Participant 2 observed:

I had exposure to incredible role models. And, whether that was in a non-professional

way seeing my mother model the expectations that she had of my brother and I in terms

of our work ethic you know, societal comportment, whatever. She pretty much modeled

for us what she expected. I say her more singularly because of my father's profession.

My father was [in] special forces, sort of intelligence person, and so he was away most of

the time and we didn't know where he was most of the time. So, that was a little

different. He certainly had a role in our upbringing as well, but my mother really had

more of a direct informative role I would say for my brother and [me].

She went on to describe her mom being a teacher and because of her role, "she was very

nurturing as a leader which one can also translate to being developmental. So, I think some of

that I got from her."

Participant 3 also discussed her mom and the type of qualities she has gleaned from her

influence. When describing her mom, she said:

But I would say that she really valued relationships, very hard worker and always had a

great work ethic as well. And, she just got, you know, people just liked her. So, I would

say that I've probably got some of that from her.

Although Participant 4 was heavily influenced by both her parents, she particularly noted how

her father's role in the military played an impactful role as well. She mentioned how her father's

autocratic leadership style was not particularly welcoming, so she knew that was not a leadership

style she wanted to embody. However, she learned how to be decisive and direct at times from

watching him. For example, Participant 4 shared:

Hmm…I think though because my father is a military man, you know we were very

much disciplined with a military background and there were times I felt like, but "I want

to say this," and "I want to say this!" and he was like "Nope! You do what I say!" And… really, that's really part of where this…maybe that's the birthplace of all of this…I never thought about it that way. But yeah, when somebody says, just do what I say, you realize that doesn't feel good.

Participant 5 also shared moment's about her father's leadership style she observed growing up as she stated:

As I said, my dad was high school principal, so I would witness him talking to parents, talking to teachers, and he was very stern. But, he also believed in everybody getting the job done and doing it together. And, I do think a lot of my experiences come from that.

When sharing her story about her parent's influence, Participant 7 stated that:

So, I'm first generation college as are my siblings. But one of the things…when you say leadership I guess my answer would be yes because they had some very…they set some very clear examples for us, that I tried to do with my own children. Although, it was a little bit more complicated because the technology was on the scene. But on Sunday my dad would make us sit around together at breakfast. We all read the Sunday paper and we had to read it from cover to cover. Both my parents were avid readers. That's something that I continue to do to this day… I'm understanding the more you educate yourself about certain topics and especially your work the more effective you're likely to be. It also creates a space where you can have conversations with people that you never thought you'd talk to before. And, I would watch my parents do that.

Many of the qualities the participants described their parents embodying are ones they observed, admired and wished to emulate in their own leadership style development process. Those memorable moments they experienced with their parents remained with them, in particular the

supportiveness, encouragement and, when possible, engagement in the decision-making process. Many of the participants attributed their work ethic to their parents' and gained much of the foundational structure from them. Many of their dads came from a military background, which provided them with the knowledge of a hierarchical structure and how to respect it, while many of their mothers were school educators who show them a more compassionate and nurturing side to leadership. Many of them noted how much of the access to leaders started in the home as it was expected of them to do well and perform on a high level. This also led many of them to seek mentors along their professional journey who would also formally or informally help cultivate their leadership style development. However, at the crux of the influence in qualities from their parents leadership is people. These relationships taught them how to understand people, which all of them describe their leadership style development process being inspired by.

Understanding and Connecting with People

While the qualities embodied by their parents or direct supervisors heavily influenced their leadership style development, the participants also discussed how understanding, connecting, motivating, valuing and developing relationships with people are vitally important. They each described how important it is to be people oriented as they have advanced to their position. For Participant 6, the human connection was and still is an essential component in her line of work. When reflecting on her personal experiences in how she found her passion and obtained her role, she shared:

> As much as I loved numbers and I loved data, I felt like what was missing for me was the people interaction, and I looked around the people in the office, and, you know, they talked to their clients, but it's like they talk at their clients. They didn't work with each

other. They didn't talk to each other and I came back, and I said this is kind of what I think I'm missing. And, so it's the people interaction, you know, and it's not like people are working together, and I don't want to be an environment where it's like all men for themselves.

Many of them proclaimed how the interaction with people has taught them more about themselves as well as how to lead better. When reflecting on this people component, Participant 1 shared, "I think…definitely speaking to people…talking to people and getting to know different people. That's what I love most about the job." She noted that she was taught this from her previous supervisor, as she professed:

He taught me to be my authentic self…that development is all about relationships and you have to be authentic in that. Cause he... No matter what was going to be authentic to himself than his values and beliefs and he has taught me how to do the same in my decision making.

Participant 2 argued that engaging people in the conversation is important as well and listening to their thoughts. She stated:

I think that also some of the best leaders that I've seen and fortunately for me, I've been able to see a lot of them at high levels…they listen. They want to hear what folks have to say. They understand that they ultimately make the decision, but that's not the point. And, they don't have to flex around it. But they want to know "So, what do you think?" Because, they understand that having input either enrich their ideas, it either helps to clarify their ideas, but there is value to it. And, so I think that's a way that my leadership style helps to influence, I think positively, my current leadership.

Participant 4 would agree that listening to people is a salient aspect of her leadership style development as she discussed that "When there were difficult pathways before us…I think it is very important that people feel that they're listened to, that people feel that they are a part of a solution."

Through connecting with people and listening to them, the participants noted how they would gain insight to their personal story, which is what has helped them understand people on another level. It is a leadership priority for them to understand people and get to know those around them as everyone has their own story which has shaped them to be who they are. Participant 5 observed that:

> You know, because in growing up I was around teacher's kids, lawyer's kids, doctor's kids and all of my friend's parents worked, some in the workforce. But, there was just this idea that my friends, you know, we just lived that life. I didn't know anybody that had been a drug addict, I didn't know anybody whose parent's had been drug addicts, I didn't know anybody that lived in poverty, and so as I was a prosecutor and I started looking at these things, I started understanding that a lot of times people can't change their situation and they are a part of their situation and their experiences that shaped them, and their attitudes about different things. So, that is really what changed how I take on leadership and how I take on my relationships with other people as well.

Participant 7 also noted how understanding people is important as well in the work that she does. She shared:

> Because I think that's part of what this work is about…. getting sort of understanding other people's thought process and why they do certain things or why they say certain things, or why they behave in particular ways. And, it takes what I would characterize as

a level of courage sometimes that most people would say, "Well, you know…I just don't

think I could talk to them."

The ability to understand people and genuinely relate to them, is what many of them shared to be

foundational in the work that they do. Participant 7 went on to say, "I mean, you

know…everybody has a brain for a reason and it's really pretty much for the same reason and

how we train them is what makes the difference." Participant 3 noted that she has to be quite

conscious in her leadership when it comes to people and "making sure that people are…that they

understand that I genuinely value relationships."

Those tough and heartfelt conversations with other people are what many of them

describe the reason as to why they do what they do and lead and how they lead. In particular,

Participant 7 said:

On many levels I have very serious heartfelt conversations with the people who maintain

the buildings… custodians. And, [I] also report to the president and I can have very

pronounced and heartfelt conversations with him, too. And, I think bring a level of

honesty to those conversations that I have the capacity to say, "Well, I don't think that's a

good idea," or "I think that we should do this and here's why I think you should go down

that path." And, it's really about building relationships with people.

This has also, in some way, showed them ways in how to motivate people, in particular those on

their teams. Participant 6 stated that:

Because so much of my leadership style is keeping people motivated, motivating them to

get behind me on this big thing. To get them motivated on doing something totally

different from what we've ever done before. To motivate them to stay the course, when it

seems like the whole rope is falling off. Whatever it is that I've got to keep them

motivated doing. And, you know, all leaders do this…is understanding what motivates

people, and sometimes that motivation is kind of walking into their office and saying,

"How you [are] doing?"

However, on the other hand, understanding and connecting with people can also be challenging

for them, especially when it comes to holding them accountable on certain issues or helping them

see the vision. For example, Participant 3 shared, "So, I think it's the adaptability and the ability

to kind of work with people and help them see change when they don't necessarily see the vision

is it's always been a struggle." When asked about the assets and hindrances of her leadership

style, Participant 6 shared:

It could be a benefit and it could be a curse sometimes because I am one of those kinds of

leader's that's always saying, "Ok, this is great, but let's see what else we can do," or

"Ok, what's the next big thing we can accomplish?" And, so I have to balance that

because that can wear people out.

In terms of accountability, Participant 4 shared how understanding, connecting, and holding

people accountable is crucial. She noted that it is often a challenge for her when she has

connected with someone but has to let them go from their position because they are not

performing at a high-level capacity to push the organizational goals forward. She shared that it's

"making those tough decisions and telling people, "I'm sorry but this is not working out and you

know, you are not going to be here anymore." She went on to say:

You know, so those are really tough. They are really, really tough. Because you think

about the person and their lives. Do they have family? Do they have children? And, so

on. And, you want to help them to land on their feet. But, you know that they're not

doing their job. And, they know they are not doing their job. But, it is still hard. That is

the hardest part for me.

Although it is tough decision for her to make, she noted how it is needed to keep those

institutional goals and initiatives at the forefront to obtain them. In addition to team members

being a challenge at times, participants also brought in situations of people outside of their work

environment, particulary those in community. For Participant 7, she stated that:

I think the challenge is just the fact that people do live in silos and they only pay attention

to the things that… in their mirror…their front view. They don't look sideways. They

don't look back. They don't look right. It's what's in front of them. And, sometimes, you

know, we have tap people on the shoulder to get their attention. Like, wait a minute, you

need to be paying attention to this, too.

Therefore, although people are important and getting to know others is principal when

developing as a leader, there are times when those relationships are challenging in the process.

Many of the participants noted how getting through to people can be hard but is worth it when

positioning oneself as a leader.

As disclosed in these interview excerpts, the participants were highly concerned with the

betterment of other people and the compassion in their voices revealed this as well. The people

component emerged in all of the participants interviews being developmentally significant in

their work and how they developed their leadership style. Although, at times, dealing with

people can present a challenge causing the leaders to adjust their style in different ways. The

people component is critical to include as each of them work at APLU member institutions in

Alabama, where much of their institution's work is parallel to APLU's mission, which is about

building, serving and growing communities at all levels. And, in these communities they serve

are made up of people and different types of people from various backgrounds. Therefore, developing relationships with people and getting to know a person for who they are, helps them understand not only the person, but how they are supposed to effectively lead them.

Impact of Gender and Race on African American Women's Leadership Style

Four out of the seven leaders stated that both their race and gender impact their leadership style in regard to how they feel they are perceived by others as leaders. They shared how leading by example and empowering those they were to lead were both vitally important because being African American and a woman increased their awareness in the importance of both aspects.

> For example, Participant 2 shared:
>
> Yeah, I think that intersectionality is a real thing...hats off to Kimberlé Crenshaw for coining that. I think that there are times when my identities are intersecting integrally and there are times when my identities are intersecting in ways that has one identity being more salient. And, it's all context driven. It depends on where I am and what I'm doing. And, what's happening in the moment.

She went on to provide an example about how her identity is relevant at different times. For the executive cabinet she serves on, she notes that her identity is less salient than it has been due to the diversity that is in the room. However, there are instances when Participant 2 becomes keenly aware of her identity. For example, she shared:

> Differently, when it's about 10pm and I'm needing some Orbit chewing gum and I've got to run up the street to Mapco because everyone else is asleep and I'm trying to stay awake to complete something and I'm in leggings and I throw on a hoodie and put my

hood on because it's raining outside, and I go into the local convenience store. It is more

salient to me that I am African American.

Because of this, both gender and race are important for her as she has advanced to her senior

level position. When sharing a story about her development process, Participant 2 professed:

I have never had the luxury of just out and out saying my race is inhibiting my ability to

lead. What I have been clear about is early on in my career, and maybe stridently so,

sharing with those to whom I reported directly, two things that were important to me. I

want the same feedback as you give the white guys, because if I don't get it, I am unable

to grow and develop, and you have my permission to give me that feedback. Secondly,

let's not go establishing rules for African Americans that don't exist for white folk.

When Participant 3 was asked in what ways her gender influences her leadership style, she

stated:

I think it's if…I would maybe couple that with like the gender, the race, you know age,

all of that. It helps in some instances because the younger staff…they think I'm

young…I'm not. You know, and then oftentimes senior staff that have been a bit more

seasoned you know are automatically kind of question the expertise essentially. So… So,

I think it's a little bit of probably both. I think it's… I think it's multiple things.

In other words, intersectionality is relevant, and many components of her identity play a role in

her leadership development. When discussing the influence of both gender and race on her

ability to lead, she said:

Influence… not necessarily my ability to lead but just… ability. Initial impressions I

would say. You know, I've not…in any instance, I've not felt like I was working at a

deficit, but I definitely recognize that in some instances I would have to prove my knowledge or expertise.

However, Participant 4 articulated that both gender and race have influenced her ability to lead. She noted how gender is important because:

As women we are socialized to be more conscientious, we are socialized to be more focused on building relationships and so forth and less focused on power per se, which might be the case, I think, for men.

She then went on to note the influence of race on her ability to lead. Participant 4 shared that:

During the times when I was in graduate school and in college, I realized you know, there weren't many black people who were part of the administration at either institution. Not many black people who were faculty at either institution. So, it became very clear, you know we need to have a voice at the table. So, I think that was a really important observation for me that influenced the way I lead.

She notes that when the two intersect, she believes, "they have a cumulative effect. They build on one another." She stated that, "I don't think of myself as a woman who is not black or a black person who's not a woman. So, it is always just a part of me. It's who I am."

Participant 5 also shared that both have an effect, in her role, but more often than none it is her gender that is a bit more salient. She stated:

Gender, some instances race. I don't think age because most people don't know how old I am, and they think I'm younger than I am.

Nevertheless, she agreed that both are important and have informed some of her leadership style development process. Although Participant 6 was not completely sure how gender and race influenced her leadership, she did say, "Sometimes I still have to prove that I deserve to be here.

That feeling that is unstated and no one says that to you, but you still feel there is a need…that there is a need to prove that."

In sum, each of the participants shared instances of gender and/or race related issues that they have encountered. Their stories were quite informative and provided the researcher with rich evidence for this dissertation study. Many of the participants revealed how leading by example is vitally important in their institutional role. In knowing that they are both black and a woman, each of them discussed how they have recognized the distinct characteristics of the two and how they inform identity, regardless of if they have accepted both in being influencers to their leadership style development. Although the majority of the women mentioned that both have influenced their leadership style, all of them talked about the two interchangeably, often mentioning one or the other when answering questions.

Mentorship is a Priority

Mentorship was highly important to all of the participants in the study. Each of them felt like this was a crucial part of their leadership journey and part of the reason why they have adapted their particular leadership style. They talked about how many of their mentors helped expand their vision and how they engage with people. By having a mentor and someone to show them how to lead was salient in their process of attaining a senior leadership potion. Many of their mentors were oftentimes their direct supervisors, previous college professors or someone who simply reached out to them to let them know they were doing someone right or wrong. In the workplace, their supervisor largely served as their mentor and influenced many of them tremendously.

For example, Participant 5 stated that:

I feel like I model my supervisor […] When I came on board here, his concept was "I'm not a lawyer but I expect you to do what lawyers do. And, I'm not going to micromanage you. I want you to do your job and if I see any issues, then I'll say something." In the 10 years I've been here, he hasn't said anything.

This meant a lot to her as she described one of her previous supervisors being a micromanager. Her current supervisor has allowed her to have a level of autonomy in her thinking and decision making. Participant 1 describes her supervision as a positive influence and one that she still values to today. When describing a previous supervisor, Participant 1 reflects on a particular experience with him by sharing that:

When I first started with him he says you have to set your strategies and objectives based off of attainable but measurable goals. And, as long as you have measurable goals and you're working towards that you can accomplish everything that you want to accomplish. And, I remember that forever. I will always remember that…

Participant 2 shared that working for a particular supervisor influenced her style in a positive way. She stated:

I think also in terms of the "millionaire three doors down" a gentleman and a family, wonderful pillars in our community you know, compact home, great, I thought, community leadership and business leadership...[I] worked for him. He was in real estate and he taught me a lot about leading and about being a person who founded something and sort of what that entailed.

A particular experience with him was when she drove her mom's car to work and proceeded to park in the front of his business. She exclaimed he said, "Move your car because that is always for the customer. We park in the back." This was a profound interaction that he had on her

leadership development as she began to understand the important of serving others and what that looked like.

When Participant 4 was asked if a mentor played a role, she enthusiastically exclaimed "Oh! Very much so. Oh, my goodness!" According to Participant 6, having a mentor was "Major…And, most of the times the mentorships were more informal." She noted that she never asked anyone to necessarily be a mentor to her, it was those relationships that were not planned or people simply giving her advice that meant a lot to help in her process. When describing one of those informal mentor relationships with a male colleague she recalled,

"He gave me a piece of advice that I remember often, he said "When you ask for a seat at the table you have to bring more to the table than a fork." He said, because if all you are bringing is a fork to get from the table, and you're not putting anything on the table. He said eventually, we're going to get tired of feeding you."

For Participant 6, this was a pivotal moment for her with her mentor, which influenced her outlook on process. Participant 1 also had an instrumental male mentor to help her in her process as well. When asked about her mentor, she confessed:

Oh, I never would be here today without mentors. That's exactly how I got where I was today and how I got started in the field actually. And, I think every step of the way, he's been there to kind of lead me and guide me. And, I tell him, I told him last week, you know, without you I wouldn't be here today. I wouldn't have half the knowledge that I have. And, that's critical to me even right now as I progress in my career. And, I don't know what comes next for me but having that critical role model there, someone to mentor me is something that I always look for in my positions before I take them.

Participant 2 felt the same way. She stated that:

I think I have high standards for myself personally, and then I think as well that having

done this for the length of time I have... having had great mentors both African American

women, but mostly white men, because that's who I've worked for, because that's who

was leading universities... is that I have learned some skills, I have learned a sense of the

nature of the academy and quite honestly, the tools to know how to get things done

within the academy effectively...I think I have learned as well.

As each of the women reflected on their advancement to their senior leadership position, each of

them described how a mentor played a role in that process. They talked about the advice mentors

gave them, the influence mentors have had on them and the ongoing relationship with their

mentors to present day. For example, Participant 3 said:

And, then whenever I would kind of go to the next level and get promoted he'd always

give me advice that I never requested but always just kind of like you need to make sure

that when you step into this role you know this is symbolic, you're going to you need to

start seeing yourself in a different light. So, he's always pushed me so I would say that he

was probably very instrumental early on.

Participant 5 shared some of those same sentiments about her male mentor. She talked about him

allowing her to shadow her when she came on board and bringing her into meetings with him, so

she could understand the environment. However, she noted that eventually he left, and she said:

…they were like "Trust me. You got this!" As time went on and I was forced to get out

there on my own, I realized that just by observing and being, you know, in certain rooms

at certain times, it really helped me with my thought process. So, when I was actually out

there on my own I actually followed through and did everything that should've been

done. And, I didn't see it then, but it's true, that was a teachable moment. Because I just

78

thought they just want me to go because they don't want to go by themselves or, you

know, it was a male, so, you know, they don't want to be in the room by himself with

another female.

For Participant 7, many of her mentors were both white and black women. She explained that

many were instrumental early on in her academic career as they served as members of her

dissertation committee. She glowingly spoke on how they each played a salient role in her

process. Participant 7 shared:

It was because of their influence and their leadership and their mentoring and sponsorship

that I was able to land a faculty appointment ever research one university and be

successful in that role. And, I have to give them some credit for that.

In sum, each of the seven participants undoubtedly explained how mentorship has played a vital

role in their trajectory to their leadership position as well as their leadership development

process. Although many of them acknowledged a few women leaders, majority of the

participants mentioned male leaders as being their primary mentors and helping them along their

journey. The relationship with their mentors was built on continuous counts of trust and ongoing

advice that they received from that person. The participants confessed that many of these

relationships started off organically and have evolved to be some of the most meaningful

relationships in their career. The power of mentorship for these women was a key priority for

their development and one in which they do not take for granted and continue to look for as they

advance the institutional ladder.

Authentic and True to Self

Six out of the seven participants described their leadership style as being authentic and true to self. The majority of them noted how their leadership style has indeed evolved overtime, often making adjustment when needed, but it is overall highly reflective of who they are as a person, as a human being. When probed about their authenticity, each of them paused and thought deeply about the question, signifying an intentional introspective response to the question. Participant 2, noted:

> You know, on some level it is hard to do diversity and inclusion work well and not feel like you are being true to yourself. So, my answer to that question is again a both and – it's that yes, I bring my whole self to work knowing that for me, that I have to be able to look myself into the mirror and know that I am doing my work with a modicum of integrity, that I expect from me.

Participant 4 noted:

> I think so! I think so…because, I…I'm the kind of person that believes that we're all human beings in this together, and we all have lives outside of our work. And, I really encourage an atmosphere of being very open about having a life and having work life balance as much as you can. And, you know so I think that if you talk for example to people on my cabinet they know enough about me and my personal life to know that I am "a real person."

Participant 3 would agree with the above sentiments when asked about her perceived level of authenticity. She said she does feel like others perceive her as being authentic "Because I do think that it's important for staff to see you as a person." According to Participant 5, this is highly

important when dealing with people because "Sometimes, I do think people can take advantage of you if you're not authentic with them. I mean…I do."

The interaction with people and how they perceived them was a common remark by many of the participants as it relates to their authenticity. Participant 6 continued this trend as she shared:

> So, recognizing that to some people I can seem a little bipolar because they are times where I am really pissed and there are times where you know, I am laughing and joking, you know? The don't know how to…How do I address her? How do I approach her? How do I deal with that? So…but I always make sure that people know my leadership style comes from a place wanting what's best for those that I serve. And, so…you know…and it's authentic because I am authentic.

However, Participant 6 also confessed that it did take her while to get to this place, because when she first started, she wanted to lead like other people she had seen, but it was not working for her. She said:

> I think that as I first came into leadership, I try to lead like the leaders that I have had in the past. And, that wasn't really my style. That wasn't really me. And, so…I had to one: gain a self-awareness of what is my style?

Participant 7 agreed with others noting that she is fully present at work and is authentic in her leadership. She articulated:

> I have to make sure I don't use too much profanity because I'm a…I'm a… I'm sorry, but that's what I do. So, sometimes, it comes out. But, yeah, I think I bring my whole authentic self. I self-monitor because there are times when… this is how I think of it… that I have a lane that I have to stay in…and sometimes even though my authentic self shows up.

However, an aspect from a few of the interviews that emerged in relation to being authentic was code-switching, which is a term often used in the study of linguistics. According to Scott (2000), code switching is when someone operates between multiple languages by shifting the language they use or the way they express themselves in certain conversations. Components of code-switching are typically socioeconomic class and cultural identity. In other words, the middle class would use more "elaborate" linguistic codes, whereas the working class would use "restricted" linguistic codes. It has been theorized that there are different languages and slangs used between classes and cultures, causing the minority to assimilate if in a dominant culture organization.

Although Einar Haugen introduced code-switching in 1954 to describe the fluid nature in which multilingual people move between languages, the definition of the term has since expanded to capture *all* the ways in which people adjust communication and expression based on their audience (Nelson, 1990). Many have described this as a tool in which people of color use to navigate white spaces (Cross & Strauss, 1998; DeBose, 1992).

For example, Participant 7 exclaimed that code switching is:

…a way of behaving. It's a way of being. It's a way of presenting yourself. So, right now I'm talking very proper using what I would consider to be very appropriate English with you because this is a formal interview. And, if you and I were just talking, I would probably revert…

In other words, code switching is understanding where you are and the type of environment you are in and adjusting your language based on those precepts. It is the ability to know where you are and bring a type of political cache to the conversation that helps one understand how or when to adjust. On the other hand, Participant 5 used code switching in a

different context, but with the same underlying meaning based on change, alteration, and adjustment. Participant 5 noted:

> And, as I call it, and I try to tell my kids, you know, I look at it as code-switching and it just depends on how you take on the responsibilities of the position that you have. You know my mom was just a first-grade teacher. I won't say *just*, but she did not have any leadership responsibilities in that role. But, she understood that she didn't need to go in and try to take over everything, you know, when she would go to work. But, she knew at home that was what she had to do because my dad was tired from being at work all day and being a leader all day, that when we got home, that was where she showed her leadership style. So, I understood that you can turn it on, turn it off. And, you had to be able to work in the environment that you were placed in.

Participant 7 would agree with Participant 5's idea of code-switching, as she contended:

> So, when you talk about…when you talk about bringing your authentic self to a leadership role or what that means. So, there are different settings that you're always operating in, right? So, you really need to be able to read the room, read the space… make people in that space to understand how my authentic self is going to be perceived by these people. And, you come to a particular conclusion about how you should operate in the space. Then you likely will do some code-switching. And, I do that sometimes because what that means is I don't really need to be on display for everybody. I'm not going to let everybody see my authentic self. I do so because it's not likely to help me do what I need to do in that space or to accomplish what I set out to accomplish.

For them, code-switching has allowed them to gain entry into places that they would not normally enter. Code-switching allows a person the ability to alter how one may express

themselves based on their audience in an ingratiating manner. They do believe this is part of

being authentic in their leadership style but recognize when they should bring all of them or just

parts of them to a certain situation. In sum, the majority of the participants feel like they are

authentic in what they do and how their leadership has evolved. They described a need to be

authentic in what they do and share parts about them, including their experiences, to their staff

and people they work with. They found that this has helped them to understand people and

provide a foundation for trust regarding their leadership capabilities. Although, of the one

participant who was not included, she noted that many of her colleagues did not perceive her as

bringing her authentic self to work and she said trust is the reason this is so. She noted that career

wise and professionally she brought 100% of herself, but she was not open in sharing other

aspects of her personal story. This is important to include because although she physically fully

present, there is still a piece that plays a vital role in being authentic in a leadership role: trust.

Summary

This chapter thoroughly describes both the data collection and qualitative analysis

process that was used to conduct this research. In doing so, six main themes emerged from the

analysis, which are seen to influence the experiences and processes that these seven African

American women senior administrators attribute to their leadership style development. To

support the findings, quotes from the each of the seven interviews that relate to each of the main

themes are interwoven in this chapter. The participants used their interview to tell their story to

provide the researcher with information that helped her understand their experiences that

contributed to the development of their leadership style. While many of them did not initially

offer concrete definitions of transformational leadership, their preferred style was consistent with

the aspects of a transformational leader. However, when listing the five traditional managerial styles of leadership, the term transformational leadership directly surfaced in many of the interviews. Although a few of them preferred a combination leadership style, in particular the transformational-democratic, they talked about how being democratic is not as efficient and effective on its own, which lent them to voice transformational as the more preferred style. Each of them went on to state how the qualities modeled by their parents' approach to leadership guided their leadership style development and showed them how to present a level of authenticity in the workplace. The participants mentioned how others may view them as leaders, especially when in disagreement or an immediate decision needs to be made and as a result different aspect of them would emerge. Many also affirmed the influence of gender and race on their leadership style, providing deep context relevant to the situation and where they are and the challenges they have experienced because of gender and race. They would describe this concept of intersectionality, whether that be race, gender, age, etc., as being applicable and how it does inform their leadership style.

In closing, from each of the interviews, it was quite apparent how the qualities of their parents and supervisors, mentor relationships, connecting with people and their own personal experiences not only steered their leadership style development but they were all foundational components that helped them to advance their senior leadership position. There was also personal connection or interaction with others that many of them experienced that helped them develop an authentic leadership style that is true to self.

Next, in chapter five a discussion of the results with connection to the relevant literature in the field is presented. In addition to this, chapter five provides conclusions from this research,

outlines the strengths and limitations from this study and presents recommendations for future

research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study was executed to answer the following question: How do African American women in senior roles at APLUs in Alabama describe their experiences of developing a leadership style? The supporting research questions are: What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity?; and, How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders?

There were seven African American women in these roles at these institutions that were interviewed about their leadership style development process. The participants were African American women, at least 30 years of age, and who had worked in a senior role for more than five years. By using a multiple case study approach, the researcher compared each interview with one another through a coding process for proper data analysis. NVivo®, a qualitative data analysis software program, was used to assist the researcher as she organized, transcribed, coded, evaluated, and interpreted the data.

Chapter five opens with a summary of the results and further interprets the findings by placing them in the context of previous literature. In addition to this, this chapter discusses the implications of the research, strengths limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Results

This research thoroughly addressed the leadership styles of seven African American women who hold senior roles at APLUs in Alabama. Through the researcher's initial investigations, she found there was not a lot of research available on African American women, African American women in leadership roles, or African American women at higher education

institutions (Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Holmes, 2004).

Therefore, there were clear gaps in the literature on African American women's leadership style development (Counts, 2012; Davis, 2016; Robinson 2017; Wiggs-Harris 2011).

The data for this study were collected using a qualitative multiple case study approach. This approach was used as it can add more depth and intricate insights about such a small, but important, niche of people. This qualitative approach has also allowed the researcher to demonstrate possible similarities as well as differences in leadership styles of African American women at different institutions. The analysis of the data brought forth six different themes related to African American women's leadership style development. These themes include: (a) they describe a transformational leadership style as their preferred leadership style; (b) qualities modeled by their parents guided their leadership style development; (c) understanding and connecting with people is important in their process; (d) their gender and race required them to work hard at leading; (e) mentorship is a priority; and, (f) being authentic and true to themselves is imperative in the workplace.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine how African American women in senior roles at member institutions of APLU describe their experience in developing a leadership style. To answer this research question, the researcher used a qualitative analysis approach accompanied with the multiple case study approach espoused by Yin (2014). To select the African American women to be a part of this study, purposeful sampling was used, which allowed the researcher to strategically select these women leader in an effort to learn important information that would answer the research question and add value to both the public administration and leadership

literatures. This qualitative analysis provided evidence for six central themes related to the authentic leadership style development of African American women senior administrators: (a) they describe a transformational leadership style as their preferred leadership style (b) qualities modeled by their parents guided their leadership style development; (c) understanding and connecting with people is important in their process; (d) their gender and race required them to work hard at leading; (e) mentorship is a priority; and, (f) being authentic and true to themselves is imperative in the workplace.

To collect the data, the researcher performed semi-structured interviews with a sample size of seven African American women in senior roles at APLUs in the State of Alabama. Each of the women were at least 30 years of age and had been a senior leadership position for at least five years. These criteria to participate in this study allowed the researcher to collect rich data from African American that would have deep insight into the dissertation topic. According to the steps identified by Yin (2014), the researcher followed every step that pertains to both the data collection and data analysis processes. Each of the interviews were conducted by phone or in-person and lasted approximately one hour. The interview questions were open-ended, and field tested to ensure the questions were appropriate for the participants. During the interview, probing questions were also used to gauge more information from each of the respondents until saturation was reached. Once data collection reached saturation, each of the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher verified the accuracy of the transcripts by comparing the recordings to the transcripts numerous times to account for any errors. She also sent the transcripts to each of the participants to check for accuracy on what they had relayed during the interview, otherwise known as member checking. Majority of the participants did not have much to content correct, except for small grammatical errors they wished to address. After

89

the requested changes were made, the updated copy of the interview was sent back to each of the respective participants for their records.

Once all of the interviews were transcribed, member checked for accuracy and returned, a within-case and cross-case analysis of the data were completed. The data was then reviewed, organized and placed in categories, where patterns and themes emerged. This process was done based on Yin's (2014) interview approach to bring more credibility, reliability and transferability to the research process. When done this way, the process can be replicated by other scholars, in turn allowing for more consistency in the field.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings from this research study reinforced the examination from the literature on this subject from previous research (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Turner & Mavin, 2008; Dawson, 2015) using the life stories approach in an effort to explain how leaders develop a strong, positive self-awareness and self-concept that undergird the authentic leadership development process. This study's findings involve six overarching areas that are meaningful to the authentic leadership development of African American women senior administrators. These themes are: (a) they describe a transformational leadership style as their preferred leadership style; (b) qualities modeled by their parents guided their leadership style development; (c) understanding and connecting with people is important in their process; (d) their gender and race required them to work hard at leading; (e) mentorship is a priority; and, (f) being authentic and true to themselves is imperative in the workplace.

In this section, the themes are discussed in relation to the proposed theoretical framework for this study, the authentic leadership development framework, and the research questions are

answered. The guiding research question is: How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style? And, the supporting research questions are: What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity? and How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders? The following overarching themes directly answer the stated research questions.

Preferred Transformational Leadership Style

The participants in this study preferred a transformational leadership style. According to Burns (1978), a transformational leader can encourage a follower to search beyond their own self goals to achieve a larger organizational goal. In other words, a transformational leadership style, a value-based framework, is the "the leader's *intent* to activate employee's higher order needs" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 5). They provide their followers with authentic wants, needs, aspirations and long-term goals that they can identify with. In relation to past research on this topic, the findings are consistent with prior research in the field (Benjamin, 1997; Byrd & Campbell, 2010; Stanley, 2009; Parker, 2005). For example, in Jones' (1992) study, she issued the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass, 1985) to seventeen African American women college presidents, and found that their leadership style was more transformational. They described their leadership approaches in terms of "hands-on, team building, empowerment, vision creation, and supervision that requires you to roll up your sleeves" (Jones, 1992, p. 120). She also affirmed these findings with follow up interviews with each of the participants.

In another mixed-methods study by Campbell (2010) on eighteen African American women administrators of the 1890 Land-Grant Cooperative Extension system, she examined the

relationships between personal, professional characteristics, and leadership style preferences. Many of the African American women involved in the study were from mostly southern states. Her surveys and interviews affirmed that African American women prefer a transformational leadership style more often than a transactional leadership style.

For the participants in this study, the preferred transformational leadership style is consistent with previous literature on this topic. A transformational leadership style has a communal aspect, whereby these leaders focus on the development of their subordinates, motivating and inspiring their teams, and paying close attention to their subordinate's individual needs. The participants in this study described many of these same characteristics when describing their leadership style. The theme from this study is parallel to the findings from previous studies that investigate the leadership style development of African American women leaders. As Evans (2010) notes, "Changing leadership styles and specifically the transformational, considerate style are more conducive to women leadership and have assisted them in accessing top management positions" (p. 549). When analyzing the data from the majority of the participants in this study, the same can be said for them as well.

Qualities Modeled by Parents

For majority of the participants, both or one of their parents modeled an appropriate leadership style for them to embody. According to Hartman and Harris (1992), some aspects of leadership are learned early on in life and the foundation for leadership is often established by a parent. Many of the participants shared how the qualities modeled by their parents in their childhood shaped their leadership style and how they began to lead later in life. For example, in Davis & Maldonado's (2015) qualitative study, they conducted semi-structured interviews as

well with senior level academic executives (i.e. presidents, vice presidents or deans) at both four-year and two-year colleges. They found that the women in their study often referenced parents and family members who provided strong guidance and support, which has profoundly impacted their leadership development process. Similarly, this statement can be said for the participants in this study. This is also consistent with previous research on this topic, as this theme provides evidence on how those values, initial teachings and learnings of a leader begin in the home, primarily with the parents. According Williams and Stockton (1973), it is in the family where an individual's personality is first developed, values are taught, identity is formed, and status is assigned. In this study, along with many others, it has become apparent that these African American women leaders possess certain leadership qualities and characteristics that can be attributed to their childhood rearing.

Impact of Gender and Race on African American Women Leadership Style

The intersection of gender and race on the African American women leaders is important to understand when assessing the leadership style development process of these individuals. This finding is consistent with research from scholars like Davis and Maldonado (2015) as they found that for African American women, there is an impact of race and gender on their leadership styles as they have advanced in their careers. When the spheres of race, gender, and other identity groups interact they shape social realities and inform the multiple dimensions of the lived experiences of African American women (Parker, 2005). For majority of the participants in this study, race and gender mattered and have influenced their leadership style. According to Giddings (1984) these concepts structure an African American woman's experience.

In Holmes' (2004) study on African American college presidents at both public and private institutions, many of the experiences they shared were within the context of race, which are often those that are reported in higher education. This can also be seen in Lloyd-Jones (2009) study as she argues that when race converges with gender, a double standard dichotomy surfaces for African American women. Oftentimes this reduces the access to leadership positions, generating ambivalence about their ability to lead (Robinson, 2017). For many of the African American women in the study, they noted that on occasions their ability to lead has been questioned, which they talked about in the terms of both gender and race. Therefore, it is important to look at the interaction of race and gender in the leadership literature rather than treating them as separate constructs. Instead, these constructs should be treated as parallel as these identifiable characteristics can play a role in the leadership development process for African American women leaders (Parker, 2005).

Understanding and Connecting with People

Additionally, the participants noted how understanding and connecting with people is important in their professional and personal development process. Each of them noted how relationships are important, often referencing how they help them learn more about themselves and how they are to lead others. In other words, their relationship with people formed the centerpiece of their thoughts about leadership. In Waring's (2003) study on African-American female college presidents, she found that their conceptions of leadership, such as decision-making, was grounded in the understanding of people and what they need. She stated that "Most of the women report that they are concerned about the relationships because attending to relationships makes them better leaders" (Waring 2003, p. 40). In understanding and connecting

with people, decision-making and responsibility are also more likely to be decentralized, where many of the participants may agree that their democratic leadership style may emerge.

According to Bruno and Lay (2008), leaders also have greater success when understanding people because they learn how to better represent the society they operate in. As a result, leaders learn to have more diverse and inclusive perspectives when leading their respective areas. Butler and Waldroop (2004) also argue that when leaders intentionally get to know people it "can boost productivity by using their employees' relational interests and skills to guide personnel choices, project assignments, and career development" (p. 1). They found that when leaders are effective in this area they gain influence, interpersonal facilitation, relational creativity and team leadership. Butler and Waldroop (2004) note these are important when developing people in the organization as well as the leader himself/herself. Therefore, this finding is also consistent with the mainstream literature on leadership, particularly emotional intelligence, and the importance of why leaders, not necessarily African American women, should aspire to have genuine connection with people to lead them more effectively.

Mentorship is a Priority

Each of the study participants overwhelmingly shared how having a mentor in their lives was instrumental to their leadership development process as well as ascending the ladder to their senior leadership position. Oftentimes this mentor was a peer or supervisor and for some of them the relationship was informal. Studies have shown that African American women who seek to obtain high-level positions are often in need of support to get there (Counts, 2012; Davis, 2016; Robinson, 2017; Sobers, 2014; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013; Wiggs-Harris, 2011). These mentors, especially those early on in the career, are seen to be influential in the professional

success of these women. Each of the participants in this study provided a narrative on a particular mentor and how this mentor shaped their style, taught them how to lead, and ultimately, influenced their career trajectory. According to Davis and Maldonado (2015), "Establishing strategic relationships in the academy is a valuable tool for African American women to gain access to higher-level promotions and career opportunities" (p. 60). In other words, having access to mentors helps these women navigate the leadership structure in their institution (Pace, 2017).

In Holmes' (2004) study, each of the presidents credited mentors with assisting them in their overall personal and professional development process. Research has shown that these support systems such as mentors are key in the leadership development process of African American women leaders (Sobers, 2014). Oftentimes, this tap on the shoulder by a mentor to the participants was considered a catalyst that put them on a path towards executive, or senior, leadership. Therefore, the findings from this research reinforce the literature on this subject, underlying the importance of mentorship when career advancement is a goal.

Authentic and True to Self

According to Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004), authentic leadership relates to an African American woman's leadership development process in the leader's awareness of self, how she believes she is perceived by others, and how she intentionally employs leadership based on those precepts. This is an entirely reflective process as well as subjective that is experienced by the individual. This means, if the individual believes they are being authentic, then by definition, they are (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eriksen, 2009). Being authentic and true to self are common qualities that were outlined by the participants. In Gardner et al.'s (2011) study on the

authentic leadership theory, they addressed how a person's values and being true to themselves are significant of an emerging authentic leadership style. These attributes also held true to majority of the participants in this study.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) posited that those who consider themselves authentic leaders encompass genuine leadership, lead from conviction, and operates as originals, and not copies of others. The majority of the participants in this study are consistent with the research on authenticity and the African American women leadership style development process. The participants in this study shared how the importance of being self-aware of their values, morals, and beliefs are foundational to their process of becoming a leader.

According to Biswas-Diener (2010), authentic leadership development, in particular self-awareness, is helpful to a leader's development and growth, which can lead to positive leadership outcomes (see also, Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012). Many of the women proclaimed that they do indeed bring their whole self to work, intend lead by example, and are self-aware of who they are at all times. These are all authentic leadership qualities described by Avolio & Gardner (2005), Avolio, Luthans & Walumbwa (2004), Gardner (2005), Gardner et al. (2011), and Ladkin & Taylor (2010). Additionally, in research that has examined the experiences of African American women leadership style development, this finding is consistent in this literature as well (Bell, 1990; Counts, 2012; Davis, 2016; Eagly, 2005; Robinson, 2017; Sobers, 2014; Wiggs-Harris, 2011).

Addressing the Research Questions

The authentic leadership development framework was used in this study to understand how African American women senior administrators at member institutions of APLU in

97

Alabama describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style. The aspects of the framework used in this study were the antecedents (i.e. personal history and trigger events) and identity, a component of self-awareness in authentic leadership. According to Gardner et al. (2005), personal history consists of family influences, role models (a parent, teacher, sibling, coach or mentor), early life challenges, educational and work experiences. Trigger events consists of those pivotal internal or external events that challenge the leader, often seen as catalysts that increase their sense of self-awareness (Gardner et al., 2005). Also, there is self-awareness, which embodies components of values, identity, emotions and motives/goals. For this dissertation study, the primary focus was on identity, which often forms as a consequence of the leader's reflection and from the interaction with others. The findings from this research enrich as well as provide relevant evidence to support each of these aspects of the authentic leadership development framework. The emergent themes provide rich, solid and substantive detail into the experiences of African American women leaders and their leadership style development journey. This theoretical framework was appropriate to use at is allowed the participants to share their life story, providing the researcher with pathway search the depths of their lived experiences.

The second theoretical construct that was important to this dissertation study to discuss in relation to the findings was intersectionality. Intersectionality explores multiple dimensions of identity (i.e. race, gender, age, sex, ethnicity, class, etc.), whereas authentic leadership development focuses on identity as it relates to oneself (Josselson, 1996). In other words, authentic leadership is more concerned with intersecting social identities in relation to expressing an authentic sense of self and living an authentic life (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Eriksen, 2009). Therefore, intersectionality is also needed as a lens to interpret the findings to better understand the intricate components of identity with certain groups. In

combination with authentic leadership, intersectionality is also found to impact an African American woman's leadership style as they embrace various aspects of their identity.

Therefore, the research questions and answers to them are as follows: 1) How do African American women senior administrators describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style? According to the findings, they describe this process as being authentic and one that has evolved over time. Many of the participants noted how their preferred leadership style has not always been what it is present day, instead it has morphed as they have ascended to their senior leadership position where many of them embrace a transformational leadership style; 2) What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity? The findings have shown that mentoring and understanding and connecting with people are some of the primary factors that help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity. Also, the types of people they interact with can also hinder them in achieving this level of authenticity, which is oftentimes due to low levels of trust, accountability, and/or, for some of them, their need to gain access to areas they would have otherwise not been afforded causing them to code-switch; and, 3) How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders? For many of them, race and gender are salient components that have influenced their leadership style development. It influenced them in a way to be more conscious of who they are and how they interact with people. They understood how being too firm, direct and authoritative might promote a negative impression from counterparts or subordinates, which is why they have maintained a level of self-awareness that positively reinforce their intersecting identities.

Overall, the findings from this research greatly contribute to understanding the leadership style development of African American women senior leaders using the authentic leadership

framework. The participants shared how their leadership identity has emerged from their personal experiences, helping them to arrive at a sense of self that they felt was authentic to who they were and were comfortable with sharing in the workplace. The experiences of these African American women can potentially provide a roadmap to others aspiring to advance to senior leadership positions in academia as well as in business. These findings can also provide a foundation for future research to build upon and expand the research on African American women leaders.

Strengths

Since African American women have so frequently been left out of the mainstream leadership literature (Milner, 2006; Pace, 2017; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013), this research provided the once marginalized with opportunity to be seen, heard and felt. They each have an appropriate foundation to voice their lived experiences by telling their stories. Through this qualitative analysis, practitioners and scholars are provided with a deeper understanding of the African American women leadership development. As Sheep (2006) contends, "Whether or not organizations want the whole person, the whole person reports for work" (p. 358). Therefore, this could potentially have implications towards both leadership and diversity training to be more inclusive in research and workplace practices.

Another strength of this research is the content validity (Bickman & Rog, 2008; Brady & Collier, 2010; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013). By using a multiple case study approach, instead of a single case study, this research can potentially cover different contextual conditions that can possibly expand the reach of the findings to a broader context. According to Bickman and Rog (2008), "the evidence from multiple case studies should produce a more compelling and robust

case study" (p. 260). Therefore, using this approach, the findings can potentially be applied to other African American and presumably other women in parallel positions working in similar institutions as well as organizations. Through multiple sources of evidence, this can bring great clarity to their own leadership style development providing them with the proper tools to understand their authentic process.

Last, this qualitative approach of using case studies is good because they account for descriptive inference (Brady & Collier, 2010; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Yin, 2014). Through the use of multiple cases and semi-structured interviews, the researcher has gained a thick description of information that would otherwise not be shared in a quantitative approach to this topic (Brady & Collier, 2010). Through this approach, a better understanding on what causes authentic leadership style development to happen in African American women is intended to be shared to provide the literature with better insight for the years to come.

Limitations

For this design, there are three distinct limitations to be aware of: inability to generalize, social desirability, and researcher bias. First, generalizability is a limitation (Brady & Collier, 2010). Due to the primary focus of this research being African American women at an APLU member institution in Alabama, the researcher cannot generalize to other races or ethnicities. In addition to this, since the sample size is small, seven African American women senior administrators, the researcher is unable to infer to a broader population of African American women leaders at other institutions or in different public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

The second limitation is social desirability (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013). This affects the research because the participants may be untruthful in reporting her own leadership characteristics in an effort to please society as well as herself. These women may have the social desirability to be like something – in reality – they are not. Therefore, this can potentially be a limiting factor in the true validity of the research.

Last, researcher bias (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013) is a limitation to this study. Through using purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally chose African American women leaders who are senior administrators at an APLU member institution in Alabama to be a part of the case studies. Because of this, discretion was given to the researcher as to who was included in the study. Therefore, researcher bias can potentially be present due to the autonomy of researchers being able to select the participants to be included in the study.

The researcher chose to sacrifice these limitations in an effort to add African American women in senior roles at an APLU member institution in the leadership literature. As Counts (2012) notes, it is through these rich examinations "that the tapestry of a rich leadership history can be woven" (p. 17). Therefore, although this population has often been left out of the mainstream literature (Loden, 1985; Milner, 2006; Parker, 1996; Robinson, 2017; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013), this research intentionally includes their voice in the discussion providing them with a platform for scholars and practitioners to understand their experiences, offering a foundation to explore better leadership training programs as well as areas for future research.

Implications for Practice

It is vitally important to understand the ways in which African American women leaders who desire upward mobility describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style as the process to develop a leadership style has been researched as an important element of an organization (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Campbell, 2010; Counts, 2012; Milner, 2006; Robinson, 2017; Waring, 2003; Wiggs-Harris, 2011). This study could provide a framework for African American women who desire to attain senior leadership positions in academia as well as in business. This could be a tool for them to refer to when looking to advance in their workplace, providing them with a clear guide that could assist them in attaining a senior role.

Additionally, the results of this study can inform both institutional and organizational leaders on diversity training programs that can possibly increase awareness of the different biases and stereotypes that are placed on underrepresented groups. These diversity training programs could focus on inclusion practices, unconscious bias awareness, positive employee interaction, and strategies on how to advance to senior leadership positions (Counts, 2012; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013). The findings could be used as a reference point for all sectors who seek to eliminate cultural barriers and obstacles that can stunt the upward mobilization of African American women in their organizations.

Last, public administrators could also assist institutional leaders in developing assessments and questionnaires that could help African American women leaders identify their talents and leadership characteristics when looking to obtain a senior leadership position. This information can potentially be crucial to institutional leaders when recommending leadership and mentorship programs that can help those that are seeking higher positions in the academy (Counts, 2012). Offering diverse leadership training programs can be useful to the organizational

culture as the promotion of knowledge can potentially foster health working relationships and increase cultural competency amongst levels amongst workers (Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013).

Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the foundational research in this field and the results from this study, there is still more research needed to explore the leadership style development of African American women. To do this, first, scholars should look to explore the effects of intersectionality and leadership style development. In this study, studying intersectionality revealed how the experiences of African American women leaders must be understood not only in terms of race and gender, but other aspects must be considered as well (Chin, Desormeaux, & Sawyer, 2016). Many of the participants noted how there are other components that contribute to the leadership style development process. Therefore, including culture, spirituality, relationships, age, nationality and other identities may be salient to research in future studies. In Wiggs-Harris' (2011) piece, she found that "For African American women leaders and other individuals of color, leadership socialization and development of self-concept are influenced by their gender, racial, cultural, and spiritual identities" (p. 4). When considered interdependently, intersectionality may be useful to further explain how multiple identities may reinforce each other and enhance the leadership style development of African American women. Simply put, more studies are needed to better understand this phenomenon and the different groups African American women may identify with.

Next, there should also be more comparative studies (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Researchers should look to explore the similarities and differences between different groups, including: 1) African American women senior administrators at HBCUs as compared to those

who are at PWIs, 2) African American women senior administrators that work at member institutions a part of the APLU as compared to those that are not, 3) African American women senior administrators compared to women senior administrators of other cultural backgrounds, or 4) African American women institutional leaders compared to those who are in executive roles in the corporate arena. Since this study did not compare and contrast leaders, there should be more studies that do this to further examine the leadership development process and how it is reflected at different organizations and institutions. This will help in framing the type of leadership development programs that can potentially be implemented at these organizations and institutions that will retain and advance leaders from diverse backgrounds.

Third, researchers should contemplate conducting a similar study to this one in an effort to increase the heterogeneity of the sample by including more African American women leaders in different roles at similar institutions. For example, by also including those that are deans, department heads, and the like, there would be greater diversity in the sample, allowing more African American women to qualify for the study. Additionally, scholars might also consider altering the methodology that is used to be more quantitative based so that the findings can possibly be generalized to other African American women leaders.

Last, it may be useful to deeply examine early childhood experiences of leadership style development in these leaders. From conducting the interviews with each participant, there seemed to be a deep pause and reflection when asked about their childhood and parent's approach to leadership, signifying there could be more that needs to be unveiled. According to Hunt, Boal, and Sorenson (1990), individual differences in leadership theories may result from those early childhood experiences. For example, not only do we tend to have ideas about a leader before or after when we meet them, but we also tend to label a person a leader who fits our idea

of a leader (Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986). Therefore, these scholars argue that at an early age, people form their own definition of a leader and what a leader looks like. Because of this, it is imperative to understand the experiences that may shape a person's understanding at such an early age. Lord et al. (1986) developed the implicit leadership theory as they found that an individual's cognitions are based on their interpretation of their world and these preconceived notions are used to interpret their surroundings as well as control their behaviors. Therefore, further research on this topic would benefit this stream of literature by delving deep into the individual's childhood to uncover those early childhood influences that may impact the leadership style development process.

It was beyond the scope of this particular dissertation to investigate all of these points in depth, which means there is much room for more research on topics that examine the leadership style development process of African American women leaders. As stated, there is need for a deeper focus on intersectionality, comparative studies, larger sample sizes and using different theoretical components to explore the nuances of one's childhood. Including one or more of these recommendation for future studies can potentially help increase our knowledge on life experiences of a person and their connection to the leadership style development process.

Conclusion

This dissertation study was conducted to fill the gap in the literature on African American women leaders developing an authentic leadership style. In particular, senior administrators at Association of Public and Land-grant Universities in Alabama were examined as this population of people have been least explored and oftentimes overlooked in the mainstream leadership literature. The theoretical foundation for this study was the authentic leadership development

framework and a multiple case study approach was used to achieve the results of this study. Although not used as a theoretical basis, the concept of intersectionality was included to discuss the results and how the findings relate to African American women senior administrators developing an authentic leadership style.

The data were used to evaluate and explain the various components that are important to consider when African American women seek to ascend to senior leadership positions. The results from this study are relevant and substantial as it provides evidence on the central themes that are foundational for the development of leadership styles in African American women. As opposed to reverting back to negative stereotypes or presumptions of this category of leaders, both institutional and organizational leaders should seek to provide strategies and trainings that will help them on their journey towards an authentic leadership style. The overarching goal is to help more African American women attain, maintain and advance to senior leadership positions, as well as edify and strengthen leaders to pay it forwards to other African American women who seek leadership roles and desire upward mobility.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND THEORY RELEVANCE

Interview Question	Theoretical Contribution	Research Question Addressed
How would you describe your leadership style?	Identity (Self-awareness)	1
What experiences led you to develop your style of leadership?	Personal History (Antecedents)	1
As you advanced to your position, how did mentorship, if at all, play a role in your process?	Personal History (Antecedents)	2
In what ways do you find your leadership style an asset to your abilities to lead?	Identity (Self-awareness)	2
In what ways, if any, do you find your style a hindrance in your abilities to lead?	Identity (Self-awareness)	2
Do you think your childhood experiences and your parents' approach to leadership influenced how you lead today? If so, how? If not, why not?	Personal History (Antecedents)	2
What are your most fulfilling experiences in your role as a senior level administrator?	Trigger Events (Antecedents)	2
What are your most challenging experiences in your role as a senior level administrator?	Trigger Events (Antecedents)	2
Do you believe your gender influences your leadership style? If so, in what ways?	Identity (Self-awareness)	3
Do you believe your race influences your leadership style? If so, in what ways?	Identity (Self-awareness)	3

Note: Research question 1 = How do African American women leaders describe their experiences of developing an authentic leadership style?; Research question 2 = What factors hinder and help African American women leaders achieve personal and leadership authenticity?; and, Research question 3 = How does race and gender influence the leadership style of African American women leaders? (Interview questions are adapted from Robinson, 2017)

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT (EMAIL)

Greetings!

You are receiving tis email because you are currently an African American woman who is in a senior administrator role at a member institution of the Association of Public Land-grant Universities. As a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Auburn University, I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study that explores leadership style development of African American women in higher education.

As a participant, you will be asked to give a phone interview. I anticipate this interview to last between 45 and 60 minutes, but no longer than 90 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded to transcribe and code later once all data are collected.

The benefits and risks of the participants involved in the research study are extremely low or insignificant. The direct benefits are with providing the participants with a platform to articulate their experiences through their stories. Another benefit would be in understanding the leadership style development of African American women to potentially increase their presence in senior administrator roles at higher level institutions and provide inclusive leadership training programs. Although no study is without risks, proper measures will be taken to ensure ethicalness or any confidentiality measures that may possibly arise from this research.

If you would like to participate in this study, please reply to this email so we can schedule a time that is convenient for you for the phone interview. If you have questions about this study, please contact Olivia Cook at ojc0001@auburn.edu or Dr. Paul Harris (dissertation chair) at paul.harris@auburn.edu.

All the best,

Olivia Cook, MPA
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