

Dr. Condoleezza Rice's Leadership Strategies While Overcoming the Glass Ceiling

Erica J. Butler, D.B.A.

Abstract

A qualitative case study delineating the leadership strategies used by Dr. Rice to overcome the glass ceiling. Transformational leadership and glass ceiling conceptual frameworks informed the study. Primary and secondary archival data revealed three emergent themes that are characteristic of African American women and indicate a need for implementation of diversity among business practices to facilitate the appointment and promotion of African American women to higher levels of leadership.

Problem

In 2008, African American women represented only 3.3% of senior executive level positions, an underrepresentation of this minority group; by comparison, African American women fill 86% of all other positions within the business sector (Pompper, 2011; Scales, 2010).

- The **general business problem** is that barriers remain prevalent, making progress to senior executive positions difficult for African American women.
- The **specific business problem** is the underrepresentation of African American women in top leadership positions resulting in the inability of business leaders to diversify their leadership talent.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to delineate the leadership strategies that the first African American woman U.S. Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, used to reduce and eliminate advancement barriers and accelerate her career during the administration of former President George W. Bush.

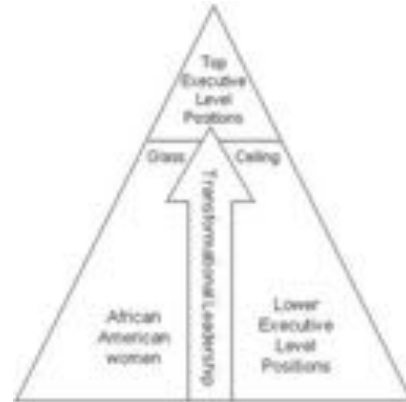
Research Question

What leadership strategies can African American women employ to overcome the glass ceiling?

Relevant Literature

The conceptual framework for this study consisted of two business concepts, **the glass-ceiling** and **gender-related leadership strategies**, which relate to African American women and their struggle to achieve higher leadership positions.

- Two Wall Street Journal reporters, Hymowitz and Schellhardt, first introduced the concept of the glass ceiling in a 1986 article.
- MacGregor Burns, pioneer of gender-related leadership strategies, first introduced the transformational leadership strategy in 1978 (Shibru & Darshan, 2011).



Procedures

Content analysis involved using a naturalistic and holistic approach to the collection of data to interpret phenomena and their related effects on humans (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

The qualitative data collection instrument, **Erica Butler's Glass-Ceiling Leadership Strategy Inquiry**, guided the data collection, and informed the research question.

•Instrument used to guide the data collection included six sub research questions focused on the conceptual framework.

•The data collection technique included primary and secondary literature derived from web content for the purposes of the content analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were categorized, assigned specific attributes, reviewed for context, and referenced separately (Doyle, 2008).

Upon completion of these steps, the data results were identified and reorganized until specific conclusions, formulations, concepts, themes, and patterns relevant to the research topic and specific to the business problem were generated (Doyle, 2008).

Findings

An assemblage of 120 unique sources collected included autobiographical and biographical peer reviewed data for the content analysis. Among the 120 sources, 6,273 instances included data passages of transformational leadership strategy, glass-ceiling barriers, and race and gender constructs affecting African American women as leaders. The result concluded that both data written by Dr. Rice and data written on Dr. Rice by other authors identified the same leadership strategy, glass-ceiling barriers, and race and gender constructs affecting African American women as leaders.

Relative to the research question of this study, the findings indicated three characteristics of Dr. Rice's behavior, which is characteristic of transformational leadership strategy. There were also three glass-ceiling barriers identified that are characteristic of the struggle that African American women often have to overcome when pursuing top level leadership positions. Lastly, three race and gender constructs affecting African American women as leaders emerged.

Limitations

Limited to written work used as collected data due to the unavailability of the African American women in top-level executive leadership positions for participation.

The data included passages collected from unique sources from Dr. Rice's published autobiographical and biographical data.

Conclusions

Dr. Rice's educational background and career milestones have afforded her to use transformational leadership to nurture, motivate, and influence her staff to perform to the highest standards in order to produce results, achieving positive and long lasting change for the U.S. Department of State.

Dr. Rice faced many glass-ceiling barriers, including international security concerns and governmental policy regulation in a political arena dominated by male superiority.

Dr. Rice is the forerunner of the population of African American women achieving diversity among the governmental hierarchy through her background in higher education and her integrity.

Social Change Implications

The three areas in need for social change are:

- transformational leadership at the executive level (inclusive of African American women)
- removal of glass-ceiling barriers to facilitate fair appointment and promotion to executive levels of leadership,
- implementation of mentoring programs for increased motivation among this population within the organizational culture.

Implementation of diversity among organizational policies and procedures to facilitate appointment and promotion of African American women to higher levels of leadership will reduce the organization's participation in discriminate treatment.

Diversity will also increase the opportunities for African American women to contend fairly for higher levels of leadership resulting in a mutual benefit for both the employee and organization .