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African American Social Service Nonprofit Leaders' Success Strategies

Orletta Ekpene Caldwell
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Orletta Ekpene Caldwell

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

African American Social Service Nonprofit Leaders' Success Strategies

by

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MS, Cardinal Stritch University, 1994

BPA, Wayne State University, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

This study sought to understand successful African American social service nonprofit leaders' stories about building sustainable organizations. There was currently limited research on this topic. Therefore, the study used a basic qualitative methodology to understand their backgrounds and influences that impacted their ability to maintain a sustainable nonprofit organization despite the unique challenges these leaders face. The White racial frame and social cognitive theory theories identified the context and foundation of these challenges. Nine successful African American social services nonprofit organization leaders were interviewed. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the interview data. The interviews helped illuminate how participants benefit the broader community; future nonprofit leaders employ and develop broader community awareness. The results indicated that African American executive directors, to be successful and maintain their organizations' sustainability over time, must understand and recognize community needs, have a team (or board), be willing to obtain expertise about the nonprofit organization sector, be fully self-aware, and be persistent. The participants' narratives provided nascent African American nonprofit leaders and social entrepreneurs guidelines to lessen the learning curve and prepare them to lead sustainable nonprofit organizations resulting in positive social change.

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to my daughter, Candace Caldwell, for silently cheering me on and for your unwavering support. To my mother, whose mandate was that I earn a degree higher than hers and her love. To my amen corner, Valerie Witcher Williams, Tonya Sanders Gray, Karen Burton, Matheta Righa, and Janella Malone Barnes. You guys unfailingly lifted me up and never questioned the journey.

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Chapter 1: Foundation of the Study

Introduction

Since the United States' founding, social service nonprofit organizations have addressed many communities' issues and needs. Arnsberger et al. (2008) noted that Alexis de Tocqueville admired how the United States people tended to work together for the common good by developing charitable, religious, and arts organizations. However, this common good often did not include African Americans, who found themselves operating their nonprofit organizations under extraordinary circumstances. Even after the U.S. government ended segregation, there continued to be hindrances and roadblocks to building sustainable organizations (Cunningham, 2016).

The theoretical base for this study was the White racial frame (WRF). The WRF indicates that European American dominance is the lens that focuses on American societal structures and norms. Inherently, all decisions, policies, and models are based upon this framework and are often used unconsciously by individuals in the majority. In reaction to this framework, minorities develop *counterframes*, which are the actions minorities use to resist the errors and narratives of the WRF (Feagin, 2013).

Data collection using semi structured interviews documented the strategies of African American leaders maintaining sustainable nonprofit organizations. In the study, I sought to document African American social service nonprofit organization leaders' experiences and understand their strategy to build sustainable nonprofit organizations. This chapter establishes the study's foundation, including the background, problem

statement, and study purpose. Additionally, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks are presented.

Background

The Philadelphia African American Leadership Forum (PAALF) commissioned research on the state of African American-led nonprofit organizations in the city. The results showed that African American-led nonprofit organizations had fewer financial resources, were smaller, and were more dependent upon the government for long-term funding than those under a European American executive (Cunningham, 2016). Moreover, African American nonprofit organizations typically have fewer European American individuals on their boards of directors and serve a primarily African American clientele. These disparities hurt African American-led nonprofit organizations. Trzcinski and Sobeck (2012) lamented, “When these organizations are unable to survive or grow, communities are confronted with yet another loss regarding losing access to the specific social and human capital that these organizations have accumulated” (p. 501). Despite the challenges, African American entrepreneurs and leaders have operated sustainable organizations for centuries, yet this achievement has received little attention from society (Carson 2005; Dunbar 2012). It can be supposed that without the racially challenged issues, African American-led organizations can be sustainable at the same rate as other organizations in the broader society.

The participants of this study were African American social service nonprofit organization leaders, commonly referred to as executive directors, working in a large Midwest metropolitan city. Each participant-led their current organization for 5 or more

years. An examination of African American nonprofits' history from slavery to the present day, an overview of the nonprofit sector sustainability factors, and nonprofit leadership strategies will help understand and answer the research question. More specifically, it will help identify and understand the strategies used by African American nonprofit social service leaders to maintain their organization's sustainability despite the lack of support compared to White-led organizations.

Problem Statement

Many African American business leaders maintain sustainable organizations through different methods than their European American counterparts despite systemic racial challenges. Scholars indicated that a lack of exposure to entrepreneurship, financial assets, and education explained some racial disparities in the number of successful for-profit businesses. Thus, African American business leaders' sustainability challenges go beyond general business issues (Branch Associates, 2016; Fetsch, 2016; Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation, 2015). However, African Americans have built sustainable nonprofit organizations while overcoming significant and historical roadblocks

In the current research, I investigated how leaders overcome race-related challenges to run their organizations to reduce the learning curve and help new leaders succeed. African American nonprofit organizations serve primarily African Americans, who already experience racial disparities as well. Thus, the importance of successfully running these organizations and improving leadership strategies will be affected without those services' entire communities -who are already vulnerable- (Cunningham, 2016). While the African American community's needs increase, available financial support

from the government decreases, thus the tremendous need to understand how successful African American leaders run their organizations, even if they do not profit as much as European American organizations (Feagin, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study documented the leadership strategies and experiences of nine African American social service nonprofit organization leaders who have successfully maintained sustainable organizations in a large Midwest metropolitan city. The study aimed to explore the influences and perspectives in their background and experiences that led them to sustain a nonprofit organization despite working, as noted earlier, with historical and racial-related impediments. This study will help future leaders develop strategies for their organizations to remain sustainable in the long term by understanding the experiences shared by these leaders and, in that way, lessen the learning curve. This study is important as it can help other social services leaders and organizations grow and remain sustainable in the long term, particularly by overcoming the race-related challenges, implementing, and learning from those who have already been through these and how to overcome them. The shared experiences of successful leaders will provide valuable knowledge to future leaders. The existing body of knowledge in this subject area focuses on social services organizations without distinguishing between European Americans and African Americans.

Nevertheless, as mentioned, these groups have different realities, and thus, existing knowledge from research should not be generalized. The conditions in which European American organizations operate are not the same as those for African

Americans. Furthermore, the challenges that these two different populations experience are also not the same. There is already an existing inequality between European Americans and African Americans, so the needs of the African American communities are even more significant. This makes the inequality in which these two kinds of organizations operate even more significant, as the lack of support that African American nonprofit social services organizations receive worsens the situation of the broader African American community.

There is a need for further research based on African American organizations to provide valuable knowledge and inform future leaders and policymakers. In addition, the study wants to inform the wider society, particularly within the nonprofit sector, of the extra burdens placed upon these leaders and organizations when their humanity and leadership are diminished due to race, consciously or unconsciously.

Research Question

What leadership strategies implemented by successful African American social service nonprofit organization leaders helped them overcome racial challenges to remain sustainable?

Theoretical Framework

The WRF, as conceived by Feagin (2013), was selected as the theoretical framework for this study. The premise of the WRF is that being European American is the epitome of all that is good in civilization. This belief, which can be subconscious, permeates every facet of society, including the media, education, and government. The critical elements of WRF are a sense that being of European descent is a virtue, that the

European civilization worldview is the height of accomplishment, a denial of the impact of systematic racism, and a belief that society is post-racial or color-blind. It follows, then, that everything about being African is inherently wrong. As Feagin explained, European Americans perpetuate this premise because they need to rationalize the enslavement of and profiting from African American labor. European Americans found it essential to use questionable biological theories, religious principles, faulty intelligence, and scientific evidence to frame a foundation for developing the WRF (Feagin, 2013). People of color, in turn, use counterframes, a term coined by Feagin, to resist these premises. The central aspects of counterframe are “a strong analysis and critique of European American oppression; an aggressive countering of anti-African American framing; and a positive assertion of the humanity of all people and their right to real freedom and justice” (Feagin, 2013, p. 205).

The WRF’s impact on African Americans has led to the development of counterframing the assertions of the WRF, yet many in society have internalized African American perceived inferiority. Therefore, it was essential to provide a model of how an individual’s background affects their decision-making, which leads to an examination of social cognitive theory (SCT). The American historical racial background influences how individuals expect to be treated, particularly African Americans, and how European Americans behave with African Americans. The environment influences the way people behave, increasing the probabilities of such behaviors based on learned experiences and stereotypes. Through time the internalization of WRF of African Americans being inferior to European White, and the other way around respectably is accepted.

Counterframes of the WRF were developed, but reciprocal determinism was also the result of centuries of racial stereotypes and behaviors. In other words, reciprocal determinism is the notion that individuals behave in specific ways based upon the probability of what is going on in their world and not just because of the environment. The individual can influence or be influenced depending upon the condition (Bandura, 1978). The three determinants of environmental factors, cognition, and behavior intertwine. The WRF has influenced African Americans for centuries in every aspect of society. Based on Bandura's social learning theory, White dominance has been exerted on African Americans for centuries, first through slavery and today through racial obstacles and discriminatory policies, implicit and explicit, in the entire system. As a result, African Americans' behaviors are determined by society, embedded with the WRF. Through punishment (discriminatory policies), African Americans learn that they are not worthy of the same value as European Americans (Ross, 2017). The lack of funds and support that African American nonprofit Social Services organizations receive compared to those received by their European American counterparts is an example of how African Americans are punished and learn (Dean-Coffey, 2018). People learn from the environment, and what African Americans have been learning for centuries is the domination that European Americans exert on them.

Behaviors, a result of cognitive processes, involve the imitation of expected behaviors according to the environment, such as social stimulus and individual factors. Bandura's social learning theory is based on reciprocal causation: other people, individual factors, the environment, including social stimuli, all influence the cognitive

processes involved in learning behaviors (Bautista, 2013). This applies in this study to both parties—African Americans and European Americans. The first have learned that they are not valued as much as European Americans, and European Americans have learned for ages that they hold a higher category and are worth more than African Americans. This learning has been done explicitly and implicitly in every aspect of society. The positive stimuli for European Americans are the privileges they have had for centuries, and the negative stimuli, negative reinforcement, and punishment have been from slavery to discrimination, including policies that negatively affect them. Moreover, this particular case is the lack of funding due to racial challenges that nonprofit social service organizations face to help African American communities.

Nature of the Study

In this basic qualitative study, I explored African American social service nonprofit organization leaders' experiences in developing strategies for building sustainable organizations despite structural and societal challenges (Feagin, 2013). This study falls under the qualitative paradigm, and the basic qualitative elements were the investigation method. The methodology chosen relates to the research question, which seeks to collect and extract the stories and explore the meaning and interpretations of the African American social service nonprofit leaders (Birchall, 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Warren, 2002). The basic qualitative method seeks to know the often-overlooked stories and how the participants create meaning in their lives. It also aims to identify the key themes to develop further research and understand how they relate to how participants overcame the challenges. According to the literature, these stories are

profound as the participants or organizations should not sustain their organizations. Other methodologies would not sufficiently open the door to create meaning to these and similar participants' lives in traditional research.

The participants were African American social service nonprofit organization leaders, commonly referred to as executive directors, working in a large Midwestern metropolitan city. Each participant-led their current organization for 5 or more years. The years of experience criterion established that the participants would have experienced enough business cycles to address the research question fully. Five years is typically the amount of time in their role to sufficiently determine if their leadership and business plans were succeeding (Lesonsky, 2018).

The rationale for choosing the basic qualitative method allowed participants to tell their stories and experiences by offering rich information and insight to answer the research question. As stated earlier, African American nonprofit organization leaders' stories are not chronicled; thus, valuable information is lost. Documenting these participants' stories and thoughts have allowed a historical record and valuable information to future leaders and funders. Another rationale for choosing the basic qualitative method is the concept of reflexivity, which allows for the researcher's ability to remain unbiased while acknowledging and accounting for the effect of bias on the research by disclosing and identifying the bias (Birchall, 2014).

The data were coded using simple thematic content analysis. The basic qualitative method allowed for a theoretical lens, but the themes emerged from the narratives. Specifically, I reviewed the individual transcripts to search for meaning from the stories

of the participants. As stated earlier, the research theories and past experiences helped find useful information and potential themes. Next, the data questions were looked at as a collection to seek comparison and contrast. The basic qualitative method aims to allow the participants' stories to address the research question's significance. The theories framed the study when analyzing the data (Birchall, 2014; Given, 2008; Josselson & Lieblich, 2003).

Assumptions

This research was not an exhaustive examination of the challenges of African American-led nonprofit organizations. However, the results emerged from the participants' experiences and values and will be considered the study's themes. This approach was applicable because it yielded valid data from the stories of their experiences. The extractions from their stories of building sustainable, successful organizations provided a more in-depth understanding of running a nonprofit organization as an African American.

Moreover, as a researcher who shares a similar cultural background, this approach allowed me to step back and derive meaning, as accurately as possible, from the participants' stories while being cognizant of acknowledging the shared environment and experiences that drove the interest in this study. A criterion of having 5 or more years of experience was to assure that the participants' stories and experiences could address the research question fully (Lesonsky, 2018). Furthermore, 5 years allows time for strategies to prove successful or not.

This study assumes that the participants' stories were honest narratives and how they remembered it happening. Each participant met the inclusion criteria of leading an African American social service nonprofit organization for 5 or more years. None of the participants had ulterior motives or were coerced into participating, and the experiences were similar enough to reach saturation.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on social service nonprofit organizations and excluded other nonprofit organizations such as arts or sports groups. Because of the nature of African American culture, the church was mentioned. However, in this study, churches were discussed as charity, not faith-based, organizations. Finally, the geographical area chosen had a high percentage of African Americans; therefore, the findings may not be similar or generalized in all regions within the United States or internationally.

A similar study can potentially be conducted in other regions of the country or internationally, particularly with leaders within the African diaspora populations, not within the United States, as the WRF is a global framework. Moreover, such a study can be conducted with other minority groups in the United States and globally. Finally, African American arts or sports group nonprofit leaders could be interviewed for their insights.

Limitations

The participants may not accurately recall their experiences in the context of the study. Moreover, their views, coupled with their perceptions and experiences, may not truly reflect the actual occurrences. This flaw is called participation bias. There had to be

an understanding that it is never possible to understand another's experiences correctly. Hence, the objective was to understand their stories as closely as possible from their perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Seidman, 2013; Simon & Goes, 2013).

Natural researcher biases may also occur because I identify as an African American and work in the nonprofit sector. This basic qualitative research seeks to fully disclose any potential bias on the researcher's part, including background, culture, and professional interests similar to those of the participants. Therefore, as a researcher, I acknowledge these factors as I work in the nonprofit sector and am an African American. It is these qualities that piqued my interest in this study.

Another limitation was that this study focused on a geographical area with a large African American population, and the experiences may be different from other regions of the United States. They have a smaller African American population.

Significance

This study documented the strategies that African American social service nonprofit organization leaders use to maintain sustainable organizations. The research on nonprofit organizational sustainability has gaps relating to these leaders' racial challenges. The results and social implications of this study are twofold. First, future leaders may use the experiences and data from these African American nonprofit leaders. Second, the WRF posits that the framework is so pervasive in our society that European Americans who may be averse to racial stereotypes still may act in ways unconsciously that hurt persons of color. Thus, the European American community can increase their

awareness of the implications of their decisions. For example, when acting as a foundation officer, individual donor, nonprofit leader, or government officials, individuals may become cognizant of how their decisions hinder African American-led social service nonprofit organizations because of inherent bias. Thus, the documentation of these African American leaders' experiences may lead to more equitable decision-making to create more robust, unified communities.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study. The next chapter presents a thorough inquiry of the literature, including the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, a history of African American nonprofit organizations, nonprofit organization sustainability, the state of the nonprofit organization sector, and the nonprofit leaders' skill set requirements.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The Philadelphia African American Leadership Forum's (PAALF) study on the state of African American-led nonprofits piqued my interest in this subject. The results commissioned by PAALF revealed that African American-led organizations have fewer financial resources, are smaller, and are more dependent on government funding than European American-led nonprofit organizations. Moreover, African American nonprofit organizations typically have fewer European American individuals on their boards of directors, and the clientele is primarily African American. Furthermore, European American funders often have preconceived notions and only fund issues important to them or fail to fund the capacity-building projects African American-led organizations need (Barkin, 2014; Branch Associates Inc., 2016).

Despite these roadblocks, leaders of African American-led nonprofit organizations have maintained their missions, leading to the question: What strategies are used by these individuals to manage their nonprofit organizations despite the odds against them? It was fruitful to gain a full understanding of the subjects and dynamics of this research, detailed earlier to understand the unique challenges of the African American social service nonprofit organization leader.

Literature Search Strategy

This review consisted of peer-reviewed literature and professional studies on nonprofit organization sustainability, the history of African American charitable organizations, and nonprofit organization leadership skillsets. The theories supporting

this study were WRF and reciprocal determinism. Articles were retrieved from the Business Source, Wiley Premier, ProQuest, ABI/INFORM Complete, Google Scholar, EBSCO, and Sage Journals databases.

Essential data on African American nonprofit organizations' history were obtained mostly from books because there was scant research from peer-reviewed journal articles on this subject. Research on for-profit African American leaders helped understand this subject to account for the paucity of research on African American-led nonprofit organization leaders' experiences and issues (Bates & Robb, 2013; Valdez, 2011; Wang et al., 2014; Wingfield & Taylor, 2016).

The searches on these topics yielded over 130 related articles, mostly for-profit-related journals, but very few related to nonprofits. The keyword search showed unique challenges and gaps (Bates & Robb, 2013; Chrisman, 2013; Cunningham, 2016; Feagin & Imani, 1994; Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation, 2015). Keywords included *African American nonprofit organizations*, *Black people nonprofit*, *minority nonprofit organizations*, *black women leaders' nonprofit organizations*, and *African American nonprofit management*. Limited research was found for nonprofit organizations for this population, thus including books as literature. This chapter will detail the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, history of African American-led nonprofit organizations, nonprofit organization sustainability, and nonprofit organization leadership strategy recommendations.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework is the WRF, conceived by Feagin (2013). The premise of this framework is that being European American and European culture is the epitome of all that is good. Feagin (2013) wrote that this belief permeates every facet of society, including the media, education, and government. The key elements of the WRF are a sense that being European American is a virtue, that the European civilization and worldview are the height of accomplishment, a denial of the impact of systematic racism, and that society is in a post-racial era (Feagin, 2013). This theory further postulates that the WRF and the relationship with African Americans are fraught with the dominant group's preoccupation with African Americans. Feagin (2013) explained that for European Americans to rationalize the enslavement of and profit from African American labor, it was important for European Americans to use questionable biological and scientific theories and ascribe faulty intelligence to African Americans as a foundation for the development of the WRF.

In contrast to the WRF, people of color, especially African Americans, found it necessary to confront the WRF using what Feagin called counterframes (Feagin, 2013, pp. 19–21). Counterframes include highlighting the accomplishments and humanity of the culture, reminding all parties of the foundational principles of liberty and freedom in America, and refuting the premise of the benefits of being European American (Feagin, 2013; Wingfield & Taylor, 2016).

To further gain insight, another theory used to frame this study is Bandura's SCT. This theory was influenced by Skinner's behaviorism, mainly the notion that people learn

to behave according to the environment's influence. Bandura's SCT also agreed that people learn how to behave from their experiences. However, Bandura's theory focuses on cognitive processes. People's behaviors result from cognitive processes that involve purposes, goals, and expected behaviors by observing the environment, including people (Middleton et al., 2018).

According to SCT, people learn from the environment through social processes, observing, imitating, and modeling behaviors they see in others (Middleton et al., 2018). It is possible to link this to America's long racial history, particularly the relationship between African Americans and European Americans. In Bandura's theory, the cognitive processes are important for learning, as they help anticipate behavioral outcomes. The theory also considers the feelings embedded in the behaviors, such as anxiety (Middleton et al., 2018). Both social and cognitive factors contribute to the learning of behaviors. This is how Bandura developed the concept of reciprocal determinism.

Another important element in Bandura's theory is agency. On one side, individuals depend on the social system, but they also determine the system. Thus, they are dependent agents, but they are also independent agents in the environment. Finally, they also have collective agency when behaviors are achieved relying on others. These elements are important for this study, as in the relationship between European Americans and African Americans throughout the history of America. The SCT provides valuable insights to understand it in the current system, particularly the challenges that nonprofit social services organizations face and how successful leaders learn to overcome those challenges.

Collective group efforts play an important role in SCT (Middleton et al., 2018). This aspect of the theory is also important for two reasons. First, research shows that for African American leaders to succeed, they require a strong board to support them, which shows the importance of group efforts for effective performance. Second, one of the purposes of this study is to help other future leaders learn from successful leaders.

According to Bandura, social and cultural institutions can shape patterns of behavior and values through rewards and punishments, in other words, through enforced sanctions. These can be very effective in rapidly sharing society (Bandura, 1989). However, changes in social systems can also be a result of dissenters opposing the prevailing social practices. From here, it can be observed that the WRF should be evaluated with an SCT lens. The history of African Americans is filled with discriminatory social practices, from slavery to current discrimination within the system. As mentioned, the WRF permeates all facets of society (Feagin, 2013). African Americans learn from experience about their status, and White people learn from the WRF embedded in the system that they are superior and that African Americans are underneath them. However, as Bandura mentioned, social changes take place when dissenters oppose the prevailing practices. Counterframes respond to Bandura and the WRF.

Research shows that most African American youth live in neighborhoods constantly exposed to poverty, crime, and violence (Ross, 2017). These are elements they are exposed to in their environment, and thus, from an SCT perspective, they learn from that environment. From Bandura's perspective, children learn from their family and

social environment, including school and neighborhood. They carry the normative attitudes and behavior to adulthood, building relationships based on what they learned. Two aspects are important for this study; the first is that it highlights the need for social services, the other is the isolation and racial discrimination African Americans experience compared to European Americans (Ross, 2017). Not only do African Americans learn about violence and, in many cases, adopt those behaviors into their adult life, but they also learn about the expected behaviors of others towards them and them towards others. Particularly with regards to the European American–African American relationship and the system and African American communities. This isolation or discrimination is also expressed in the lack of support that African American social service organizations receive compared to similar organizations run by European Americans.

Social connectedness is part of the social environment from which people learn, according to Bandura (Middleton et al., 2018). From this perspective, SCT helps understand how African Americans develop at the individual level and how it shapes the relationship and identity of the nation as a whole. African Americans perceive racial discrimination, aggression, social isolation, rejection, and so on as a form of punishment that reinforces their beliefs, identities, behaviors, and so forth. They learn rules and models from the environment, where they are treated with less value than European Americans. Moreover, how the system is permeated from the WRF (Feagin, 2013) is connected to SCT and the WRF.

However, Bandura also highlighted the role of agency and, more particularly, collective agency. This can link to the counterframes that African Americans develop in

response to the WRF and how it can help understand how successful African American leaders managed to counterframe and succeed in their nonprofit organizations.

Furthermore, these organizations play an important role from the SCT perspective in helping African Americans learn as they receive the support they need. Ultimately, it is important to highlight that the purpose of the nonprofit social service organizations is to help the wider African American community as they are vulnerable because of the WRF.

Reciprocal determinism is a characteristic of SCT as the development of human behaviors occurs due to a direct and reciprocal relationship between parties. It is not a one-side determinism that can explain behavior (Bandura, 1989). WRF does not only influence European Americans' behaviors but also African Americans'. Behavior is not a result of unidirectional causation but reciprocal determinism. Thus, it is important to consider the counterframes of dissenters who find alternative strategies to overcome the racial challenges. Altogether, the SCT with reciprocal determinism, the WRF, and the counterframes contribute to understanding the situation of nonprofit African American organizations, their challenges, and the strategies that successful leaders used to maintain those organizations sustainable through a long time. Reciprocal causation considers the behavior of both sides, cognitive processes, personal factors, and the environment. The WRF on its own cannot effectively explain the challenges of nonprofit African American organizations. Nor can it explain how successful leaders overcome the challenges. However, the SCT, including reciprocal determinism, can illuminate the WRF and counterframes that explain why African American organizations struggle so much and

how some leaders managed to implement strategies that made the organizations sustainable.

The WRF provided a foundation for this study because research revealed that African American entrepreneurs (for-profit and nonprofit) encounter race-specific challenges (Bates & Robb, 2013; Fairlie, 1999; Lofstrom & Bates, 2011). There were specific reasons for African American entrepreneurs' challenges, such as insufficient or reduced financial resources, lower education status, and few self-employed families as a model to conclude that more funding programs could change the conclusion (Fairlie, 1999). However, Gold (2016) clarified, "Blacks bear not only significant disadvantages but also have limited access to resources for their race. Many of these disadvantages are unique to African Americans or were not experienced to the same degree by other racial and ethnic groups" (p. 1714). Even if money were the solution, funders (government and foundations) typically do not fund African American entities at the same percentage as other racial groups (Barkan, 2013; Garrow, 2012).

The WRF is so enmeshed in American society that it can be enacted even subconsciously (Feagin, 2013; O'Brien, 2000). Thus, European Americans who are racism averse may subconsciously react to African Americans in a discriminatory manner because of the influences of the WRF, such as still viewing African Americans as feeble, unfortunate, or marginal (House, 2017; O'Brien, 2000). This particular premise is vital because many racism-averse European Americans work in social service nonprofit roles (Gasman et al., 2011; Mueller & Feagin, 2013; Whaley, 1998). Whaley (1998) indicated that European Americans who identify with a liberal political agenda may demonstrate

less reactive attitudes, such as ascribing stereotypical perceptions towards African Americans but still retain the same attitudes towards racism as their more racist society members. The difference is that racism-averse European Americans may suffer guilt from these thoughts and are less likely to act upon or perpetuate these stereotypes (Whaley 1998).

Moreover, a majority group's judgments concerning the members of a minority group influence their decisions, such as treating African American patients in health care more harshly than European American patients (Whaley, 1998). From an SCT perspective, this would be considered a punishment to reinforce behaviors and communicate values and cognitive processes of African Americans regarding themselves and white people (Ross, 2017). Reciprocal determinism is also at play, as there are two groups involved. Another implication is accepting policy evaluations based on flawed assessments in education or government, resulting in less funding for African American communities (House, 2017). Finally, studies concluded that minority students had to exert more effort to create acceptance among the dominant populations because of the WRF (Garrow, 2012; House, 2017; Mueller & Feagin, 2013). The counterframe, or different behaviors of people that tried to evade workforce discrimination by becoming entrepreneurs, shows the importance of reciprocal determinism rather than unilateral determinism.

Research on the use of counterframes included Wingfield and Taylor's (2016) idea that African American entrepreneurs use counterframing strategies such as starting businesses to overcome workforce discrimination, benefit their communities, or evoke

racial unity. Another researcher countered historical research, which said African Americans could not sustain enterprises, by showing African American leaders persist in business longer than Hispanics and European Americans (Freeland & Keister, 2014; Köllinger & Minniti, 2006).

The WRF demonstrates the challenging societal norms that most African Americans live with in society. The challenges compound when an African American leader works towards the betterment of their community. To illustrate this point, Peck (2016) used James Baldwin's statement,

When any White man in the world says, *give me liberty, or give me death*, the entire White world applauds. When a Black man says the same thing, word for word, he is judged a criminal and treated like one, and everything possible is done to make an example of this bad n----- so there won't be any more like him.

These societal norms explain some of the environments where African American leaders operate and unconventional strategies to maintain sustainable organizations.

Dean-Coffey (2018) conducted a study to explore how equity and race affect the nonprofit and philanthropy arena. The current trend shows an increasing number of organizations embracing racial equity at the core of their identity and values. Racial equity affects how they work in practice. However, and despite their philanthropic desire, they continue to reinforce racism unintentionally. Dean-Coffey offered an evaluation of this reality that contributes to the current study. The increase of foundations seeking funding is demanding from the foundations to focus on inclusion and equity.

The basic reason underneath the unintentional racism reinforces social norms, biases, and privileges that already exist and are internalized in society. This occurs at an individual and systemic level. It causes a constant reminder of the disadvantages and advantages of the different racial groups. Primarily this is shaped by everyday narratives that marginalize, minimize, and disrespect African Americans. Moreover, according to Dean-Coffey (2018), the solution does not fall only on changing the privileged narrative but also the less-privileged by not demonizing and constantly blaming the dominant group. Changing narratives at the core of foundations aspiring to racial equity should be a primary goal to have a powerful impact on communities and individuals, becoming a resource for society.

Jurcevic and Fyall (2019) also highlighted how organizations struggle to transfer those into practice despite the efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in the nonprofit sector, including explicit diversity statements. The main challenge is the framing and communication of values within the organizations. The study focused on racial minorities instead of white perspectives, showing that African Americans and Latinos are marginalized and feel devalued even within the organizations that claim to stand up for diversity values. One important element of this study is the expectation of racial-devaluation feelings. This 'expectation' can be linked to the SCT as feelings and behaviors are developed and learned in the environment concerning others.

This racial mismatch of lack of equity within nonprofit organizations, including volunteers, board members, and staff, confirms and expresses the inequality between African American nonprofit organizations and European American ones. Moreover, it

also explains how African American organizations lack diversity and European American staff. Nonprofit organizations are marked by racial inequality.

Nonprofit boards are responsible for the organization's success (The Urban Institute, 2021), and as a result, the greater emphasis on racial equality has placed more pressure on them for accountability and transparency. Not only financial but also racial. The Urban Institute (2021) report shows that nonprofit organizations that serve minority groups, their board members also include members from the minority groups they serve. Nonprofit organizations that serve 50% of African Americans have 36% of African American board members. However, European Americans and even Latino Americans have a higher percentage of board members representation. The board member representation will have an important impact on funding sources.

Jurcevic and Fyall (2019) also mentioned, as Dean-Coffey (2018), that the greater challenge for nonprofit organizations to embrace and transfer into real-life practice diversity values are narratives and communication of diversity values. It seems that language and narratives have a great influence in the nonprofit sector concerning diversity.

As already explained, the leadership gap between European Americans and African Americans cannot be answered based on backgrounds, qualifications, or skills (Thomas-Breitfeld & Kunreuther, 2017). The gap is a result of a structural barrier that prevents leadership diversity (Boyarski, 2018). Research shows that executive recruiters are not even proficient in knowing enough Persons of Color to grow the pool of qualified candidates to fulfill executive or leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. They are

only aware of the European American pool of candidates. This points towards that structural obstacle. From the African American's perspective, it also shows the lack of support to find leadership roles. Much is being done to promote racial equity within the nonprofit sector. However, efforts are not placed the same across all nonprofit organizations. For example, education is the most racially diverse sector (Boyarski, 2018).

A more recent report, finalized during the COVID-10 pandemic, highlighted the grief of the African American Community as there are still killings by the police and vigilantes of Black people (Race to Lead, 2020). This highlighted with even greater strength the way that African Americans are treated. The Black individuals' killing shows how the WRF exists in society, particularly among authorities protecting citizens. However, it also shows how it reinforces the attitude and fear of African Americans. Finally, the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign also shows the counterframe or reaction against White privilege. The most recent report that revisits the previous one that addressed racial leadership gaps in nonprofit organizations shows that efforts to improve diversity increased race and racism awareness, particularly between 2016 and 2019, but there have not been significant changes in practice. This report also shows that nonprofit organizations are influenced by a pervasive white privilege that benefits European American people. According to the SCT, this pervasive systemic system reflects the WRF and acts as a negative reinforcer. Furthermore, the study used a survey to explore nonprofit leaders' experiences and showed that while European American people had positive experiences, African American people had negative ones (Race to Lead, 2020).

Social service nonprofit organizations have an important impact on communities as they focus on health, poverty, housing, and education, balancing the inequality in society, particularly with minority groups. Nonprofits, particularly social service nonprofit organizations, should help prevent and reduce racism, offering models of racial equity. However, this is not the case. Oyetunde et al. (2021) report recommend the main ways to improve equity in nonprofit organizations: authenticity, assessment, and empowerment. Authenticity reflects setting clear intentions about organizations actions towards equity; assessments refer to analyze the organizations to identify areas where racial equity and inclusivity are not established; and empowerment refers to the empowerment of governance board to promote equity, to develop policies and resources for change, but also to implement inclusion in the same board. This report is helpful to understand the practical actions and recommendations that are available to nonprofit organizations. They can serve as a reference when conducting the interviews of African American leadership, particularly their experiences.

Nonprofit social service organizations play a key role in fighting against inequality in different areas, as mentioned. However, organizations generally play a central role in producing and perpetuating equality or inequality in society (Fulton et al., 2019). While organizational elites continue to be predominately European American, inequality will remain following the WRF theory. European American elites represent white privileges. Furthermore, if nonprofit organizations have predominantly European American leaders, they will continue to support the WRF theory. The inequality in society, inequality in education, health, and housing, amongst others, are forms of

negative reinforcement, from the SCT perspective, that contribute to European American domination. Furthermore, inequality in those areas acts as negative reinforcers from which African Americans learn about their place in society and their European American counterparts. Moreover, organizations are central to domination (Fulton et al., 2019).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

African American Nonprofit Organizations Historical Overview

As Carson (2005) explained, “Black philanthropy is shaped by the social, economic, and the legal climates faced by African Americans at different points in history” (p. 6). Despite the changes in these climates, African American nonprofit organizations have a long and vibrant tradition even though America’s touted practice of caring for the common good often excluded African Americans (Brice & Hardy, 2015). Thus, the genesis of African American-led charity began at the advent of slavery in the United States. African American philanthropy roots came from what Martin and Martin (1985) coined as “the African helping tradition,” which is a practice of providing charity and hospitality to others, placing the village’s needs above those of the individual, and working as a collective.

The African helping tradition was a cultural norm of enslaved Africans and instrumental to the African American community’s survival under slavery. Mixed into plantations from various nations, tribes, and families, the enslaved Africans developed a system to survive despite not knowing each other’s or their masters’ languages. Even with the intentional stripping of African culture from the slaves, the African helping tradition remained intact (Carson, 2005; Martin & Martin, 1985). Enslaved Africans

developed methods to care for children removed from their parents and the old and infirm (no longer useful to their masters) by sharing their rations. They used the church as a few opportunities to be away from the master to become the enclave or gathering spot for organizing (Brice & Hardy, 2015; Carson, 2005; Martin & Martin, 1985).

Not excused from the harsh treatment of European Americans were the Freedmen. The African helping tradition, uncharacteristically, asked them to take on the responsibility of assisting their brothers and sisters trapped in the bonds of slavery. Even at their peril, one of the greatest fights freed African Americans took on was to ensure the freedom of all their African kin. The formalization of the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movements emanated from the African helping tradition. These activities required the use of Freedmen's homes, money, and time. Their mandate and purpose were to help their bound kinsman and, more importantly, protest the state of their race (Martin & Martin, 1985).

As early as 1693, the Society of Negroes in Massachusetts was one of the first recorded benevolent organizations established by African Americans. The society's mission was to band together to brave the harsh conditions that Freedmen and enslaved Africans endured (Dunbar, 2011). Another pivotal organization was the Free African Society (Cannon 2013), formed in 1787, a precursor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Martin & Martin, 1985). The Free African Society worked to care for the sick during the Yellow Fever epidemic in Philadelphia to be included in the European American community. Though the organization worked parallel

with groups in the European American community, newspapers deceptively wrote that African Americans were immune to Yellow Fever.

Nevertheless, many in the African American community died from caring for the sick of both races. Though lauded for its efforts, society's accolades did not afford full personhood status nor the ability to sit with European Americans in houses of worship. This discrimination led to the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816 (Martin & Martin, 1985). Other groups included the Brown Fellowship Society, Prince Hall Masons, and Baltimore's Society for Relief in Case of Seizure. These charitable organizations provided African Americans a place to learn a trade, support schools, help the needy, and provide social interactions (Dunbar, 2012).

Many in the European American community felt that these organizations were imitations of their European American-led counterparts. The questionable scientific theories and experts inferred that these organizations were illegitimate, stating that the African American-led charitable organizations were not at the same level of sophistication as those formed by European Americans. UB Phillips, a historian, and his counterparts described African Americans' organizations as child or ape-like. They indicated that the environment and the time the Africans had been in the United States had hardly transformed them from their inherent inferior nature (Carson, 2005). Consequently, this rhetoric reinforced the cynical way European Americans characterized and treated these organizations.

Emancipation and later the Reconstruction eras caused an increased need for charitable efforts to provide for the formerly enslaved Africans' needs. Benevolent

societies served millions of former enslaved African's illiterate, homeless, and without the wider society's assistance. Many Freedmen became philanthropists by starting schools, women's clubs, and churches to uplift and transform the race. However, organizations failed or were stymied by the majority community despite the African American founders' valiant efforts. As Martin and Martin (1985) noted, "although the helping tradition reached a peak during the Reconstruction period, it was overwhelmed by forces outside its control" (p. 58), such as allowing the Southern states to write their constitution and ban charitable organizations created or led by African Americans. These actions caused many organizations to diminish. However, as Carson (2005) wrote, African Americans formed secret societies or dual-purpose groups. Interestingly, the strict segregationist conditions led to a strong racial African American identity and race-based institutions, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and Marcus Garvey's Universal Organization Negro Improvement Association. There were records of local charitable organizations providing services to their communities (Boyd, 2017; Martin & Martin, 1985; Walters, 1999).

The Civil Rights era marked the next significant change in the African American community. More opportunities to interact with society occurred after the Jim Crow era; however, socio-economic challenges remained. The wealth gap is still significant between African Americans and European Americans though many African Americans joined the middle class (Carson, 2005).

Despite the Civil Rights era successes, African Americans still had to take care of their communities. Some African Americans argue that desegregation was not a complete victory because it stalled the African helping tradition (Martin & Martin, 1985). Taking that stalling as a call to action for their community, the Black Panthers group worked to fill in gaps; nonetheless, more has been written about their militant stance and not about the social services they provided to their community (Carson, 2005; Williams, 2014).

The Black Panther Party's mission was to liberate African Americans in a revolutionary manner. Their purpose was to protect the community by raising the consciousness and living conditions of the people they served (Kirkby, 2011). They developed grassroots programs such as the Free Breakfast for Children program, free health clinics, Liberation Schools, and legal aid seminars. Though not recognized officially, their breakfast program served as a precursor to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Carson, 2005; Williams, 2014).

Another facet of the Civil Rights era was the professionalization of community leaders. During slavery, most African American leaders and caregivers in the community were Freedmen. During Reconstruction/Jim Crow era, pastors or wealthy individuals within the community took up this role. However, the post-Civil Rights era called the credentialing of the African American leadership, i.e., licensed social workers, redistributed aid because the government or foundation funders mandated that these programs need these roles. Thus, African American society's focus shifted from uplifting

the race to social class and individual achievement leading to the decreased use of the African helping tradition (Martin & Martin, 1985).

No matter the funding source, these charitable organizations were the foundation of African American society, and some still exist today. There were few avenues for African Americans to participate in society. Thus, these aid societies, churches, and lodges provided their population with political, religious, cultural, and educational opportunities to excel within their community and bridge the broader culture (Dunbar, 2011). These organizations share three characteristics: promoting the common interest of the group, pooling together modest amounts of money from many, and improving the status of African Americans (Kirkby, 2011; Pinn, 2002; Pope & Flanigan, 2013).

Research shows that African Americans are the racial group that gives a larger part of their disposable income to nonprofit organizations than any other group (Drezner, 2009). This research does not clarify which nonprofit sector they donate; however, it provides important information about the philanthropic attitudes of this racial group and how these behaviors cultivate this group. According to Drezner (2009), the techniques used to foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to encourage African American communities to donate focus on prosocial behaviors, cultivating organizational identity and social changes.

Fundraising began in the 1940s when nonprofit organizations required rules to raise funds for their causes. According to Reissová et al. (2019), fundraising is critical for non-profit organizations to succeed, so the process and strategy of fundraising are key. Age, gender, education, income, and religion are factors that determine the willingness of

donors. Drezner (2009) states that the African American community is the community that allocates more funds for non-profit organizations, and Perry (2011) states that African American nonprofit organizations struggle to fundraise with the European American community.

Perry's (2011) study explored the African American attitudes towards fundraising and asking European American people for funds for evangelical purposes. Participants expressed their shame in asking non-African Americans (mostly European Americans) for financial support. The study also shows the differences in this non-profit sector with other non-profit organizations (Perry, 2011). Due to the lack of funds from non-African American communities, many workers have to be on a volunteering basis rather than in paid positions like other non-profit organizations. Fundraising in the European American community has cultural barriers that are racial-specific. For example, in this study, many European American people do not consider 'missions' or evangelical needs as important to fund. From the WRF perspective, American history explains how African American males feel degraded and shameful to ask European American males for funds. Furthermore, from the WRF view, African Americans represented a large community depending on welfare (Fording & Berry, 2007). European American people do not understand the needs of African Americans (as a minority group), and there are cultural barriers and a huge gap between African Americans and European Americans that make the fundraising process challenging and inefficient (Perry, 2011).

Another research focuses on the need for color fundraisers as by 2050, the greater population of America will be formed of persons of color. These fundraisers can best

relate to diverse populations. However, only 11 percent of registered fundraisers have considered persons of color. For example, educational institutions want to reach more diverse populations, and thus, they need more non-European American fundraisers for non-profit organizations, but there are not sufficient applicants to fill the vacancies. This research provides valuable information for the current research. One reason for the lack of applicants is the older European American men that dominate the field (Bowman, 2010).

Moreover, 82% of nonprofit employees are European American, while 10% are African American. Furthermore, of all nonprofit leadership and upper management roles, African Americans occupy only 14%. The rest are majority European American (Weisinger et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, leaders in the nonprofit sector have similar qualifications regardless of race. It is even more shocking that African American staff aspire to become nonprofit organization leaders than their European American peers. However, as mentioned, European Americans are given upper management and leadership roles. This is explained in the *Race to Lead* report (2019) due to systemic biases and barriers rather than individuals lacking skills. People of color have limited access to whites, limiting their opportunities despite their greatest aspiration to executive leadership roles.

On average, those who can reach leadership roles belong to smaller organizations with reduced budgets and limited financial support from private donors, foundations, and government (*Race to Lead*, 2019) compared to their European American peers. Another important fact is that African American nonprofit leaders experience more relationship

challenges with the board of directors that tend to be predominantly white. However, a positive remark is how there has been a radical approach towards nonprofit organizations taking important steps towards becoming more inclusive and diverse and, thus, more equitable in the last couple of years.

Because African American leaders have limited resources, they struggle to fundraise. European American leaders do not find it as hard to fundraise. The main sources of struggle and frustration that African American nonprofit leaders face include the lack of staff, board support, onerous grant requirements, and smaller grants available than their European American peers. Overall, the main challenge is the access to large grants from foundations, governments, and individuals and the relationship between leaders and board affecting the leader's experience, particularly as board members do not get involved in governance supporting leaders. European American leaders do acknowledge the support of their board; African American and other persons of color leaders do not receive the support of the board when they are predominantly European American. Finally, the *Race to Lead* report (2019) also stated how hard it is to lead nonprofit organizations on equity and diversity, as there is a contradiction between what nonprofit organizations claim as their values -diversity and equity- and how they put it into practice internally and how they address equity.

Building Movement Project is investing much into supporting and developing African American leaders as the population growth in the next decade will demand a greater involvement of African Americans, and white leaders are expected to transfer

their dominance. However, for this to occur, greater support is needed (Race to Lead, 2019).

As the American population increases in diversity, nonprofit boards require the contribution of racial groups to reflect the values of the current century (BoardSource, 2018). The racial diversity of board members strongly influences the organization's outcomes as these depend on policies and governance practices. Diversity also increases the donation levels. Furthermore, research also shows that "a higher percentage of minority members on the board is positively associated with higher scores of political board performance" (BoardSource, 2018, p. 35). Social performance and fundraising are improved with diversity. There are many subsections within nonprofit organizations, from organizational policy, monitoring programs, fundraising, educating the public about the organization's objectives, public relations, financial overweighing, and more. However, research shows that board members limit their engagement to financial overseeing and organizational policies. The *Race to Lead* report (2019) shows that one of the main challenges African American leaders face is the lack of support and engagement from board members.

Potapchuk (2020) claims that for change to take place, it is necessary to have leadership teams embracing diversity in each department of organizations. Black, Indigenous, and other minorities' emotional labor should be considered, and special attention should be given. Another interesting element that Potapchuk (2020) explains is that the learning curve of white people in organizations regarding racism is slow, but it is positively changing. Another recommendation to improve diversity within organizations

is that the Board of Directors should be racially diverse. The board members contribute towards equity in the entire organization. Finally, because white privilege is embedded in the culture, language and culture are both affected by the dominant European American culture that is anti-blackness. Thus, a common language should be implemented to prevent discrimination through language. This includes the openness to discuss racism and white privilege concerning the operation of the organization. Being able to discuss these things in the open means that the organization is ready to change. One of the main problems that non-profit organizations have is that staff members are not trained to deal with racial conflicts. Moreover, this culture reinforces conflict aversion, and as a result, the expressions of emotions regarding race in the workplace can easily escalate, as there can be a feeling of discrimination and fragility as cultural norms protect white members of staff.

Potapchuk's (2020) study shows the strength with which whiteness is embedded in culture, language, and organizations to the operational and personal levels. It also shows how current practices are constantly reinforcing, from an SCT perspective, racial inequality. European Americans are protected, and African Americans become more vulnerable and fragile, reinforcing their feeling below the dominant culture. Potapchuk (2020) also highlights the importance of racial conflict training for the staff members in non-profit organizations to succeed as an organization that embraces equity.

Nonprofit Sustainability

This portion of the review provides an overview of the subject of nonprofit organizational sustainability. The research question addressed the distinct practices that

African American nonprofit organization leaders use to build sustainable organizations. It was necessary to understand nonprofit organizational sustainability tenets to discern the research participants' particular patterns.

The nonprofit sector is dynamic and handles issues that for-profit will not and that the government no longer provides. Coupled with the proliferation of nonprofit organizations and fewer resources, leaders must serve an increasing number of customers/clients while maintaining financially sound organizations. More nonprofits fight over fewer dollars while struggling to find new methods to increase revenues to use on a growing client base (Weerawardena et al., 2010). The government, at every level, decreased or even eschewed what was once under their purview. Moreover, the tax code changes reduced a nonprofit organization's ability to raise funds through the promise of tax deductions to the donor (Chrisman, 2013).

Before the 2008 recession, many nonprofit organizations received funding from governments, corporations, and foundations. These revenue sources accounted for a high percentage of the organizations' budgets. As revenue sources decreased, it became necessary for nonprofit organizations to change their fundraising strategies to remain open and viable. Besides fundraising, approximately 1.5 million charities are registered with the Internal Revenue Service (*The nonprofit sector in brief*. (n.d.).), and this number is increasing annually. As a result, there are fewer dollars for organizations, causing a threat to their mission.

Researchers call for new structures and processes to be implemented for nonprofit organizations to thrive or merely subsist in this new terrain (McDonald et al., 2015;

Weerawardena et al., 2010). Whereas the for-profit's goal is to reap a profit, a nonprofit organization's "success" serves and achieves its mission. This dilemma means managers and leaders must develop systems that serve the mission while having enough financial resources to sustain the organization. Moreover, leadership needs to create new knowledge and models to achieve their goals alongside a new understanding of the nonprofit sector. Weerawardena et al. (2010) wrote the seminal research on nonprofit sustainability. The authors state that nonprofit sustainability is a thriving organization that serves by committing to its mission. This sector's dynamic nature, coupled with the new environment, has made nonprofit organizations less inclined to begin new programs/services without the necessary resources available and reinvent ways to infuse new revenue streams. Therefore, financial sustainability in the nonprofit sector means making a "profit" or "annual resources exceeding annual cost" (Weerawardena et al., 2010, p. 352). Nonprofit organizations need to know how to pay for the mission (Kim et al., 2014).

Weerawardena et al. (2010) developed a typology called the "double bottom line," or balancing the needs of raising revenue and serving its mission. The typology provided a tool for nonprofit managers to improve financial performance while serving the constituency and mission. Recommendations included redefining the mission, strategically determining which services to offer, measuring outcomes and impact. The research also proposes that nonprofit organizations build long-term relationships with funders and stakeholders (Mataira et al., 2014; Weerawardena et al., 2010). In other words, to survive, nonprofit organizations need to build upon their social connectedness

by partnering with other groups beyond their sector or build social connectedness. Social connectedness is the amount of social capital an organization develops. Social capital is essential for social service nonprofit organizations whose donors are often different from the community served (Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2017).

Though sound, these recommendations have proven not to be the full answer due to the economy's cyclical nature (Trzcinski & Sobeck, 2012). Increasingly, there is a call for nonprofit organizations to consider using not-for-profit businesses' strategies. This call means that these organizations should seek to address their mission in the long-term and earn revenue sources beyond the traditional modes of donations (Brinckerhoff, 2009; Trzcinski & Sobeck, 2012). New leaders, convinced of a new model's necessity, created social enterprises to change by challenging traditional charity work norms and boundaries. The social enterprise movement partners and allies with businesses (for-profit and nonprofit), government, academic institutions to build new markets and address societal ills at the systemic level (Trzcinski & Sobeck, 2012, p. 352). Activities may involve nonprofit organizations engaging in for-profit activities such as selling merchandise, charging for services, or cross-marketing campaigns.

However, nonprofit sustainability is not solely about revenue generation but a method to address the long-term needs for its existence. This approach seeks to find and inform the stakeholders of the long-term prospects of the organization. It involves a qualified workforce (volunteer and paid), an educated and engaged board, cost containment, informed leadership, a consistent image, and an organizational brand, among other characteristics (Cullom & Cullom, 2011). This new concept ensures that

boundaries will continue to blur. Moreover, these innovations increase the need for more sophisticated and insightful leadership.

Indeed, the innovations used to sustain nonprofit organizations are in effect now, but their impact on African American-led nonprofit organizations is yet to be fully understood. Again, most African American social service nonprofits are starved for resources and stakeholders (Branch Associates Inc., 2016). So how do these leaders build sustainable nonprofit organizations? As Garrow (2015) concluded, a nonprofit organization or the community's race composition serves factors into its survivability rate. The higher the percentage of African Americans or Hispanics in a neighborhood, the more likely an agency will close than in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of European Americans. European Americans were leaving a community result in fewer nonprofit organizations serving the community due to fewer resources and the neighborhood's isolation (Garrow, 2015). One reason for closure is that the nonprofit organizations that remain may become too foreign to the European American donors (Garrow & Garrow 2014; Garrow, 2012). Conversely, if a low-income neighborhood has a European American majority, it will receive more government funding than a low-income neighborhood with a higher African American population (Garrow, 2012).

These results show the unique challenges faced by African American-led nonprofit organizations. Their disbandment is not always related to internal disorganization or neighborhood deficits; often, these organizations must use different strategies to sustain or disband (Lee, 2017). The social enterprise model requires the organizations to track data, determine program outcomes, and have the expertise to lead

their organizations. Unfortunately, African American-led organizations may not have all this accouterment. Guidelines mean another layer of burden on the African American social service nonprofit organization leader. Thus, knowing how these leaders lead is critical.

Cullom and Cullom (2011) proposed that nonprofit organizations go beyond crisis fundraising and adopt sustainability models from their for-profit counterparts. The leadership needs professional development to ensure the maintenance of these models and ensure the dissemination and internalization of information.

Strategic planning is another key element for nonprofits to remain sustainable. It involves financial sustainability for competitive advantage through resource management (Rana et al., 2017). Based on the literature reviewed, most African American nonprofits tend to be smaller with scarce resources. Thus, strategic planning for financial sustainability should occupy a major role. Planning occupies a central role in all organizations. However, nonprofits that rely on funding, particularly African American nonprofits, require even greater planning care to achieve success. It is a continuous, intentional, and deliberate strategic process to achieve the organization's goals. It is essential to evaluate where the organization is going, what it requires, how long it takes to succeed, and the beneficiaries for whom it is working.

Furthermore, it is in this particular area that diversity also plays a major role. By answering these questions, organizations can orient their resources to improve their quantifiable targets, increase profitability, and minimize expenses. Overall, strategic

planning is as important in sustainability as evaluating how African American nonprofits receive their funds.

Nonprofit Leadership Strategies

Based on the recommendations outlined in the prior section, the nonprofit organization leader's skillset needs to evolve (Johnson, 2009; Landles-Cobb et al., 2015; Martinelli, 2018; Tierney, 2006). This section addresses the skillset and attributes necessary for a nonprofit leader to be successful in this era. The literature search on nonprofit leadership strategies was scant, and it is essential to review material on leadership skills in general. Callanan et al. (2014) found that they could not locate empirical studies on social sector leadership development. Another study reviewed the impending leadership crisis for baby boomers' retirement and indicated a significant gap in nonprofit leadership subjects (Nonprofit Leadership Alliance, 2011). However, upon further review, data from nonprofit think-tanks and experts provided information on this subject.

The Bridgespan Group (n.d.) found that leadership competency needed to change to reflect the nonprofit environment's changing nature. Among their findings were that organizations needed to understand the significance of events on a larger scale, address their mission's importance on a broader scale, and fundraise for more than program costs. Moreover, there is a need to develop human and business (Nonprofit Leadership Alliance, 2011). A successful nonprofit leader must navigate a path that delivers its mission while maintaining a steady revenue stream (Trautmann et al., 2007). One key difference between the nonprofit and private sector leaders is that the customer/client

often does not pay for services rendered. This difference means the nonprofit leader's (with the board) role is to develop and maintain strategies to stay afloat (Callanan et al., 2014; Carrasco, 2010; Kim et al., 2014; Tschirhart & Bielefeld, 2012). Callanan et al. (2014) recommended that leadership development focus on the nonprofit sector, including providing sabbaticals, formal training, and funding organizations for their management. Furthermore, they found that donors need to add funding to their grant applications to ancillary resource activities.

The Network for Social Work Management leadership guidebook outlined the success competencies a nonprofit sector leader needs: leadership, resource management, strategic management, and community collaboration (Hassan & Wimpfheimer, 2015, p. 3). Further, the guidebook stipulated that leadership training is needed because it is a clear indicator of organizational sustainability. The authors felt an individual could not have all these competencies, concluding that the leader must be aware of their strengths and weaknesses to perform their duties adequately.

Furthermore, nonprofit organizations have been receiving great pressure to become more inclusive and diverse. These pressures come from the inside because of strategic goals. It was mentioned already that the population is expected to become more diverse in the next decades, and thus, nonprofit organizations must become more diverse to deliver the organizations' goals. Moreover, external pressures come from government priorities, policies, regulations, clients, community members, customers, funders, donors, and other organizations (Bernstein & Fredette, 2019). The best way to reflect an organization's diversity policy is to have leadership diversity.

Leadership diversity is important for a nonprofit organization as it is a best practice to ensure that it remains faithful to its mission in a diverse society (Bernstein & Fredette, 2019).

Leadership strategies have a direct effect on an organization's performance. Leadership strategies are part of the organization's general strategy. The top leader of an organization should reflect the strategy of the organization strategy. According to Phipps and Burbach (2010), leaders' and managers' roles differ in that the leaders are in charge of the organizational strategy with the external environment. From this perspective, and considering the SCT and the WRF approach, African American leaders of nonprofit organizations play an important role as they are in charge of the organization's strategy with the environment where European American leaders of nonprofits receive more funding. In this environment, being African American is worse than being European American (according to the WRF approach). So for an African American leader to guide its organization through this environment and make it sustainable and reach its goals, it is essential to develop a strategy that reflects the organization's identity, serves the people they are meant to help. Influence donors to receive the necessary funding. According to the SCT, learning from the environment, which privileges European Americans, is essential for leaders. The organization's performance will depend greatly on African American leaders' learning process of the external environment.

According to Phipps and Burbach (2010), the learning capacity of leaders of nonprofit organizations plays a crucial role. Moreover, this learning capacity is in line with the SCT. The capacity for change is also crucial. Leaders should develop strategies

to help organizations face change and change when necessary to achieve their goals. Change is also a valuable element to consider as it is relevant to the counterframes in a white secret society. From the WRF approach and considering how hard it is for African American nonprofit organizations to remain sustainable, it is key for African American leaders to change and adapt.

Managerial Wisdom -which involves the ability to solve problems in the right manner and time- and context are two crucial elements for nonprofit leaders that play an even more important role for African American leaders as their context is a hostile one, benefitting their European American counterparts.

Overall, the most important elements that must be considered in leadership strategies become even more important for African American nonprofit leaders as they face even greater challenges. These strategies from a WRF approach play an even greater role, as African Americans face a more hostile environment, adaptation to change, and learning and wisdom. Thus, the importance of this study is to help future African American leaders of nonprofits to succeed.

In conclusion, the nonprofit sector is dynamic. Thus, contemporary African American social service nonprofit organization leaders need to acquire the competencies and revenue streams necessary to maintain their sustainability successfully.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provided a foundation of the theories and research related to the research question. The relationship between the WRF and reciprocal determinism theories was included to provide a framework for the research question. This chapter also

presented a historical timeline of African American-led nonprofit organizations, an overview of the nonprofit organization's industry-wide issues related to sustainability, and these leaders' skill set needs. This review confirmed the considerable gap regarding the legacy of African American nonprofit organization leaders. Moreover, many African American leaders have the skill set prescribed for sustainable social services nonprofit organizations; many hurdles emanate from race-related issues. The study will document the narratives of a group of African American social service nonprofit organization leaders who have led sustainable organizations despite racial challenges. The next chapter details the methodology to document their experiences.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The current study was conducted using basic qualitative method analysis. Stories and experiences of African American social service nonprofit organization leaders were collected. Participants were from a large Midwestern city. Participants were selected as they are leaders that maintained the success and sustainability of their organizations. Data were collected using semi structured interviews. The goal was to collect the stories and experiences of the participants to address the research question of what leadership strategies were implemented by successful African American social service nonprofit organization leaders and how these helped them overcome the racial-related challenges to remain sustainable in the long run. A qualitative methodology allowed me to understand which are the most valuable lessons and experiences that helped African American leaders make organizations succeed so the learning outcomes can be passed on to future leaders, contributing to the success of more African American nonprofit social service organizations, supporting in that way the wider African community and population.

Due to the limited number of African American leaders of nonprofit social service organizations. A qualitative study allows a deeper understanding of African American leaders' rich experiences and strategies to succeed. Thus, a qualitative study was more appropriate for this study.

As the research questions aim at understanding strategies and experiences of African American leaders, qualitative research is more appropriate because it focuses on the richness of experiences of each participant. A quantitative study would require many

participants, and the focus could not be placed on the richness of the experiences described. Instead, a basic qualitative analysis allowed me to understand the challenges faced by the participants, their experiences, the learning outcomes, and how they could use those experiences to succeed.

This chapter presents the researcher's role, identifies the research participants, and explains the research method and design. To adequately address the research question properly, information regarding the population, research method and procedure, data collection techniques, and reliability and validity are detailed.

Research Design and Rationale

The basic qualitative research design was selected for this study to answer the following research question: What leadership strategies implemented by successful African American social service nonprofit organization leaders helped them overcome racial challenges to remain sustainable?

This study sought to understand African American social service nonprofit leaders' stories and, in doing so, identify how they maintained organizational sustainability despite the racial challenges that benefit European American-led nonprofit organizations in terms of funding and board support, rather than African American-led. Existing literature and research show that African American nonprofit organizations have unique race-related challenges with African American leaders. However, research is limited, and researchers have not explained how African American leaders of social service nonprofit organizations managed to overcome and navigate those racial obstacles. A qualitative study was conducted to fully understand the successful leadership strategies

as it allowed participants to develop their personal experiences, successes, and failures. As detailed in further chapters, the participants' stories indicated that they were fully aware of the race-related difficulties before they applied for those positions; however, they persisted as they wanted to make a significant change. In their roles, leaders acted as a bridge to the broader society to instruct, serve as ambassadors to their communities, overcome loneliness, and tenaciously ensure their organization's mission in the long run.

Thus, the existing gap demands a thorough study, which is what this study aims to do. In this study, I sought to document the leaders' stories often neglected in the literature, especially regarding sustaining an organization despite the drawbacks. I wanted to "better understand" (Butina, 2015) that though research shows that the African American social service nonprofit organizations are rife with race-based challenges, what from their stories can guide us on what they do anyhow. A better understanding of their stories made the basic qualitative method the logical approach to address the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Lewis, 2015).

Largely qualitative studies emerged as an alternative to positivism or quantitative research. Quantitative studies contain research questions that can be deductive, measurable, and replicated. Conversely, qualitative studies often address problems focused upon a phenomenon or experiences, study a smaller group, or do not include a hypothesis of the outcome. These studies have become an acceptable way to provide richness to the understanding of our world. There are numerous qualitative approaches to inquiry (Butina, 2015). The standard qualitative methods are case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative (Creswell, 2014).

Researchers use basic qualitative analysis to try to understand human behavior and how these are influenced. This approach focuses on the reasons behind human behavior, mainly how and why people make decisions. As a result, the basic qualitative analysis focuses on small data samples but is rich in description to identify patterns of behavior and the context in which it takes place. Open and semi-open questionnaires and interviews can be used for basic qualitative analysis.

The basic qualitative approach focuses on the participant's story with disclosing the researcher's interest in the question. The goal is to understand behaviors and their meaning from participants' stories. This is achieved through the construction of narratives (Gilstein, 2020). Many disciplines use this approach to understand historical experiences and culture, usually collected by interviews but can include biographies and oral histories (Birchall, 2014; Butina, 2015; Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). Anthropologists and sociologists used this approach first, but it has expanded to other disciplines. The central element of basic qualitative is that every human has a story, people do not mind telling their stories, and rich meaning can come from gathering stories (Butina, 2015).

As a result, basic qualitative analysis is the most suitable if participants share their stories and experiences to answer the research questions. From their stories, it is possible to understand how participants navigated the racial disadvantages as leaders to succeed. Furthermore, from the WRF approach and the SCT, a basic qualitative analysis can be conducted to understand behaviors in a White privilege context and the learning process of participants as they encounter the environment and face the challenges. Furthermore,

reciprocal determinism also helps explain how African American leaders responded to the challenges of developing successful leadership strategies.

Basic qualitative methodology helped uncover the use of the unknown or ignored experiences of African American leaders. It allowed for the use of a theoretical foundation, unlike with some of the other qualitative methodologies. Theories provide an operational understanding, but the research through the analysis can help develop new meaning (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). Researchers can return to the theory to evaluate whether findings enrich it or contradict it (Butina, 2015; Josselson & Lieblich, 2003).

To understand and learn from the participant's experiences and stories, it was impossible to use case studies, ethnography, or grounded theory. Instead, a basic qualitative study understands how and why people behavior how they do. Thus, this qualitative methodology was selected to understand and learn from the participants, particularly as it is most appropriate to answer the research questions considering the WRF and the SCT. The SCT focuses on how individuals learn from the environment and how they shape their behaviors. Furthermore, the SCT focuses on cognitive influence, how people learn and use it to influence their behavior. The environment is, moreover, from the WRF, hostile against African Americans. Thus, a basic qualitative methodology is ideal for this study that focuses on behavior, the reasons, the environment, and learning outcome:-

The desire to understand the experiences and stories of African American nonprofit leaders emanated from my lifelong community service and witnessed first-hand the trials of African American-led nonprofits' lack and challenges. Josselson and Lieblich

(2003) wrote that students who propose to use a qualitative study typically want to give voice and meaning to subgroups from their own experiences. At the onset of the research, I can concur that this was my intent: to give voice and sense to these leaders who toiled relentlessly with no documentation or record of their accomplishments nor understood why they continue to do so.

Role of the Researcher

Basic qualitative analysis is different from other qualitative methods in that the research does not imply objectivity. Instead, the researcher discloses their interest in the analysis and personal thoughts to acknowledge any potential bias. In doing that, the goal is to reduce and prevent projecting those thoughts onto the participants' stories (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). They strive to be objective even when it is difficult to be neutral and minimize bias by having the researcher "situate themselves into the research by being explicit" (Birchall, 2014). Mazur (2018) explained that the researcher plays a role much like being a mom or sister. Therefore, the research can be a co-creation; thus, the researcher needs to document how they reacted to the stories and be cognizant of this tension when analyzing the data. Finally, Birchall (2014) described reflexivity as acting on the ability to remain unbiased while realizing and accounting for bias. Therefore, I disclosed my background, thoughts, and interest in the research questions.

There was no previous relationship between the participants and me. However, I was aware of the participants' jobs but never had any personal relationships, nor did they work together. I neither worked with nor supervised the participants at any time. Thus,

any previous thoughts regarding the participants were not based on an existing relationship.

Qualitative research involves interpretation; thus, the researcher plays a key role. Because the researcher is deeply involved in the experience shared by participants, this involvement introduces important strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the research process that must be addressed (Creswell, 2014). The key factors that introduce potential biases into the research are personal background, history, and culture, particularly racial.

Both the participants and I belong to the African American community, and thus, there is a stronger connection. Similarly, I was attracted to this topic because of my previous personal experiences in the nonprofit sector. The participants and I share a common history and culture as African Americans.

As a result of the shared experiences and backgrounds, both the participants and I connected even if they did not have a previous personal connection or relationship. This might have caused me to tend to certain themes and interpretations, particularly as the theoretical framework (the WRF) is racial-related. For that reason, all previous personal thoughts were addressed before the interviews and analysis.

The topic explored was racially related; thus, a sensitive topic was present as participants shared their experiences on overcoming racial challenges in the sector. All participants were reassured they could stop at any time, and they could leave the study. Furthermore, due to the topic's sensitivity, I masked the names of people, activities, places, institutions, and organizations.

My initial interest in this topic came from my previous volunteering roles in the nonprofit social services sector. It was not until college that I realized that one could professionally work in the nonprofit sector and that African American organizations faced more challenges than their white counterparts. Another facet was that African American organizations spend an inordinate amount of time convincing the broader society that our needs are legitimate and systemic.

One important personal experience that led me to study this topic was addressed before the interviews and analysis is the experience of a local community fund, where all African American-led nonprofit organizations were competing for funds to survive when none of the judges was African American. The organizations were sustaining the operations from their funds. Thus, the conclusion that further research had to be done as African American-led organizations indeed had more challenges than their European American counterparts. I developed a desire to learn from these African American nonprofit leaders' stories of what kept them running their organizations against its drawbacks. For-profit entrepreneurs at least had the realization of riches if they succeeded. Also, the WRF was selected as a theory to understand systemic racism constructively (again to diminish bias) and use it as a framework.

Methodology

The participants were African American social service nonprofit organization leaders in a large metropolitan city in the United States' Midwest portion. The inclusion criteria were that participants had to be executive directors of social service nonprofit organizations who have been in their roles for 5 years or more. Five or more years were

required to ensure that the individuals had enough experience in leading a nonprofit organization and a guarantee that organizations remain sustainable (Lesonsky, 2018). The geographical area chosen had a large African American community and a substantial pool of participants. As of early 2019, many of the longstanding leaders who fit the population's characteristics retired (Welch, 2018). Thus, the documentation of their experience was considered fruitful for future leaders' use, so they were invited to participate in the study.

The sample size consisted of nine participants. Initially, the number of participants was 12, but the data reached saturation. Saturation is when "no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences occur in the data (Saldana, 2015, p. 248). As saturation is involved in its definition, data saturation is reached when replicating the study can be achieved. As the current study is qualitative, the goal was not to analyze a large quantity of data to reach statistical conclusions. Instead, the richness of data was the goal (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Richness refers to the quality of the data provided by participants during the interview. A rich description is desired for qualitative research to be fruitful. Fusch and Ness (2015) recommended that interviewers ask multiple interviewees the same questions; otherwise, achieving data saturation would be ever-changing.

The purposeful selection was made first by researching existing and retired African American leaders of social service nonprofit organizations. I recruited participants from a local community development association, a state-level community development association, and nonprofit social media groups. The individuals who fit the

research criteria were sent an email message or social media messages which included a description of the nature of the research and an invitation to participate in the study. The invitations detailed the description of the study and the steps to participate in it. Upon consent to participate, they were called or emailed to set up an appointment. Participants were checked whether they fit the criteria during the phone call or email once they confirmed their desire to participate. Due to scheduling issues, a schedule of available dates and times was established and provided upfront to avoid lag time.

Instrumentation

The semi structured interview process took approximately 60 minutes. The interview was recorded. I guided the participants throughout the interview process, using semi structured questions that helped them develop their stories, focusing on their background, education, and critical incidences that led them to maintain sustainable social service nonprofit organizations. Semi structured interviews help researchers document the participant's narratives to achieve the goal of the study (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). As the interviewer, I prepared the questions, which helped encourage the participants to develop their stories, using certain flexibility and preventing silent moments.

Moreover, the uniformity of questions asked during the interviews ensured the study's validity as it was conducted using thematic coding. The follow-up questions, if necessary, enhanced the participants' experiences accurately (Butina, 2015; Turner, 2010).

The interview questions emanated from the literature. The first questions in the interview guide were demographic. The other questions addressed specific topics related to their experiences of being nonprofit leaders. The questions to document their stories specifically asked what made them choose to lead, to choose a mentors' role, their perceived qualities and behaviors needed to fulfill that role, what social and cultural factors, challenges they encountered during their career, and other factors of being an African American nonprofit executive director. Validity was established during the practice sessions to prevent bias, adverse reactions, and the feasibility of allowing the participants to tell their stories to address the research question (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Seidman, 2013).

Exploratory/Pilot Study

Researchers who explore trustworthiness and validity in qualitative research methods with interview guides should include a pilot study. The pilot for this research consisted of practicing using the interview guide with subjects who did not fit the study's criteria. This practice allowed correcting bias, assessing adverse reactions, checking the interview flow, and testing the equipment. Again, the interview guide's validity was directly related to viable research (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Seidman, 2013). The pilot and main study were not conducted before I received institutional review board (IRB) approval. The authorization number for this study is #12-23-19-0108400.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Nine participants took part in the study. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a safe and confidential setting. The interviewer was the researcher. There were

exceptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and one interview was over the phone and one in written form. The face-to-face and over-the-phone interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The interview guide (see Appendix) was used to collect the data. The researcher also took field notes and journal entries. The interviews involved semi structured questions, and the researcher had interview guides to help ask questions and promote participants to develop their stories as descriptive and rich as possible.

The study involved a single interview, as mentioned. Participants who needed further clarifications or follow-up were contacted by email or over the phone, and each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes. There were no adverse reactions during the interviews. Overall, the participants enjoyed telling their stories. Therefore, formal debriefing exercises were not applicable. The interviews were recorded using a Sony I.C. recorder and the Easy Voice Recorder Pro app as a backup. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants interviewed written form; an email was sent with guidelines and questions.

All participants signed a consent form and were told they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. The consent form indicated that the interviewees would be contacted if any follow-up was necessary for clarification.

Data Analysis Plan

Basic qualitative study coding and data analysis use an abductive approach (Given, 2008). An abductive approach means that the research is not guaranteeing the meaning of the narratives. In other words, the researcher uses existing research during the analysis process (Shaw & Hiles, 2017). However, as with similar qualitative study

approaches, the analysis was an iterative process. A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDA) could have been used to help interpret the interviews. However, because of the nature of the topic and the number of participants, manual analysis of data was the most suitable method (Birchall, 2014; Chrisman, 2013; McAlpine, 2016).

The transcripts were transcribed using the software. However, those transcripts required further editing. The analysis process was as follows:

1. To familiarize with the data, the researcher read the interview transcripts and listened to the stories several times; coupled with the audio and field notes, the researcher engaged with the stories to understand the narratives better.

The coding process involved reading the transcripts several times, and after familiarizing well with the data, transcripts were coded. The first and second step coding was used, and finally, themes emerged from them.

2. The data -codes and themes- were interpreted from the WRF perspective using the SCT to withdraw meaning from the participants' stories. The WRF provided the lens to understand and interpret the participants' stories, particularly the context and environment where participants engage in and work as leaders for the success of the organizations. The SCT offered the tools to interpret behaviors according to the environment and the learning because of the environment, past experiences, and previous behaviors.

The first coding step provided a general sense of what the stories reflected and an overall general meaning. Notes were taken during the coding phase, as well

as field notes. The codes were used to categorize data, labeling them with terms. There were later used to identify the emerging themes.

3. There were not any significant discrepancies in the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthy research can be relied upon to be valid, and the results are considered worthy of the reader's consideration. The nature of qualitative research methods makes this examination of trustworthiness even more noteworthy. Qualitative studies' trustworthiness consists of four components: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016; Elo et al., 2014). Each term is addressed in this section.

Credibility

To be considered credible, the researcher must ensure that the data is relevant to answer the research questions (Amankwaa, 2016). This study's research question is: What leadership strategies implemented by successful African American social service nonprofit organization leaders helped them overcome racial challenges to remain sustainable and be passed on to future leaders to contribute to the success of more African American nonprofit social service organizations to support and help a wider African Diaspora?

Thus, the interview questions concentrated on the participants' backgrounds as Executive Directors, with sufficient years of experience, in their stories and experiences leading successful and sustainable nonprofit organizations. The interview questions understand from their stories that led to running sustainable organizations. Nonprofit

organization professionals not in a leadership capacity assisted in pre-interview sessions to test interview questions' quality and ensure they were suitable to gather rich and descriptive narratives to answer the research questions.

Transferability

Unlike quantitative research methods, transferability does not imply duplicating the study process and gaining the same results. In qualitative studies, transferability ensures the reader by providing full descriptions, transparency on what occurred during the interview, and interpreting the results (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016). Thus, this research protocol included what Amankwaa (2016) described as “thick description,” which provides enough detail that the reader can make proper inferences and uses of the research. The researcher assumed that the “story” is told thoroughly with many notes and details in this context. The transferability of this study is good as it provides detailed information in the research methods about the rationale of the study and each step is taken to conduct the study. This study can be replicated again by any other researcher following the methodology steps. It can be replicated in other locations and with other nonprofit organizations.

Dependability

The final criterion for trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability is an audit check in which an independent reviewer reviews the research to assure the study's accuracy and findings. As this is a doctoral thesis, the committee and University review the study. The journal activity logged the details from the meetings.

Confirmability

Amankwaa (2016) recommended the use of a journal by the researcher to facilitate confirmability. Other researchers can evaluate the journal field notes as well as the coding process to establish its confirmability. Besides, the journal provides information on the location, time, the participant's attitude, recording equipment, and other details (Amankwaa, 2016). The goal was to develop an analysis that another researcher could replicate to explore its conclusions in different settings. Moreover, the journal provided information to enhance the interpretations and documentation for validity purposes.

Ethical Procedures

Sometimes in the pursuit to learn about phenomena, researchers went beyond the bounds of ethical standards to seek knowledge. The practice of not harming participants emanated from stories such as Henrietta Lack's cells' unethical use, gynecological tests on slaves, and the Tuskegee Syphilis tests (Gordon, 2014) emphasize not harming the participants. Because of examples of wrongdoing in scientific research, it became necessary to legislate protections against vulnerable populations and establish ethical standards in research in the United States.

One of the first steps was the Belmont Report established by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research in 1974 (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016; Seidman, 2013). The next step included creating local Institutional Review Boards (IRB), which sets the criteria and regulations of all research completed within their organization. One of the

primary components is the informed consent form that assures that the participant faces no harm through the study (Seidman, 2013).

Walden University mandates that researchers receive IRB authorization (#12-23-19-0108400) before conducting any research. The process included a thorough review of the research process (Brice & Hardy, 2015). Therefore, I ensured that the process protected all participants' anonymity, provided that the process harmed no one, assured all participation was voluntary, and guaranteed all participants' right to withdraw. Safeguards included establishing a means to ensure the data is not accessible by those who should not have it. The participants' identities will remain unknown through coding and within the manuscript.

This research follows the guidelines in Seidman's (2013) *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and The Social Services*. The first portion is the informed consent form (Appendix A and B), which explains the study and includes the participant's risks, rights, possible benefits, records management, and dissemination of the information (Seidman, 2013).

All participants signed a consent form, and they were ensured they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to, even after the interview was conducted. As it is a sensitive topic with potential psychological effects, particularly as participants were telling their stories and race-related experiences, the researcher ensured that the interview was conducted in a safe environment to speak about their experiences safely and comfortably. The semi structured questions allowed clients to develop the topics according to what they felt comfortable talking about and omit if they considered

harmful any part they felt like omitting. Participants were also guaranteed confidentiality which also ensures that the study follows all the ethical guidelines. Other applicable concerns such as power differentials and environment were not applicable.

The participants were informed that I would not share the identities of individual participants or nonprofit organizations' locations. Nor would I provide details that might identify participants, and the location of the nonprofit organizations are not shared with another party. I used numerical codes to identify the participants to maintain the confidentiality of the participant's identities. Moreover, I did not use their personal information for any purpose outside of this study. The data is kept with a secure passcode on my home's laptop and will be held for at least five years, as required by the university, and then appropriately discarded.

Summary

This chapter documented the study's process to assure that the results fell under the parameters of trustworthiness. The semi structured interview research model facilitated the documentation of the experiences of the participants' interviews. The interview questions were asked consistently and related to the research question. All regulations and protocols assured that the research caused no harm to the participants nor invalidated the results. The next chapter presents the study's results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This basic qualitative study relays the stories of African American social service nonprofit organization leaders from a Midwestern city regarding their strategies to maximize sustainability. What from the lived experiences and stories of African American social service nonprofit organization leaders led them to maintain sustainable nonprofit organizations in a large Midwest metropolitan city? This chapter presents the findings and a detailed summary of the semistructured interview data.

Demographics

Nine individuals participated in this study, of whom seven completed face-to-face interviews in a safe and confidential setting. The exceptions were because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which case the interview was conducted by telephone and written. However, all participants were given a study overview. The interview guide (see Appendix) was used to collect the data. There were no collusion elements or perceived coercion to participate in the study due to any existing or expected relationship between the participants and me may have swayed the study's analysis and findings. Participation recruitment was voluntary, and there was no compensation for participation. There were no adverse effects on any participants' health and no minor or severe injuries as the study did not require human experimentation. The interviews were recorded using a Sony I.C. recorder and the Easy Voice Recorder Pro app as a backup.

All participants were African American social service nonprofit executive directors in a leadership position for 5 or more years. They live and work in the same

large Midwestern metropolitan area. The first questions in the interview guide were demographic. The other questions addressed specific topics related to their experiences of being nonprofit leaders. The questions to document their stories included what made them choose to lead, mentors' role, perceived qualities and behaviors needed, social and cultural factors, challenges, and other factors of being an African American nonprofit executive director.

The demographic data included the participants' educational attainment, years of experience, and age. Eight out of the nine participants earned a postsecondary degree. The participant who did not attend college supplemented their education with on-the-job training and continuous education courses. The participant acknowledged that their initial career did not require a college education. However, they realized that more education was needed to run an organization; they pursued continuous professional development. All study participants were over the age of 40 at the time of their interview. For five of the nine participants, their current role represented a change from their former career path. Three of the participants retired from their first career before taking on their current position.

Table 1*Demographics*

Participants	Years in an executive director role	Education
A	21	PhD
B	9	2 Masters
C	5	MSW
D	22	Some college
E	15	MSW
F	15	BS
G	6	MSW
H	5	Some college
I	12	BA

The core of the interview contained questions developed to draw out the participants' experiences regarding being an African American social service nonprofit organization leader.

Data Analysis

This research documented the experiences of African American social service nonprofit leaders in a Midwest metropolitan area. Basic qualitative was chosen because the research question was designed to capture data to fill a gap about African American social service nonprofit leaders' strategies for running sustainable organizations. As Adu (2019) recommended, I wrote my ancillary thoughts, reflections, and field notes into a journal.

The small number of participants made using Microsoft Word advantageous to code (Basit, 2003). As stated earlier, I intended to immerse myself in the analysis and did not feel the need to use data analysis software. Fortunately, all the interviews took place within 2 months, making it easier to hear consistent subjects in their answers. I was sure

to note them in my journal. Field notes help capture nuances, aid in reflexivity, and provide detailed descriptions of the stories with this research approach. For example, Participant A's interview was recorded in their home. This environment was apropos as she is a community organizer whose organization's (and her) mission is to revitalize her neighborhood. She did not have to detail the area's state, as we were both there.

Similarly, Participant B shared how important cultural inclusion was to her. I noted the three languages on the sign-in tablet, which was evidence of her stance. The research notes included such details but transcribing and data analysis did not start until the interviews were conducted. Trint software was used to transcribe the interviews, after which I edited the draft transcriptions by listening along with the recordings.

After carefully editing the transcripts with the recorded data, I began moving inductively from coded units to themes recommended by the literature. I did a cold reading without marking the transcripts to gain a sense of the participant's answers without my nervousness during the interviews. In the third reading, I started to identify codes by underlining passages. During this time, as well, I conferred with my journal notes. After coding the transcripts, I reviewed the transcripts to derive themes and interpreted the data (Adu, 2019).

The themes that emanated from this process were

- recognizing a community's needs,
- the importance of a team (or Board),
- obtaining knowledge about the nonprofit organization sector,
- being fully self-aware, and

- persisting.

After establishing the themes from the interview data, I referred to the WRF as a framework. The WRF themes accent the humanity and strength of communities of color, evoking liberty, justice for all, acknowledging conscious, subconscious, and unconscious enrichment of being European American, and calling to revolutionary action (Feagin, 2013). This comparison helped establish that this research had information on the practical aspects of being an African American social service nonprofit leader, detailed in the next chapter. There were few discrepancies or outliers from this pool of participants. However, Participant G founded her organization because of a family tragedy. More details on the results will follow in the next chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This section provides the implementations and adaptations, which assure the study met the standards of trustworthiness. The standards of trustworthiness were defined and determined in Chapter 3. However, this section details the implementation of the components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and consistency/confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility stipulates that the researcher's methods in conducting the study met the results' standards and can be considered credible (Connelly 2016). In this study, the implementation of the standard protocol paralleled the Methodology section in Chapter 3. Moreover, the questions in the interview guide ensured consistent interviews. Seven of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, one was written, and one was completed on

the phone. The themes emanated from the coding process and were compared to the theories' frameworks.

Transferability

Transferability assured replicability in similar research (Amankwaa 2016). However, in qualitative studies, the reader needs to realize that the participants speak on a subject based upon their experiences and cannot assume their answers fully represent the entire population or issue. Moreover, the story is an interpretation of the subject's perceptions. The researcher should retain interview notes and journal entries to demonstrate that the data met transferability standards. Finally, I sought to document a specific cultural group's experiences in a particular geographical area in this study. Future research may use this study's methodology to record stories from other cultural groups or different regions. Moreover, the researcher's reflexive statement includes any personal characteristics that may impact the research (Josselson & Lieblich 2003).

Dependability

Dependability is a technique to establish an audit trail of the process in qualitative research. The university's procedures assure dependability. The approach used was the basic qualitative approach. Using this approach is a proven qualitative methodology. This methodology addresses the research question using an interview guide, using established data analysis principles, and creating meaning from the data. I disclosed my background to establish perspectives and use theories to provide a framework. Finally, all records and tables were retained.

Confirmability

The confirmability standard is consistent findings and can be replicated in future research (Connelly, 2016). The interview guide ensured that each participant received the same overview and questions. Again, the journal, interview guides, and notes were retained. The interview collection and analysis were conducted per established guidelines.

Results

What leadership strategies implemented by successful African American social service nonprofit organization leaders helped them overcome racial challenges to remain sustainable?

The participants' narratives established that African American nonprofit organization leaders could lead sustainable organizations despite race-related challenges. They saw a need, built a team, sought professional development, and persisted. Their stories demonstrated that these nonprofit organizational leaders grew up in environments that encouraged service for their community. They did not use racial injustice against them as an impetus to lead their organizations' missions, overcome obstacles with professional development, build alliances, and balance the needs and challenges within and without the community.

These individuals are self-aware and thus sought nonprofit organization professional development, built a team or board including those not of the Black community to shore up any deficits within the organization or provide allyship to increase its capacity. Moreover, they understood and lived with the impact of being an

African American nonprofit organization leader. They acknowledge race-related issues. Two participants discussed the need to reach out to other cultures and were prepared to serve them and strengthen their community for a diverse society. One participant's mission is to increase her community's wealth by coordinating collective investments and property purchases because of race-related issues.

Interview Questions Highlights

Interview question: "Please reflect on your experiences as an Executive Director focusing on the elements of your experiences that may have impacted sustainability?"

This question elicited answers concerning the pathway to leadership in their current roles. The journeys were diverse. One common core was that all participants saw a need and addressed it. Seven of the nine participants worked in a different capacity before their current role. Being an executive director represented a second career or postretirement activity. Participant F initially felt that there was no need to start another organization. However, after meeting a prominent figure, the participant decided to formalize an organization to publicize community organizations' mission and work. It also provides opportunities for volunteers to engage in community development work. Another participant mentioned that the encounter and encouragement from nationally renowned celebrities spurred them into starting their organization. Their professor challenged Participant B to implement the plan written in their school's paper. Last, Participant I used their for-profit business experience as a framework to build a nonprofit organization.

Interestingly, the participants sought assistance to overcome any perceived weaknesses by obtaining nonprofit organization training and seeking experts in the field. The interviewees seem resistant to focusing on their individual needs. They aimed to alleviate the community's needs. Participant B stated,

From my perspective, I think one of the things that promote sustainability is community voice—getting the community involved in [the] decision-making process because then they own it. And that's my goal that the community owns it because that's why we're here.

Overall, the participants used their skills, networks, and talents from their education and work experiences to drive their organizations' mission.

Interview question: “How did any mentors, personally or professionally, aid you in leading in the sustainability of your organization?”

This question focused the participants on any roles mentoring had on their experiences in relationship to leadership strategies. All participants agreed that mentors played a significant role in being able to lead successful nonprofit organizations. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, running an organization was not the option for some participants sought. Thus, participants used mentors to model or soundboard on running an effective organization and shore up any deficiencies. Participant B mentioned that their mentor was the catalyst to implement the objectives written in their paper for school. Participant E also used coaches extensively for everything from information technology to running a sustainable nonprofit organization. Lastly, Participant A instilled

the use of mentors on their board. In general, the participants addressed mentors' role in sustaining a successful nonprofit both personally and professionally.

Interview question: "What qualities and behaviors do you currently possess important to leading a sustainable nonprofit organization?"

This question elicited the success traits participants perceived as valuable. The answers differed, but the core answers related to a sense of personal awareness. Participants stated traits such as "emotional intelligence," "tenacity," and "passion and compassion." Participant C discussed connecting the dots and realizing how a decision impacts more than the initial intention. The participants used soft skills, which are not usually a part of formal leadership training or curriculums. Other participants consider their experiences, such as training received in their previous role, small projects started in their last position, or grant writing, which emanated from learning to write concisely.

Interview question: "What do you think are the social and cultural factors that impact the ability of a leader to create and maintain a sustainable organization?"

One of the central questions concerning the research question was the social and cultural factors that impact the leaders' sustainability. This question's responses were very personal and less theoretical than previous remarks. For example, Participant D reflected the lack of leeway given to African Americans to make mistakes. "We don't get a second chance." Participant A stated, "Well, one thing. I mean as a minority, as a woman, a minority, the expectation is that I'm not going to succeed". Another participant mentioned working around the angry black woman trope used to describe African American women in leadership.

On the other hand, three of the nine participants reflected on social and cultural implications for the groups they serve. Participant I stated,

I think one of the biggest challenges is that we look out at areas that we want to make changes, and there's a lot of socio-economic things that we cannot change until we bring someone in. So, we are got the cart before the horse. If you want to change all of those social ills, those economic disparities, you have to elevate economically and put [a] platform [together].

Participant E explained her role as a bridge between the community and the broader society. She lives with the people she serves and realizes her position as a role model. However, she is aware of other cultures; thus, she wants to ensure those who know her community and different cultures. She develops opportunities for her students to engage in cross-cultural events and participants in other cultures' associations. She stated,

so being a role model culturally, not letting only my cultural background...but being very intentional about bringing communities together who wouldn't otherwise be together in this kind of [organization] is what made us unique and learning from others [youth] see each other socially and know how to listen attentively to serve better.

Participant B similarly reflected on the need to address needs outside "the doors in your community." She believed that to manage society and the organization's ills; one must include everyone in the conversation. Her organization is intentional about ensuring all marketing materials are available in the languages represented in the community.

Interview question: “What is your greatest challenge in this role in relation to building a sustainable organization?”

This question documented the challenges faced by these leaders. All the participants stated that raising money was a central dilemma. However, the dynamic of competition and the need for collaboration in the sector was a significant concern. In other words, a pressing matter was to develop fresh approaches to running social service nonprofit organizations. Participant C mentioned that they hired a new CFO of Finance.

You know, we’re in the same market as G.M. and Quicken and Henry Ford and Blue Cross, although they call themselves for profit. It’s not quite the same. So in [a] market that’s already tight, finding quality [employee]...It’s really hard. You need people [who] can do a job.

Likewise, Participant B stated,

My greatest challenge right now is the system in which I operate, which was created prior to my entering into it. [It] is a system of competition and not collaboration. It’s a system of mistrust. It’s a system of pitting folks against each other instead of bringing people together. And not all the elements of the City want to collaborate and work together.

Participant B continued that a nonprofit organization “cannot continue to depend on philanthropy or the city to support you. You have to have diversity. You need to figure out what’s best for you, and then, you know, make that one your main goal.” Participant C stated that having the right people in the organization is as essential as having an income. She said that sometimes moving people from their current roles or terminating

them and other human capital techniques were as critical as fundraising. She stated that this does not always happen in the nonprofit sector but is necessary.

Interview question: “What other factors elements are critical in creating and maintaining a successful, sustainable nonprofit organization?”

The question created an opportunity to expound on anything mentioned or discussed earlier. Two of the nine participants mentioned getting the community involved in the work of the community. Throughout the interviews, there was mention that getting others involved in the work is a significant challenge. Participant H lamented that

And I know you're tirelessly communicating [to] people. It is the hardest nut to crack. And that's the hardest thing. And I don't understand. My husband told me my passion is different from everybody else because it's just getting people together. You have to be responsible whether you're a tenant or own a house. You live in this community. So, I, you know, I make it my purpose. God knows I'm making it my purpose to make this thing work as it has to.

However, the most significant result is that these leaders' narratives illustrate that the star quality is persistence. Each participant, in some facet, exemplified perseverance. The leaders realized their race-related issues but did not use them as an excuse to build sustainable organizations. Participant F quipped that we have it difficult as African Americans, but no more than enslaved ancestors, so we must be willing to work.

Conclusion

This chapter provides the findings of the individual interviews. The sections addressed the demographics and the data items from each of the questions. The questions

focus on different aspects of the research question to help the participants give a full story about their nonprofit leadership exploits. The next portion reviews research trustworthiness, including a description of each component. Finally, Chapter 5 will integrate and synthesize the literature, interview data, and future research recommendations. The study will conclude with a summary of the research findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This basic qualitative study documented African American social services nonprofit organization leaders' stories to understand their experiences as nonprofit organization leaders and maintain sustainable organizations. The investigation stemmed from a lack of information regarding how African American-led nonprofit organizations possessed sustainability when research demonstrated they had race-related challenges. A review of the research literature revealed that African American-led nonprofit organizations tended to be small, have fewer finances, have very few European Americans on their board, and serve predominantly African American clientele (Cunningham, 2016). However, African American-led organizations have existed in some form since 1693 (Dunbar, 2011). Many such organizations have persisted for decades, which led to this research documenting African American social service nonprofit organization leaders' stories. The results below illuminate the experiences of the African American social service nonprofit leaders' experiences successfully running sustainable organizations despite race-related issues and the sector's dynamic nature.

The results showed that successful leaders

- understand and recognize a community need,
- build a team (or Board) based on expertise,
- are willing to obtain nonprofit sector knowledge,
- are self-aware of strengths and weaknesses, and
- can persist and adapt.

Moreover, an analysis of the results in the context of theoretical and conceptual theories will be described. Finally, provided are the limitations, recommendations, and implications of the study.

Interpretations of the Findings

This section addresses the interpretation of the findings. The findings include the themes formulated from the analysis. The themes were recognizing a community need, the importance of a team, obtaining knowledge, self-awareness, and the ability to persist—each of these themes correlated with some aspects of the literature review. These results were pragmatic. African American social services nonprofit leaders focus on the organization's day-to-day needs while simultaneously being aware of the unique challenges and extra burdens of being an African American leader. In the broader community, the plight of African Americans is often framed in the embodiment of Martin Luther King's eloquent rendering of the "I Have a Dream" speech. However, on a day-to-day basis, the seeking of liberty coexists with the need to pay bills. The participants' stories embodied this context. As African American social service nonprofit leaders, not only do they have to lead in the nonprofit sector rife with change and fluidity but be cognizant of representing their culture and organization. More so than other nonprofit organizational leaders, they must be sophisticated of the trends because their failure to do so may mean the detriment of the mission and resources.

The interview examples include Participant F's desire to get African American nonprofit organizations' stories publicized because the media often ignore them. Another was Participant H's dogged determination to advocate for her community to the highest

local government levels. Finally, Participant A faced direct racism from a government official who felt the organization could not handle a grant and provided obstacles to prove it. In all of these examples, these leaders are aware of the race-related and sector challenges and persist. They also faced internal race-related challenges, such as Participant C, who relayed the loneliness of being an African American leader. She mentioned that even her family does not understand the stress. Participant I is frustrated because of her desire for the community to acquire wealth as a collective. Then, Participant G took another job to support herself and the organization even though she retired because her organization's mission was so important to her.

Their persistence can be a drawback because they all seem to take on the extra stress of being African American and nonprofit organization leaders. They are few and have had to navigate a thorny path on behalf of their organization. Throughout the interviews, I noted that while they acknowledged the challenges, it was not the crutch they would use not to succeed.

The other themes proved that race is a defining characteristic to measure the worthiness of being a nonprofit leader. The results showed that each of the participants fully understood the need to develop a team. Their self-awareness allowed them to acknowledge that their team members had to shore up their deficiencies. Conversely, Participant D remarked that a leader needed to know when to terminate a staff member if they are not suited for the work. She noted they could be nice, but they could ruin the organization. Moreover, each participant has participated in professional development to

learn more about the sector and missions. Therefore, their practices align with the literature recommendation for nonprofit leadership.

The White racial frame

The WRF, the theoretical framework for this study, indicates that American society constructs were developed through a lens of White dominance and inherently causes inequality and other challenges for minorities, even if the racism is subconscious by the dominant culture. Moreover, every institution, including the media, perpetuate this notion. Persons of color in opposition and belief of full personhood assert their right to liberty through various methods (Feagin, 2013). Feagin (2013) called these methods *counterframes*.

The WRF confirmed the findings of the study. All the participants acknowledged the unique challenges of being an African American nonprofit organization leader. However, their work challenges aligned with the nonprofit sector with the extra layer of systemic racism to contend. The most common challenge was the need to provide financial resources to serve the mission. Though this is an overall challenge of most nonprofit organizations, some participants mentioned the more significant obstacle of being an African American leader. For example, Participant A's organization earned a contract with the state. However, one of the state's employees felt that an African American-led organization was insufficient to handle the grant and gave them more scrutiny. To overcome this dilemma, the leader called the state but also assured them their paperwork was superior. As she stated,

Anything they asked us to do, we would do, you know, can you come and meet with ... we need you to come up here so that the Governor will speak about the program. Will you come? You'll be there. Do we need you to come and present the program to the legislators? We will be there. ... Now, it is like that. I'm going to do everything that is in my power to make the program look good.

The situation illustrated a strategy of not using their race as a crutch but ensuring excellence in their products and offerings. As in Participants H's and I's cases, they learned to demonstrate shrewdness, as Participant A did, or operate their business contacts from their previous career.

Participant C mentioned that finding a mentor who understood the challenges African American leaders face from their peers could be difficult. She asserted that there are not many in the executive role. Even with mentors and a good team, it is lonely. However, Participant F instructed that enslaved African American ancestors crossed the Atlantic Ocean despite the alienation and loneliness, and their survival demanded that African Americans persevere and keep going. "Do you know how powerful our ancestors were to do that?" Each participant mentioned some form of counterframe by taking the necessary steps to emphasize their and the community's personhood. Two examples include Participant B and Participant H. Participant B said the key to sustainability meant "Getting the community involved in the decision-making process because then they own it."

Furthermore, Participant H stated that the community is not as bad as it could be or as rumored: "People want the same things I want." Thus, she felt it was her role to

knock on doors and provide opportunities to build a better community. Lastly, Participant E spoke about her efforts to get her students to raise their awareness of different cultures to prepare them for their future in a global society.

Reciprocal Determinism

Bandura (1978) wrote that three determinants would influence how a person will choose to live. The individual can control or be affected depending upon the condition. The three determinants of environmental factors, cognition, and behavior intertwine. This study confirmed this theory in that each participant has similar characteristics (culture and race) that determine building successful and sustainable social service nonprofit organizations. However, the specific determinants were more of a factor based upon the individual.

One determinant was that six participants grew up during the Civil Rights era, whereas three grew up under the influence of Civil Rights heroes. The participants in each interview mentioned wanting to make their community better. The only divergent view was which mission they wanted to improve. Participant C's awareness came from seeing her relative's struggle. Participant B came from watching her grandmother's service to her church and neighborhood. Participant I saw how the European Americans approach wealth building. Participant G suffered a horrific family tragedy, and Participant E wanted to increase students' educational levels. The environment of participants' backgrounds differed. Three of the participants grew up in families that valued service to others. One of the participants came from a prominent family whose members were integral during the Civil Rights era. This participant mentioned that one of

their children is carrying on the mantel of service as an attorney. Another participant stated that her grandmother was always helping others in the church. This experience is the foundation of her service mantra. Another again saw the struggles in her family and wanted to help her community. Another example is the participant that started as a social worker that led to becoming an executive director.

The participants' self-awareness was intact in that each participant did not feel that they had the qualifications necessary to build a sustainable organization without assistance. They sought to find others who had the expertise they needed to develop their organizations. In most cases, they were a conduit to allowing the community to advocate for themselves—in other words, building the African helping tradition by being the conduit to help the collective work together.

Confirmation of Literature

The literature review provided a foundation to understand the research question. The aspects focused upon were the history of African American-led nonprofits, nonprofit sustainability, and nonprofit leadership strategies. The data confirmed the findings of the review. People of African descent-led nonprofits have existed since Africans first arrived on the shores of what would become the United States. These organizations' needs originated from Africa's cultural standard, which Martin and Martin (1985) called the African helping tradition. This collective approach to life, which includes hospitality to strangers and the community's needs, is higher than individuals permeated African American culture. For example, none of the participants in this study initially set out to start or run a nonprofit organization. It was their sense of community that forged the

pathways in their current lives. Additionally, they lead their organizations to uplift African Americans to elevate their community's lives and personhood while understanding that African Americans and their organizations are considered inherently inferior.

The next review's subject was nonprofit sustainability. Even though African American-led organizations face unique challenges because of systemic racism, this study sought to understand nonprofit sustainability principles. The review revealed that for a nonprofit to be sustainable, it would need to develop the ability to reach what (McDonald et al. 2015) coined the *triple bottom line*. This typology includes sustaining revenue while simultaneously continuing to serve the mission and constituency. The leader must have the sophistication to address each component.

The participants' experiences demonstrated that each understood this concept. Participant I's mission is to develop land through individual investments, thus increasing the overlooked wealth. Participant B's work on land trust uses nontraditional pathways to help the community that does not include waiting for grants. Moreover, serving and educating the community on new paths to prosperity. Participants A, C, and D expanded their organization's services and got rid of obsolete services. One participant works an outside job while running their organization. All the organizations represented in this study have gone beyond the traditional pathways to raising funds. The activities reported by the participants demonstrate that African American-led sustainability traits are like European American directors. They acknowledge the issues but work harder to achieve sustainability. Another responsibility they tackle is educating philanthropists of the

community's issues or providing critiques to the funder's proposals as a bridge to understanding what will or will not work. Therefore, the monies invested in the community assist in the alleviation of the issues within the communities.

The final review was on nonprofit leadership strategies. The study illuminated that nonprofit organization leaders' skill sets must be compatible with for-profit leaders. Leadership development should focus on the nonprofit organization's attention, as is fundraising to counteract against the dynamic nature of the sector. The data suggest that these leaders were cognizant of the necessity of leadership development. Most leaders have college degrees and stay abreast of the nonprofit sector's changes by acquiring continuing education and aligning with the community's experts. Overall, the participants' experiences and practices align with the theoretical and conceptual theories' findings, even while overcoming systemic racism.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were the same as in Chapter 1. The limitations were that participants' stories were from the context of their recollections; therefore, their understanding and results may include personal bias. These are the participants' experiences and from their perspectives. As I shared the same cultural background as the participants, the research assumed loftier or more philosophical results. Carefully adhere to the research approach traditions to avoid any embellishments. Therefore, the initial thoughts and interests in this research were disclosed. The use of reflexivity, journal entries, and consistency in gathering and analyzing the data allowed me to overcome any bias.

Recommendations

The research's initial goal was to document African American nonprofit leaders' experiences to understand the strategies to maintain sustainable organizations while being Black in the United States. Though widely unknown, African American social service nonprofit organizations persist for decades. Therefore, this study can be used as a foundation to document similar participants' stories sustaining a nonprofit organization.

Second, this research provides guidelines for nascent African American nonprofit leaders and social entrepreneurs on the participants' strategies. Their experience can lessen the learning curve of new leaders—for example, the participants' self-awareness. Self-awareness is a subject often neglected. Therefore, self-development courses should be formalized in the education systems to develop the leaders earlier. Those seeking to start an organization can formalize why they want to address a disparity in the community. Moreover, this research may educate the broader community on the innate issues these leaders face, especially in this current climate of achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion in fundraising, personnel, and all facets of the nonprofit sector.

Finally, African Americans are part of the African diaspora. The WRF has negatively impacted these nations and cultures through enslavement and colonization; however, these people built nations, institutions, and organizations under oppressive racial systems. Documentation of their stories is necessary. It is not only for the wider community to understand but also for the African diaspora to acknowledge their similar but different perspectives on how to counterframe this framework.

Implications

One tenet of the WRF is that White superiority is pervasive in every facet of our society, including education and media. Therefore, non-racist Whites may subconsciously subscribe to Black inferiority's beliefs (Dupree & Fiske, 2018; Feagin, 2013). The nonprofit sector's many White members fall under this category. Therefore, this research can help address and hopefully understand the society of the extra burdens of the African American social service nonprofit organization leaders. The philanthropic community can ally with these leaders and their organization with better funding practices, increase allyship, and thoughtful introspection before making any conclusion concerning African American-led nonprofits. They also can step up their efforts to build a bridge to these leaders and communities.

The second implication is for upcoming African American social service nonprofit organizations to glean from these leaders' stories and experiences. They can carry the torch without relearning from mistakes and build on the foundation laid out. Most importantly, this research has demonstrated that there has always been an African American-led nonprofit organization from the beginning of African Americans living in the United States.

The basic qualitative approach is a critical methodology. This approach allows for the stories of often overlooked aspects and cultures. The African American nonprofit organization leaders' experiences need to be told and understood if the sector which serves society can genuinely do so equally.

Conclusion

This study documented the perspectives of African American social service nonprofit leaders. The results demonstrated room for more discussion on the nonprofit sector's need to eradicate these leaders' undue challenges. Overall, these leaders pursued building sustainable social service nonprofit organizations like the broader community. However, they have the additional burden of counterframing, having to advocate and educate the dominant culture. This study heralds these leaders and their many accomplishments.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview Guide

Pseudonym:	Code:
Interview Date:	Start time: End time:
Sex:	Age:
Highest Educational Attainment:	School:
Position/Title:	Yrs. In Position:

Introduction

Hello, _____ (name of participant) _____. Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this study. I sent you a letter explaining the purpose of this study. Before we proceed to the interview, do you have any questions as to the nature and purpose of this interview? **Pause**

The interview will take approximately an hour of your time. Do you think you have ample time to finish the interview? If not, we can do whatever is convenient for you, and we can reschedule to finish the interview. **Pause**

During the interview, please let me know if you do not want to answer or have questions you want me to explain further.

Complete confidentiality of any information from you will be observed. The interview transcript will be stored in a password-protected computer and any hard copies placed in a safe. I am the only person who can access it, and all the information will be destroyed after five years.

If you do not have any more questions, let us start.

My questions will be a focus upon your experiences, maintaining sustainability. In terms of this research, I am referring to the phrase “**sustainability**,” as it is commonly used to describe a nonprofit that is able to sustain itself over the long term, perpetuating its ability to fulfill its mission. (National Council of Nonprofits, 2019)

1. How long have you been in your current position?
2. What is your educational background?

3. Please reflect on your experiences as an Executive Director focusing on the elements of your experience that may have positively impacted sustainability.
4. How did any mentors, personally or professionally, aid you in leading in the sustainability of your organization?
5. What qualities and behavior do you currently possess that are important to leading a sustainable nonprofit organization?
6. What do you think are the social and cultural factors that impact the ability of a leader to create and maintain a sustainable organization?
7. What is your greatest challenge in this role in relation to building a sustainable organization?
8. What other factors or elements are critical in creating and maintaining a successful, sustainable nonprofit organization?