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Exploring Nonprofit Leadership Roles Among Black Women

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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BS, Martin University, 2002

AS, Grambling State University, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Although nonprofit organizations are essential in addressing social and community concerns to enhance the lives of individuals and groups, Black women face barriers in nonprofit leadership roles. Crucial to such hurdles is the perception that their voices are often disproportionately missing from leadership-based research on women. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of 26 Black women in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership roles regarding their experiences and critical factors contributing to the success, challenges, and barriers they face in leadership roles. Black feminist thought theory in work leadership, family, and Black women's oppression was used as the theoretical framework that guided the study. A qualitative narrative inquiry was used to address two research questions on the (a) perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid to senior-level nonprofit leadership roles and (b) critical factors contributing to success, challenges, and barriers Black women face in leadership positions. A semistructured virtual interview and thematic analysis with the NVivo computer-assisted software were used for data collection and analysis. These yielded five themes—childhood experiences, service for others, administrative challenges, leadership barriers, and opportunities. The study's results indicated that Black women enter nonprofit leadership out of a desire to serve their communities and that Black women face critical barriers, including a lack of upward mobility and discrimination. Positive social change implications include the view that Black female leaders in nonprofit organizations can provide insight into best practices and policies that help support and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in these organizations, resulting in improved community outcomes.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to the one with whom I shared the most incredible season, my husband, the late Corey Deon Davis Sr., who passed suddenly on December 15, 2023. I had no choice but to push through the grief and finish this nine-year journey out. Your words and support were my push. I will love you forever, Scooby-Doo! To my children, Brie, Dallas, Clark, and Carter. I hope one day you will truly understand my journey, passage, and fortitude to change the trajectory of our family name and impact others through service to others. I love each of you with all I have!

To my late mother, Collesta Bolden Taylor Hosinski, and grandmothers Mildred Beamon Bolden and Florence Rhodes Taylor. Though you are not here with me, I always feel your spiritual presence. For each of you, I did this for all that you were not able to get done or sacrificed for others to advance instead. Thank you for covering me and loving me. My aunts Colleen, Phyllis, Darlene, and Gwendolyn. Thank you for being monumental in my life. Leonard Taylor Sr, for being present every day of my life, and my grandfather, the late Honorable Judge Clarence D. Bolden. I am because of each of you!

This is dedicated to every Black woman who has questioned their worth and sense of self in the workplace. This is dedicated to the black woman who wanted to give up, caved in, and even gave in. This is dedicated to the black woman unafraid to share their journey and exist in spaces not historically designed for us. This is dedicated to every black woman who is conscious daily of all the paths we must navigate to be successful and survive in leadership spaces. It takes more than the self to make it.

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To every woman who extended themselves, loved me, and lifted me when I needed it. Thank you! To my brothers who did the same. Thank you!

Gloria Ard, Alice Wise, Kathryn White. Your empowerment in my life has never been forgotten, though you are not here anymore. My mother in love, Sammy Mahoney. I am blessed to have you, and I love you!

Jada Westmoreland Lee, Christy Wiggins Smith, Dr. Royond Hendrix. The main constants in my life who never wavered.

Tau Beta Sigma Honorary Band Sorority- Zeta Mu Chapter, Zeta Phi Beta- Upsilon Nu Zeta Chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi & Silhouettes- Mansfield Arlington Cedar Hill Chapter, My Connect Three (Errika Moultrie), and my sisters of BWNPL My line sisters of Spring 93 and Spring 2000. The Real Northside Indianapolis, Grambling State Tiger Marching Band, Kappa Kappa Psi Band Fraternity, and Order of Eastern Star.

My committee chair, Dr. Emmanuel Tetteh. You came right on time! Thank you for immediately providing me with the support and encouragement to get this done under the circumstances I faced in my last months of study. God knew who to send! To the wonderful blessing of Dr. Cara Marie Manlandro. You have kept me from giving up for the last two and a half years! I appreciate your support in making this a reality!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Tracing back from the colonial era through modern society, nonprofit organizations have had an impactful history in the United States by working to help those in need, such as giving them crucial resources, providing support systems, advancing social transformation, and aiming to improve the lives of the people they serve across communities (Baxter & Nowrasteh, 2021). In addition, nonprofit organizations strive to create a better future via advocacy, empowerment, instructional support, community development, citizenship engagement, and the application of successful social issue solutions (Ott & Dicke, 2021; Ressler et al., 2021). White males typically dominate the various leadership positions of nonprofit organizations, including coordinators, managers, program directors, and executives (Lee, 2019). However, recent studies on nonprofit management and capacity building suggest that the most qualified individuals, such as Black women or other underserved people, should fill these leadership positions to execute policy viability and carry out their duties and the nonprofit's mission mandates toward realizing their full potentials (DeSimone & Roberts, 2023; Nordin et al., 2024).

The presence of Black women in leadership has substantially grown due to their transition from domestic service work (Smith et al., 2018). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021b), 27.2% of employed Black women worked in the education and health services sector, followed by professional and business services (18.9%) and retail trade (12.9%). Conversely, fewer Black women were employed in leisure and hospitality (9.4%), government (9.4%), and other industries (9.4%; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021a). The differences in career choices pursued by Black women are poorly

understood. Specifically, scholars need to research why there is an absence of Black women working in the upper echelons of the nonprofit sector.

Therefore, in this qualitative narrative inquiry, I explored Black women's perceptions and experiences in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles. This chapter includes the background of the study and the problem, purpose, research questions, and significance of the study. The chapter also contains other relevant topics, such as definitions of key terms used in the study, the researcher's assumptions, delimitations, scope, and limitations. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 2.

Background of the Study

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS, 2021), the United States contained approximately 1.5 million registered nonprofit organizations in 2021. Unfortunately, the nonprofit sector lacks diversity (Lee, 2019). Despite substantial diversity, equality, and inclusion measures that have increased awareness of structural racism in society, the nonprofit sector has seen relatively few changes. Its leadership still does not fully reflect the racial and ethnic variety of the United States. For example, Sesay-Tuffour (2015) highlighted the demographics of nonprofit employees within the United States, with data reflecting 82% Caucasian, 10% Black, 5% Latino, 2% Other, and 1% Asian/Pacific. Since 2015, these statistics have not changed dramatically (NCCS, 2021). Recent findings indicate that although more nonprofit organizations have board members of color than reported in prior national studies, progress lags at the leadership

level (Faulk et al., 2021). Cain (2015) indicated that less than 16% of nonprofit executive leadership in the United States comprised women in these positions. This statistic has not changed significantly over time because of workforce expansion challenges involving barriers to women's representation in nonprofit leadership (Atley-McCurry, 2022; Gibelman, 2000; Hegge, 2020; Stilley, 2022).

Historically, Black women have an established, visible presence in the workforce. However, a seemingly low number of Black women hold high leadership positions in any sector. For example, Black women had 6% of nonprofit positions compared to 42% of Caucasian women employed in related positions (Catalyst, 2015; Faulk et al., 2021). In addition, only 1.2% of Black women serve in executive or senior-level roles, underscoring a relatively low percentage of women of color in nonprofit leadership positions (Catalyst, 2015). Black women have made gains and advances in obtaining the opportunity to serve in nonprofit leadership roles. However, substantial sociocultural factors could limit Black women in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. For example, some Black women can encounter inequities and biases through organizational cultures and social norms that create barriers (Beckwith et al., 2016). The factors contributing to inequities in the nonprofit section are poorly understood.

Davis (2016) explored the underrepresentation and intersectionality of gender, race, education, culture, and leadership experiences of Black women. These women included 7.7% with master's degrees and 4.4 % with doctoral degrees in the United States, indicating that educated, qualified Black women are available for leadership positions. However, their ability to navigate into high-ranking job positions has

stagnated. Stagnation is evidenced by similar statistics regarding the presence of Black women in leadership positions in the public sector (Beckwith et al., 2016; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Pham, 2021), despite advances in the education level of Black women, with more and more Black women obtaining masters and doctorate degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Pham, 2021). Specifically, Black women account for 7.4% of the U.S. population but hold only 1.6% of vice president positions and 1.4% of C-suite positions (NCCS, 2021). In contrast, White males comprise 35% of the U.S. population but dominate leadership positions, holding 57% of vice president and 68% of C-suite positions (Pham, 2021). These inequities extend to the nonprofit sector.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) explored the difficulties of women of color, particularly Black women, who have struggled to have a safe platform for speaking of the historical realities of race and gender norms typified by their American experience. The perspective voices of Black women are disproportionately missing from leadership-based research focused on women (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Wiles-Abel, 2020), representing a substantial gap in the academic literature. Some studies have examined the multiple perspectives of Black women in nonprofit leadership (Kuenzi et al., 2021; Nickels & Leach, 2021). However, more research is needed to reflect a thorough scope of the perspectives of Black women in leadership positions within nonprofit organizations, identifying the barriers that limit upward promotion and the assumption of leadership roles. Whitaker (2018) elaborated on the need to expand the literature on Black women in nonprofit organizational leadership, highlighting a significant need for the present study.

Mangual (2019) suggested that executive women of color are more likely to be found serving in the nonprofit sector. However, the study indicated that their perspectives on theories or frameworks needed to be expanded to explore this identified group's experiences, which this study aimed to do. Buteau (2019) shared the dimensions of leadership diversity in the nonprofit sectors. The author studied nonprofit CEOs who recognized the importance of having diverse staff, leadership teams, and boards to meet program outcomes and goals. Buteau found that over three-quarters of respondents working in the nonprofit sector felt that the leadership of nonprofit organizations must reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the United States. Finally, Alvarez-Cleveland (2017) discussed nonprofits' need to address diversity in leadership and found that Black women in nonprofits wanted more (a) positive feedback, (b) professional development and academic advancement, (c) connection to culture, (d) unsolicited opportunity, (e) mentoring and sponsorship, and (f) trailblazing improvements. Therefore, the study of Black women in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector must address the best organizational practices that impact the organization's culture.

Sanders et al. (2019) shared three actions that must be taken to support women's access to leadership. First, women's growth is based on a sense of leadership, although a woman's point of view did not gender these findings. Sanders et al. aimed to expand the concept of a diverse, secure workspace in the nonprofit sector by giving Black women a better understanding of their paths to themselves, their organizations, and their seats at the decision desk. Second, the narrative and experiences investigated in this study were from Black women holding leadership positions in the nonprofit sector (Sanders et al.,

2019). Thus, the few Black women obtaining C-Suite level positions in the nonprofit

sector can give others a perspective on how to close the leadership gap. Third, the need

for leadership in the nonprofit sector is increasing due to the need to address complex

societal concerns, rising competition for financing, and shifting demographics and

stakeholder expectations (Denhardt et al., 2018). In addition, due to the retirements and

exits of experienced leaders, the sector is also experiencing a leadership gap, pushing the

demand for fresh and diverse leaders (Denhardt et al., 2018). Thus, undeveloped

resources need to be investigated if the problem is resolved (Sanders et al., 2019). I aimed

to investigate one undeveloped resource: Black women in nonprofit leadership positions.

To this end, I collected and evaluated the lived experiences of Black women in leadership

positions in the nonprofit sector to inform them of the challenges, barriers, and

opportunities to fulfill these three actions to support diversity in leadership.

Problem Statement

Many quantitative studies have examined the percentage of employees from

varied backgrounds who hold leadership roles in nonprofit organizations (Branche &

Ford, 2021; Mumford, 2022; Wang, 2022). Mumford (2022) indicated an increasing

interest in understanding the representation of minorities in nonprofit leadership roles.

However, a substantial need remains for more current qualitative research examining

nonprofit sector executives' experiences and viewpoints. Further qualitative research is

required to establish an in-depth knowledge of the lack of leadership diversity and

possibilities experienced by persons in nonprofit leadership roles and to support diversity,

equity, and inclusivity (DEI) initiatives in this sector (Wiles-Abel, 2020).

In this study, I addressed the problem of Black women's voices being disproportionately missing from leadership-based research focused on women (see Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Wiles-Abel, 2020). The current qualitative studies in the academic literature evaluate multiple perspectives of nonprofit leadership but with limited exploration of Black women in such leadership positions. For example, multiple studies have examined the perspectives of White men or women in nonprofit leadership positions (Nickels & Leach, 2021). Therefore, although researchers have investigated this issue, the topic has yet to be explored from the perspectives of Black women (Dula et al., 2020). Indeed, researchers have highlighted the lack of literature reflecting a range of experiences encountered by Black women who serve in leadership positions within nonprofit organizations (Branche & Ford, 2021). I evaluated whether sociocultural factors limit diversity among Black women in nonprofit leadership positions. Furthermore, I aimed to understand the potential stigmatization of their roles and how opportunities to assume leadership positions were made available for Black women.

I aimed to provide a professional perspective of Black women in leadership by examining shared experiences within nonprofit organizations. Key factors contributing to Black women's success, challenges, and barriers to ensuring stability were identified. Factors that may lead to their ability to thrive in leadership roles within the nonprofit sector were also examined. This research supports ongoing research and contributes to further advancement, awareness, and the need for all nonprofit leaders to acknowledge DEI initiatives to help understand the issues faced by Black women in leadership. Thus, I addressed a valuable and important problem in public policy and administration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles. Nonprofit organizations are essential in addressing social and community concerns and enhancing the lives of individuals and groups. Barron (2019) supported the need to address this social issue, as increasing leadership diversity can help nonprofit human resources manage recruitment, DEI, succession planning, and future leadership opportunities. Black women must lead these organizations because their unique perspectives, experiences, and leadership abilities enable them to meet their communities' culturally and socially sensitive demands in their communities.

Cain (2015) examined the implications of positive social change by heightening the awareness of the need to decrease workplace discrimination and inequalities, creating a more conducive environment that promotes Black women into leadership, and making the issues of implicit biases against these women visible for DEI development in nonprofits. Though organizations have established programs and stipulations to policies and practices to create diversity, there is still a minimal representation of Black women in senior-level positions (Barron, 2019; Johns, 2013). In addition, the presence of Black women in leadership roles helps break down barriers and enhance diversity in the nonprofit sector, resulting in more equal outcomes for everybody.

Research Questions

To attain the purpose of the study, the researcher has developed two research questions that will guide the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid to senior-level nonprofit leadership roles?

RQ2: What critical factors contribute to the success, challenges, and barriers Black women face in leadership positions within the nonprofit sector?

Theoretical Foundation

The theory grounding this study was the Black feminist thought theory (BFT). Collins (1990) established BFT, exploring seven core themes: marginalization, intersectionality, oppression, empowerment, knowledge production, resistance, and activism. Alston (2012) stated there needed to be an increase of interest among researchers seeking to understand the experiences of Black women from their perspectives, using BFT as a blueprint to develop their studies. Collins combined a personal and historical perspective of Black women with a theoretical analysis upon the basis and insistence of mindful consciousness and change among individuals and social transformation of organizations and institutions as new knowledge is critical for dimensions of social change (Cain, 2015; Collins, 1990; Whitaker, 2018). In addition, the BFT theoretical approach seeking social change presents a lens to examine the narratives of various Black female study participants (Alvarez-Cleveland, 2017). BFT was an appropriate framework for this study.

The logical connections between the framework presented and the nature of this study include addressing organizational cultures and change, historical perspectives, mindfulness, diversity in nonprofit leadership, and social change. To build a better theoretical understanding of how class, gender, and racial oppression are all components of a single, historically established system, BFT rearticulates experiences. To address organizational cultures and diversity in nonprofit leadership, Collins (1990) and the necessity for DEI activities are at the forefront of the conversation.

BFT highlights the intersectional and compounded realities of race, gender, and class oppression endured by Black women (King, 2016). This paradigm is essential for comprehending Black women's obstacles and difficulties in the workplace. For instance, Black women frequently experience bias and discrimination in the workplace, such as unequal pay, restricted access to promotions, and microaggressions (Velazquez et al., 2022). In addition, Black women are underrepresented in areas of leadership, including elected officials and senior administrative jobs (Mumford, 2022). Therefore, by using BFT philosophy, I examined how these structural hurdles and biases lead to the marginalization of Black women in the nonprofit sector and strive toward establishing a more inclusive and equitable society (see Collins, 1990; Velazquez et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to elevate the views and perspectives of Black women in decision-making processes and guarantee that research includes their experiences and demands. Therefore, I used a BFT theory approach to understand the perspectives of Black women in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles. A narrative inquiry was chosen for the study due to the absence of Black women's perspectives and experiences in nonprofit leadership. I used purposeful sampling to identify 26 women in the United States serving in nonprofit organizations. The participants completed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to explore the narratives of each participant's leadership experiences. The interviews were conducted using Zoom.

Researchers use purposeful sampling to select participants who are not generalized based on a specific criterion, allowing rigor and reflecting a quality qualitative research process (Wiles-Abel, 2020). A narrative inquiry was chosen as the research design because it enables the storytelling presentation of comprehensive participant descriptions. Narrative inquiry is often a helpful research technique for understanding how people view the world regularly (Clandinin et al., 2019). Additionally, I implemented the tools developed by O'Brien et al. (2019), who identified guidelines when reporting various approaches, methods, and paradigms of qualitative research. The BFT theoretical approach seeking social change presented a lens to examine the narratives of multiple study participants (Branche & Ford, 2021).

Definitions

C-suite: C-Suite refers to senior management positions that begin with the letter C, such as chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO), and chief information officer (CIO; Takos et al., 2018).

Mid-level: Examples of intermediate-level positions include managers and supervisors (Sanders et al., 2019).

Microaggression: Common unconscious or conscious verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights that communicate hostile, negative, or derogatory attitudes towards an individual from a marginalized population. Microaggression, called partial aggression, is a form of systematic racism normalized in society (Kim & Mason, 2018).

Oppression: A multilayered societal system that integrates social power for the benefit of oppression and privileged group members. Oppression is maintained and operated in three dimensions: context (e.g., person, institution, society/culture); conscious and unconscious (e.g., intentional and unintentional); and their application (e.g., attitude, behavior, policies, practices, norms, values, beliefs, customs; Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019).

Senior/executive level: Examples of senior/executive-level work include the positions of chairman, vice president, and general manager (Wallington, 2020).

Stereotype threat: Explain the fear of affirming a negative attitude towards one's ethnicity, ethnicity, gender, or cultural group (Sales et al., 2019).

Assumptions

Research assumptions are beliefs held by the researcher that cannot be explicitly evaluated or proven (Cudziło et al., 2018). The first assumption in this study was that the participants would provide open and honest answers to all interview questions (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). This assumption is reasonable due to the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. The participants had nothing to lose by providing honest answers; as such, they were expected to be honest and truthful in their responses. My second assumption of the study was that the participants had sufficient knowledge regarding the benefits, challenges, and barriers of holding leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. The validity of this assumption was promoted by including questions on the participation screening questionnaire to evaluate the participants' experience levels. A third assumption of the study was that Black women would have different perspectives on nonprofit leadership than other populations.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was based on certain boundaries that, as the researcher, I set. Delimitations of a study are the boundaries a researcher imposes that make the study feasible (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). I delimited the scope of this qualitative narrative inquiry to Black women who held mid- to senior-level leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. There were no delimitations on the participants' ages or locations in the United States. This flexibility in the participant section allowed for greater transferability to the general population. Alternative target populations, such as Black

men or White women, would not be appropriate for the study because these populations have higher levels of representation in nonprofit leadership (see Faulk et al., 2021).

Twenty-six participants were interviewed in this study, allowing for diverse perspectives, sampling sufficiency, and data saturation (see Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The participants were required to have a bachelor's degree and at least 1 year of experience in nonprofit leadership. The choice to delimit the study to 1 year of experience was purposeful for three reasons. First, the lack of Black women in nonprofit leadership positions may have made recruiting participants difficult for me. Second, allowing women with varied leadership experiences to participate allowed for a thick description of their narratives. Third, interviewing participants with varied experiences may increase the transferability of the study's findings to all Black women working in nonprofit organizations. Therefore, I delimited the scope of the study to 26 college-educated Black women with at least 1 year of experience in mid- to upper-level leadership in nonprofit organizations in the United States.

Limitations

Every study has limitations. Limitations are shortcomings in a study that derive from the research design and methodological choices (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). There are some limitations based on the choice of the general population, namely Black women in leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. Individuals in upper-level leadership positions tend to work rigorous schedules with extended hours. Therefore, recruiting 26 study participants was challenging due to schedule conflicts and the time commitment needed for the study. Asking individuals to dedicate a minimum of 45 minutes to

participate in an interview was not feasible for some potential participants, which created barriers to gathering sufficient data for the study. The participants were provided flexible virtual interview times and dates to mitigate this limitation.

Another limitation of the study was the use of technology to conduct the interviews. Some participants did not have a stable internet connection, and some interviews were temporarily interrupted because of a loss of internet connectivity. Virtual interviews can limit the researcher's ability to evaluate the nonverbal body language of the participants (de Villiers et al., 2022). Finally, an additional limitation of the study was my positionality, as I worked for a nonprofit organization and am a Black female. Therefore, I had personal and professional experience with the phenomenon under investigation. To mitigate potential researcher bias, I engaged in extensive reflexivity protocols, as described in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Significance of the Study

There was a significant gap in the literature surrounding the perceptions and experiences of Black women who lead nonprofits. Historically, society has ignored Black women, and opportunities for progress were limited (Branche & Ford, 2021). This study was significant because there was a need to explore the perspectives of Black women in nonprofit leadership positions to provide support for leadership frameworks effective in nonprofit organizations. For example, Johnson and Fournillier (2021) concluded that the experiences of their Black female participants highlighted the need for more research on the paths of nontypical leaders in the United States. Johnson and Fournillier also explained that Black women had limited opportunities to vocalize their stories,

experiences, and perspectives due to the lack of social connections, political power, and historical oppression.

The current research study should contribute toward filling this gap by understanding the lived experiences of Black women toward overcoming challenges serving in leadership roles. For example, Bynum and Stordy (2017) explained that nonprofit leaders should be culturally relevant and diverse to serve each organization's purpose in the best interest of underprivileged communities. There are overreaching issues that may exist due to the impact of implicit biases that Black women face in the nonprofit leadership experience. Analyzing Black women's experiences could be encouraged using BFT categories that connect with systems of power through exploring intersectionality (Collins, 1990). I assessed the experiences of women of color who serve in managerial and senior-level nonprofit positions, identifying key factors contributing to their success, challenges, and barriers.

Significance to Practice

The findings of this study have significant implications for workplace decision-makers and policymakers. According to Barron (2019), research on this subject can help human resource (HR) leaders and senior officers further understand the lived experiences of women of color. In doing so, HR leaders can address recruitment, development, diversity, equity, inclusion, and succession planning strategies, all of which may influence barriers to advancing Black women in leadership. Indeed, the perspectives of Black women in leadership could be the key to supporting such initiatives to inform best practices based on the organization's mission and decision making (Barron, 2019). Such

information may, in turn, improve customer relations and support to all staff and clientele, typically comprised of underrepresented minorities. Furthermore, by examining the perspectives of Black female leaders, workplace decision-makers and policymakers may obtain a greater knowledge of the experiences and obstacles experienced by women leaders in the workplace (Scarborough et al., 2019). This data can inform policies and practices that enhance workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion. Studying the perspectives of Black female leaders may also shed light on best practices and policies that help support and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in non-profit organizations, resulting in enhanced organizational results for these organizations (Scarborough et al., 2019).

Significance to Theory

Black women come from various backgrounds and experiences that can be shared and benefit others seeking leadership positions. Their multiple perspectives expand the literature on nonprofit leadership. It is essential for the factors encountered to be explored and articulated, as well as the need for continuous action and progression toward diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in nonprofit organizations (Branche & Ford, 2021). For example, this study helps promote action through conversations that increase understanding and common language, supporting Black female leaders. Conversation and ongoing learning are necessary for significant theoretical change (Walker, 2019). In a socially constructed world, Smith et al. (2018) argued that historically heterosexual White males who may have implicit bias validated Black women (see Collins, 2000;

Smith et al., 2018). Wiles-Abel (2020) specified the lack of research on Black women in nonprofit leadership facing barriers.

Significance to Social Change

Black women have been traditionally underrepresented in leadership positions, and their contributions to social change initiatives are sometimes neglected. Examining their experiences and accomplishments can aid in increasing the visibility and representation of Black women in leadership positions (Azevedo et al., 2020; Hunt et al., 2018). Black women provide insights that may differ from those of other groups in attempts for social change (Cooke & Hastings, 2023). By examining their experiences and viewpoints, the difficulties and possibilities facing Black women in nonprofit organizations and their strategies for addressing these issues may be better understood. Studying Black female leaders in nonprofit organizations may also shed light on best practices and policies that help support and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, resulting in improved community outcomes (Cooke & Hastings, 2023). The study of Black female leaders in nonprofit organizations may contribute to social change by enhancing the visibility, understanding, and representation of Black women's distinctive viewpoints and leadership contributions (Hollis, 2018). For example, McKinsey and Company have published several studies examining the connection between diversity and performance (Hunt et al., 2018). As a result, they discovered in 2015 that diverse businesses are clearly at an advantage when hiring the finest personnel, having a stronger focus on customers, increasing employee happiness, and making better decisions (Hunt et al., 2018).

Summary

Leadership combines thoughtful and lasting thinking and is found in an unprecedented talent pool. Black women continue to navigate the maze of successful leadership across sectors. However, in the United States, they still have a minor role in leadership at all levels and sectors. I purposely targeted Black women in the nonprofit sector. Black women in senior management can provide strategies to future leaders and organizations regarding the benefits, challenges, and barriers to obtaining and retaining leadership positions. In addition, these women give insights to Black women aspiring to obtain leadership positions by discussing leadership success formulas and blueprints.

In Chapter 1, I reviewed the background of the study and the problem, purpose, research questions, and nature of the study. The chapter also included definitions of crucial terms uszed throughout the study, the study's assumptions, scope and delimitations, and potential limitations. Finally, the chapter included a discussion of the significance of the study concerning practice, theory, and social change. Chapter 2 provides a literature review focused on research related to topical analysis. This section contains information about the need for more non-profit leaders of color. The leadership features that benefit non-profit organizations, the benefits of being a versatile leader, a summary of the educational outcomes of Black women, and the challenges Black women face at work are reviewed. In Chapter 2, I also examine the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is an increase in leadership opportunities in various nonprofit organizations. The most qualified individual should fill these roles to execute and perform the position's duties. The problem I addressed in this study was a substantial and noticeable lack of Black women holding leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles. This research also supports filling gaps and ongoing research to promote awareness of Black women in leadership roles. A qualitative research methodology with a narrative inquiry study design was used to investigate the life experience of Black women in leadership positions in nonprofit sectors. In addition, I review the concepts of resiliency and transformative leadership of Black women within nonprofit organizations and their ongoing change management efforts.

In Chapter 2, I provide an account of the literature search strategy used to conduct the literature review. Next, the theoretical framework, BFT, used to underpin the analysis of the study's problem, purpose, and research questions, is discussed. Next, a comprehensive review of the perceptions and experiences of Black women serving in nonprofit leadership roles is provided. Finally, I conclude Chapter 2 with a summary of the literature review and a discussion of how the literature review framed and supported the current problem in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

Multiple databases were searched extensively to provide as much information as possible on the existing literature on the perceptions and experiences of Black women serving in nonprofit leadership. While there has been extensive research in some areas related to nonprofit leadership, the literature review presented in the present study ultimately led to the need to address a gap in existing research addressing the representation of Black women in leadership roles in nonprofit organizations. The following databases were used to research the multilayered topic of Black women serving in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership: Google Scholar, PubMed, Science Direct, ProQuest Central, ProQuest, and SAGE. I also used additional online library sources, scholarly databases, and previously written dissertations. A combination of phrases and key terms was used when searching the various databases on this subject. Individual keywords or combinations included: *Black feminism, feminism, Black, Black, women, barriers, glass cliff, diversity, gender, race, executive leadership, leadership, nonprofit, leadership, microaggression, career, black women in leadership, nonprofit organizations, diversity in leadership, phenomenology,* and *career advancement.* The literature chosen for analysis in this chapter includes the most recent developments on Black women serving or seeking in nonprofit leadership, with 75% of the references including articles published within the last five years.

Theoretical Foundation

BFT is a critical social theory that aims to articulate Black women's unique experiences and viewpoints marked by intersecting oppressions (King, 2016). BFT

originally emerged from Black women's literary traditions, education within Black families, and the struggles of Black women activists (Collins, 2000). BFT coalesced as a theoretical lens in the 1980s and 1990s through the seminal works of scholars like Collins, Crenshaw, and the Combahee River Collective. Centrally, BFT contends that Black women face specific forms of oppression due to the interlocking systems of racism, sexism, and classism (Collins, 1986). As such, Black women have a "distinctive set of experiences" that offers them a unique angle of vision shaped by their historical and present-day realities of inhabiting "both the dangerous spots at the social margins as well as the relative safeties of the social center" (Collins, 1993, p. 543).

BFT was used as the critical social theory, which consists of a comprehensive understanding of Black feminist thought to underpin the analysis of Black women's experiences through narratives. This theory suggests that a unique combination of racial, gender, and class oppression influences Black women's experiences, which shapes their perspectives and attitudes on various problems (Collins, 1990). Furthermore, BFT looks at how race, gender, class, and other social characteristics interact to affect the experiences and oppression of Black women. Collins (1990, 2015) created BFT in reaction to traditional feminism, which frequently discounted the experiences and viewpoints of Black women and other women of color. BFT examines how oppressive systems, including racism, sexism, and capitalism, interact and overlap differently for Black women (Collins, 2015). Specifically, the experiences of Black women, according to BFT, are vital to comprehending oppression and resistance. Therefore, according to Collins (1990), the methods by which Black women actively participate in social

interactions consider the intersectionality of race and gender. BFT will guide this study because the theory posits that the experiences of Black women are influenced by more comprehensive systems of oppression and how these systems interact rather than merely by personal prejudice (see Collins, 2015). It also emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend the unique experiences of Black women in various national, regional, and cultural contexts (Collins, 2002).

Black women have created a robust and informed culture that is mostly unknown outside their society despite the heavy load of racial and gender oppression (Farmer, 2017; Nelson et al., 2016). The BFT gives Black women a voice and emphasizes that they have a unique viewpoint on their personal experiences and that Black women share certain solidities of perception (Logan & Dudley, 2018; Spates et al., 2020). In addition, BFT shows that despite their links, Black women still have a variety of identities in terms of their socioeconomic status, geographic location, age, and sexual orientation. The originality of Black women's lives is shaped by this distinctiveness, which gave rise to diverse manifestations of these universal themes (Collins, 1993; Logan & Dudley, 2018).

BFT is a valuable theoretical framework for comprehending the intricacies of oppression and promoting social change that addresses the various, interconnected systems of oppression that Black women experience (Collins, 2015). For academics, activists, and organizers pursuing social justice in all endeavors, such as amplifying diversity in nonprofit leadership, it contributes significantly to feminist thought and practice. Collins (1990) first established BFT by exploring the themes of work, family, and Black women's oppression. Each of these core themes are discussed in turn.

Work, Family, and Black Women's Oppression

Black feminist assessments of the work of Black women typically focus on two issues. On the one hand, much scholarly research examines how racial, economic, and gender oppressions connect to form Black women's paid employment (Collins, 1990). A less well-developed yet significant subject focuses on how Black women's unpaid domestic work simultaneously confines and empowers them. Compared to Black women's paid employment, research on Black women's unpaid work in extended families has not yet reached the same level of development in BFT (Collins, 1990). Such scholarship suggests that Black women view the unpaid work they do for their families more as a form of resistance to oppression than as a form of exploitation by men. Instead, they believe such work highlights African American women's contributions to their family's well-being, such as maintaining family structures and teaching children survival skills (Davis, 1981; Martin & Martin, 1978). Additionally, BFT suggests that both feminist and antiracist ideologies fall short in addressing the particular kind of oppression that Black women suffer. It draws attention to how Black women are marginalized and excluded from mainstream feminist groups, frequently led by middle-class White women who are not always open to Black women's experiences (Collins, 1990).

BFT's Use as a Framework

The BFT approach, while seeking social change, presents a lens to examine the narratives of various Black female study participants (Alvarez-Cleveland, 2017). This methodological strategy consists of exposing all the possibilities of Black feminism through the lives and experiences of Black women. Collins (1990) created this

framework to address history and unacceptable experiences in mainstream American culture. BFT is an essential theoretical framework for comprehending Black women's multidimensional experiences and views. It also offers a platform for promoting societal equality and justice, thus making it a key instrument in confronting and destroying oppressive structures (Patterson et al., 2016). Using the framework of BFT can be transferred into lessons applicable worldwide and is an important methodological tool for research about Black women. It is essential to note the criticism and prejudice Black women face in all topics, especially when delving into emotionally charged topics (Allen et al., 2019). Therefore, this theory can be seen as a vehicle for making Black women critically aware and conscious. It also allows Black women to overcome oppression, allowing for self-empowerment.

Numerous research studies on Black women's views have used BFT. For example, in a study by Wade et al. (2022), BFT was used to examine Black women's perceptions of health promotion programs and their efficacy. Wade et al. indicated that Black women's lack of health promotion led to concerns over mental health, obesity, and their relationships with Black males. To this end, the authors recognized that effective programs must combat mental health stigma, incorporate family members in addressing health-related issues, and teach skills to combat obesity and other racially-dependent health disparities (Wade et al., 2022). In another study, Rankin and Irish (2020) found that merely involving Black women in the game creation process was insufficient for Black women working in game design. Using BFT as a critical framework, the women surveyed reported that sometimes their perspective was disregarded during the early

phases of game design or only considered when reviewing and play-testing games (Rankin & Irish, 2020). Finally, Patterson et al. (2016) explained that multiple researchers employ BFT to inform their techniques and guide their methodological decisions. BFT prioritizes embodied knowledge from the experiences of Black women who articulated their diverse forms of truth. Representative data in the form of oral tales serve as social artifacts that contribute to the connection that Black women create (Patterson et al., 2016). Based on the previous use of BFT and its framework for qualitative studies, BFT was appropriate for this study.

Literature Review

The following section contains a review of the professional and academic literature. Key topics include leadership in nonprofit organizations and what is currently known about the leadership of Black women in these organizations. The literature supporting a gap in the literature is reviewed, leading to the rationale for conducting this study.

Nonprofit Organizations Overview

Nonprofit organizations are businesses whose primary objective is to benefit a specific cause or group of people rather than to make money for their owners or shareholders (Arvidson & Lyon, 2013). They are essential in tackling various problems, including healthcare, homelessness, poverty, and environmental degradation. These groups rely on donations, volunteers, and financial assistance from the government (Yasmin & Ghafran, 2021). Nonprofit organizations can function locally, nationally, or

internationally, taking many different shapes, including charities, foundations, and advocacy groups (Kabeyi, 2019).

The work of nonprofit organizations is crucial to meeting societal demands and positively influencing communities (Arvidson & Lyon, 2013). Despite their difficulties, nonprofits continue to significantly contribute to improving the world, and the social fabric dramatically benefits from their work (Kabeyi, 2019). Additionally, there will be a greater need for leaders who can handle these and other new concerns. For example, Sargeant and Day (2018) explained that the nonprofit sector would require nearly 80,000 new senior-level managers or leaders each year.

Nonprofit Leadership

The success of nonprofit organizations as they endeavor to fulfill their goals and benefit society depends on effective nonprofit leadership (Kabeyi, 2019). Nonprofit executives must determine the organization's vision and strategic direction, manage funds and resources, create partnerships and networks, and instill inspiration and motivation in staff and volunteers (Golensky & Hager, 2020; Sargeant & Day, 2018). Additionally, nonprofit executives must be excellent communicators who can convince various audiences—including funders, legislators, and the general public—to support their cause (Golensky & Hager, 2020; Worth, 2020). Nonprofit leadership can take various forms, from conventional top-down hierarchies to collaborative, participatory models (Worth, 2020). Golensky and Hager (2020) posited that the most successful nonprofit executives can strike a balance between the requirements of the organization and those of its constituents. They are also flexible and sensitive to social, economic, and political shifts

(Golensky & Hager, 2020). In summary, nonprofit leadership calls for a unique set of abilities and a solid dedication to the goals of the organization and the communities it supports.

The use of corporate management ideas and practices in the administration of nonprofit organizations is referred to as strategic leadership and management. The main focus is to set and attain strategic goals and objectives consistent with the organization's purpose and values (Golensky & Hager, 2020). To accomplish organizational goals, strategic leadership in nongovernment organizations (NGOs) emphasizes the significance of vision and mission congruence, effective decision making, and effective communication (Worth, 2020). Essential elements of strategic leadership in NGOs include servant leadership, where the leader prioritizes servicing the organization's and its stakeholders' needs, and stakeholder management, where leaders consider all stakeholders' requirements and expectations (Golensky & Hager, 2020; Worth, 2020). For example, a report from the Concord Leadership Group, Sargeant and Day (2018) explained that effective strategic leadership in charities requires a blend of interpersonal and technical abilities. Additionally, leaders of nonprofit organizations must be able to create and carry out strategic plans, handle money and budgets, and communicate well with stakeholders (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020; Sargeant & Day, 2018). They must also be able to lead by example for their teams, cultivate positive connections with key stakeholders, and make challenging choices that are in the company's best interests (Brimhall, 2019; Sargeant & Day, 2018).

Regular monitoring and assessment of organizational performance are essential to good strategic management in NGOs to ensure that objectives are fulfilled and resources are used efficiently (Agard, 2011; Bryan et al., 2021). Additionally, strategic NGO management calls for a dedication to ongoing learning and progress and the capacity to adjust to changes in the outside world (Bryan et al., 2021). Wolf (2022) explained that effective strategic leadership and NGO management need theoretical knowledge and practical expertise. Furthermore, Wolf described that leaders who can successfully align their organization's vision and goal, make wise decisions, and manage and interact with stakeholders are a must for nonprofits.

Diversity in Nonprofit Organizations

There are several reasons why diversity in nonprofit organizations is vital. First, it ensures that the organization is representative of the communities it serves, allowing it to comprehend better and address its needs (Roberson, 2019). Diversity can result in activities and programs that are more pertinent and successful, which can eventually have a more significant impact. A diverse leadership group with various racial and cultural backgrounds is essential, especially in nonprofit organizations. Gündermir et al. (2017) discovered benefits to raising the proportion of persons from various racial and ethnic origins in senior leadership. According to Kohli et al. (2011), a diversified leadership workforce in the public sector will result in better government through increased efficiency, creativity, and effectiveness. In addition, the use of a varied workforce's skill sets and retention are both improved by diversity in senior leadership (Wolf, 2022).

Diversity in leadership impacts access to health care for people from different racial and ethnic origins. It produces culturally competent professionals in health services (Silver, 2017). Learning cultural competence requires being in a diverse setting. A diverse workforce, especially in senior leadership, produces favorable results for the company and the community (Mitchell, 2019). Diverse leadership and the workforce may contribute various viewpoints, life experiences, and ideas to decision-making, resulting in more creative and inclusive solutions (Ahmed, 2019; Enwereuzor, 2021). Additionally, it fosters an environment at work where everyone feels appreciated and respected (Ahmed, 2019). Fostering inclusion and diversity may improve a company's reputation and draw in a larger spectrum of patrons and donors (Roberson, 2019). Roberson (2019) explains that this may result in more funds and resources, enabling the group to broaden its influence (Roberson, 2019). Encouraging diversity in non-profit organizations is crucial for building a more fair and equitable society and ensuring that these organizations can successfully represent and serve their communities (Ahmed, 2019).

In a mixed methods explanatory sequential design study on diverse leadership needs in nonprofit organizations, LeRoux and Medina (2022) showed that by boosting the participation of Black and Latino groups on the governing board, nonprofits can enhance the possibility that they will be able to recruit or hire a Black or Latino executive director or CEO. By forcing nonprofit grantees and contractors to diversify their boards of directors when feasible and to develop a plan for inclusive governance, public organizations can improve the representation of Black and Latino executives in nonprofit leadership roles (LeRoux & Medina, 2022). There are widespread perceptions of racial

inequities in funding distribution despite the rhetoric of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) resonating through the sector with increasing volume (Einolf, 2022). The practice of granting unpaid internships is one nonprofit organizations should stop doing. By funding fellowships and internships, foundations and public organizations can contribute to developing a more diversified executive leadership pipeline for charities (LeRoux & Medina, 2022).

Evolution of Black Leadership

A complex interaction of historical, cultural, and sociopolitical forces has influenced how people view Black leadership (Gaines, 2012). Black leaders have historically been seen negatively by the larger community due to their frequent labeling as radicals or militants (Gaines, 2012; Jackson, 2019). Stereotypes and biases about Black people, such as the idea that Blacks were less intelligent, unreliable, and violent, fueled this mistrust (Jackson, 2019). However, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s changed how people saw Black leadership. Black leaders like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. were well-known and compelling characters who motivated millions through activism, speeches, and marches (Jackson, 2019; King et al., 2023; Lee & Gaines, 1997). Their impact continues to influence how people today see Black leadership.

These leaders inspired a movement that contested the profoundly ingrained racist institutions of American society. For example, the election of Barack Obama as the first Black president of the United States in recent years has significantly changed how people view Black leadership (Marable & Clarke, 2009). Many people viewed Obama's victory

as a turning point in the fight for racial equality and evidence that the nation had come a long way in transcending its racist history (Marable & Clarke, 2009). Despite these encouraging changes, prejudice and unfavorable preconceptions continue to shape how people view Black leaders (King et al., 2023). As a result, Black leaders still have to contend with prejudice, a lack of support, and being held to a higher standard than their white counterparts in their political and professional careers (King et al., 2023). However, more work must eradicate deeply embedded preconceptions and stereotypes. Although Black leaders continue to confront particular difficulties, their contributions to society and influence on the global political and cultural environment are not denied (LeRoux & Medina, 2022).

Promoting Black leaders would help to lessen the extreme racial disparity in leadership. An example of the paucity of Black leaders, never mind Black female leaders, is that there are just four Black CEOs of Fortune 500 businesses as of 2020 (Dust, 2020). Additionally, it would ensure that leadership is better aligned with sociological and demographic trends. It is past time to go in this direction, but let us keep sight of the bigger picture if we want this transformation to last (Dust, 2020). In addition to being expected to lead during a crisis, newly hired Black executives are also expected to symbolize the organization's newly established racial equality ideals while being closely scrutinized.

Evolution of Black Women in the Workplace

Early in the 20th century, most African women were restricted to low-paying domestic and agricultural work (Higginbotham, 1987). During World War II, however,

the scarcity of male labor opened chances for women, particularly Black women, in various businesses, including weapons factories and government offices. This marked a turning point in their workplace representation and provided the groundwork for future advancement (Higginbotham, 1987; Johnson & Fournillier, 2021). In the 1960s and 1970s, the Civil Rights Movement and feminist movement offered Black women further opportunities to challenge workplace discrimination, get equal pay, and improve working conditions (Ling & Monteith, 2014).

This era also witnessed the growth of Black women in leadership roles, with Shirley Chisholm being the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress and establishing herself as a renowned advocate for equal rights (Winslow, 2018). Black women continue to confront substantial obstacles in the workplace, including salary inequities and underrepresentation in leadership positions (Ling & Monteith, 2014; Walker, 2019). Collins (1990) explains that one facet impacting Black women in the workforce is the history behind the gender roles in Black households. For example, if one assumes that men go to work and real women care for their families, Blacks have inadequate conceptions of gender. Collins (1990) specified that when Black women labor outside the house, compete with men for jobs, and spend time away from their children, they lose some of their femininity and societal power.

Black women in the United States and other women of color usually have their experiences framed through the lens of an imagined conventional family ideal and are seen to be lacking (Glenn, 1985; Higginbotham, 1987; Mullings, 1997). As a result, the unpaid, nonmarket labor of women of color is still invisible (Banks, 2020; Bhattacharya,

2017). Bhattacharya (2017) explained that Black women and other racialized women endure unpaid, nonmarket labor. Historically, a Black woman's community is a significant location for women of color to carry out unpaid, nonmarket collective labor to advance the welfare of residents and take care of problems that the governmental and commercial sectors cannot meet (Banks, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2017). Despite this, Black women have achieved significant educational advancements and have higher rates of entrepreneurship, which are crucial predictors of future success (Sims & Chinta, 2019).

The growth of Black women in the workplace has been distinguished by progress and persistent obstacles such as racial and gender discrimination, pay disparities, hiring biases, and segregated job markets. However, despite systemic restrictions and prejudice, Black women have made considerable professional advancement and industry-specific barrier-breaking accomplishments (Alonso-Villar & del Río, 2016; Davis, 2016). Despite these challenges, Black women have made considerable progress in entering the workforce and attaining professional achievement (Alonso-Villar & del Río, 2016; Motro et al., 2022). There have also been initiatives to enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace over the years, resulting in a higher representation of Black women in various industries, but unfortunately, not in non-profit sectors (Holder et al., 2015; NCCS, 2021). The advent of the Black Lives Matter movement and the expanding dialogue surrounding racial justice have increased attention to the difficulties and experiences of Black women in the workplace, accelerating the march toward a more equitable future (Bartholomew et al., 2018; Dickens & Chavez, 2017). Nevertheless, despite these advancements, Black women continue to confront difficulties, such as uneven pay, limited promotion access,

and a lack of representation in leadership roles (Allen, 2020). The following sections will review the various roles and historical implications that have culminated in today's issue of the lack of Black women in non-profit organizations.

Stereotypes of Black Women in the Workplace

Harmful stereotypes that might limit Black women's possibilities for progress and job satisfaction are frequently present in the workplace (Dickens et al., 2019). Being viewed as angry, confrontational, or domineering are a few stereotypes that are frequently used (Ashley, 2014). Additionally, Black women may be passed over for promotions or leadership roles because they are perceived as less capable or qualified than their colleagues (Motro et al., 2022). The idea that Black women are too demanding and challenging to deal with is another stereotype (Motro et al., 2022). These detrimental assumptions can lead to a lack of diversity and representation in the workplace and foster a hostile work environment (Dickens et al., 2019).

Female stereotypes, such as women being emotional or unable to make strategic and analytical decisions, create barriers to career advancement for all women and women of color (Sales et al., 2019). For example, assertiveness and competitiveness are often qualities associated with successful leadership. Still, these traits are considered masculine and not feminine (Aaron, 2020). Aaron (2020) explained that stereotypes adversely affect perception and can affect women and women of color in leadership roles. For example, Motro et al. (2022) sampled 555 respondents on expressions of anger at work and concluded that negative stereotypes lead to worse performance evaluations and assessments of leadership capability. Based on this study, stereotypes adversely affect

perception and can affect women and women of color in leadership roles (Motro et al., 2022).

Because of the harmful stereotypes that Black women face due to their distinct experiences that are racial and gender-related, Black women lose respect from organizations (Coles & Pasek, 2020; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016). Invisibility is one of the stereotypes. Black women face; if they are not perceived as angry or masculine, they are not seen (Coles & Pasek, 2020; Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Black women endure a lack of recognition and a confluence of hypervisibility and invisibility.

A research area that in-depth explains how stereotypical Black women are viewed at work is the intersectionality of Black women. The harm brought on by sex and racism impedes Black women's advancement and promotion. According to a study on how Black women are positioned, they are more typically Black than female or woman. Black women are stereotyped into a boundary that results in less promotion and less respect in the workplace since Blackness and masculinity are associated (Coles & Pasek, 2020; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016; Rosette et al., 2018). According to research, the traditional trope or schema of the Black woman has negative racial and gendered impacts that interact to damage Black women (Coles & Pasek, 2020).

Stereotypes that Black women with natural hair are less clever are perpetrated against them. Black women are seen as less beautiful, which contributes to the perception that more attractive women make better leaders (Montle, 2020). There is still a negative stigma about attractiveness among female leaders, although certain women of other races can shatter it. Black women are still seen as being less beautiful and less capable as

leaders, particularly Black women leaders with natural hairstyles (Coles & Pasek, 2020). Given that some people see masculinity as a skill or quality that a leader should possess and since Black women are perceived as being masculine, one would assume that Black women would also be seen as capable leaders. However, when it comes to Black women in leadership positions, this is not the case. Furthermore, this is untrue in the case of Black women in leadership positions who have natural hairstyles. Black women are persuaded to believe that to be perceived as professional, their hair must be straight or pulled back. This preconceived notion keeps Black women in the background (Montle, 2020).

Black women's perceptions of themselves are warped due to the misrepresentation of Black women in White surroundings. Some women have started to accept the prejudices males or members of other ethnic groups have towards them. Black women leaders' coping methods to combat stereotypes are heavily influenced by womanism about Black women. Within the nonprofit sector, gendered patriarchal assumptions about Black women's subordination to Black males continue to be reinforced. Black men continue to dominate society, which is projected onto how Black women should act in leadership positions (Okunrobo, 2020).

Influence of Black Feminism

Black feminism is a movement that draws attention to the opinions and experiences of Black women in politics and society. It highlights how race, gender, and class contribute to Black women's oppression and pushes established feminist groups to recognize the particular hardships of Black women (Collins, 1990). Black women in

leadership have significantly benefited from this viewpoint since it has shaped their experiences and given them a framework for comprehending and addressing the difficulties they confront (Collins, 1990). The first wave of feminism occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Voting rights were the primary concern of feminism during the first wave. The second wave of feminism included equal rights for women under the US Constitution. The development of feminism was evident in the 1990s when Generation X individuals (individuals born between 1965 and 1980) began to critique the positions of the first and second-wave feminists and what they felt was unfinished work by the first two waves. Love et al. (2018) recognized and discussed various conflicts in feminism, and there was an apparent tension between third-wave feminism and second-wave feminism and conservative leadership. Osili et al. (2018) explained the difference between the collective consciousness and agile third-wave feminism and an increased focus on the individual. The author LeRoux and Langer (2019) described the third feminist movement as a reaction to college campuses where feminism in the 1990s felt no longer relevant. LeRoux and Langer (2019) stated that the third wave attempted to embrace the difference and build a bridge to look forward to the seventh generation in feminist language.

The first wave of feminism occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily concerning voting rights. The second wave of feminism included equal rights for women under the US Constitution. Sanders et al. (2019) argued that the view of Black women should be called feminism or Black feminism. More definitions of feminism were coined, reflecting on the challenge of dealing with the diversity of women of color

(Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019). Gobin (2020) argued that living in a racially divided society makes Black women consider ways to cross barriers and develop effective leadership strategies that involve taking creative risks. This adaptability and flexibility make Black women suitable for leadership roles. Thus, this perspective adds a new dimension to the image of Black women, who are often respected by the media and society (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019). Fredette and Sessler Bernstein (2019) argued that racial, class, and gender repression could not continue without solid ideological justification for their existence. Takos et al. (2018) stated that people had developed prototypes and a spiritual image that reflects or defines a leader and what leadership has to do with spirituality. Small (2020) wrote that group identity plays a vital role in the leadership process, and followers tend to prefer leaders who are considered group representatives.

Black feminism has inspired Black women in leadership positions to value representation and push for more diversity in settings where decisions are made. It has also motivated Black women to confront structural obstacles and advocate for laws that cater to the particular requirements of Black communities, such as lowering poverty levels, boosting access to healthcare and education, and eliminating racial prejudice (Collins, 2000; Evans-Winters, 2019). Black feminism has also motivated Black women leaders to support, encourage, and promote other women and seek to build more inclusive and equal workplaces (Evans-Winters, 2019).

Black women in leadership positions contribute to developing a more just and equitable society for all women by speaking up about their experiences and calling for

change (Aaron, 2020; Collins, 1990). As a whole, Black feminism has significantly impacted Black women in leadership, influencing their experiences and giving them a framework for comprehending and addressing their difficulties (Collins, 2020). Black women in leadership significantly influence society and leadership for future generations by fighting for more representation, dismantling institutional obstacles, and empowering other women (Collins, 2020).

Black feminism emerged and responded to the demands of Black women who felt racial oppression in the feminist movement and gender oppression in the Black Liberation Movement. The United States House of Commons Council identified the beginning of the women's movement in 1848 (Gobin, 2020). The National Women's Election Association (NWSA) was formed after the Civil War of 1869 to help women achieve the right to vote. After the founding of the NWSA, the American Women's Government Association was created, whose members later felt indifferent and disillusioned. In the 1880s and 1890s, voting organizations benefited from the prominent tendency of middle-class women to volunteer. Therefore, attention should be paid to the merger of the two national organizations. Looking at American history, they can conclude that the middle class of the 1880s and 1890s included a small number of Black Americans (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019). Kim and Mason (2018) worked on this in their commentary on the ideas of Black feminists by actively returning people to the fight for equality. Sanders et al. (2019) stated that Black feminism is an activist's reaction to the oppression of Black women at the crossroads of race, class, gender, and sexual oppression.

According to Mayberry (2018), Black feminism has three main components that encourage intellectual inclusion. The first concept is discrimination with interrelated types of oppression (race, gender, gender, class) and recognizing that all boundaries simultaneously affect one's life. The second is to accept and allow Afrocentrism and inform their culture about the experiences of their practices (Mayberry, 2018). The last concept included self-actualization, realizing individual potential, pursuing personal growth, and complete understanding (Nash, 2018). There is still additional work to do with Black feminists wanting to embrace racism as a structural feature of their relationships with White women. This changed worldview has helped women of color face distorted concerns about social justice (Mayberry, 2018; Nash, 2018). According to Nash and Allen (2021), the idea of BFT and research offers a fresh perspective on the intricate causal chains that underlie social events. They went on to say that fragmentation demonstrates how gender, race, and class impact everyone's perspectives, experiences, and opportunities in a society that is separated along these lines. The paucity of Black women taking the initiative to incorporate the opinions of this group in discussions underlines the necessity for study in this area to guide practice (Nash & Allen, 2021).

Black Female Leadership

Prior to the adoption of Civil Rights legislation and affirmative action policies, which provided opportunities for them to obtain leadership positions in academic, legal, and private sector organizations, Black women made progress into leadership positions in local community organizations, including 33 religious and civil rights groups (Allen & Lewis, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Malveaux, 2013). Before the Civil War, Black women were

activists for various racial issues, according to Forbes (1998). During the Civil War,

Black women networked and joined various groups (Forbes, 1998). According to Sales et

al. (2019), the history of Black women in leadership positions is little or not recognized.

Brewer (2020) stated that the Black Women's Club in the 1890s confirmed the early

leadership of Black women as these clubs helped educate and promote Black American

women, providing a place for empowerment. These clubs also serve as a way to spread

awareness of the plight of Blacks to all American citizens well into the 1980s (Brewer,

2020). Allen et al. (2019) examined women's leadership roles by focusing on nonprofit

organizations in renewable energy and concluded that to further the transformation of the

energy system, creative methods must be shaped and contextualized by women's

leadership. Additionally, Barron (2019) studied the lived experiences of career

improvement and decision-making methods for senior-level Black women. The study

results provided conclusive knowledge on organizational and human leadership that are

important to consider through diversity and inclusive of internal and external recruitment

(Barron, 2019).

Affirmative action (AA) programs and equal employment opportunity (EEO)

laws from the 1960s and 1970s focused on workforce diversity and equity, allowing

women and people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to have easier access to

job opportunities (Byars-Winston et al., 2015; Choi & Rainey, 2010; Gardenswartz &

Rowe, 2009). Similarly, Jin et al. (2017) proposed that an organization's confidence in

encouraging diversity and granting equal chances is represented by its diversity policy.

Despite the promise of legislative and policy initiatives, diversity in the public sector

goes beyond obedience to legislation passed due to the civil rights movement (Hewins-Maroney & Williams, 2013). In contrast to conventional equal employment opportunity/affirmative action policies, Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015) explained that implementing diversity management in public organizations involves luring, keeping, and managing a diverse workforce with improved performance goals (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). The impact of a strategy intended to strengthen the leadership self-perceptions and behaviors of high-potential professionals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds will determine the success of an initiative, such as diversity policies, designed to increase the representation of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in senior-level positions (Gündermir et al., 2017). EEO and AA regulations, diversity management, and leadership commitment to strategic initiatives are necessary to promote a diverse leadership workforce that includes Black women in senior-level positions.

Allen and Lewis (2016) stated that minority groups, including Black women, have historically been underrepresented in leadership roles at all organizational levels, with even fewer women holding mid-level and senior-level posts. Many people have believed throughout history that only men should hold leadership positions (Gamble & Turner, 2015). According to Rosser-Mims (2010), Black women have traditionally been pressured to take up leadership roles and gain power by unconventional means, unlike Black and Caucasian males. Bell (1990) underlined the need for high-level leadership chances and experiences for Black women that prevent them from adequately learning their roles. Allen and Lewis (2016) backed up these viewpoints. They asserted that

because Black women do not conform to the typical stereotype of a Caucasian male leader, they are seen as unauthentic leaders. As a result, the historical contributions of Black women as leaders have yet to be acknowledged, and their influences have been underrepresented (Allen & Lewis, 2016; Bonaparte, 2015).

According to Chin (2013), leadership research frequently ignores the role of race in leadership practice. It leaves out leaders' experiences from various racial and ethnic origins. As a result, Blacks, whose experiences and viewpoints were left out, do not accurately represent the triumphs and difficulties faced in leadership (Chin, 2013; Mitchell, 2019). Eight Black women leaders in the General Schedule Grade 15 and Senior Executive Service levels were interviewed in semi-structured interviews for the data. The Moustakas-modified van Kaam approach was used to examine the data. Results showed that although Black women executives experienced obstacles and hurdles, there are ways to improve professional advancement.

Success Factors Contributing to Black Women's Leadership

Black women continue to face challenges as they reach leadership positions, become more prominent, and seek more attention and criticism, referred to as the glass layer (Mayberry, 2018). Black women have frequently faced significant barriers and hardships but have persevered and conquered these obstacles through tenacity and resilience (Mayberry, 2018). This capacity to recover from setbacks is a defining trait of influential leaders. Black women are renowned for connecting with and understanding people, which is necessary for effective leadership (Sales et al., 2019). They are frequently capable of communicating well with disparate groups, forming solid

connections, and creating inclusive settings. Black women provide a unique perspective to leadership, as they have personally experienced the intersections of race and gender (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Sales et al., 2019). This cultural understanding enables them to approach decision-making and to problem-solve with a fresh viewpoint. Black women frequently rely on solid support networks, including mentors and peers, to advance their professions. For example, these networks give Black women essential resources, direction, and support, enabling them to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Many successful Black women have invested in their education and professional development, enabling them to gain the leadership qualities and knowledge essential for success. Black women's leadership achievement results from personal attributes, support networks, and deliberate investment in their growth and development (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Sales et al., 2019). Due to these attributes, they have overcome obstacles and become great leaders in various sectors and organizations.

Professional Development for Black Women

Given the barriers and prejudices Black women encounter in the workplace, professional growth and career progression can be difficult. Despite this, many Black women have accomplished their professional objectives by working hard, remaining persistent, and receiving community support. Building contacts and networking are critical to Black women's professional advancement (Dickens et al., 2019). They can meet mentors through this, discover employment prospects, and learn insightful information about their subject of choice. Participating in these events may help create a supportive environment and open new employment prospects for Black women. In

addition, many professional organizations and advocacy groups provide networking and mentorship opportunities for Black women. Lisle-Johnson and Kohli (2020) studied case studies of Black women's educations. They recognized that creating professional development spaces helped address their feelings of isolation and supported their personal and professional well-being and subsequent professional development. Therefore, Black women should not only actively seek learning chances and training options that will keep them up-to-date in their area and assist them in acquiring new abilities, but their companies should also facilitate these avenues (Lisle-Johnson & Kohli, 2020). This may entail taking classes, attending conferences, or participating in professional development initiatives (Dickens et al., 2019). Black women must grasp their professional objectives and strategies for achieving them. This may entail establishing clear benchmarks, pinpointing problem areas, and looking for chances for professional development (Dickens & Chavez, 2017). Black women may overcome obstacles and realize their professional aspirations in the workplace with perseverance, support, and a focus on personal and professional development (Dickens & Chavez, 2017). Despite increasing professional mobility, their problems are comparable to those Black women experienced in past decades (Sales et al., 2019).

Participants in the study by Chin et al. (2016), who were leaders from various ethnic and racial backgrounds, described mentoring as a two-fold process whereby leaders from various ethnic and racial backgrounds can obtain support and guidance in a safe environment and the leader's responsibility to provide mentoring relationships to others who aspire career development and growth. In addition, senior leaders realized the

value of teaching others after achieving career success. A Black executive, for instance, who had previously received mentoring from a Black CEO, took time to mentor other Black coworkers and others from various racial and cultural backgrounds (Chin et al., 2016). This research shows that mentoring relationships may be a means of improving oneself and moving up the corporate ladder, as well as appreciating the value of mentoring and helping others progress in their careers.

Carbajal (2018) states that gaining job experience and exposure are essential progression tactics for becoming leaders. Leadership-related seminars and training may be a part of work exposure, which can better prepare potential leaders for upcoming chances (Carbajal, 2018). In addition, aspiring leaders may improve and refine their leadership talents, particularly soft skills like communication, emotional intelligence, motivating and managing people, planning, and organizations, according to Stewart (2016), who highlighted the value of leadership development training. Kubu's (2018) survey of the literature for aspiring leaders to demonstrate a clear indication of their desire to serve in leadership, which may lead to other leadership opportunities, they should take advantage of opportunities that stretch them. This will help the author identify potential explanations for the gender gap in leadership. Furthermore, according to the researcher's findings, aspiring leaders must actively seek leadership opportunities to develop their skills and skill sets and get a competitive edge in their quest for professional progression (Kubu, 2018).

Glass Cliff Theory. In addition to the discriminatory structures in societal systems preventing Black women from becoming leaders and succeeding in leadership

positions is the glass cliff (Glass & Cook, 2019; Yang et al., 2022). The glass cliff hypothesis describes when women, especially those from underrepresented groups, are disproportionately assigned to leadership positions when there is a significant danger of failure (Dunlap, 2021). This implies that black female CEOs may be more likely to be nominated to leadership positions in companies dealing with serious issues, including financial difficulties or poor morale (Dunlap, 2021; Dust, 2020). The glass cliff theory's detractors contend that black female leaders are frequently appointed to these demanding positions as a show of tokenism, with the hope that they will fail. The organization will be able to use its failure as an excuse to stop promoting women to leadership positions going forward (Glass & Cook, 2019). The possibilities for growth and progression that black female leaders require may not be offered in these jobs, frequently linked to high-stress levels and burnout (Glass & Cook, 2019; Yang et al., 2022). Black female leaders assigned to positions on the glass cliff have frequently been able to rise to the challenge and succeed despite these obstacles (Dust, 2020). They have exhibited their capacity to lead successfully in trying conditions by bringing fresh ideas, creative solutions, and a dedication to diversity and inclusion to their companies. The glass cliff idea emphasizes the difficulties black female leaders face in the workplace and the necessity for companies to overcome structural prejudices that restrict their chances of progress (Dust, 2020).

Corporate Saviors Theory. Like the glass cliff theory, the corporate savior's theory is crucial in understanding why some companies may or may not hire Black women into executive leadership positions (Dust, 2020). The corporate savior idea

emphasizes that tokenism frequently affects Black leaders. Black leaders struggle because they are symbols and are subject to much criticism (Jung et al., 2022). Putting a spotlight on Black leaders can be hazardous because it creates exponential pressure to succeed and may lead to actions they otherwise would not make (Dust, 2020; Sobande, 2019). An adverse reaction will occur no matter how the organization performs (Sobande, 2019). For example, Dust (2020) explains that when Black leaders are successful, it is a reason for celebration, misrepresenting success as an aberration.

Black Women in Nonprofit Leadership

Black female presence and engagement in management roles within nonprofit organizations entail holding leadership positions within the nonprofit sector. Black women's distinct experiences and viewpoints may significantly influence the direction and achievement of charitable organizations (Holder et al., 2015; NCCS, 2021). Although historically underrepresented, there is increasing acknowledgment of the benefits various viewpoints can offer to leadership and decision-making in nonprofit organizations (Mumford, 2022). According to research, Black women leaders frequently display attributes that are standard for leaders—like assertiveness and competitiveness—and nontraditional—like empathy and a strong sense of community (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). These distinctive traits may benefit stakeholder interactions and business culture. In reality, prejudice and biases based on race and gender prevent Black women from holding leadership positions in charity organizations (Branche & Ford, 2021). However, despite these obstacles, many Black women succeed in leadership roles in the nonprofit industry and significantly enhance their organizations and communities. Black female

nonprofit executives frequently have a solid dedication to promoting the rights of oppressed groups and a desire for social justice (Branche & Ford, 2021). Additionally, they offer a distinct viewpoint on the difficulties experienced by communities of color. They can bridge the gap between these groups and the organizations that support them.

By providing racial identity and learning and development opportunities for Black women leaders, nonprofit organizations may gain from their experience (Branche & Ford, 2021). Leaders in the nonprofit sector who are Black women have complained that there are not enough opportunities for them to demonstrate their leadership abilities. Black women are on the organization's periphery, which fosters exclusion or stigmatization of Black women leaders (Bowers, 2021). Black women successfully secure leadership positions because they adopt a leadership lifestyle, which becomes the norm in the nonprofit sector.

In a unique approach to a qualitative study by Curtis (2020), the Black female leaders stitched together a quilt, representing their leadership stories and struggles, and then interviewed about their creative decisions. In these metaphorical, colorful, worn-out, and knotted strands, this technique highlights their strengths and commands visibility while showcasing bright, impassioned social justice leadership (Curtis, 2020). In popular fiction, black women's ability to succeed in leadership positions is frequently not a key theme. Those who wield power in society do not frequently advocate or celebrate these experiences (Curtis, 2017, 2020). However, according to this study, black women's survival is one in which their fortitude occasionally hangs alone by a frayed string. By weaving their leadership paths and using these threads to verify connectivity, black

women leaders have used a bond and had the chance to share their frequent experiences alone (Curtis, 2020).

Like Curtis (2020), Bowers (2021) concluded that it is essential to acknowledge black women as existing NPO leaders while remaining outside and that black women can set an example of authentic leadership by establishing relationships that are true to their identities. On the other hand, Black women leaders who oppose objectivity and whiteness are rendered invisible and rife with stereotypes (Bowers, 2021). Black women develop expertise in educating other leaders about the inequalities relating to race, class, gender, and marginalizing situations as part of social justice leadership (Love & Jiggetts, 2019). Black women leaders in NPOs have distinct experiences, much as people in other industries. However, highlighting parallels and variations in the lived experiences might provide light on why Black women are underrepresented in leadership positions within NPOs (Sales et al., 2019). The intersectional experiences of Black women leaders in NPOs are underrepresented in the literature. There has not been much study done, particularly on the effects of Black women who have held NPO leadership roles. If such a study is not conducted, Black women's underrepresentation and implicit bias against them in leadership roles within NPOs will likely persist (Bowers, 2021; McGee & Bentley, 2017).

Black female executives in nonprofit organizations frequently encounter particular difficulties in their positions. Although there is a small but informative body of literature on the career paths of nonprofit executives (Einolf, 2022; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2018; Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018), this work largely ignores the role of structural inequities

faced by minority candidates and how this might affect the likelihood that minority candidates will be chosen for executive roles. The combined barriers of race and gender are another difficulty that Black female leaders frequently encounter. They could encounter racial and gender-based bias, which can poison the workplace and reduce their chances of success (Einolf, 2022).

Livingston et al. (2012) examined the historical implications of Black women in leadership and empowerment. Then, they conducted discussions among Black female leaders to understand their perceptions of Black women in leadership. Livingston et al. (2012) posited that, compared to other ethnic groups, Black women leaders have different conceptions of their leadership duties. For example, for Black women leaders, several themes surfaced, including being devalued, neglected, and underappreciated in their careers as leaders owing to their dual minority status. Such obstacles can impede advancement for Black women leaders, just as they did in the past. Sales et al., 2019.

Additionally, Brescoll and Uhlmann's (2008) research showed that female employees who indicated anger received lower status and pay than their male or female counterparts. This conclusion remained true regardless of whether the person was a CEO or an entry-level trainee. These results have been explained by the idea that while agentic actions and emotions are consistent with leadership responsibilities, they are not consistent with female gender roles, emphasizing warmth and community (Livingston et al., 2012). There are at least two opposing forecasts regarding the agency penalty for Black women. First, Black female leaders who exercise autonomy face consequences more significantly than White female leaders who exercise the same autonomy. Another

explanation is that Black female leaders get a lesser agency penalty than Black male leaders or White female leaders. The interactive prediction's rationale assumes that the category "Black female" is more than just the addition of race and gender. Instead, they place Black women in a particular place due to their multiple subservient identities.

Black women are frequently characterized as non-archetypal, marginal members of their racial and gender groups and are, as a result, made "invisible" (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). This is because the prototypical Black person is male, and the prototypical woman is White. Black women may be protected from many of the racist assaults aimed at Black males as an ironic result of their invisibility (see Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) (Livingston et al., 2012). Black males should be more likely penalized for demonstrating agency and rewarded for expressing respect or commonality. White men may perceive Black men as a more significant threat than Black women. According to earlier studies, leaders who are Black but not White men benefit from having a non-threatening look (Livingston & Pearce, 2009). In particular, having a baby face—a physical characteristic linked to friendliness, respect, and weakness—benefited Black male CEOs but hurt White male CEOs. Another effect of the special place that Black women occupy is that prescriptive stereotypes for Black women may differ from those for Black men or White women (Aaron, 2020). Prescriptive stereotypes are beliefs about how a group should behave. In contrast, prescriptive stereotypes refer to how a group should not behave.

The experiences of Black women leaders have been the subject of several empirical research (Bailey-Morrissey & Race, 2019; Moorosi et al., 2018; Smith et al.,

2019). Other studies (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Meister et al., 2017) have concentrated on the experiences of women leaders, while a systematic review by Curtis (2017) confirmed that being Black and female has an intersectional relationship that results in Black women leaders' unique experiences. Evidence from the research (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019; Nair & Adetayo., 2019) shows that Black women leaders endure stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, racial microaggressions, and marginalization. However, this period of social change, which gave rise to the paradigm of literature focusing solely on Black women's leadership experiences, was insufficient and might not be pertinent to the most recent studies. Mayberry (2018) asserts that scholars have been more intrigued by the nuanced experiences of Black women in leadership posts and the intersectionality of their multiple identities.

Summary

This literature aims to advance knowledge of Black women's perspectives and experiences as leaders in charitable organizations (mid to senior level). Given the difficulties and opportunities presented by the absence of leadership, expanding the survey of Black women is crucial (Allen, 2020). Organizations may address societal challenges and increase their worldwide influence by filling in the gaps with an understanding of these subjects (Geib & Boenigk, 2022). More studies are required to fully comprehend why Black women decide to enter the charity sector (Smith et al., 2018). Researchers can examine the variables that affect the presence of Black women in executive positions in social services thanks to the literature that has been published. BFT

provides the theoretical foundation for this topic's investigation and aids in understanding the professional preferences of Black women.

Nonprofit organizations face the challenge of meeting the needs of a wide range of clients, along with the expectation of retirement for many of their leaders (Hall, 2016). Organizational leadership must find ways to address the growth opportunities of Black women in leadership roles (Nickels & Leach, 2021). Understanding the barriers preventing them from attaining leadership roles is essential to address future and ongoing leadership needs among Black women (Allen, 2020). Additionally, Black women should continue pursuing leadership roles and furthering their education. The study concepts and techniques discussed in Chapter 3 may be used for research. The study framework described in Chapter 3 will also cover data-gathering tools, analysis procedures, and a tool for identifying research participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles. I identified key factors that attributed to their success, challenges, and barriers faced daily to ensure stability and ability to thrive in their leadership roles within the nonprofit sector. This chapter introduces research methods for education, including study design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodologies for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter 3, I also review potential professional and personal relationships between myself and participants. A discussion of the strategies used to mitigate researcher bias using reflexivity and ethical considerations of the study are also considered.

Research Design and Rationale

To attain the purpose of the study, two research questions were developed to guide the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid to senior-level nonprofit leadership roles?

RQ2: What critical factors contribute to the success, challenges, and barriers Black women face in leadership positions within the nonprofit sector?

The phenomenon under exploration in the study was the narratives, experiences, and perspectives of Black women in nonprofit leadership positions disproportionately underrepresented in the academic literature. The research tradition used for the study was

qualitative, which allows for inductive analysis of individuals' thoughts, views, perspectives, and beliefs (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, a qualitative approach to the study allowed for narratives of Black women in nonprofit leadership to be placed into the academic literature. A qualitative narrative inquiry research design was used to explore Black women's experiences and personal narratives in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. Narrative inquiry is a vital avenue to understanding experiences, according to Clandinin (2006), because investigators can learn from the participants in a reflective and recollective manner as a source of knowledge.

Narrative inquiry was chosen over other research designs, including phenomenology, which allows researchers to investigate a phenomenon's underlying meaning and contexts (see Morse, 2015). However, in this study, I was more interested in participants' experiences and personal narratives regarding nonprofit leadership, which is best facilitated narratively (see Clandinin, 2006). In addition, a qualitative narrative inquiry enables researchers to inquire why and how and offers context and a greater knowledge of why a phenomenon arises (Peterson, 2019). Single and multiple case study designs were not chosen for this study because case studies generally only allow the perspectives of one or more cases to be explored (see Yin, 2016). Since I aimed to understand the narratives from a diverse group of Black women in the nonprofit sector, a case study research design was not chosen for this study. A qualitative narrative inquiry was chosen because it best suited the present study.

Role of the Researcher

As a researcher in this study, I was the sole research instrument that recruited participants, conducted open-ended interviews to collect narrative data from participants, transcribed audio data into written transcriptions, and conducted inductive analysis of the data. I have a personal and professional interest in this study because I am a Black female working in the nonprofit sector and know other women of color who face racism and gender discrimination for leadership roles in nonprofit organizations. I used reflexivity throughout the investigation to minimize any chance of bias on my part. Reflexivity is how a researcher thinks critically about how their worldviews, beliefs, and values influence the research process, including decision-making, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Olaghere, 2022). My privileged position benefits this research by providing access to the Women of Color network. Recognizing the diversity of women of color can help mitigate prejudice. As a woman of color, I have similar experiences based on sexism and racism, but my experience is also very different. Women of color have a variety of experiences based on race, ethnicity and immigration status, economic situation, gender expression identity, sexual orientation, religion, marriage situation, and many other identities.

Methodology

The general population and the target population were Black women in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector in the United States. I used a qualitative technique as the research seeks to learn directly from the perspectives and experiences of the participants on the research topic. Qualitative research investigations seek to answer questions about

people's lives, lived experiences, emotions, behavior, perceptions, and the widespread phenomena under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, a narrative inquiry approach was employed using open-ended interviews, which I guided through the data-gathering process. Within this design, I aimed to better understand Black women by collecting qualitative data that encourages other researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the Black female experience in nonprofit leadership. The qualitative approach allowed for a rich, thick description of the experiences of women of color in nonprofit leadership. This study's results help identify differences and similarities in the experiences of women of color in leadership roles (see Tjora, 2018). This integrated approach may facilitate understanding the experiences of women of color.

I used a narrative inquiry approach for this study. I examined each participant's experience through a detailed description of their experience. I purposefully sampled 26 Black women in the United States who served in nonprofit leadership. My main goal was to shed light on the participants' experiences and how they understood their lives as Black women within the context of leadership in the nonprofit sector. This approach ensured that relevant and meaningful information was collected to distinguish how Black women relate to their experiences and how to learn and advance their leadership careers in nonprofit organizations.

Participant Selection Logic

The population of study participants was delimited to those Black women with experiences directly related to the phenomenon. Participants held mid level to -advanced leadership positions in a nonprofit organization or organization for at least one year.

Recruitment in this study relied primarily on a network of Black women. I had direct knowledge of participants who were midlevel leaders and nonprofit sector executives. Therefore, a recruitment flier was posted on my personal Facebook and LinkedIn profile pages (Appendix A). The recruitment flier detailed the study's inclusion criteria and how participants could indicate their interest. The recruitment flier contained a QR code with a link to a Google form containing screening and demographic questions.

Participants who met the inclusion criteria of this study were chosen using purposeful sampling specifically the maximum variation strategy. According to Palinkas et al. (2016), purposeful sampling is frequently used in qualitative research to find and choose samples that are relevant to the study's topic and are information-rich. A purposeful sampling strategy can be used to thoroughly understand the research issue by deliberately selecting specific individuals, events, and locations (Yin, 2016). So, this study used the purposeful sampling strategy that relied primarily on a network of Black women. I did have direct knowledge of participants who were mid-level leaders and nonprofit sector executives. As described above, potential participants were screened to determine their eligibility through a participant screening and demographics questionnaire completed by the participants. A sample size of 26 participants was chosen to ensure the study reached data saturation and the narratives of diverse participants were examined. Therefore, the specific, purposeful sampling strategy used in this study was the maximum variation sampling, allowing the selection of participants who represent a wide range of experiences related to the phenomenon under study.

Instrumentation

The data collection process used the qualitative instrument of open-ended interviews with guiding interview questions. I asked open-ended, semistructured questions, enabling each participant to give in-depth, individualized replies. Open-ended interviews provide more flexibility and adaptation to the unique requirements and viewpoints of the participants than structured interviews, which use predetermined and standardized questions (Weller et al., 2018). Open-ended interviews primarily allow for the nonthreatening investigation of sensitive and complicated subjects (Rapley, 2001). The freedom to express thoughts and feelings in one's own words allows participants to share insightful details about their backgrounds and worldviews (Rapley, 2001). Additionally, open-ended interviews can be used to acquire data on subjects like attitudes and opinions that may be challenging to define or assess using other techniques (Weller et al., 2018). Participants were first given a screening questionnaire to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. After participants were selected, they were provided an informed consent form detailing the risks and benefits of participating in the study. Upon receipt of informed consent, Zoom was used to conduct the interviews. An interview protocol based on this study's research questions and design was used during the study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The admission process began when I was approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for participation in the study (see Drew et al., 2019). Participants met the following selection criteria: (a) identified as a Black woman, and (b) had at least one year of experience holding a mid- to senior-leadership position in a non-

profit organization in the United States. Upon receiving a screening questionnaire from a qualified participant, I sent an email containing a copy of the informed consent form so that participants could make an informed decision regarding their participation in the study. The email also provided a Calendly link for participants to book 45-60-minute Zoom interviews. Participants were interviewed using Zoom's video conference platform. The video conference allowed me to observe participants' facial expressions and body language using a pseudo-personal experience. The interviews were audio-recorded with explicit permission from the participants. Participants were informed that if they became uncomfortable and wished to withdraw from the study, they could do so without fear of repercussion or penalty. Each participant's interview was saved under a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed participants to provide feedback on their experience by sharing their stories' beginning, middle, and end (see Roberts, 2020). The interview protocol also included scripts that guided me through engaging in open dialogue (see Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). This gave participants the freedom to express their life experiences. A purposeful sample of 26 Black women in U.S. nonprofit leadership completed semistructured interviews to explore the perceptions of each participant's nonprofit leadership experiences. Open-ended questions were premade and well-designed to facilitate discussions about how participants feel, think, and experience their life experiences. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai. The transcriptions were compared to the audio recordings line-by-line to

confirm no discrepancies in the transcriptions. Transcriptions were sent to participants for interviewee-transcript review to allow participants to clarify any of their thoughts, if necessary. Participants responded, indicating that no revisions were needed to the transcripts.

Data Analysis Plan

The data will include a description of the woman's direct experience through open questions and dialogue. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of each participant. Thematic analysis was used to develop a research framework that allows the researcher to focus on how individual subgroups experience a particular phenomenon from different perspectives (Myers, 2019). The analysis will be participant-centric and structured to maintain a deep experience in data interpretation. Thematic analysis will provide a broad qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews. Participants discuss, understand, and respond to their experiences with the phenomenon. The analytical process will focus on all subjective reactions rather than trying to develop objective memories deviating from the effects of their life experiences on the phenomenon. It is important to note that the researcher's position in the context of the study will not affect the ability of participants to think and analyze their answers to open-form questions. Through the thematic analysis process, researcher bias was reduced, and data integrity was verified by encoding the subject and performing continuous comparisons (see Maxwell, 2019).

Subject coding, also known as thematic analysis, was used in this study to identify the subject of transcribed text by analyzing word interpretations and sentence patterns.

Identify the subject from the information gathered in each set of the interview process

and generate code directly from each answer. The steps for a continuous comparative

analysis are as follows:

1. Read the entire dataset.

2. Divide the information into smaller pieces.

3. Tag each excerpt with a descriptive name or code.

4. Compare each new piece of information with the previous symbol. Make sure

similar parts are marked with the same symbol (Ismail et al., 2018).

After encrypting all the data, the code was grouped according to the similarity. Themes

were identified and documented for result analysis. Thematic coding was performed

using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo Version 12.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Conducting a qualitative narrative study includes interviews with people who may

share their personal experiences and narratives. The attitude and credibility of the

researcher should also be considered (O'Donoghue, 2018). Other features were shared

with the various participants, including research, socioeconomic status, age, and

experience resulting from research phenomena. When researchers attempt to understand

this phenomenon without bias, they become sensitive to the participants' experiences.

Therefore, the researcher must gain trust to ensure they are willing to share detailed

information that adds value to the study (Ngozwana, 2018). Personal relationships with

some participants might help them gain immediate trust, but the first person to contact a

researcher can be honest about their experience with the researcher. The components that

ensure trustworthiness in this study, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures, will now be discussed.

Credibility

When research correctly represents the participants' viewpoints, it is said to be credible. Morse (2015) asserts that it is necessary to establish that the conclusions of a qualitative study are credible from the viewpoint of the research subjects. Design is a significant component that might lessen the study's trustworthiness. Quotations from the participants in the reporting topics and sub-themes bolster veracity (see Daniel, 2019). I will address credibility by ensuring my reflexivity and using verbatim participant quotes. One way to promote credibility is through an interviewee transcript review, which involves sending interview transcripts to participants for review and explanation (Hayashi et al., 2019). In this study, transcripts were sent to participants within 72 hours of the interview to ask if anything on the transcript required explanation or correction. The qualitative research approach will also ensure that interview designs are developed to provide thick, complete data that can be validated and used for generalization to other populations. Twenty-six participants were recruited to ensure data saturation and a thick description of the data. This qualitative narrative inquiry study can show credibility and offer a thorough and reliable knowledge of the stories being examined by employing these techniques.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability refers to the capability of study results to be applied to many persons or locations (Tong et al., 2012). Transferability also refers to

how much the study's findings may be applied or extended to different situations, populations, or places (Lindgren et al., 2020). In qualitative investigations, transferability assures that the theoretical insights gained from the study may be used for both the target population and other contexts. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), if the methods used to conduct the research are sufficiently described, the transferability of the study may be assured. As a result, I give a succinct and thorough explanation of the procedures utilized to conclude the study data. In order to improve transferability, the study additionally used sampling sufficiency and detailed descriptions (Kyngäs et al., 2019).

Dependability

Dependability is crucial for reliable and meaningful research. Dependability emphasizes the reliability or congruency of the outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The function of dependability is to provide a framework within which the researcher may assess the analysis process to ensure it adheres to the requirements of the chosen design (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Despite the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher will try to give data that will help other researchers repeat the study in the future (Shenton, 2004). By providing an audit trail that records the procedures and choices made throughout the research so that subsequent researchers may reproduce the study and conclude, dependability may be assured (Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, an audit trail of research notes was maintained to guarantee that details are documented and might be duplicated by others to verify the study's findings.

Confirmability

The ability of others to corroborate or verify research project findings is known as confirmability (Elo et al., 2014). While conducting a study, I will utilize reflexivity, a researcher's constant reflection (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Individual bias requires a balance between beliefs, values, experiences, and world views that can lead to early research. The researcher is responsible for maintaining an objective experience different from the participants. Suppose researcher bias is evident in the study; in that case, transparency is the best approach to ensure that participants are aware of a direct association with the phenomenon under investigation (Myers, 2019). During the interview, the researcher must know how linguistic and non-verbal communication affects participants' reactions. To control biases and be truthful while employing reflexivity, I recognize my past experiences, allowing the reader to assess the integrity of the presented findings (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2016).

In order to prevent biases in the data collection, I utilized the reflective diary to record my reflections while conducting interviews. This ensures that the researcher's prejudices will not affect the results, according to Singh et al. (2021). By providing strong evidence to back up assertions, the confirmability of the study may be improved. I ensured this by quoting participants precisely and presenting a report of my codebook as an attachment to the dissertation. These techniques may be used to establish a qualitative study's dependability, giving rise to trust in the accuracy and dependability of the findings.

Ethical Procedures

I will adhere strictly to ethical guidelines as outlined by Walden University's IRB and in conjunction with the findings of the Belmont Report. Since I was enquiring about professionals' leadership experiences, the study was limited to interviews about participants' experiences in their employment and carried only minimal risk. I submitted for approval utilizing Walden University's IRB Pre-Approval Manual for Minimal Risk application procedure to ensure I had the required approval to perform the study. Therefore, the researcher must ensure the welfare of participants during the investigation (Connelly, 2016). Ethical guidelines must be followed to protect the participants' welfare throughout the study process. In the Belmont Report, these requirements are clearly explained (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). These values include respect for others, justice, and beneficence. Each of these principles was maintained in the study.

While carrying out this study, I briefed every participant about the research project to ensure their informed consent. A consent form outlining the study and stating that participation is voluntary was given to participants through email. Furthermore, the researcher can minimize unintended damage by understanding how to address uncomfortable themes, protecting participants confidentially when they divulge information that might put them in danger, and regaining participant agreement anytime they sense the interviewee is becoming uneasy (Taquette & Borges Da Matta Souza, 2022).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher outlined a qualitative narrative inquiry designed to understand life experiences that contribute to the limits of Black women in the role of leadership in a nonprofit organization in Texas. The specific qualitative method of this study is narrative inquiry, which will allow the investigator to capture the essence of the experience the participants have had. Participants were invited to participate in a semistructured interview using the Zoom video conferencing platform. The qualitative interview was conducted through an interview protocol. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis, minimizing investigator bias. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures were outlined in this chapter. In Chapter 4, the findings of this qualitative narrative inquiry will be presented.

Chapter 4: Results

Nonprofit organizations in the United States aim to address important social challenges and disparities. The diverse missions of nonprofit organizations require diverse leadership (Brimhall, 2019). However, Black women are underrepresented in nonprofit leadership (Griffin, 2021). Consequently, the narratives of Black women in nonprofit leadership are largely absent from the professional and academic literature. To address this gap in the literature, Black women in mid-to-upper-level leadership positions in U.S. nonprofit organizations were interviewed to understand their perspectives on leadership.

In this qualitative narrative inquiry, I aimed to explore Black women's perceptions and experiences in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles. Two research questions were devised to address the purpose of the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid to senior-level nonprofit leadership roles?

RQ2: What critical factors contribute to the success, challenges, and barriers Black women face in leadership positions within the nonprofit sector?

A narrative inquiry research design was used to investigate this study's purpose and research questions. Semistructured interviews with 26 Black women in nonprofit leadership positions were conducted to understand their personal narratives and experiences with nonprofit leadership. The results lend insight into the diverse

experiences and challenges, barriers, and opportunities identified by Black women in nonprofit leadership.

Chapter 4 begins with a description of the research setting and the demographic characteristics of the participants. The procedures used for data collection and analysis are described in detail. I discuss evidence of the study's trustworthiness. In the main section of Chapter 4, I present the study's thematic findings. The chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 5.

Research Setting

Following IRB approval (IRB #09-29-23-0038286, awarded on September 29, 2023), I posted the recruitment flier on my personal LinkedIn page. The recruitment flier instructed interested Black women in mid- to senior-level leadership positions in nonprofit organizations in the United States to complete the participant screening questionnaire using a QR code on the flier. Individuals selected for the study were also invited to distribute the recruitment flier on their professional networks through snowball sampling. Thirty-three responses from potential participants were received at varying intervals after posting the recruitment flier. Each potential participant was contacted by email to provide them with the informed consent form. The participants generally returned the informed consent by email with the words "I consent" within 36 hours. Once they indicated their informed consent, interviews were scheduled at a mutually convenient time and date.

Demographics

The participants were all required to meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) identified as a Black woman and (b) had at least 1 year of experience holding a mid-to senior-level leadership position in a nonprofit organization in the United States. I confirmed with each participant that they met the inclusion criteria using a participant screening questionnaire. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Participants Demographic Information

Participant	Position	Years in position	State
P1	Director	7	Texas
P2	CEO, Curator	3	Texas
P3	Program manager	8	Texas
P4	Executive director	3	Texas
P5	Founder, CEO	5	Texas
P6	Education manager	9	Texas
P7	Chief client services officer	8	Texas
P8	Associate vice president of program services	2	Texas
P9	Director	3	Texas
P10	Executive director	4	Texas
P11	Senior director of partnerships & collaboration	2	Texas
P12	Director of clinical programming	1.5	Texas
P13	Executive director	5	Texas
P14	Founder, CEO	7	Texas
P15	Senior director	6	Texas
P16	President and CEO	4	Texas
P17	Childcare center director	4	Texas
P18	Programs and community architect	1	Texas
P19	Chief of staff	2	Texas
P20	Vice president of human resources	9	Texas
P21	Director of Programs	1	Texas
P22*	--	--	--
P23	Chief clinical officer	5	Texas
P24	President	10	Texas
P25	Program director	8	Texas
P26	Director of partnerships	4	Texas
P27	CEO	15	Texas

Note: P22 withdrew from the study after completing their interview.

Data Collection

Data collection began after I scheduled 1-hour interviews with the selected

participants. I conducted all interviews using the Zoom telecommunications software

with the 27 selected participants who met the inclusion criteria for the study. Participants

were reminded not to reveal personal information beyond what I asked through the

interview questions. No information shared in the interviews could be reasonably used to

identify the participants. Consequently, there was no need to redact any information from

the interview transcripts. Participants were assigned a participant identification number

for data collection and identification purposes to protect their identity and to provide

confidentiality throughout the study. The participant identification numbers used in this

study were P1, P2, …, and P27. The identification numbers were assigned based on the

order in which the participants scheduled interviews. One participant (P22) completed an

interview but subsequently withdrew from the study. P22's screening questionnaire,

informed consent form, audio recording, and interview transcript were destroyed with

data destruction software. The participants who completed the screening questionnaire

but did not return the informed consent form or schedule an interview were not assigned

identification numbers and were excluded from the analysis.

Before starting each interview, I reviewed each participant's informed consent

form. I confirmed with each participant that they consented to have their interview audio

recorded and their data used in the study, which all the participants acknowledged

verbally. Data were audio recorded using the recording function of the Zoom

telecommunication software. During the interviews, I followed the interview guide I

created to ensure I asked all participants the same questions in the same order. However, when necessary, I added prompting questions to maintain a fluid and conversational dialogue between myself and the participant. The interviews ranged in length. The shortest interview was 10 minutes (P3), and the longest interview was 53 minutes (P19). A summary of the data collected in this study is provided in Table 2.

Notes were taken during the interviews to promote researcher reflexivity. The notes mainly comprised of my impression of the participants' demeanor when speaking about their experiences as a Black woman in upper management in nonprofit organizations. Most participants spoke about their experiences with acceptance, indicating their resilience in challenging environments.

I used the transcription capabilities of the online transcription software Otter.ai to transcribe the data. I reviewed the transcriptions line by line and compared them to the original audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. After I completed the transcriptions, I emailed each participant a copy of their transcript to allow them to participate in the interviewee transcript review, following the guidance of Rowlands (2021). I asked the participants to acknowledge receipt of the transcript, evaluate the transcript, and return feedback. All participants, except for P27, responded to the interviewee transcript review email. Participants P5, P6, P12, and P16 requested slight corrections to their transcripts, which were denoted in the finalized transcripts.

Table 2

Summary of Data Collected in This Study

Participant	Date provided informed consent	Interview date	Interview (minutes)	Provided transcript feedback
P1	10/8/2023	10/10/2023	13:11	12/12/2023
P2	10/9/2023	10/17/2023	26:24	11/11/2023
P3	10/8/2023	10/13/2023	10:03	12/9/2023
P4	10/2/2023	10/16/2023	23:27	12/5/2023
P5	10/9/2023	10/17/2023	20:24	11/11/2023
P6	10/4/2023	10/18/2023	10:20	12/10/2023
P7	10/8/2023	10/19/2023	13:07	12/6/2023
P8	10/9/2023	10/20/2023	31:05	11/5/2023
P9	10/1/2023	10/19/2023	37:20	12/3/2023
P10	10/2/2023	10/19/2023	28:20	12/4/2023
P11	10/4/2023	10/21/2023	17:26	12/7/2023
P12	10/9/2023	10/23/2023	21:33	12/4/2023
P13	10/20/2023	10/24/2023	31:16	11/26/2023
P14	10/9/2023	10/24/2023	32:26	12/6/2023
P15	10/9/2023	10/24/2023	14:32	12/6/2023
P16	10/19/2023	10/26/2023	25:32	12/4/2023
P17	10/22/2023	10/24/2023	21:47	12/4/2023
P18	10/22/2023	10/24/2023	13:51	12/5/2023
P19	10/4/2023	10/31/2023	53:19	12/9/2023
P20	10/11/2023	11/1/2023	22:38	12/7/2023
P21	10/9/2023	11/22/2023	26:05	12/8/2023
P23	10/9/2023	11/28/2023	27:01	1/10/2024
P24	12/1/2023	12/1/2023	14:07	1/10/2024
P25	11/20/2023	12/1/2023	39:01	1/10/2024
P26	12/1/2023	12/4/2023	20:04	12/12/2024
P27	12/11/2023	12/14/2023	46:16	N/A

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis to analyze my data, following the six-phased approach specified by Braun and Clarke (2022). In Phase 1, I became familiar with the interview data by reading the interviews multiple times. To this end, I read each interview from start to finish to gain a holistic understanding of the data I collected and to gather my general impressions regarding the depth of the participant's answers to the interview questions. Next, I read responses to each interview question across participants. Specifically, I read each participant's response to Interview Question (IQ) 1, followed by each participant's response to IQ 2, until all IQs had been exhausted. During this phase, I carefully analyzed each participant's responses for any personally identifiable information in the transcripts that could be used to identify the participants. Many of the participants spoke about their nonprofit organizations and their positions within their organizations. Since this information could be used to identify the participants, it was redacted from the transcripts.

Phase 2 of Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis involves categorizing the data into meaningful units called codes. For this phase, I created a codebook to categorize the data. I applied the codes to participants' ideas, perspectives, and opinions regarding their experiences as Black women in nonprofit leadership. In Phase 3, I reviewed the codes and combined them to form axial categories. In Phase 4, I refined the axial categories to extract themes. The categories were grouped into themes based on their similarity. The themes represent patterns and relationships presented in the interview

data. A description of the categories and themes contributing to the thematic development

of this study is shown in Table 3 for RQ1 and Table 4 for RQ2.

Table 3

Categories and Themes Derived from Analysis of the Participants' Interviews for RQ1

Theme	Category	Participants
1.1. Black women seek nonprofit roles based on childhood experiences	C1.1A. Positive childhood experiences	P2, P6, P12, P19, P26
	C1.1B. Negative childhood experiences	P7, P11, P13, P24, P27
1.2. Black women seek nonprofit roles to serve underprivileged populations	C2.2A Service for others	All participants

As shown in Table 3, two themes (Themes 1.1 and 1.2) were identified based on the

participants' experiences addressing RQ1. Two axial categories contributed to the

development of Theme 1.1, whereas Theme 1.2 contained one category.

Table 4

Categories and Themes Derived from Analysis of the Participants' Interviews for RQ2

Theme	Category	Participants
2.1. Challenges in nonprofit leadership	C2.1A. Administrative and logistic challenges	P1, P6, P7, P9, P15
	C2.1B. Challenges with fundraising	P1, P3, P4, P9, P10, P13, P14, P24, P27
	C2.1C. Gaining support for their organizations' causes.	P2, P5, P12, P13, P14
	C2.1D. Imposter syndrome	P7, P9, P10, P12, P23, P25
2.2. Barriers to nonprofit leadership positions	C2.2A. Racism and discrimination	All participants
	C2.2B. Barriers to obtaining leadership positions	P2, P4, P7, P9, P11, P16, P20, P21
	C2.2C. Financial compensation	P4, P9, P16, P18, P23
2.3 Opportunities for Black women in nonprofit leadership	C2.3A. Mentorship	P2, P6, P7, P14, P19, P24
	C2.3B. Networking support	P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P21, P23

C2.3C. Training and professional development	P6, P9, P15, P20, P27

Table 4 shows the three themes (Themes 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) were developed to address RQ2. Within each theme, four axial categories contributed to Theme 2.1, and three axial categories contributed to each of Themes 2.2 and 2.3. In this study, for a pattern to qualify as a category, at least five participants were required to have contributed ideas to the category.

During Phase 5, I examined the codes, categories, and themes to determine whether new themes emerged or were redundant and needed to be combined. I also evaluated the data for discrepant cases. Braun and Clarke (2022) stated that a discrepant case is a code that can only be applied to one participant's interview. There were no discrepant cases in this data set. In the final data analysis phase, I reexamined the data by reviewing each interview transcript to ensure the participants' answers were explicitly related to the appropriate codes, categories, and themes. During this phase, I ensured the themes appropriately corresponded to the research question. After data analysis, I concluded that the participants' data addressed the research question because member checking was performed with the participants, and there were no changes to the data collected. According to Braun and Clarke, member checking promotes the study's credibility by actively involving the participants in the data analysis process.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Promoting trustworthiness in qualitative research involves ensuring the findings are dependable, reliable, and valid. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the importance of

four factors in promoting the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility is the confidence researchers can place in the truthfulness of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I implemented several strategies to promote credibility in this study. First, I used an interviewee transcript review to increase the authenticity of the final transcript (see Rowlands, 2021). I emailed each participant's interview transcript to the correct participant to allow them to correct errors, clarify erroneous information, or provide additional information. Several participants (P5, P6, P12, and P16) provided clarification to their answers on the transcripts. To denote these changes, I used the track changes function in Microsoft Word to indicate that the addition to the transcripts came from the participant's review of the transcript. Second, I included verbatim quotations from the participants in the final analysis of the data. Third, I used reflexivity protocols during the research process to account for my perceptions and mitigate potential researcher bias. Specifically, I took notes and memos during the research interviews and while reading and analyzing the data.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability is the degree to which a study's findings can be transferred to other settings or populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick, rich descriptions of data can promote transferability in qualitative studies (Hays & McKibben, 2021). To provide context to the participants' experiences, I collected relevant

demographic information about the participants regarding their experiences with leadership in non-profit organizations. The data provide readers with the necessary information to draw conclusions about the breadth of the participants' experiences with non-profit leadership. As shown in Table 1, some participants had 1-2 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, whereas other participants had 10-15 years of experience. Some participants worked in human resources, whereas other participants were the CEOs or founders of their nonprofit organizations. The breadth of the participants' experiences has implications for the transferability of the study's findings.

Data saturation also influences transferability in qualitative research studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The sample achieved sufficiency, evidenced by data saturation. In this study, I defined data saturation as the point during data collection and analysis whereby a participant's interview did not generate any new unique codes. The data reached saturation after 13 interviews, but I continued to interview participants because of the variability in the participants' personal experiences leading to their roles in nonprofit leadership.

The study's inclusion criteria ensured that the participants were knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation, namely being a Black woman in mid-to-upper-level leadership in non-profit organizations. The participants were in various stages of their careers. For instance, P5 had over 30 years of experience working in nonprofit organizations, whereas P18 was a young leader, having worked for 4 years in the nonprofit sector. Therefore, the transferability of this study was established by describing

the data in a way that could be compared to other Black women with experience in mid-to-upper-level leadership positions in nonprofit organizations.

Dependability

Qualitative research is considered dependable if the same results are generated when a research study is conducted multiple times (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I promoted dependability in this study in several ways. First, I created an audit trail, documenting every aspect of the research process. I documented interactions with the participants in my research journal and saved emails with participants for future reference. Second, I used an interview protocol to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions in the same order. The only deviation from the interview protocol was prompting questions to clarify participants' statements when necessary. Third, dependability is promoted by clearly documenting the data collection and analysis procedures and noting any changes to the procedures outlined in Chapter 3 (see Johnson et al., 2020). The methodology's rigor is provided in this chapter's data collection and analysis sections. Therefore, I promoted dependability using these three mechanisms.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research involves ensuring that the study's findings are derived from the participants' experiences, not the researcher's experiences or biases (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). To promote confirmability, I used reflexivity protocols during the research process. I used bracketing procedures, which involved setting aside preconceived notions before conducting interviews (see Dörfler & Stierand, 2021). I also took notes during the interviews to preserve my perceptions of the participants'

responses. The notes allowed me to bracket my thoughts properly when I conducted data analysis. Finally, I promoted confirmability using verbatim quotations from the participants. The use of verbatim quotations is accomplished in the following sections, which present the research findings.

Results and Findings

The results and findings section is organized into two main subsections. First, the findings for RQ1 are presented by analyzing the personal narratives of the study participants regarding their drive and motivation for nonprofit leadership. Two themes were identified that address RQ1. Theme 1.1 describes how some Black women seek roles in nonprofit organizations based on childhood experiences. Theme 1.2 explores how Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles to serve underprivileged populations. Three themes addressing RQ2 were extracted from the participants' interviews. Theme 2.1 examines the challenges faced by Black women in nonprofit leadership. Theme 2.2 examines the barriers faced by Black women in nonprofit leadership. Finally, Theme 2.3 examines the opportunities identified by the participating Black women in nonprofit leadership. Thematic analysis of RQ1 and RQ2 are presented in the following sections.

Thematic Findings for RQ1

The first research question guiding this study examined the perceptions and experiences of Black women in leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the study's first research question was:

RQ1: What are the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid to senior-level nonprofit leadership roles?

Two themes were extracted from the participants' interviews for RQ1. Theme 1.1 describes how Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles based on their childhood experiences. Theme 1.2 explores how Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles to serve underprivileged populations. The thematic findings for these themes are presented in the following sections, using excerpts from the participants' interviews to support all assertions.

Theme 1.1: Black Women Seek Nonprofit Roles Based on Childhood Experiences

The first theme identified from the participants' interviews is that Black women seek roles in nonprofit organizations based on childhood experiences. Two axial categories were used to develop Theme 1.1. Some participants spoke about positive experiences they had as children, which influenced their desire to work in nonprofit organizations; these positive experiences comprise Category C1.1A. Other participants spoke about negative experiences in childhood; these negative experiences comprise Category C1.1B.

Category C1.1A: Black Women Seek Nonprofit Roles Based on Positive Childhood Experiences. The first category contributing to the development of Theme 1.1 was that some Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles based on positive childhood experiences. For instance, P2 said:

I had a teacher in third grade who had her hands in anything and everything after school. I constantly saw her doing different programs for after school, helping kids with their reading. I was one of those kids she helped. It was her impact on me that made me say I want to grow up and do the same thing.

In her childhood, P2 had a teacher who invested in her students, helping them develop
literacy and other skills after school. P2 aspired to be like this individual and,
consequently, sought nonprofit work. P6 similarly explained that she was inspired by her
familial upbringing to help children without adequate resources. She said:

> One is I'm very blessed to have come from a two-parent household that honed in
> on education. My parents were teenagers when I was born, and they did not plan
> to have me in this world. They did everything possible, overcoming so many
> obstacles to ensure that my siblings and I never had to ask for a thing. They
> ensured that we always had a roof over our heads, transportation, and clothing on
> our backs. If we were ever at a place where we were lacking, we never knew.
> That's something that I know that many of the youth we serve don't get access to,
> and I want to give it to them.

P6 described her upbringing as a blessing and dedicated her life to helping children in
less-than-ideal circumstances.

P12 explained that she benefited from the generosity of nonprofits in her
community when she was a child. She said:

> When I grew up, I went through Girls Incorporated. I benefited from the TRIO
> programs and Upper Bound. So, I benefited a lot as a child. My mom was a single
> parent, so she needed after-school care for us. When my aunt sent me the position
> [at my first nonprofit], I was excited to support a cause that helped me as a child.

P12 utilized the services of a nonprofit organization for children in her childhood.
Consequently, when she was made aware of a position at a similar nonprofit, she ignited

a passion to help similar children. P19 also identified her childhood experiences as a contributing factor to her desire to pursue nonprofit leadership. She said:

> It was my upbringing, to be honest. I'm the only child of two parents who have been married for 40 years at this point but are hard-working and middle-class. They both had high work ethics, and they just worked hard to provide the lifestyle that we had. They sacrificed to pay for private school so I would have a quality education. I realized at a young age that my parents were paying for quality education that I wasn't freely given to families that send their children to public school. My friends, really smart kids, were asking me for help, but they just didn't necessarily have the same access to teachers, tutors, textbooks, or resources that I had. I thought that was unfair. You shouldn't have to pay for a quality education.

P19 observed inequities in education based on her childhood experiences, which prompted her to pursue work in the nonprofit sector to enhance the quality of education for underprivileged children. Based on these findings, some Black women pursue nonprofit leadership based on positive childhood experiences. For these women, their positive experiences inspired them to contribute positively to others.

Category C1.1B: Black Women Seek Nonprofit Roles Based on Negative Childhood Experiences. While the participants contributing to Category C1.1A described positive experiences that influenced their passion for nonprofit leadership, other participants described negative experiences in their youth that contributed to their desire to pursue work in the nonprofit sector. For instance, P7 said:

Particularly my grandmother, to see her like debilitated and helpless, on a fixed

income. When she got sick, all her expenses went toward her medical care and

needs, depriving her of basic needs in other areas. Those things I saw growing up

didn't make sense to me. As I became an adult, I wanted to make a change in

people's situations. I decided to have a business catering to senior citizens, and I

want to make sure that I was having making an impact. That's a population that is

often forgotten about calling on.

After watching her grandmother struggle with medical expenses and basic needs, P7 was

driven to work in the nonprofit sector, advocating for senior citizens. The adverse

situation of her grandmother ignited a passion to help others in similar situations with

similar needs. P11 also cited her childhood as a driving force for her passion for nonprofit

work. She said:

As you might imagine, in oil companies, and oil companies being institutions that

White men in the South created, I experienced lots of things growing up that I

don't want anybody else to experience. Then, going to university and seeing very

smart young women not always get the same job opportunities as everybody else,

being told that they need to lose weight, they can't have a baby stay at their job,

all of that crazy nonsense, which was negatively impacting their self-confidence, I

thought, "This has to stop." I thought we need to start as young as possible, telling

girls everything that they're worth and everything that can do.

P11 indicated that she experienced challenges in her youth and in her young adulthood due to gender-based stereotypes; these stereotypes and experiences drove her to pursue nonprofit work to help girls build self-confidence and self-esteem.

P13 explained that adverse experiences in her youth contributed to mental health challenges, which contributed to her desire to advocate for children in nonprofit work. She said:

> I am from a Republican-based conservative military family. Although my father was retired and started working for a civil service, for the Air Force, I still was a child who went to 15 different schools from K to 12th grade. I have lived experience ever since I was a baby girl with severe anxiety and depression. Through my lived experiences, I've always had a love for children. I always wanted to be a child advocate, helping others find what was missing from my younger self.

P13 decided to work in the nonprofit sector to help children who had similar experiences in their childhood with anxiety and depression. P16 also cited her childhood as an influencing factor. She explained:

> I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that I grew up in a highly impoverished community. I would be lying if I said it wasn't a driver because it was a driver. I have a specific interest in those who are either forgotten or uninvited. I want to ensure I get to a table so they're included and their voices are heard.

P16 felt like individuals within her childhood community were often forgotten, leading to impoverished and struggling communities; these conditions helped her realize her passion for the nonprofit sector.

P24 explained how her mother's drug addiction inspired her to work in nonprofit organizations. She said:

> My mom developed a drug addiction that, for a time, became much stronger than she was, and her addiction just had a devastating impact on our lives. The older I got, as her addiction got worse, I felt anger, resentment, fear, sadness, and disappointment. I just knew I wanted to be different and spend my life helping people who needed help.

P24 was inspired by her childhood upbringing and her mother's situation to help individuals struggling with drug addiction. Based on these findings, some Black women pursue nonprofit leadership roles based on adverse childhood experiences. The participants expressed feelings of not wanting others to have similar experiences.

Theme 1.2: Black Women Seek Nonprofit Roles to Serve Underprivileged Populations

The second theme identified from the participants' interviews is that Black women seek leadership roles in nonprofit organizations to serve underprivileged populations. Indeed, nearly all participants cited a desire for service as a motivation for entering the nonprofit sector and working toward a leadership position. For instance, P1 explained:

I've always wanted to have my own business because what I had in my mind and

my heart was necessary to support others. It's so important for me to maintain my

purpose. My purpose in life is to serve. My purpose in life is to give. My purpose

in life is to honor and nurture.

P1 entered nonprofit work to enact her life's mission to serve others. Most participants

spoke about serving others as their mission, which impacted their career trajectories and

choices to pursue nonprofit rather than other corporate avenues. To give equal weight to

all participants' ideas, excerpts from each participant contributing to this theme are

provided in Table 5.

Table 5

The Participants Chose Nonprofit Work Out of a Desire to Serve Others

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P2	"The position I'm currently serving in, I just the want to help young ladies be the best versions of themselves. I often think to myself, if I had me, the person I am currently, in my life at a young age, I could probably be a lot further in life than I am now."
P3	"I truly do believe that the children are our future. I decided I want to serve kids, that at-risk population, if I want to serve them. I felt like I do better work in a nonprofit than I could at Child Protective Services."
P4	"I love people, and I love serving people. I was brought up that way. My dad was military for a significant part of my life. I grew up serving, and in the sector, that's the place that I could do it. And I could love on people, and I could be there for people."
P5	"What attracted me to this position is quality care. I always believed that any center regardless of where it's located, or any school, regardless of demographics, should have quality care and education. I've always believed in quality care that all that we need to bring quality to all early childhood programs."
P6	"A lot of the youth that we serve don't get access to quality education and support. I recognize just how important it is to be a member of their village and contribute in that way to ensure that they still have the support that comes with a two-parent household, but they may not get it in that traditional way."
P7	"I've always desired to serve senior citizens. I believe that senior citizens are the foundation for our youth and our future and they should be revered, not forgotten."
P8	"I have a desire to help our community. I think that we are greater when we serve."
P9	"Education is my passion, it will always be my passion. Everything that I've ever done outside of public-school education has had some kind of link to the school system, to educating children to educating children and communities that they say are marginalized and underrepresented, all those words that we don't like."
P10	"I have a passion for giving back to the community who has had a major role in raising me up as a person."
P11	"I want to serve young girls. I want those little girls to know that they can do absolutely anything that they want to do and that their gender and their rights have nothing to do with their ability to succeed regardless of what anybody says."
P12	"That was my spark of really being able to pour back into the community."
P13	"I worked in education. I realized that it wasn't about the children. It wasn't about what was going to make their lives better. It wasn't about the families; it was about the money."
P14	"The nonprofit world appealed to me just because I just wanted to kind of give back to the community, I just like the concept of being able to serve people versus main corporate America."

P15	"I am motivated by helping other leaders and by supporting frontline workers who are invested in helping their communities.
P16	"I like the fact that we were going into existing communities and not building new child development centers. Inside of the communities that we go in, which have historically been under-invested marginalized communities, we help uplift people.
P17	"Unlike with the school district where you can get stuck with this curriculum, the nonprofit world lets us evolve. It is about the child. If we encompass that socially, emotionally, educationally, self-help, we're building great individuals for the future."
P18	"I love that I can serve and be agent of change in somebody's life."
P19	"Inequity is a disservice and an injustice in itself. How can I lend myself to trying to right the wrong in this country, and right the inequity and the injustice that so many have had to face and are facing? That's why I do this work."
P20	"I started in corporate American and everything was just about the money. I went into the nonprofit world so I could be a change in someone's life."
P21	"The majority of women that I worked with were Black and Brown women. It's important to me to help others like me. Being mission-centered has always been important to me."
P23	"My journey started when I was working for CPS. I noticed that all of the families that were on my caseload looked like me. I decided I wanted to help and advocate for these families."
P24	"I started my first nonprofit embracing mothers for young girls whose mothers are currently incarcerated. I believe these people deserve a second chance and I want to provide that."
P25	"I love early childhood; I see the necessity of strong foundations. It has also been very rewarding to be able to work with everyone at different levels that are trying to move the work of making a kid successful."
P26	"I've always loved working in underserved communities. I believe they need advocates and enjoy advocating for people without a voice."
P27	"I have always been oriented toward service. Why not make my career in service to others? To others who need help when there's no one else to help them."

As shown in Table 5, all participants contributed to this theme. These findings collectively suggest that Black women seek work in the nonprofit sector to selflessly contribute to the betterment of their local communities and society at large. The missions of each participant's nonprofit varied greatly, spanning childhood education to criminal justice reform. However, regardless of the mission, the participants spoke enthusiastically

about their desires and passions to help others, particularly individuals from marginalized or underprivileged communities.

Thematic Findings for RQ2

The second research question guiding this study examined the challenges, barriers, and opportunities experienced by Black women in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. Specifically, the study's second research question was:

RQ2: What critical factors contribute to the success, challenges, and barriers

Black women face in leadership positions within the nonprofit sector?

Three themes were developed based on the participants' experiences. Theme 2.1 examines the challenges with nonprofit leadership identified by the participants. Theme 2.2 explores the barriers to nonprofit leadership experienced by the participants. Finally, Theme 2.3 explores the opportunities for Black women in nonprofit leadership.

Theme 2.1: Black Women Experience Numerous Challenges in Nonprofit Leadership

Theme 2.1 explored the challenges experienced by Black women in nonprofit leadership. Four axial categories contributed to the development of this theme. In Category C2.1A, I examine how Black women experienced administrative and logistic challenges associated with nonprofit leadership. Many of these challenges were not necessarily due to being a Black woman in leadership; instead, these identified challenges were consistent with published challenges in nonprofit leadership (Clerkin et al., 2023). In Category C2.1B, I examined Black women's challenges with fundraising for their nonprofit organizations. Category C2.1C examines challenges associated with enthusiasm or buy-in into nonprofits' missions. Finally, in Category C2.1D, the participants spoke

about how the imposter syndrome is a common challenge for Black women in non-profit leadership.

Category C2.1A: Black Women Experienced Administrative and Logistic Challenges. The first category contributing to the development of Theme 2.1 was that Black women experienced administrative and logistic challenges as nonprofit leaders. P1 indicated that leadership in the nonprofit sector requires paperwork that is not always obvious or readily available. She said:

> I'm communicating with an executive of a large nonprofit organization supporting other nonprofits and community-based programs. I had the opportunity to have a conversation with a CEO, and she asked for certain required documentation, so it would have probably been good for her to review. However, I didn't have that documentation. I didn't have a Form 990 that showed I made a certain amount, or my operating budget was what she required.

A Form 990 is an Internal Revenue Service form that gathers information about a nonprofit organization and is shared with the public (Ely et al., 2023). Without proper guidance, P1 was unaware she was unprepared for conversations without Form 990 as background information, highlighting the learning curve associated with nonprofit leadership. P7 also indicated that administrative challenges provided her with a steep learning curve in nonprofit leadership. She explained:

> If you're in a nonprofit, there are many things you just don't know until something happens. Then, you have to learn by trial and error. You don't have this paperwork. You need to find and do that paperwork. You don't know where to

submit paperwork. You don't know how to submit a grant, which can cause you to miss a deadline. You just have to figure that out.

P1 and P7 struggled to understand the administrative requirements of nonprofit organizations, which they identified as a challenge in nonprofit leadership, especially at the beginning of their careers.

P7 spoke about learning by trial and error, implying that she was not provided with all the knowledge required for different situations, including fundraising. P15 reiterated P7's thoughts regarding having to learn by trial and error. P15 said:

The challenges I've experienced are because of the various roles I was in; even from that first one where I was working for a startup organization, I always had roles where I had to figure it out. I'm having to figure stuff out on the fly. I'm having to build planes as I fly. I'm never stepping into this routine with preset instructions.

P15 explained that she was never given clear instructions on her roles in nonprofit organizations and needed to learn by trial and error. Without clear executive support and guidance, P19 indicated that the nonprofit sector is difficult to navigate. She said:

I knew I wanted to work in a nonprofit, but the path has felt less clear of what success looks like or what I should be striving towards. I didn't have a lens on what a pathway could look like. And so that was challenging just in trying to find my footing. I didn't have an executive telling me do this first, then do this second. I had to figure it out on my own.

For these women, nonprofit leadership did not come with an instruction manual, and the participants found it challenging to navigate their way through nonprofit logistics and administration. P6 associated this challenge with a lack of mentorship. P6 said, "It was so challenging to navigate the responsibilities of my role and be supported by this particular supervisor who lacked all of the training that was important for my development as a leader." Thus, based on the participants' experiences, some Black women experience challenges with the administrative and logistic nature of nonprofit organizations and leadership.

Category C2.1B: Black Women Experienced Challenges with Fundraising.
The second category contributing to the development of Theme 2.1 was that Black women experienced challenges with fundraising for their organization. Fundraising is critical for nonprofit organizations, as many private and government organizations offer grants for nonprofit organizations to enact their mission (Kelly, 2020). Kelly (2020) argued that fundraising is critical for the survival of most nonprofit organizations. The participants indicated that fundraising was a significant challenge. For instance, P1 said:

> My organization supports communities, and I'm still not at a $250,000 operating budget; it's still not $250,000 at this point. So that's a challenge. You don't qualify for many grants when you have an operating budget of less than $250,000. So that's a challenge – the operating budget.

P1 indicated that, in her field, having a $250,000 operating budget is the gateway for many fundraising opportunities; since her non-profit's budget did not surpass $250,000,

she experienced challenges gaining funding. P4 also indicated that funding and fundraising were a challenge. She said:

> With the organization I've founded, funding is a significant barrier. I'm in this proving-up space. People have said, well, when you expand, we'll look at giving you the funding. Well, I can't expand without money.

Like P1, P4 found that the small size of her nonprofit hindered her from receiving grant money and support for the organization. Other participants spoke about the challenges of gaining funds for their nonprofit organizations. To give equal weight to all participants' ideas, excerpts from the participants' interviews related to fundraising challenges are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

The Participants Experienced Challenges with Fundraising

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P1	"I enjoyed the face of nonprofits and being more philanthropic. But with that, there were challenges, financial challenges, trying to get funding for programs for programs that serve children with special needs, but also programs that served impoverished communities as well as African American students. I was at a standstill."
P3	"I decided to want to get funding from a grant and that was the hardest thing for me. I had not mastered how to track my progress and I was not willing to lie. I realize that sometimes people lie to get the money and I'm not going to lie."
P9	"I'm a little concerned about the nonprofit world because nonprofits rely so heavily on funding, from grants funding from foundations and funding from other entities. I think we're all in trouble. We all have to face the reality that the economy, particularly in the U.S., is changing. It's shifting the value of the U.S. dollar, and all of that is changing."
P10	"Funding is a challenge. It sounds simple to me, but again, without the funding and without the necessary resources, we'll continue to spin our wheels for 100 more years to come."
P13	"I feel like those who are funders out in the field kind of want you to fight over a little bit of money. Funding isn't easy."
P24	"I think the main challenge is fundraising. Working in a space of criminal justice reform, where there's not a lot of empathy, no one wants to give money."

As shown in Table 4, the participants collectively believed fundraising for their nonprofit organizations was a significant challenge. Three participants (P9, P14, and P27) posited that their fundraising challenges stemmed from being associated with Black female-led nonprofit organizations. Specifically, P9 indicated that racism may also contribute to an inequitable distribution of grant money. She said:

In the area of grants, my nonprofit relies on grants, and we still are not being rewarded or awarded the grants. We meet the requirements because my friends are getting these grants, but we're not getting the money. When I say we, I'm talking about nonprofits led by women of color.

P9 believed that she encountered challenges with fundraising due to being a Black nonprofit leader. P14 also expressed similar ideas:

> The biggest challenge is the financial piece. As a Black woman, you have to work hard to get recognition and funding. Even other organizations have recognized that a lot of funding is not going to the smaller Black, female-run nonprofits.

P14 indicated that the field widely acknowledged that small, Black female-led nonprofit organizations were not receiving funding compared to nonprofit organizations led by other demographic groups. P27 reiterated these thoughts, saying, "I also saw that there was like a cycle of the same type of organizations, predominately White women-led, who were accessing funding." Thus, the participants' challenges with fundraising may have a racial component that hinders their ability to lead their organizations.

Category C2.1C: Black Women in Nonprofit Leadership Face Challenges Gaining Support for Their Causes. The third category contributing to the development of Theme 2.1 was that Black women in nonprofit leadership face challenges in gaining support for their organizations' causes and missions. P1 explained that nonprofit organizations often have challenges gaining support for their missions. She said:

> I'm still in a space of continuing to form business partnerships with other organizations to fulfill my nonprofit mission. So here in this age of 2023, three years after a pandemic, I still feel like we're still in a pandemic. We're still forming other partnerships with the community to support the mission.

P1 found that community support for her organization was challenging, and she was still trying to form collaborations to support her mission. P14 also indicated that support for her mission could be challenging due to the population the organization serves. P14 said:

> You're trying to chase the money and find the funding, which is another challenge in trying to find people who will support the cause. We don't have cute little puppies that have cute babies; we have people that people want to forget about, you know, for they don't want to deal with our already pre-judged population.

P14's explained that her nonprofit organization aimed to help a truly desperate and marginalized population, which made it difficult to gain support and funding. P13 explained that she attempted to divert her mission to conform to others' notions of importance. She said:

> When I didn't get support for my ideas, I downplayed my mission. I downplayed my voice. I changed my mission. I lost my voice. I had to find that again, reclaim it, and say, no, this is what I'm doing.

P14 spoke about how she changed her mission when she could not gain support for her chosen cause, which ultimately caused conflict within herself.

Gaining support within an organization can also be a challenge. P5 indicated that she sometimes experienced challenges with other nonprofit employees. She said, "Getting other employees on board is challenging. Getting them to have the passion I've had from when I started and keeping that fire burning up under people is challenging. I want them to care as much as I do." P5 indicated that she was passionate about her nonprofit's mission but sometimes struggles to inspire the same enthusiasm in others.

P12 indicated that, at times, it could be challenging for executive boards to understand a non-profit's mission relative to current circumstances. She explained, "Other challenges have been the mission not aligning with what was happening and me trying to point that out. You won't be successful if your mission is misaligned with reality." P12 experienced challenges with her executive leadership when her nonprofit organization's mission was not perfectly aligned with the community's needs. Thus, based on the participants' experiences, gaining support for a nonprofit organization's mission is a considerable challenge faced by some Black women in nonprofit leadership.

Category C2.1D: The Imposter Syndrome is a Challenge for Black Women in Nonprofit Leadership. The fourth category contributing to the development of Theme 2.1 was that some Black women in nonprofit leadership face challenges with the imposter syndrome. The *imposter syndrome* occurs when an individual feels anxious and does not experience success internally despite being high-performing in external, objective ways (Breeze, 2018). P7 indicated that her leadership journey required her to overcome the imposter syndrome. She said, "It's a journey that took maturation. It took confidence. It took value in my self-worth and for me to believe that I even deserved to be in a leadership role." P7 explained that she struggled with self-confidence and believing that she was capable of working in nonprofit leadership. P9 believed that the imposter syndrome is a common phenomenon for Black women in leadership positions. She said:

> Even when we talk about how we have confidence, we talk about the gifts, talents, and skills that we bring when they are put to the test when it's time to execute, we shrink back. We shy away. We silence ourselves, or we allow other

people to silence us. All of those areas continue to be barriers for Black women,

not just in nonprofits, but for Black women in lots of different spaces.

P9 believed that Black women struggle to realize their own self-worth in leadership

positions, shying away when presented with growth opportunities.

Other participants specifically mentioned the imposter syndrome in their accounts

of personal challenges they encounter in nonprofit leadership. For instance, P12 said, "So

internally, the imposter syndrome is something I struggled with going into leadership

positions. Being in myself and saying, I can do this. They chose me for a reason." P12

explained that she struggled with having confidence in herself to advocate for her

position, a form of the imposter syndrome. P10 also expressed similar thoughts. She said:

> Knowing that you're capable of doing something and doing it are two different
>
> things. Many of us know that we are more than capable. I've been behind the
>
> scenes for so long that I doubted myself. I truly doubted myself. My self-esteem
>
> was low.

P10 explained that she had taken roles behind the scenes, which hindered her self-

confidence in leading her organization. P23 explained that Black women can undervalue

their worth. She said, "I think a lot of Black women don't know their worth or don't value

themselves. They don't know how to advocate for themselves. We are not vocal, and

humanity wants us to be this way." P23 believed that the imposter syndrome manifests

for some Black women as succumbing to the notions of society, devaluing their self-

worth as leaders. Lastly, P25 also spoke about the imposter syndrome. She said:

I will say the number one challenge is imposter syndrome. Being in this space

often does not feel like you belong when you are beyond qualified. You may not

feel like you belong because of what happens on paper. I didn't have a master's

degree completed, and all other 14 males had master's degrees. But I was the only

one with 16 years of teaching experience and a Texas teacher certification. So, I

think imposter syndrome is big. When you come into nonprofit work, you work

with many people who don't look like you.

For these participants, the imposter syndrome manifests as low self-confidence in their

abilities, low self-esteem, and low self-value regarding their roles as leaders. Thus,

according to the participants, the imposter syndrome is a challenge encountered by Black

women in nonprofit leadership positions.

Summary of Theme 2.1. Theme 2.1 explored the challenges experienced by

Black women in nonprofit leadership. Four axial categories contributed to the

development of this theme. In Category C2.1A, I examine how Black women

experienced administrative and logistic challenges associated with nonprofit leadership.

Many participants described not having guidelines for their roles as nonprofit leaders,

forcing them to essentially perform on-the-job training without formal training. In

Category C2.1B, I examined Black women's challenges with fundraising for their

nonprofit organizations. The participants indicated that funding discrepancies may have

racist undertones, as many White-led organizations were receiving funding and Black-led

organizations were not. Category C2.1C examines challenges associated with enthusiasm

or buy-in into nonprofits' missions. Many of the participants serve marginalized

populations, which can be stigmatized and not attractive to community partners and funding agencies. Finally, in Category C2.1D, the participants spoke about how the imposter syndrome is a common challenge for Black women in non-profit leadership. The participants described having low self-confidence in their abilities, resulting in low self-esteem and self-worth.

Theme 2.2: Barriers Hinder Black Women from Nonprofit Leadership Positions

In Theme 2.1, the participants discussed the challenges they experienced with nonprofit leadership. Some of those challenges stemmed from the nature of nonprofit work and the sector, including a lack of guidelines and challenges with fundraising. However, other challenges derived from being Black women in nonprofit work. In Theme 2.2, the participants discussed barriers that hinder Black women from nonprofit leadership positions. Three categories contributed to the development of this theme. Category C2.2A explored the discrimination faced by the participants, including racial discrimination, microaggressions, sexism, and ageism. Category C2.2B explored the lack of upward mobility articulated by the participants. Finally, Category C2.2C examined barriers associated with fair compensation in the nonprofit sector.

Category C2.2A: Black Women Face Discrimination in Nonprofit Leadership. The first category contributing to Theme 2.2 was that Black women face discrimination in nonprofit leadership. Within this category, the participants spoke about racial discrimination, microaggressions, sexism, and ageism. Examples of each type of discrimination are provided using the participants' perspectives.

Racial Discrimination. All participants indicated that they experienced racial discrimination in their roles as nonprofit leaders. For example, P1 believed she was promoted to nonprofit leadership to increase the diversity of the board, a form of tokenism, but she perceived that others did not value her opinions. She said:

> Quite frankly, and I know this personally, you are selected as the executive, or you're selected as the employee because you are Black, but then me and my educated Black self show up, and so do all of the isms that come along with who I am. I have not been embraced. I've been in many situations and spaces where my thought process is not embraced. So, I've experienced firsthand, and with other African American executives, you're selected because the box was checked, especially with this whole DEI push. Minimally, you're saying that you want us there, but you don't embrace all that comes along with it.

P1 explained that she experienced racial discrimination in the nonprofit sector despite her organization advocating for DEI within the executive board. P3 also experienced discrimination in her leadership position. She said:

> The fact that I am a woman and I am Black is a barrier. Even though Black people run a lot of nonprofits, you still have to get permission from somebody who doesn't look like us. I think that sometimes my skill set is not valued as to what it shouldn't be.

Like P1, P3 believed that her skills were not valued by her organization despite her hard, education, and experience. P4 also indicated that racism was a significant challenge in nonprofit leadership. She explained:

A challenge was people believing that I had the knowledge and the talent to do

the work. I had to do a lot of proving in the work that I was doing. Being a black

woman and experiencing racism. I was with an organization, and going into an

event, I was asked to go to the door as if I were the help. It feels like it's a

constant fight. It's constantly a fight and a struggle for Black women.

The participants believed that racism is prevalent in the nonprofit sector. Moreover, the

participants indicated that they encountered racism and discrimination in their nonprofit

careers, especially as leaders.

The other participants also spoke about their experiences with racism and

discrimination in nonprofit leadership. To give equal weight to all participants' thoughts,

excerpts from their interviews regarding racism and discrimination are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

The Participants Encountered Racism and Discrimination in Nonprofit Leadership

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P6	"The CEO was a white woman and the director of development was a Black woman. There were a lot of power struggles that happened in those relationships. I observed a cultural lack of awareness with the CEO. That was very frustrating for me and I didn't know how to address it. What you find in a lot of nonprofits, especially smaller ones, is that they don't have a human resources department."
P7	"A lot of times, when it's all funky, hairy, and stinky, they'll bring a Black woman in to clean it up, because they can't handle it. That's something that I think we're just plagued with."
P8	"As a Black leader, I have struggled more with getting buy-in from Black women who report to me. I know that that's very strange, but I think most people would say in their space that they struggled with getting support from non-Black leaders. But for me, it's been support from Black leaders."
P9	"Being looked over when it's time for promotion, recommendations, and referrals based on race or even gender. That's a challenge."
P11	"For a while, being the only Black person on the leadership team, not having any input into my annual goal, having unattainable goals. I noticed stretch goal was an attainable goal that was given to me, I had no input to and I was

	expected to lie down and not have a voice. I was expected to go along with the status quo."
P14	"I don't understand why there has to be a competition when we're the minority in a room. I'm not trying to be my sister's competition. We can work together. Sometimes Black women can be your worst enemy."
P16	"People underestimate my intelligence. I think that even though I have a Harvard degree, it doesn't matter. I think sometimes in leadership, in general, people aren't used to seeing people who look like me. And if you're not used to seeing people that look like me, then how do you know how to work with me? And I think that's the hardest part is protecting myself from racism.
P17	"I feel like I've experienced some discriminatory instances where the persona of the angry Black woman has tried to be assigned to me in instances where I've been assertive."
P18	"There is something unique about a Black woman in leadership. It is the overthinking of how to do your hair, when you step into a room: Are my nails too much? Is my makeup too heavy? It's all of the external things that don't have anything to do with what's happening internally, but you're going to go into a room with people who don't look like you, and you know that they will judge you off of what they see first. That has been a challenge for me. I love beauty and fashion, and all of that has sometimes made me feel like I'm not taken seriously."
P20	"One of the most grueling things is to be working hard, not getting promoted, and having to train people that they bring in to put over you - training of your new supervisor. So, I've seen several Black women put in that position, where they've done the work, they've put in the time and the dedication, they have the education, they have the experience, but they have not moved into those levels of leadership and White women are brought on broad and offered them for us to train."
P21	"Everybody knows that a black woman can get it done. The problem is that they expect us to do so much, and betray ourselves, our bodies, and our mental and emotional health to get it done for them."
P23	"Racism, I would probably say all the isms; racism, sexism. I've seen them work twice as hard and get paid half as much. I've seen the pay gaps between myself and White counterparts, specifically white male counterparts."
P24	"Being second-guessed about everything. The microaggressions, the double standards. The double standard for sure, is the expectation that you have to be at 150% all the time when your counterparts are barely doing 50% and it's perfectly fine. Also, the stereotypes. We're expected to carry ourselves in a certain way, or it's viewed as aggressive, or divisive. Or when for our counterparts, it's considered just being passionate or outspoken. And that's incredibly frustrating."
P26	"The executive director was an older white man, and he lived up to that. I will also say that my greatest ally was a White woman, one of the parents, who could see what was happening. I also think that I wasn't expected to succeed as quickly as I did in the role and it just created a lot of tension between myself the executive director."

P6 provided context for her experiences with racism and discrimination, noting that many nonprofit organizations do not have human resource departments to which they can bring concerns. Without an HR department, there was no way for her to address the challenges she was experiencing with racism. P8 and P14 indicated that they experienced challenges gaining support from other Black leaders, not White ones. P26 articulated that one of her most avid supporters was a White woman, indicating that racism manifested for the participants in different ways from different demographic groups. Other participants, including P16, indicated that racism has become commonplace. P16 explained:

I have already predetermined that I'm going to have so many numbers of racist experiences throughout my day, month, and year. And so, they're not a shock for me when they happen.

Another important facet of this theme is the notion of code-switching. Code-switching is the phenomenon by which an individual changes their language or disposition to meet the demands of their audience (Smith, 2021). P25 explained:

I think it is challenging to show up and be able to show up authentically as who you are in these spaces. I'm navigating a White America. You have to think through the simple things: how I may have decided to wear my hear, maybe colloquialism that I use as a part of my everyday vernacular that I've had to kind of be mindful of in different settings because of the demographic of people that I'm working with. I think a lot of times I find myself code switching, especially when I'm dealing with the founders.

Based on the participants' experiences, Black women in nonprofit leadership experience considerable challenges with racism and discrimination in their leadership positions.

Microaggressions. In addition to systematic racism, some participants spoke about their experiences with racial microaggressions in the workplace. For instance, P8 said:

> I think Black women, in general, cannot authentically be ourselves. I think about a very small thing that gets to me a lot. One day, I typically wear my hair naturally, just curly. I had been working and working, and one day, my hair was straight; I don't remember why. My boss said, oh, your hair looks so beautiful that way. The microaggressions get to me.

P8 indicated that she struggles to cope with the microaggressions she experiences daily. P12 also described microaggressions but did not specifically refer to them as such. She said:

> I was at an organization where Black women's emotions were very much micromanaged. I had a boss, and multiple times in a meeting, the focus was always on me and my facial expressions or whether I was silent. If I wasn't talking enough, it was: Are you okay? You look a little frustrated. You look a little upset. I was constantly being told I looked frustrated, upset, or distracted.

P12 further explained that she experienced microaggressions from those in leadership positions, which prevented her from knowing how to act. She said:

> There is no right answer. If you weren't like the happy-go-lucky Black girl that they liked, if you aren't the person who says, "Yes. I'll do this and everything you

say," then it's a problem. If you're the quiet one or the one who just came here to do their job, that's frowned upon. We get these little microaggressions from our superiors that just do not feel right.

P12 indicated that microaggressions were a significant challenge, especially those from superiors, which made her feel uncomfortable in the workplace. Similarly, P26 spoke about microaggressions as a barrier to leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. She said, "The microaggressions, the double standards. We're expected to carry ourselves in a certain way, or it's viewed as aggressive or divisive. Or when, for our counterparts, it's considered just being passionate or outspoken." P26 indicated that the microaggressions she encountered pertained to her demeanor; when she expressed passion for her work, it was perceived as aggression. Thus, based on the participants' experiences, Black women in nonprofit leadership encounter microaggressions from others in leadership positions that make the workplace unhospitable and uncomfortable.

Sexism. Some participants indicated that they experienced challenges with sexism. P15 explained that the executive board at her nonprofit organization was mainly composed of men. She explained:

When you look at the executive leadership team, it's mostly men. We just added one woman in on the executive leadership team last year, and they did not last. Then, trying to be intentional, I was appointed to the executive leadership team. Still, it's like a one-year kind of deal where they wanted to give exposure and bring people in and provide a development experience, but it's not permanent. Men don't always have the same values, drive, and goals as women.

P15 described tokenism regarding her position in the executive leadership team, indicating that she was appointed to the board to increase the board's gender diversity. However, she did not believe her appointment was permanent.

Some participants spoke about inequities in salary, compensation, and career progression based on sexism. For instance, P16 said, "Our numbers tell it all. As women of color, we're being paid a fraction of what men are being paid. It's not right." P16 explained that Black women in her organizations were not receiving similar or fair compensation compared to men in similar positions. P19 indicated that she encounters resistance from male colleagues because she's a Black woman. P19 said:

Because I'm a woman of color in spaces with predominately White men, I think White men tend to be more resistant. Not knowingly, but I just tend to be more resistant to my voice and what I have to offer in the room.

P19 explained that her ideas were not valued or acknowledged because of her status as a Black woman in an organization predominantly led by White men. P23 reiterated challenges associated with sexism and gaps in pay. P23 said, "I've seen the pay gaps between myself and my White male counterparts." Thus, based on the participants' experiences, Black women in nonprofit organizations receive lower salaries than White and Black men in the same positions.

P21 and P23 spoke about how sexism has hindered her career progression. She said, "I think about sexism. My Black male colleagues in the nonprofit space are much more advanced in their career trajectories and get more recognition than some Black women who have done as much, if not more, work." P21 indicated that her male

colleagues received promotions at a faster rate for less work and involvement in the organization. P23 explained that she did not receive the appropriate recognition for her work. P23 said, "I've been on the receiving end of: "Let me pick your brain.' Now, what you picked my brain about is a multimillion-dollar project, but there's no name, no credit, and no recognition attached to my ideas." Thus, based on the participants' experiences, Black women in nonprofit organizations experience sexism that hinders their career progression.

Ageism. Other participants spoke about discrimination in the form of ageism. P3, a young nonprofit leader, indicated that she feels like other nonprofit leaders look down upon her. She said:

> I'm very young. I feel like I'm not young, but everybody else thinks I'm young.
>
> This translates to many people who have been in the nonprofit space longer not
>
> believing that I know what I'm doing. They're hesitant to give me contracts.

P3 found that others in nonprofit leadership didn't take her seriously due to her age. P6 had a similar experience. She said, "I was usually the youngest person. It was a very difficult transition because I was not being talked to as if I were this person who had just been elevated into this role. I ended up seeking some professional coaching." P6 sought professional advice on projecting her confidence to others with more nonprofit experience. Like the other participants, P19 found that others did not take her seriously as a nonprofit professional due to her age. She said, "I tend to be the youngest in the room a lot of the time. I have the baby voice and baby face, and people are trying to figure out if I'm old enough even to drink my beer." Thus, based on the participants' experiences,

young Black women in nonprofit organizations can experience challenges related to their ages.

Category C2.2B: Black Women Experience Barriers to Obtaining Leadership Positions. Some participants indicated that they experienced challenges with career mobility and obtaining promotions in nonprofit organizations. For example, P2 explained:

> In my career with nonprofits, I feel like many organizations have reached a ceiling quickly, like the lack of growth and wiggle room when you get into a position. In many nonprofits, you see people who get into that organization, are comfortable, and stay in that position. So, not many people are quitting, and not many are moving around. So, when you come into a position and want growth, it's hard to get that in the same organization.

According to P2, many nonprofit leaders do not have opportunities for upward career mobility due to others becoming complacent in their roles and organizations. P20 articulated similar barriers with a lack of available positions on executive boards. P20 explained:

> To be on the senior leadership team, there had to be a position there. We did not have a position available. They created my role and hired someone else for it. So, I thought, well, there could be a similar position for me if you can create one. I was attending senior leadership team meetings. I was more of an advisor who came in, presented, and was part of conversations, but I was not invited to join the senior leadership team. I felt like 27 years with the organization, being the person

who is asked to give their opinion, give input, or serve on a committee, I felt like

it was a total mess for me not to be invited to be on the senior leadership team.

P20 indicated that a lack of available positions hindered her career progression, as

executive positions must become vacant before they can be filled. Moreover, P20 found

that their executive board created positions for others, but did not extend the same

courtesy to her, despite her 27 years of loyalty to the organization.

Other participants spoke about how they experienced challenges gaining

promotions in the nonprofit sector. For instance, P4 said, "I always had to fight for my

promotion, whether that was financially or whether that was positional, there was always

a fight." P9 also found career mobility to be a barrier for Black women in nonprofit

leadership. She said, "Being looked over when it's time for promotion. That's a

challenge." P7 also believed gaining promotions was challenging but added that race and

gender influenced her career mobility. She said, "One of the biggest barriers I see is the

glass ceiling. Black women are viewed as fixers and nothing else. It's hard to grow in that

environment." According to P7, nonprofit leadership boards view Black women through

a certain lens that stymies their career progression.

P11 explained that lack of upward mobility in nonprofit organizations can prevent

some Black women from taking on leadership roles and may lead to Black women

leaving nonprofits altogether. She said:

It's about going along with the status quo. If you don't go along, you may get out

of it. Your road becomes more difficult. Your voice becomes diminished, and

then you're screaming. You may choose to leave nonprofits because you're

screaming, but you're not even in the conversation.

P11 believed that her career development had been hindered by being a Black woman.

P16 explained that lack of sponsorship can hinder upward mobility. P16 said:

I think probably the biggest barrier is sponsorship. When you have somebody

who's speaking your name in rooms that you're not in, when you have somebody

advocating for you for C-level jobs, it's helpful. We just don't have that as Black

women. I will be honest: I got this job because of a classmate from Harvard. This

job wasn't posted. It wasn't with the traditional way of navigating jobs. It was with

a search firm but wasn't posted as a job. I can honestly say that if Black women,

or women in general, were given the opportunities for true sponsorship, there

would be way more women in leadership and way more women on boards. I think

the biggest barrier is how the network was designed. It wasn't necessarily

designed with women who look like me.

P16 indicated that having a strong sponsor and advocate is essential for Black women to

progress into executive positions in the nonprofit sector. Based on the participants'

experiences, Black women in nonprofit organizations have barriers to executive positions

that limit their career mobility.

Category C2.2C: Financial Compensation is a Barrier in Nonprofit

Leadership. Some participants believed that financial compensation was a barrier to

nonprofit leadership positions. P4 indicated that fair compensation was a barrier. She

said, "We do face so many obstacles, and we are underpaid, but there's a higher

expectation of the work that we're going to deliver. The hiring people didn't see the value of bringing strong people in." P4 believed that she was underpaid for her role in her organization, a sentiment she shared with P9. P9 said:

> The biggest barrier for me is in the area of compensation. I still feel like I am not being rewarded financially as I should be. I feel like I'm doing everything I need to do. I wear many hats. At what point do I say enough is enough? It is time for you to compensate me for the work I started doing when I started the job, right? That's a challenge. We are constantly being asked to do more and more and more. We're doing those things, maybe two or three jobs wrapped in one, but we still are not being compensated for the work and commitment we're providing these nonprofits.

P9 believed she was not compensated for her work in many organizations despite working the equivalent of two or three positions. P18 indicated this lack of compensation may be racially motivated. She said:

> Compensation is the biggest one. We're qualified. We have the life experience. We have the certifications. We have the schooling. All of these very decorated women with documents and degrees, but they are not being compensated. What I've seen is the comfortability of being underpaid, as well as the fear of negotiating salary.

P18 believed that Black women in nonprofit leadership are generally underpaid and do not feel comfortable negotiating for a higher salary or asking for fair compensation. P21 agreed, saying, "Black and brown women are underpaid and overworked, yet we're

scared to speak up and say, 'Enough is enough.'" Thus, based on the participants' experiences, Black women in nonprofit leadership experience challenges with fair compensation and salary, which hinders their career progression in the nonprofit sector.

Summary of Theme 2.2. In Theme 2.2, the participants discussed barriers that hinder Black women from nonprofit leadership positions. Three categories contributed to the development of this theme. Category C2.2A explored the discrimination faced by the participants. The participants spoke about their encounters with racism and racial discrimination in the nonprofit sector. While some participants spoke about systematic racism, others indicated that they experienced racial microaggressions from their supervisors and coworkers. Some participants also spoke about non-racial sexism, indicating that they experienced different treatment compared to Black men. Finally, some of the younger participants indicated that ageism was prevalent in the nonprofit sector and expressed feelings that they were not taken seriously as leaders due to their age. Category C2.2B explored the lack of upward mobility articulated by the participants. Within this category, the participants noted that nonprofit boards tend to remain stale, with few people being promoted and few people retiring. Other participants indicated that racism was associated with nonprofit executive boards, explaining that less qualified individuals were promoted instead of themselves. Finally, Category C2.2C examined barriers associated with fair compensation in the nonprofit sector. The participants who spoke about compensation expressed feelings that they were not being properly compensated for their work in nonprofit organizations.

Theme 2.3: Black Women Were Offered Opportunities in Nonprofit Leadership

Themes 2.1 and 2.2 examined the challenges and barriers faced by the participants in nonprofit leadership. Theme 2.3 explored the participants' perceived opportunities in the sector. Three categories contributed to the development of Theme 2.3. In Category C2.3A, the participants describe how mentorship offered them opportunities in nonprofit leadership. In Category C2.3B, I explore how Black women in nonprofit organizations have opportunities for networking and support. Category C2.3C examines how Black women in nonprofit leadership have opportunities for professional development.

Category C2.3A: Mentorship Offered the Participants Opportunities. The first category contributing to the development of Theme 2.3 was that the participants were offered opportunities through mentorship. P2 indicated that her mentors helped her obtain a nonprofit leadership position. She said, "[Redacted] had a program when I first started that helped the site guys, the glorified hall monitors, level up into manager roles. That was helpful. At [redacted], I had a great mentor. She helped me develop logistically." P2 identified her mentors as instrumental in her career development as a nonprofit leader. P6 credited her success in the nonprofit sector to the influence of a mentor. She said:

She took me under her wing and told me that corporate is not where your skill set should be. You need to be doing this type of work; you are such a professional, you love service, and you have the potential to become a leader in this space. I had no idea what she was talking about when she presented nonprofits as an

option for me. She went above and beyond, a Black woman who had been in that

space for many, many years.

P6 initially had career aspirations in another field until her mentor helped her learn about

the nonprofit sector. P24 also attributed her success in the nonprofit sector to her mentors.

She said, "I was just really blessed to have mentors. That helped me rise and climb the

nonprofit ladder." Thus, according to the participants, mentorship is an important

opportunity for Black women in navigating the nonprofit sector.

P7 similarly believed that mentorship provided her with important opportunities

in her career. She explained:

I've always had mentors. One of the things that has helped me get to this point in

my career journey, both professionally and personally, is that I've always

surrounded myself with people who are older than me or in the position I want to

attain. That has been one of the biggest pillars of my foundation, which is just

having at least one to two people who are older than me and pour into me.

P7 indicated that she leans on the support of her mentors to help her make important

career decisions. P19 explained that her mentor helped her gain her footing in the

nonprofit sector. She said:

Early in my career, I didn't know many people who worked in nonprofits outside

the people I was working with. I didn't have a lens on what a pathway could look

like. It was challenging just trying to find my footing. My new boss offered to be

my mentor, my first year in the door at the organization. She told me that I didn't

need a prescribed path. Every opportunity is an opportunity to learn and grow

your skill set. What you're doing has a purpose, so just be focused on that.

P19 was able to navigate the early stages of her career with the help of her mentor. Based

on the participants' interviews, Black women in nonprofit organizations can better

navigate the sector with the help of their mentors. In addition, mentorship can help them

progress in their careers and gain leadership positions.

Category C2.3B: Black Women in Nonprofit Organizations Have

Opportunities for Networking and Support. The second category contributing to the

development of Theme 2.3 was that the participants identified opportunities in nonprofit

leadership through networking and support from other Black women in the nonprofit

sector. P3 explained:

A couple of nonprofit leaders, Black women in a nonprofit cohort, were game

changers. I was able to see what different barriers other people had, and I was

able to figure out how to deal with those. Through that cohort and working with

the organizations, I could attach and build my name to where I can say, "I know

what I'm doing."

P3 participated in a cohort of Black women in nonprofit leadership who supported each

other and provided each other with networking opportunities. P4 also believed that

networking and support were significant opportunities for her. She said:

An opportunity was being introduced into the Dallas nonprofit sector. Coming to

Dallas, I had the opportunity to learn the landscape and be engaged in the sector. I

feel like that's an opportunity because I benefited from the connections. As we

grow, I do understand the landscape. I do understand who the players are in the

philanthropic community.

P4 identified the nonprofit community as an opportunity to grow and understand the

sector. Other participants identified networking and support as significant opportunities

in nonprofit leadership. To give equal weight to all participants' ideas, excerpts from the

participants' interviews contributing to this category are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

The Participants Identified Networking and Community as Opportunities

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P5	"I've had an opportunity to travel, go to conferences, and meet different people networking."
P8	"Every place I've gone, I've had a tribe, people who spoke kindly of me when I wasn't in the room, and people who created space for me. They weren't always Black women. The person who brought me to this role was a White woman that I met at the Salvation Army."
P9	"I think one of the best blessings that I've had recently, is meeting people like you, it's meeting women in nonprofit leadership."
P12	"The Black woman nonprofit leadership cohort was an amazing opportunity. I was a part of Communities Foundation of Texas, their emerging leaders and philanthropy cohort. The Op-Ed project has been a great cohort that kind of taught me how to write and express my voice as an underrepresented person in the nonprofit space."
P14	"One of the great things was when I was in the Black woman, nonprofit leadership cohort. That's when I got myself care. That's when I got support from women who believed in me, supported me, and poured into me. I even probably underestimated what it's like to have people like you, people that are doing the same thing you're doing pour into you."
P15	"I've had opportunities to be involved in different things that I chose, like our Black women in the nonprofit leadership cohort. I gained a support system."
P16	"I don't know where I would be without the intense passionate unconditional love of other Black women in nonprofits. The supportive network of my girlfriends."
P18	"My career has grown simply off of building relationships, meaningful relationships, and people remembering what I bring to the table, I show up with my best self-authentic self."
P19	"I've learned definitely through the cohort, how valuable relationships are when they're the right ones, not ones that you feel like some kind of exchange

	value, like a tit for tat, or quid pro quo. Instead, people who genuinely care about you and want to invest in you, you return that sort of energy to them."
P21	"I participated in a women of color cohort, which provided advocacy for Black women and additional learning. I see that as being a huge support."
P23	"Community and village are important because community and village help to reaffirm who you are when you have a world and it's telling you that you're something different."
P27	"I've been able to have a voice through my career, and I'm grateful for that, you know, the, the people places and things, you know, that's created opportunity platforms for me to be able to speak boldly and authentically as myself."

The participants collectively identified support and networking experiences with other Black women in nonprofit leadership as an important opportunity for them in the sector. Through these resources, the participants gained valuable advice from colleagues who helped them navigate their careers.

Category C2.3C: Black Women in Nonprofit Leadership Have Opportunities for Professional Development. The third category contributing to the development of Theme 2.3 is that Black women in nonprofit leadership have numerous training and professional development opportunities. For instance, P5 said, "I've had many resources. I have just a whole lot of different websites. Training opportunities. I can go online and do any training and resources. Everything is available at my fingertips." P5 explained that there are numerous training opportunities and resources available to her. P6 also identified this as a significant opportunity. She said, "Constant professional development. I will say that I've had the opportunity to participate in statewide conferences as a nonprofit professional." P9, like P6, indicated that her nonprofit board heavily invested in professional development. She said, "My board pays for perpetual professional development for me. They will send me any place I want to go to a conference because

they believe in what I'm doing and see how hard I'm working." For these participants, opportunities in the nonprofit sector include an enhanced capacity for professional development and training.

Other participants spoke about how training and professional development helped them advance their careers. For instance, P15 said:

I've had the opportunity to get a promotion. So, I'm grateful that I have this opportunity to do this term. As a part of the executive leadership team, I went to a training with the Harvard Leadership Institute. The American Management Institute has a women's leadership training program, which I did. So, I've had some good development opportunities along the way.

P15 attributed some of her success in gaining a leadership position to the professional development and leadership training in which she participated. P20 also valued the professional development offered by her organization. She said, "I was able to go to some conferences and DEI conferences. So, the education part was there, and I do appreciate that development." P20 believed that the education provided by the nonprofit sector helped her with her career development. Thus, based on the participants' experiences, Black women in nonprofit leadership have opportunities through training and professional development.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I first described the data collection and analysis procedures used in this qualitative narrative inquiry. I also described the measures I used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study's findings. Next, the findings from the study were presented.

The findings section was organized into two main subsections. First, the findings for RQ1 were presented by analyzing the personal narratives of the study participants regarding their drive and motivation for nonprofit leadership. Two themes were identified that address RQ1. Theme 1.1 described how some Black women seek roles in nonprofit organizations based on childhood experiences. Theme 1.2 explores how Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles to serve underprivileged populations. RQ2 examined the challenges, barriers, and opportunities for Black women in nonprofit leadership. Three themes addressing RQ2 were extracted from the participants' interviews. Theme 2.1 examines the challenges faced by Black women in non-profit leadership. Theme 2.2 examines the barriers faced by Black women in non-profit leadership. Finally, Theme 2.3 examines the opportunities identified by the participating Black women in non-profit leadership. In Chapter 5, I provide a discussion of the study's findings in the context of the academic literature and the study's conceptual framework, BFT. I also make recommendations for practice and future research and discuss the study's implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Nonprofit organizations are essential in addressing social and community concerns and enhancing the lives of individuals and groups. Nonprofit leadership boards lack diversity, often consisting of White men with few ties to the communities served by the nonprofit (Azevedo et al., 2020). Barron (2019) highlighted the lack of diversity in nonprofit executive boards as a considerable social issue that must be addressed, as increasing leadership diversity can help nonprofit human resources manage recruitment, diversity, equity, inclusion, succession planning, and future leadership opportunities. Black women could lead these organizations because their unique perspectives, experiences, and leadership abilities enable them to meet their communities' culturally and socially sensitive demands in their communities. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black women in mid- to senior-level nonprofit leadership positions by identifying critical factors contributing to their success and the challenges and barriers they face in their leadership roles.

Five themes were identified through thematic analysis of interviews with 26 Black women in nonprofit leadership in Texas, United States. Theme 1.1 described how some Black women seek roles in nonprofit organizations based on childhood experiences. The participants highlighted positive and negative childhood experiences that influenced their decisions to pursue nonprofit work. Theme 1.2 explored how Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles to serve underprivileged populations. All 26 participants

contributed to this theme, underscoring the idea that Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles for the betterment of their communities.

Theme 2.1 examined the challenges faced by Black women in nonprofit leadership. Many participants described not having guidelines for their roles as nonprofit leaders, forcing them to perform on-the-job training without formal training. The participants also spoke about challenges with fundraising for their nonprofit organizations, indicating that some funding discrepancies may have roots in systematic racism. The participants also indicated challenges in gaining support for their work with marginalized populations, which can be stigmatized and not attractive to community partners and funding agencies. Finally, the participants spoke about struggling with the imposter syndrome, citing low self-confidence in their abilities, low self-esteem, and low self-worth.

Theme 2.2 examines the barriers faced by Black women in nonprofit leadership. Within this theme, the participants spoke about different forms of discrimination they encounter in the nonprofit sector. The participants spoke about their encounters with racism and racial microaggressions in the nonprofit sector. Other participants indicated the presence of sexism, highlighting that they experienced different treatment compared to Black men. Moreover, some of the younger participants indicated that ageism was prevalent in the nonprofit sector and expressed feelings that they were not taken seriously as leaders due to their age. Another barrier to leadership in nonprofit organizations is a lack of opportunities for upward mobility. Specifically, the participants noted that nonprofit boards tend to remain stale, with few people being promoted and few leaders

retiring. Finally, the participants spoke about fair compensation as a barrier to leadership in the nonprofit sector. The participants who spoke about compensation expressed feelings that they were not being properly compensated for their work in nonprofit organizations.

Theme 2.3 examines the opportunities identified by the participating Black women in non-profit leadership. The participants indicated that they were presented with opportunities for career success and advancement through mentorship, noting that their mentors helped them navigate the complexities and politics of the nonprofit sector. Many participants also explained that they had copious opportunities for networking and support with other Black women in nonprofit leadership. Through these connections, the participants described themselves as better able to approach challenges they encountered in their workplaces. Finally, the participants spoke about being offered consistent opportunities for professional development and training in various subject areas, including leadership, management, and DEI.

In Chapter 5, the findings of this qualitative narrative inquiry are interpreted in the context of the academic literature and analyzed under the study's theoretical framework, BFT. The limitations of the study are presented, which lead to recommendations for future research. I discuss the implications of the study for positive social change and provide recommendations for practice to nonprofit organizations and to Black women seeking leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. The chapter closes with a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I interpret the study's findings in the context of the academic literature and the study's conceptual framework, BFT. I provide interpretations for each of the study's five themes. Novel or unanticipated findings are highlighted.

Interpretation of Theme 1.1

Theme 1.1 described how some Black women seek roles in nonprofit organizations based on childhood experiences. The participants highlighted positive and negative childhood experiences that influenced their decisions to pursue nonprofit work. That is, some participants spoke of positive childhood experiences that catalyzed their desires to help others in the same way they were helped. Other participants spoke about negative childhood experiences, indicating they wished to prevent others from having similar adverse experiences. Empirical studies analyzing the motivations of Black women in pursuing nonprofit leadership roles are scarce in the academic literature. For instance, Griffin (2021) examined the lived experiences of Black women in nonprofit organizations but analyzed their experiences once in the sector. Some of the participants in Griffin's study emphasized that their desire for leadership positions derived from inequities they experienced in childhood, like the participants in this study. Chance (2021) found that some Black women in leadership positions identified a crucible experience as motivation for pursuing leadership. However, Chance did not focus on Black women in nonprofit organizations and only examined adverse childhood experiences, whereas some participants in this study highlighted positive childhood experiences as their driving force for pursuing nonprofit leadership. Thus, my study

contributes new knowledge to the academic literature regarding the motivations of Black women for pursuing nonprofit leadership.

Within the context of BFT, Theme 1.1 aligns with the tenet of work, family, and oppression. Collins (2009) identified the themes of work, family, and oppression as inequitable labor among Black women. Black women tend to internalize their childhood experiences, which manifests in a collective personality focus on family and community (Hampton-Anderson et al., 2021). Black women's experiences with oppression often motivate their career trajectories (Uriostegui et al., 2021). Consistent with this idea, in this study, some participants' childhood and familial experiences motivated their choices to pursue nonprofit leadership.

Interpretation of Theme 1.2

Theme 1.2 explored how Black women seek nonprofit leadership roles to serve underprivileged populations. All 26 participants contributed to this theme, with each woman explaining how they sought nonprofit leadership roles for the betterment of their communities. This idea is reminiscent of servant leadership. Servant leaders tend to prioritize the needs of others over their own needs (Liao et al., 2021). Indeed, Richardson (2021) found that Black women in the nonprofit sector tend to exhibit the servant leadership style, prioritizing the needs of their teams and communities. Similarly, Daniels and Robinson (2023) found that many Black female leaders are motivated by a desire to help others and advocate for their communities. Thus, the findings of Theme 1.2 are consistent with findings in the academic literature.

One of the seven themes of BFT is activism. According to Collins (2009), activism and social justice are important catalysts for change in Black women's lives. Collins defined activism in the lives of Black women as a critical strategy in taking group action to challenge systemic inequity and injustice. Black women in nonprofit organizations advocate for social justice outside and within their workspaces (Cherry, 2020; Griffin, 2021). In this study, the participants spoke about a desire to advocate for marginalized, underrepresented, and underprivileged populations, demonstrating their commitment to activism and social justice.

Interpretation of Theme 2.1

Theme 2.1 examined the challenges faced by Black women in non-profit leadership. Many participants described not having guidelines for their roles as nonprofit leaders, forcing them to perform on-the-job training without formal training. This finding is consistent with the literature regarding nonprofit leadership in general. For instance, Bindernagel (2021) identified a lack of formal training as a considerable challenge for nonprofit executive directors, regardless of race or gender. Einolf (2022) similarly scrutinized nonprofit leadership succession, finding inadequacies in planning and leadership preparation. Thus, one recommendation for practice includes providing nonprofit employees with executive board aspirations with leadership training for nonprofit governance.

The participants also spoke about challenges with fundraising for their nonprofit organizations, indicating that some funding discrepancies may have roots in systematic racism. These findings are also consistent with reports in the literature. Dorsey et al.

(2020) found that nonprofit organizations led by racial minorities received fewer grants and funding opportunities than nonprofits led by White men or women. Interestingly, this phenomenon is observed in other countries, including Canada (Pereira et al., 2020).

Another challenge identified by the participants was the imposter syndrome. Specifically, the participants spoke about having low self-confidence in their abilities, low self-esteem, and low self-worth. Collins et al. (2020) examined the imposter syndrome among Black women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The participants in Collins et al.'s study articulated similar feelings of inadequacy to the participants in this study. Similar findings were observed for Black women in higher education (Chance, 2022), law (Cokley et al., 2022), and corporate executive leadership (Bonner, 2023). Thus, the experiences of the participants in this study perhaps speak to a ubiquitous phenomenon of the imposter syndrome among Black women in leadership positions.

Collins (1986) identified self-definition and self-valuation as one of the seven themes of BFT. According to this theme, Black women reject pejorative images of themselves and develop narratives affirming their existence and belonging (Blaikie, 2021). While dominant groups have objectified Black women by stereotypes, Black women chose to redefine themselves and their worth (Collins, 1986). However, the participants in this study did identify participation in professional affinity groups, such as counterspaces, to bolster their self-definition and self-valuation, which is consistent with findings in the literature (West, 2023).

Interpretation of Theme 2.2

Theme 2.2 examines the barriers faced by Black women in nonprofit leadership. Within this theme, the participants spoke about different forms of discrimination they encounter in the nonprofit sector. The participants specifically identified racial, gender, and age-based discrimination. These findings are consistent with findings in the literature. For instance, Dorsey et al. (2020) identified racial discrimination as a considerable challenge for Black women in the nonprofit sector. Alcarez-Minnick (2020) examined sexism in nonprofits, finding that 63% of charitable foundations in the United States were led by men, despite 90% of the lower-level staff and 50% of the higher-level staff being women. Mason (2023) similarly identified ageism as prevalent in the nonprofit sector. Thus, the participants' experiences of racism, sexism and ageism are validated by the experiences of others in the academic literature.

The participants' experiences with racism, sexism, and ageism may have limited their opportunities for upward mobility. Specifically, the participants explained nonprofit boards tend to remain stagnant, with few people being promoted and few leaders retiring. Besel et al. (2021) highlighted the lack of mobility as a challenge in succession planning in nonprofit organizations, arguing that individuals generally must leave an organization to obtain a leadership position instead of being promoted internally. Geib and Boenigk (2022) also highlighted challenges associated with nonprofit succession, including a lack of investment in succession planning. Thus, the participants' experiences are corroborated by findings in the literature.

Due to Black women's marginalized status, Collins (2009) proposed stereotypes and controlling images as a theme in BFT. Historically, White societal norms created problematic stereotypes and images of Black women to justify their social control, management, and placement as others (Collins, 2009). For instance, the *Strong Black Woman* archetype is an internalized, controlling image adopted by many Black women and passed down generationally, which epitomizes strength, endurance, independence, and the ability to overcome difficulties (Geyton et al., 2022). White employers tend to expect Black women to embody the Strong Black Woman persona, often placing unrealistic expectations on them (Rabelo et al., 2021). In this study, the participants voiced frustrations with unrealistic expectations and being asked to perform jobs and tasks not included in their job roles or descriptions.

Interpretation of Theme 2.3

Theme 2.3 examined the opportunities identified by the participating Black women in non-profit leadership. The participants indicated that they were given opportunities for career success and advancement through mentorship, noting that their mentors helped them navigate the complexities and politics of the nonprofit sector. Liebeton (2022) argued that effective leadership in nonprofit organizations is unattainable without mentorship regarding the politics of the sector. LeRoux and Medina (2023) similarly ascertained that mentorship from nonprofit executives is critical for many individuals with aspirations of obtaining nonprofit executive positions. These studies indicated that mentorship helps individuals through the provision of knowledge and

allows aspirating executives to have allies and sponsors who can advocate for their career advancement (LeRoux & Medina, 2023; Liebeton, 2022).

Professional development and training are strengths of many nonprofit organizations. In this study, the participants spoke about being offered consistent opportunities for professional development and training in various subject areas, including leadership, management, and DEI. Wolf (2022) analyzed the expenditures and budgets of nonprofit organizations, finding that many organizations set aside funding for staff development and training. However, Worth (2020) found that decreased financial contributions during some economic cycles can lessen the funding available for professional development.

Limitations

The study had several limitations. First, all participants in this study worked for nonprofit organizations in Texas, which may limit the transferability of the study's findings. The participants' experiences with nonprofit leadership may have regional characteristics that are isolated to Texas nonprofits and may not represent the experiences of all Black women in U.S. nonprofit organizations. There were interested participants located in Illinois with whom I was working to schedule times to interview. Due to my husband passing away suddenly, these interviews did not take place. Second, the study relied on self-reported data from the participants. Consequently, there may have been instances of social desirability bias where participants may have included accounts or experiences in anticipation of the researcher's desires (see Bergen & Labonté, 2020). The participants may have chosen not to share information that may be contrary to the

reputation of their organization. Thus, the participants may have excluded certain details to protect their organizations' reputations.

Recommendations

The limitations of this study suggest multiple recommendations for future research. Additional studies could focus on identifying Black women in nonprofit leadership positions in other areas of the United States. Such a study would allow for the comparison of other Black women's experiences to the experiences of this study's participants. A second recommendation for future research is to conduct a longitudinal study and examine Black women's experiences with nonprofit leadership across their career development. Such a study would identify challenges, barriers, and opportunities in Black women's early, middle, and late-stage nonprofit careers. A third recommendation is to conduct mixed methods studies examining Black women's experiences in nonprofit organizations. A quantitative research component could identify Black women's leadership styles and attributes in nonprofit organizations and contribute to knowledge regarding how successful Black female nonprofit leaders manage their organizations.

Implications

The study has numerous implications for positive social change. Nonprofit organizations are positioned at a crossroads in American society, advocating for social justice of marginalized and underrepresented populations and communities. Increasing the diversity of nonprofit leadership boards can help organizations better advocate for the plights of individuals, families, and communities (Cain, 2015). Cain (2015) examined the

implications of positive social change by heightening the awareness of the need to decrease workplace discrimination and inequalities, creating a more conducive environment that promotes Black women into leadership, and making the issues of implicit biases against these women visible for DEI development in nonprofits. Though organizations have established programs and stipulations to policies and practices to create diversity, there is still a minimal representation of Black women in senior-level positions (Barron, 2019; Johns, 2013). In addition, the presence of Black women in leadership roles helps break down barriers and enhance diversity in the nonprofit sector, resulting in more equal outcomes for everybody.

Black women have been traditionally underrepresented in leadership positions, and their contributions to social change initiatives are sometimes neglected. Examining their experiences and accomplishments can aid in increasing the visibility and representation of Black women in leadership positions (Azevedo et al., 2020; Hunt et al., 2018). Black women provide insights that may differ from those of other groups in attempts for social change (Cooke & Hastings, 2023). By examining their experiences and viewpoints, this study provides an enhanced understanding of Black women's difficulties and possibilities in non-profit organizations and their strategies for addressing these issues. Studying Black female leaders in non-profit organizations also sheds light on the practices and policies that help support and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, resulting in improved community outcomes (Cooke & Hastings, 2023). Thus, the study of Black female leaders in non-profit organizations contributes to social change by enhancing the visibility, understanding, and representation of Black women's

distinctive viewpoints and leadership contributions. This study indicates that Black women are motivated to lead nonprofit organizations out of service to their communities.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations work to help those in need by giving them resources and support and aim to improve the lives of the people they serve. In addition, nonprofit organizations strive to create a better future via advocacy, instruction, and the application of successful social issue solutions (Ott & Dicke, 2021). White males typically dominate the various leadership positions of nonprofit organizations, including coordinators, managers, program directors, and executives (Lee, 2019). However, the most qualified individual should fill these positions to execute and carry out the position's duties and the nonprofit's mission. This study examined the experiences of Black women in nonprofit leadership roles in an effort to understand the challenges, barriers, and opportunities for Black women in nonprofit leadership.

Five themes were identified through thematic analysis of interviews with 26 Black women in nonprofit leadership in Texas, United States. The participants indicated they sought roles in nonprofit organizations based on positive and negative childhood experiences, citing a desire to serve underprivileged populations. The participants spoke about challenges in their nonprofit leadership careers, citing significant racial, gender, and age-based discrimination that hindered their promotion to leadership positions and their ability to gain funding for their causes. This study brings voices to Black women in nonprofit leadership, highlighting the need for increased awareness of racist, sexist and ageist practices in the nonprofit sector.

The study also highlights numerous opportunities for Black women in nonprofit leadership. The nonprofit sector offered the participants continuous opportunities for mentorship, training, and professional development, which helped the participants navigate the politics of the nonprofit sector. Key recommendations for practice include providing Black women in nonprofit organizations with professional development and leadership training. Increasing the leadership skills of Black women can help position them as competitive and attract choices for nonprofit leadership roles, thereby increasing the diversity of executive boards in nonprofit organizations. With increased executive diversity and perspectives, nonprofit organizations can better serve unrepresented and underprivileged populations and communities, thereby contributing to positive social change.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Materials

Appendix B: Participant Screening Questionnaire

1. What is your racial identity?

    a. White

    b. Black or African American

    c. Hispanic or Latino

    d. Asian or Asian American

    e. American Indian or Alaska Native

    f. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

    g. Other (please specify)

2. What is your biological gender?

    a. Male

    b. Female

    c. Prefer not to answer

3. Do you hold a mid-to-advanced leadership position in a non-profit organization in

    the United States? [Yes/No]

4. What is your position title? Do not identify your organization.

5. How many years have you been in your current position?

6. Please leave contact information for the researcher.

    a. Name:

    b. State:

    c. Email Address:

    d. Phone Number:

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been in your current position?

2. How long have you been at your current organization?

3. What attracted you to this position?

4. Why do you want to work in the nonprofit sector?

5. Please describe your journey to taking on a leadership role.

6. What were some of the challenges to getting to where you are now in your career?

7. What specific barriers did you face?

8. What opportunities were available to you during this journey?

9. How can organizations support diversity in leadership?

10. Is there anything else you would like share?

Appendix D: Participant Interviewee Transcript Review Email

Date: XX/XX/2023

From: Coleone Davis

Subject: Doctoral Study Transcript Review

To: Participant

Hi Participant name,

Thank you again for participating in my study and completing the interview. I

learned a lot from our discussion. I'm writing today to provide you with a copy of

the transcript from the interview. I have replaced your name with a pseudonym

(e.g., Participant 1). If you mentioned any personal identifiable information during

the interview, such as your name or place of employment, I redacted that

information. I ask that you kindly review the transcript to ensure that your

thoughts are accurately reflected. If you would like any changes to the details of

the transcript, please indicate what those changes are, and I will revise the

transcript.

As a reminder, I will be contacting you in a few weeks with a 1-2-page summary

of my analysis of your interview for your review.

Thank you again for your participation in my study,

Coleone Davis

Appendix E: Member Checking Email

Date: XX/XX/2023

From: Coleone Davis

Subject: Doctoral Study Review of Data Analysis

To: Participant

Hi Participant name,

Thank you again for participating in my study and completing the interview. I

have completed my analysis of your interview data. I'm writing today to provide

you with a summary of the data analysis pertaining to your interview. Just like

before, I ask that you kindly review the summary to ensure that your thoughts are

accurately reflected in the study's findings. If you disagree with my analysis, it's

important to me that my analysis reflect your thoughts and perceptions. It would

be helpful if you would reply to this email letting me know if you believe your

thoughts are reflected in my analysis.

Thank you again for your participation in my study,

Coleone Davis