

2020

## The Executive Director Experiences of African American Women in Mainstream Nonprofit Performing Arts Organizations

David S. Gobin  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Davida S. Gobin

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

The Executive Director Experiences of African American Women in Mainstream  
Nonprofit Performing Arts Organizations

by

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MPA, Strayer University, 2010

MBA, Strayer University, 2008

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2020

## Abstract

African American women are presently underrepresented in mainstream nonprofit performing arts organizations (PAOs) throughout the United States. Despite this inequality, a small number of African American women have overcome the odds and have productively earned senior leadership roles as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Using the conceptual frameworks of intersectionality and critical race feminism, the purpose of this study was to explore the shared lived experiences of African American women in executive director positions and the impact of race and gender on their leadership development and training for advancement in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Four research questions explored the nonprofit management and leadership experiences and perspectives of African American women as a result of the intersection of race and gender identity. A transcendental phenomenological method was applied as the qualitative research design. Semistructured interviews with 9 African American women working currently or previously as an executive director or senior leader in a mainstream nonprofit PAO provided data collection. Findings from this study affirmed that although African American women are challenged and impacted by intersectional identities, organizational solutions and strategies for advancement are available. The results of this research study may contribute to positive social change by increasing awareness of the experiences of African American women and the strategies outlined for improved executive leadership advancement. When cultural arts leaders get information, ignored potential can be realized.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Chudney Mala Gobin and to my mother, Carolyn A. Harrington.

This dissertation is also dedicated to all of the African American women who have broken down barriers to entry in theatres, record companies, recording studios, opera houses, orchestras, dance companies, museums, publishing companies, videos, on stages and movie sets including but not limited to the following: Hattie McDaniel, Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, Mahalia Jackson, Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald, Marian Anderson, Josephine Baker, Billie Holiday, Eartha Kitt, Ruby Dee, Diahann Carroll, Miriam Makeba, Nina Simone, Katherine Dunham, Maya Angelou, Aretha Franklin, Jessye Norman, Toni Morrison, Leontyne Price, Cicely Tyson, Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Alice Walker, Suzanne de Passe, Debra L. Lee, Michelle Obama, Meghan Markle, Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Janet Jackson, Ava DuVernay, Shonda Rhimes, Debbie Allen, Phylicia Rashad, Judith Jamison, Cathy Hughes, Oprah Winfrey, Sylvia Rhone, Sylvia Robinson, Diana Ross, Whoopi Goldberg, Halle Berry, Lupita Nyong'o, Queen Latifah, Angela Bassett, Regina King, Tracee Ellis Ross, Misty Copeland, Iyanla Vanzant, Viola Davis, Vanessa Williams, Laverne Cox, Monique, India Arie, Alicia Keys, Keke Palmer, Yara Shahidi, Amandla Stenberg, Marsai Martin, Blue Ivy Carter, up and coming Chudney Gobin, and so many more!

In loving memory of my grandparents; Robert Lee Anderson and Brunella M. Anderson; my honorary father, Johnnie L. Harrington; my daddy, Rev. David L. Scott; my aunt, Barbara A. Black; and my precious Karma.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### **African American Women and Mainstream Nonprofit Performing Arts Organizations**

“Okay, okay, ladies, now let’s get in formation . . . dream it . . . work hard . . . own it.” —Beyoncé, 2016, “Formation”

Gender inequity in arts leadership in the United States and abroad has been a topic of conversation for over a decade (McConarty & Rose, 2017, p. 212). For African American women, however, the intersection of gender and race presents a different challenge to equality in nonprofit performing arts organizations (PAOs), especially mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Although African American women work in the performing arts field on stages, in front of curtains and cameras, and behind closed doors, they remain significantly underrepresented in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

By definition, mainstream nonprofit PAOs are those large organizations with annual budgets including state and/or federal funding of over \$1 million with public performance arts in ballet dance, theater, opera, or music (Pandey, Kim, & Pandey, 2017; Vakharia & Janardhan, 2017). Predominantly European American males run these major organizations (Cuyler, 2015, p. 18). Despite the proliferation of cultural equity and diversity initiatives outlined by arts organizations regarding the inclusion of women, African Americans, and other people of color as board members and audience members, the path to executive director positions remains largely blocked (Americans for the Arts, 2015).

Researchers have articulated experiences specifically related to African American women and the ways in which the intersectional identity of race and gender impacts executive director development and advancement in nonprofit PAOs (Kim & Mason, 2018; McConnell, Todd, Odahl-Rhaun, & Shattel, 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). According to Catalyst (2017), a nonprofit organization working to promote the advancement of women as leaders, African American women occupy only 1.3% of executive and/or senior leadership positions in Fortune 500 companies. European American women hold 21.8% of roles, trailed by other women of color (4.7%) and Asian women (1.8%). The low number of African American women working in any capacity of executive leadership in the United States is disproportionate in comparison to European American women.

African American women continue to combat underrepresentation related to the intersection of race and gender identity. Past researchers who have examined gender inequity have focused primarily on the experiences of European American women as they neglect the stories of African American women (Christo-Baker, Roberts, & Rogalin, 2012, p. 13). This level of neglect coincided with the historical absence of African American women's voices and presence in the workplace and the failure of organizations to adequately address this lack. Although African American women are unequivocally underrepresented in executive leadership positions, scholarly research was scant regarding the intersectionality of race and gender as a critical constituent of African American women's experiences (Calafell, 2014, p. 75). This lack is unjustifiable, given

that Catalyst (2017) continues to report that African American women and other women of color are overlooked and underrepresented in executive leadership positions.

Regarding the disproportionate representation of African American women in executive leadership positions, Collins (2000) proposed intersectionality as a resourceful description of the racism and genderism and the ways in which having a dual minority identity intersects with injustice (Lee, 2012, p. 468). The underrepresentation of African American women in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, combined with the barriers impeding this population's advancement throughout their careers, is an all-inclusive phenomenon (Beckwith, Carter, & Peters, 2016; Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Wilson, 2014).

The majority of researchers who studied African American women's professions focused on specific barriers impacting equal opportunity, recruitment, limited career development, and support in the executive leadership pipeline (Rice & Alfred, 2014; Rose & Bielby, 2010). Others who have addressed the roles of African American women in senior leadership positions have done so primarily within the educational field (Neigel, 2015, p. 522). As a result, there are considerable gaps in the existing literature about African American women in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Researchers have focused on the roles of women, and African American women in particular, with regard to: (a) audience participants and cultural capitalists in performing arts genres (Christin, 2012; Fleming & Roses, 2007; National Endowment for the Arts, 2015; Schmutz, Stearns, & Glennie, 2016); (b) board directorship and membership

inclusion (Adams, 2016; Colaco, Myers, & Nitkin, 2011; Rose & Bielby, 2010); (c) women as chief executive officers (CEOs) in corporate America (Cook & Glass, 2015; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016); (d) secondary and postsecondary education and academia (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Powers & Duffy, 2016); (e) science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM; Devine et al., 2017; Rice & Alfred, 2014); (f) health care services (Hauser, 2014); (g) identity (Cooley, Winslow, Vojt, Shein, & Ho, 2018; Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017); and (h) organizational leadership (Bear, Cushenbery, London, & Sherman, 2017; Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

Prior researchers acknowledged prevalent barriers impeding the advancement of African American women throughout their careers, including race, gender, and ethnicity inequalities; class; unfavorable stereotypes; gender-based discrimination; bias in selection and promotion; mentoring; limited opportunities in formal and informal networking; limited access to male-dominated networks; and a paucity of commitment by organizations to recognize barriers and solutions to overcome them (Beckwith et al., 2016; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Fitzsimmons, Callan, & Paulsen, 2014; Le, Rentschler, & Frederick, 2010; Wilson, 2014).

A comprehensive literature review disclosed scant studies relevant to African American women working or seeking employment as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs in the United States. My study contributed further insight through the vital personal accounts of African American women who have secured or are pursuing a position in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. This information was socially significant for a number of groups, particularly African American women who struggle in the pursuit of

attaining executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Knowledge gained further assisted arts policymakers and artistic work intermediaries such as the National Endowment for the Arts and other cultural arts leaders and organizations, as well as colleges and universities on the challenges faced and strategies needed to implement and develop African American women as executive director leaders.

Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive background of the research study as a frame of reference. Also included is a thorough statement of the problem, the essential purpose of the study, the research questions, and a discussion of the contextual frameworks grounding the study. Definitions, assumptions, scope, limitations, and delimitations also appear, along with the significance of the study and a chapter summary.

### **Background of the Study**

In the United States, evidence shows women of all backgrounds struggle with advancing into positions of power and leadership, and for African American women seeking executive director positions in the mainstream nonprofit performing arts sector, the hurdle becomes even greater. Presently, evidence also shows there is no way to account for the number of African American women—or any other women of color—in executive director positions, as this information is not available. African American women appear in all-inclusive categories of quantitative data in which their identity is overlooked either through gender in which they are included with all races of women or race in which they are included with African American men. As stated by Adesaogun, Flottemesch, and Ibrahim-DeVries (2015), the workplace experiences of minorities and women are predominately assessed by researchers without proper respect to ethnicity and

with limited data on the experiences of African American women (p. 46). According to a 2013 report by Americans for the Arts, a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC responsible for advancing the arts in the United States, African Americans held 2.6% of executive director positions; however, no researchers have specifically measured the number of African American women. Despite this lack of definitive numerical data, a small number of African American women have secured executive director positions.

In 2015, Felicia W. Shaw was named Executive Director of the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis, becoming one of the few African American females to head a regional arts commission (Americans for the Arts, 2015; Shaw, 2015, p. 9). Other African American women holding executive leadership positions include Camille Russell Love, Executive Director for the City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs; Tanisha Laird, Executive Director for the Princeton Arts Council; and Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, Executive Director of Arizona State University's Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium and Vice President for Cultural Affairs (Americans for the Arts, 2015; Arts Council of Princeton, 2016; Women of Color in the Arts, 2017).

In a study of women in top management, Elmer (2015) found African American women to be underrepresented in leadership jobs. Of the 26% of executive leadership roles held by women in the United States, African American women made up roughly 1% in comparison to European American women, who stood at 21% (Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017, p. 406; Elmer, 2015, p. 3). The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor found 59.7% of African American women employed, the majority in lower levels of the workforce, and with a large wage gap in comparison to European

American women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Americans for the Arts (2013) and Cuyler (2015) validated the Women's Bureau report, identifying the intersection of race and gender discrimination as a determining factor for the discrepancy.

Intersectionality continues to be a dominant factor in the underrepresentation and limited career advancement of African American women, which strongly suggested the need for further investigation into how having an intersectional identity contributes to the specific experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream PAOs (Kim & Mason, 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

African American women and other women of color often experience barriers exclusive to their race and gender as they try to advance into executive director positions. African American women with education, vision, and promise who seek to move from lower-ranking positions into the higher echelons of leadership encounter resistance and setbacks in trying to prove themselves as top cultural leaders of performing arts innovation. African American women and other women of color have intersectional identities of oppression, increasing the risk of workplace harassment and various types of racial and gender discrimination (Juan, Syed, & Azmita, 2016). In comparison, European American men have no minority identity, and European American women and other men of color have only one (p. 225). This evidence correlated with the hindrances of African American women and their limited opportunities in obtaining executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

On average, women experience greater difficulty than men in trying to obtain executive or C-level positions (Elmer, 2015, p. 4). In fact, African American women are

more likely to have unrewarding experiences in the pipeline to executive director titles than do European Americans of both genders. Not only do barriers to entry exist, but so does an unfavorable wage gap. Elmer (2015) measured the difference in pay between men and women, with women earning an average of 20% less overall and 15% less in management positions (p. 6), where African American women make up to \$21,000 less annually in comparison to European American women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Ensuring equal opportunity on the path to executive leadership, reducing the wage gap, and providing opportunities that lead to career advancement would benefit not only African American women, but also other women of color, as well as mainstream nonprofit PAOs and other cultural institutions and the communities they serve.

According to the American Association of University Women (2016), African American women hold just 2% of senior leadership positions in comparison to European American women, who hold approximately 24% of the roles. Despite findings by the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) identifying 22.4% of African American women as holding bachelor's degrees or higher and representing 28.7% percent of the workforce in arts, management, business, and science. Opportunities remain exceptionally low for this group to advance into executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

In previous research, Cuyler (2013) addressed the need for PAOs to reconsider both affirmative action and diversity as structures for recruiting more people of color into senior level positions. Cuyler further assessed the relationship between PAOs and arts management educators as leaders in the development of a more diverse workforce. These findings suggested mainstream nonprofit PAOs can maximize their human capital and



engage the communities they serve when they diversify not just their audiences, but their staff, as well (pp. 99–102). Even so, the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors for mainstream nonprofit PAOs continues.

Cuyler (2015) and Stein (2000) examined diversity and the percentages of marginalized group members working in management in PAOs. However, scholars have directed limited attention to the career development, career advancement, and executive leadership experiences of African American women underrepresented as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. As a result, empirical evidence supporting the experiences of African American women is lacking.

### **Problem Statement**

Minimal research is available that supports the intersectionality of race and gender in the subject matter of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Although African American women make up 13.7% of the total U.S. workforce, African American women hold only 1.3% of executive and/or senior leadership positions in Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2017; 2018). These data parallel Lee and Priester's (2014) findings that African American women are more prone to marginalization due to the intersectionality of race and gender (p. 93).

In my phenomenological study, I used the experiences of African American women as executive directors of mainstream nonprofit PAOs in the United States to explore nonprofit management and leadership disparity embodying discrepancies in hiring, executive leadership development and training for advancement, promotion, and other workplace discrimination experiences of African American women as a result of

the intersection of race and gender identity. Such discrepancies create challenges for women to advance to the top (Sanchez-Hucles & David, 2010, p. 174). Consequently, these challenges generate inequities in mainstream nonprofit PAOs and others.

Intersectionality explains how the leadership of dominant systems, such as mainstream nonprofit PAOs, reconsiders its approach to the inequities and challenges surrounding individuals with multiple identities, such as race, gender, and class, and how new perspectives will impact individual outcomes within the organization (Severs, Celis, & Erzeel, 2016, p. 2). In other words, intersectionality directs attention to African American women overlooked in mainstream nonprofit PAOs due to interlocking systems of oppression, such as race, gender, and class (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989). As stated by Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010), the inequities African American women face such as racism, sexism, barriers to promotion and advancement, minimal support and sponsorship, discrimination, tokenism, and stereotypes (p. 174) create challenges for them to move into executive director positions.

Through a literature review, an adequate amount of research was discovered that centered on leadership inequities for European American women and women of color in organizations predominantly run by European American men. However, gaps existed regarding studies addressing the lived experiences of African American women in executive director positions. Also overlooked was the intersection of race and gender pertaining to executive leadership development and training for advancement in general and the intersection of race and gender regarding executive leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this phenomenological study, I examined the lived experiences and perspectives of African American women and their underrepresentation as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. In particular, I explored how the intersection of race and gender impacted African American women's leadership development and training for advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs and identified key themes in how African American women in executive director positions experienced, have been impacted by, and coped with inequalities surrounding racism and sexism, as well as the ways in which they resisted workplace barriers caused by dual intersectional identity.

Critical race feminism (CRF; Delgado, 1993) and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) were at the basis of my study in addressing race and gender as systems of oppression for African American women (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The first goal was to use the experiences of African American women working as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs to identify actions needed to guarantee their success. The second goal was to understand the ways in which African American women have been impacted by any inequities and challenges they have experienced, such as barriers to promotion and advancement, minimal support and sponsorship, discrimination, tokenism, and stereotypes (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 174). The third goal of the study was to recognize strategies, such as education, networking, mentorships, and leadership skills, which could be aligned with African American women's leadership development and career advancement. The final goal of the study was to identify organizational

contributors to the success or failure of African American women executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

My study gave voice to African American women by allowing them to share their experiences and perspectives of becoming executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, along with obstacles they may have faced and the coping and support mechanisms assisting in advancement despite population underrepresentation. Findings added to limited research on the shared experiences of African American women working in executive leadership roles.

### **Research Questions**

This phenomenological study was guided by four main research questions, and they are as follows:

RQ1: What are the executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

RQ2: How does race impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ3: How does gender impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ4: What strategies would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

### **Conceptual Framework**

A phenomenological study addressed the intersectional identity of race and gender and its relationship to the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Two conceptual frameworks supported this study: CRF (Delgado, 1993), focused on the intersection of race and gender identity central to the underrepresentation of marginalized groups, but specific to African American women in power structures, such as mainstream nonprofit PAOs (Rodgers, 2017); and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), used to examine how race and gender can interlock and cause discrimination.

[I]ntersectionality is regarded as one of the feminist scholarship's most substantial contributions to the academy and owes its rich history to the rise of the Black feminist movement in the 1970's. Intersectionality provides a critical analytic lens for expanding our knowledge of leadership in public organizations as well as highlighting barriers to leadership opportunities. Intersectionality reveals the unique experiences of individuals who occupy multiple marginalized social categories (Breslin, Pandey, & Riccucci, 2017, pp. 161–162).

Formulated by Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality aligns with Collins' (1990) assessment of interlocking identities such as race and gender and holds that multiple forms of oppression can together produce social injustices for African American women, particularly in traditional European American–led organizations (Luna, 2016, p. 772). Multiple researchers (e.g., Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Curtis, 2017; Oikelome, 2017; Roland & Agosto, 2017; Severs et al., 2016) concluded that intersectional

identities, particularly race and gender, adversely influence the experiences of African American women in executive leadership positions. Davis and Maldonado (2015) further identified that African American women not only are vastly underrepresented in executive leadership positions, but often find insufficient opportunities for executive leadership development and/or executive leadership advancement (p. 48).

In line with the conceptual inquiry of intersectionality and its relevance to African American women and systems of oppression, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) reported a significant wage gap in the weekly median earnings of African American women, who had the lowest income compared to male and female European Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and African American men combined (p. 1). In a separate report, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017) found African American women accounted for only 29% of high-ranking and higher-paying positions compared to European American and Asian women (p. 2). These findings also applied to executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, which reveal minimal diversification in high-level labor for women, particularly those who are African American.

CRF provided a framework for uncovering some of the reasons African American women face obstacles to advance into executive leadership roles by way of limited opportunities and social inequalities because of multiple oppressing identities (Breslin et al., 2017). The conceptual frameworks of CRF and intersectionality served as verification for the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, indicating poor hiring practices as a catalyst for

misrepresented groups' continued powerlessness and was used to provide a detailed description of these situations.

### **Nature of the Study**

According to Beatty (2014) and Henriques (2014), researchers can look deeper at collective human experiences as an aspect of a phenomenon. One way to do this is through the phenomenological method. Validated by Moustakas (1994), this phenomenological approach assisted in exploring the impact of intersectionality on the shared executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs related to the dual identities of race and gender. The phenomenological method allowed a deeper review of challenges impeding leadership development and advancement that lead to the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Windsong (2018) found the qualitative method more appropriate for both understanding experiences and examining intersectionality of race and gender dynamics (p. 139). Lewis and Grzanka (2016) also supported the use of qualitative methodology for intersectionality research, as it allows the researcher to formulate questions to examine complexities of African American women's lived experiences and to position these experiences in a cultural context (p. 44). However, Lewis and Grzanka (2016) deemed the quantitative methodology unable to capture the lived experiences of individuals or to answer the research questions (p. 45).

Data was collected for this qualitative study from African American women who are or have worked as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Participants were recruited by telephone and e-mail. Participants were asked to respond to

semistructured questions either through a one-on-one interview or a video call interview using FaceTime or Skype. I recruited a maximum of 12 African American women in executive director positions. Eligibility requirements were that participants must have been African American, female, over the age of 18 years, and currently or previously employed as an executive director or at the senior executive level in a mainstream nonprofit PAO or affiliate organization. I recruited participants through personal affiliations and recommendations. Women were also sought through contacting PAOs by telephone and e-mail. Nine women met the requirements and were interviewed for the study.

The conceptual frameworks of CRF (Delgado, 1993) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), with considerable attention on the latter, substantiated findings from the research and interview questions. I used open-ended interview questions to investigate the individual experiences, backgrounds, learning experiences, and personal accounts of participants in executive director positions pertinent to the dual identities of race and gender. Semistructured interviews provided participants the opportunity for open dialogue to talk about organizational experiences, challenges, and approaches to career achievement. To facilitate accuracy, I used an iPhone 8 as the audio-recording device along with a Canon GX7 camera. I took notes in a journal to code and analyze data. I used NVivo v.12 software to examine participant responses, recognize themes, and convert findings into rich, descriptive responses to the research questions. Further description of the data analysis plan appears in Chapter 3.



## Definitions

Definitions of terms relevant to this study were as follows:

*African American:* A person who identifies as a Black American born in the United States of African ancestry (Christo-Baker et al., 2012, p. 14).

*Artistic director:* In a nonprofit performing arts organization, the individual responsible for the creative and performance activities of seasonal artistic productions (Reid & Karambayya, 2009, p. 1080).

*C-suite:* The highest-level, most valuable senior executives working in a business or organization (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014, p. 245).

*European American:* A person who identifies as a White American born in the United States of European ancestry. Although many European Americans can have mixtures of different races and nationalities within their ancestry, they are considered White only when there is no evidence or feature of non-European ancestry (Williams, Gooden, & Davis, 2012, p. 26).

*Executive director:* In a PAO, the individual responsible for revenue activities such as fundraising, marketing, government relations strategies, and budget planning (Reid & Karambayya, 2009, p. 1080)

*Intersectionality:* An approach rooted in feminist theory supporting the notion that race, class, and gender are interconnecting categories of disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality allows for analysis of the different forms of disadvantage by focusing on the experiences of specific groups (Bastia, 2014, p. 238).

*Mainstream nonprofit performing arts organizations (PAOs):* Large nonprofit arts associations with annual budgets including state and/or federal funding of over \$1 million for public performances in ballet dance, theater, opera, or music (Pandey et al., 2017; Vakharia & Janardhan, 2017)

*Pipeline:* Individuals in the workforce with enough skill and education to meet the demand of certain jobs, such as executive director positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015, p. 51).

*Race:* The classification of people based on their common descent (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 877).

*Women of Color:* The demographic strata of all women who are nonwhite (Pei-te Lien, Hardy-Fanta, Pinderhughes, & Sierra, 2008, p. 1).

### **Assumptions**

Simon and Goes (2013) contended that qualitative research comes equipped with assumptions (p. 277), statements believed to be true for the purpose of research (Wargo, 2015). My phenomenological study was designed to address the significant underrepresentation of African American women in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs and was grounded by six assumptions to provide participants assurance of the scope. First, the phenomenon under exploration was assumed to be legitimate and that participants were truthful about their roles and reasons for participating in the study, as well as open and trustworthy in their responses to interview questions. Second, participants were expected to identify as females of African American descent, and to share and express the real experiences, successes, and failures that may

have contributed to their advancement or lack thereof in being hired, promoted, provided mentorships, or advanced into leadership. This led to the third assumption that although participants may have shared the same or part of the same African American identity that they also shared similar experiences (Karagiozis, 2018, p. 26). The fourth assumption was that groundwork would contribute to solutions for African American women's career development and their increased presence in executive director roles. The fifth assumption was that the sample size would be what Yin (2016) described as information rich, by which the researcher would be able to provide data that is plentiful and relevant (p. 93). The sixth assumption was that the information provided by participants would contribute to social change.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of a research study incorporates its range and confines, as well as what the study involves (Simon & Goes, 2013, p. 272), while the delimitations of the study are its boundaries (p. 274). The purpose of my research study was to explore the ways in which the intersection of race and gender identity contributes to the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. My study determined how the intersection of race and gender impacted executive leadership development and training for advancement of African American women through their described lived experiences and perceptions. This research problem was selected because of interest and justification regarding the role intersectionality plays in the underrepresentation of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAO executive roles.

One delimitation of the study was its sample: a maximum of nine women of African American descent above the age of 18 years working or pursuing a role as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. These qualifications excluded other racial and/or ethnic groups, both male and female, working in the United States in the role of executive director. The second delimitation involved the extensive employment experience needed by participants. The only African American women who qualified for the study were those with experiences they believed may have led to their successes and/or failures, and that may have contributed to their success or lack thereof in being hired, promoted, or gaining mentorship or advancement as a result of intersectional identity. Confining this study to African American women who have been able to advance in a field so underrepresented by women provided a thorough investigation and understanding of the strategies used and the path taken to achieve success.

The intention of my study was to isolate, probe, and inform information that is transferable. According to Yin (2016), transferability allows subsequent researchers to apply a study's conclusions to another population, confirming the importance of the initial study (p. 107). Inquiry primarily focused on the impact of intersectionality, barriers to inclusion, and traditional organizational practices may provide insight and assistance not only for African American women aspiring to executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, but to all leaders in various genres of the performing arts sector, as well as other marginalized groups.

### **Limitations**

Simon and Goes (2013) defined limitations as potential weaknesses or constraints beyond the researcher's control (p. 272). The persistent, inadequate representation of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, the meager availability of facts and information, and the limited availability of a population sample size can all pose limitations to this study. A considerable limitation was in selecting the right population with the demographics, qualifications, and backgrounds necessary to satisfy study criteria—specifically, African American women either working or pursuing a position as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO in the United States. Other roles and levels within such organizations will not merit consideration.

To garner participants for this study, African American women with professional affiliations and who met criteria for the prototype were contacted. Although other underrepresented groups may be subject to bias, discrimination, and poor leadership advancement, the specifics of all marginalized groups due to size, time, and financial limitations were not examined.

### **Significance of the Study**

Kim and Mason (2018) disclosed that African Americans are underrepresented as arts leaders at a rate not reflective of the communities they serve, with only 3.8% percent African American women nonprofit arts leaders in the United States compared to 84.3% European Americans (pp. 56–57). African American women have a unique position in nonprofit organizations, as they are underrepresented due to the dual identity experiences of racism and sexism (Adesaogun et al., 2015, p. 46).

My study was significant because it provided examination of an inconspicuous phenomenon reflecting a disproportionate population, which can impact community growth and pose a greater disadvantage to a more diverse public arts sector. The phenomenological method facilitated understanding of the shared experiences of African American women as executive directors in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. The general public policy and administration problem to address was the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, and the impact of the intersection of race and gender identity on executive leadership development and training for advancement. In exploring the phenomenon, discoveries and recommendations pertinent to assisting leaders in considering greater diversifying opportunities in the nonprofit arts sector were generated and highlighted to reflect the communities at large while cultivating a climate of social change.

### **Significance to Practice**

Despite the low percentage of African Americans in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, recent statistics reveal more African American women in executive director positions than ever before. Although no study to date has specifically accounted for the number of African American women, African Americans held only 2.6% of executive director positions (Americans for the Arts, 2013).

A thorough review of past and present literature disclosed an insufficiency of scholarly research accounting for the experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. My study was significant because nonprofit officials, state and funding agencies, performing arts executives, boards of

directors, and human resources managers may acknowledge the results when assessing cultural inequities and diversity initiatives. Findings may also impact policies to organizational improvement such as those outlined by Cuyler (2013), especially if companies choose to diversify their executive-level employees to match the needs of their respective diverse populations. Organizations may consider exploring the ignored potential of African American women through leadership development approaches to combat inequities in the work environment, as suggested by Beckwith et al. (2016) and addressed by Bonaparte (2016). Strategizing ways to align African American women with methods to increase training and advancement through mentoring, professional networking, internships, fellowships, and similar opportunities could help create a qualified, skillful, and knowledgeable talent pool. Changes may also increase cultural equity and reduce some of the barriers associated with intersectional identity.

My study was also significant for outlining some of the success strategies that helped participants to navigate difficulties such as discrimination, bias, and stereotypes. Such firsthand knowledge may assist other African American women in their pursuit of executive leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. In addition, this discovery may set precedence and standards for future performing arts sector policies related to inclusion and diversity in executive positions in the workplace. Findings added further to the body of existing research on African American women, the impact of intersectionality, and the ways in which members of this population share in their unique perceptions, commonalities, and experiences (Hague & Okpala, 2017, p. 3).

### **Significance to Theory**

My study advanced scholarship and contributed to the existing body of women's leadership literature by applying intersectionality as the conceptual framework to explore how race and gender identities shaped African American women's executive leadership experiences in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Feminists have widely accepted intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) as applicable to the interconnectedness of identifiable, oppressive characteristics such as gender and race (Cho et al., 2013, p. 787). Limited studies existed on the impact of intersectionality and the professional experiences of African American women in executive leadership roles (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hague & Okpala, 2107). Research was scant regarding the actual number of African American women—or any other women of a marginalized group—working as executive directors or leaders within the performing arts sector, figures necessary to pinpoint the urgent need for inclusive representation. Findings added to existing literature to determine how intersectionality impacts executive leadership development and training in the advancement of African American women.

### **Significance to Social Change**

The results of my research study contributed to social change through benefits to African American women, nonprofit government officials, state and funding agencies, and mainstream nonprofit PAO CEOs and boards of directors. Insight into the lived experiences of successful African American women who have attained executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs may assist African American women, as well as women from other underrepresented, marginalized groups, to achieve executive-ranking



positions in the performing arts sector. Findings suggested strategies that promote positive social change by identifying and alleviating oppressive barriers of discrimination and inequities perceived and experienced by African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

Leaders of public policy and social change can identify, develop, and institute policies to help eliminate systems of oppression. Nonprofit leaders need to institute inclusionary policies while developing and implementing better diversity initiatives. By doing so, these leaders can create a social culture for all, as well as advance their organizations through growth, innovation, and sustainability.

The mainstream nonprofit performing arts sector is one of the largest leaders of social change with the enormous responsibility of promoting and spreading important messages through arts programming. Findings assist these leaders in understanding how having an intersectional identity can impact the experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, with the social change implication that by recognizing, developing, and instituting policies to eliminate barriers to inclusion, they will provide an equal opportunity for not only African American women, but for all women from underrepresented or marginalized groups. Finally, my research study affects social change by helping mainstream nonprofit PAO leaders determine ways to improve recruitment, hiring, placement, and advancement of marginalized groups into executive director positions, including these individuals in decision-making processes that ultimately affect their communities.

### **Summary and Transition**

In Chapter 1, the research study was introduced and provided context for the underrepresentation and cultural inequity of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs throughout the United States. Presented was the conceptual framework of intersectionality as it relates to the identity of gender and race with regard to African American women, along with the conceptual framework grounded on CRF and intersectionality theory. Results from the study added to scant literature on how the intersectional identities of race and gender contribute to the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Chapter 2 detailed my comprehensive review of the literature, including search strategies, research gaps, the conceptual framework, and findings.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In recent years, researchers have identified a major demographical gap in leadership positions throughout the arts sector (Americans for the Arts, 2013; Cuyler, 2015; Los Angeles County Arts Commission, 2016). However, a significant proportion of the research on executive-level leadership, specifically within nonprofit PAOs, excluded the experiences of African American women and other women of color. This lack of research means there has been limited scholarly inquiry on the subject. The customary public policy and administration problem addressed in the study was the ever-present underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, and how the intersection of race and gender identities impacts executive leadership development and advancement. Literature specific to the actions of mainstream nonprofit PAOs and their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in executive leadership was minimal, indicating the need for further engagement (Cuyler, 2013; Kim & Mason, 2018).

My study's construction contributed to the preexisting research while reducing gaps in the literature. Previous researchers have identified limitations to women's progression in executive leadership roles, both nationally and internationally (Elmer, 2015; Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016). Researchers have also identified such limitations as having an even greater impact on African American women who have reportedly faced even heftier challenges acquiring executive leadership roles in organizations with minimal minority and/or gender representation (McGee, 2018; Pietri,

Johnson, & Ozgumus, 2018). Compared to European American women, African American women face fewer chances to advance into executive leadership positions due to exclusionary barriers perhaps stemming from oppressions, including racism, colorism, tokenism, negative stereotypes, micro aggressions, invisibility, and the double outsider position (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; McGee, 2018; Nixon, 2017; Pietri et al., 2018). My research study centered on the prevailing phenomenon of the underrepresentation of African American women in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs in the United States, with attention to the intersection of race and gender and its relationship to leadership development and training for the advancement of African American women. This chapter reveals literature review strategies, a conceptual framework for the study, and comprehensive literature review findings.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The online library research databases of Walden University and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte served as the primary sources for scholarly literature related to this study. Specifically, sources of review and inclusion came from the following databases: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Central, SAGE Premier, and Walden University Dissertations, as well as the aggregators Thoreau multidatabase search, Project MUSE, and Google Scholar. In cases where minimal current and scholarly research was available, key organizations with data pertinent to this study were referenced, including Americans for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Catalyst, League of Black Women, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Primary keywords searched included the following terms and combinations of terms: *African American, African American women in the arts, African American women executives, arts and cultural leadership, arts administration, arts management, barriers, Black art in the United States, Black Arts Movement, Black Club women, Black feminist standpoint theory, Black feminist theory, Bourdieu, class, colorism, concrete ceiling, critical race theory, cultural equity, cultural organizations, culturally specific performing arts organization, discrimination in the workplace, diversity in arts leadership, double jeopardy, dual identity, European American, executive director, executive leadership, feminism, feminist theory, formation, glass ceiling, high art, identity, inclusion, intersectionality, leadership, mainstream performing arts, mainstream performing arts organizations, marginalized, nonprofit performing arts organization, nonprofit management, organizational culture, performing arts, performing arts leadership, performing arts history in the United States, phenomenology, pipeline, race and gender inequality, racial bias in the workplace, recruitment theory, stereotypes, tokenism, underrepresentation, and women of color in the arts.* Research related to African American women, executive director development in mainstream NPAOs, and the intersection of race and gender identities was virtually nonexistent. Purposeful research sources from 2014 through 2019, such as articles from peer-reviewed journals, were minimal. Research sources for this study helped support the previous structured knowledge.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

A review of the literature revealed an inadequate amount of data that addressed the national disproportion of African American women in executive leadership positions in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. It was difficult to pinpoint literature that specifically coincided with this study's subject matter in detailing the exclusive leadership experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, and how intersectionality impacted their development and advancement as executive directors. Because exploration focused on African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs was insufficient, understanding this phenomenon involved encompassing scholarly research concentrated on executive leadership for African American women with an emphasis on leadership development and advancement, challenges in the pipeline, underrepresentation, diversity and inclusion, discrimination, and organizational solutions (Cuyler, 2017a; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; McGee, 2018; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). The intention was to accentuate how having dual oppressive identities can pose an even greater challenge to African American women based on the views and beliefs of society and members of the arts leadership profession, as well as how those views and beliefs can influence organizational culture and norms in a mainstream nonprofit PAO, while impacting executive director leadership opportunities for the development and advancement of African American women.

Six meaningful studies addressed this national issue and were in direct alignment with this research study (Bonaparte, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; McConarty & Rose, 2017; McGee, 2018; Mena, 2016; Oikelome, 2017). McGee (2018) interviewed 10

women of African American, Asian American, European American, and Hispanic American/Latina ethnicities to explore the impact of race and gender on advancing into an executive career in the U.S. information technology field. Six themes emerged from McGee's study identifying the factors that supported or impeded leadership development and advancement. McConarty and Rose (2017) examined gender inequity in theaters for women playwrights through interviews with 18 participants, seven men and 11 women. The findings of McConarty and Rose revealed women are not only underrepresented in executive leadership positions, but the discrepancy may stem from the systemic decisions of those in power within these organizations, i.e., European American males.

Oikelome (2017) explored the intersecting experiences of 13 women, six African American and seven European American, and the impact of race and gender identity on advancing into a college presidency in the United States. Three themes emerged, shedding light on the identifiable factors of both identity and organizational structures that supported or impeded leadership development and advancement. Bonaparte (2016) examined the experiences of eight African American women in leadership positions and the strategies they used to empower themselves in a predominantly European American environment. Seven themes highlighted the experiences of African American women including race and gender, such as a lack of training, development, and mentorships; having the ability to influence policies and contribute information that could impact the organization, as well as being able to mentor other African American women.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) used feminist theories to research the leadership experiences of five African American women and the impact of the intersectionality of

race and gender on their advancement into executive leadership in higher education. Five themes common to their professional experience were (a) having a strong support system, (b) being sponsored, (c) learning how to navigate an intersectional identity that can jeopardize success, (d) having social networks, and (e) being able to mentor other African American women (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Mena (2016) explored the career experiences of 13 women of color working within a predominantly European American educational institution, seeking to explore their career trajectories and challenges faced by having the intersectional identities of race and gender, as well as to understand the factors that contributed to oppressive environments. Four recurring themes emerged highlighting microaggressions, credibility, marginalization, and coping both inside and outside of the academy. Collectively, these researchers shared in highlighting and supporting the professional experiences of women of color through qualitative critical ethnographic views and the concept of intersectionality.

Recent researchers have conducted studies about women in theater (McConarty & Rose, 2017) and African American women in executive leadership positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015); however, research was limited in studies on women, and specifically African American women, holding executive leadership roles in the nonprofit performing arts sector. Most of the literature concerns gender and ethnic diversification in nonprofit board leadership and audience participation. Researchers have likely focused more on board diversification and audience participation due to nonprofit organizations' increased concern with diversity, cultural equity, and maximizing resources (Gould, Kulik, & Sardeshmukh, 2018; Kim & Mason, 2018; Weisinger, Borges-Méndez, & Milofsky,



2016). In a 2015 investigation of the demographics of arts managers in the workforce, Cuyler (2015) further confirmed the almost nonexistence of African American women as executive leaders in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, disclosing findings in line with the research results of McGee (2018), Bonaparte (2016), and Davis and Maldonado (2015). Gathering information from an online survey, Cuyler reported that 79% percent of the 575 arts leaders who participated were European American males. Of the remaining 21% of the total leaders, African Americans made up 6%, all of them male, with African American women left out of the study altogether (Cuyler, 2015, p. 18).

Additionally, Cuyler (2015) revealed that although 77% of the respondents were women, men dominated executive leadership positions and received higher salaries, giving further proof of the gender inequity of women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (p. 17). Not only do women hold fewer executive leadership positions than men, but they are underrepresented as nonprofit board members, as well. According to Gould et al. (2018), women in the United States hold just 14% of board positions (p. 1). In fact, the male-dominated composition of boards may limit the appointments of women (Cook & Glass, 2015, p. 143).

Consistent with the previous studies, Branson, Chen, and Redenbaugh (2013) also found a minimal presence of women in executive leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. Although the rate of female executive leaders in nonprofit organizations is moderately greater than for-profit organizations, women in the nonprofit sector had lower salaries than those in the for-profit sector (Branson, Chen, & Redenbaugh, 2013, p. 17). Adesaogun et al. (2015) attested European Americans occupied the majority of leadership

roles in nonprofit organizations, providing more empirical evidence of the overall lack of racial equity and diversity in nonprofit organizations (p. 45). Previously, those researching executive leadership and the impact of the intersectionality of race and gender identity primarily focused on the experiences of African American women executive leaders in academia (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Mena, 2016; Oikelome, 2018). An examination of the history of African American women in nonprofit executive leadership roles revealed a gap in the literature. Although other researchers confirmed the presence of racial and gender disparities in executive leadership across both corporate and nonprofit organizations, only a small number of them considered African American women's perceived views on the scarcity of representation in mainstream nonprofit PAO executive leadership. The insufficiency of research specific to executive director leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs has left a considerable literature gap.

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

#### **Critical Race Feminism**

Croom (2017) posited that when exploring the impact of racism and genderism in social organizations such as mainstream nonprofit PAOs, researchers should use critical theories that address individuals, groups, and power systems of oppression (p. 563). Therefore, my study relied upon a conceptual framework validated by Delgado's (1993) CRF and Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory. The CRF framework enabled investigation of the manifestation of racism and genderism surrounding executive director leadership experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. CRF is grounded in critical race theory (CRT), the foundation of which, according

to Berry and Candis (2013), lies in the legal practices of Bell and Freeman during the mid-1970's, who found race, racism, and systems of power to be embedded in American history. Critical race theory provides a path for acknowledging the voices of marginalized groups as they recount the impact of race on lived experiences often otherwise hidden inside of organizations such as mainstream nonprofit PAOs (Berry & Candis, 2013, pp. 47–48). Emphasizing the experiences of African American women filters through both self-definition and valuation (Phelps-Ward, Allen, & Howard, 2017, p. 56). In other words, African American women must have permission to speak for themselves by telling their own stories and lived experiences. Although CRT identifies racism as a common core in the social realms of American tradition and culture, CRF puts the experiences of African American women at the forefront as they exist within these realms.

Prior researchers have utilized CRF in studies regarding academia, and the conflicts and obstacles surrounding race and gender encountered by African American women in academic institutions as professors and/or tenured staff members (Allen & Lewis, 2016, p. 110). The lack of representation and promotion of African American women into tenured positions in academe was problematic both because of the devaluing of African American women's scholarship, as well as the deeply embedded beliefs of European American men that challenge the credibility, authority, and competence of African American women (Croom, 2017, p. 560). Croom adopted CRF as a theoretical foundation because it highlighted and affirmed the lack of social equity for African American women as professors and/or tenured staff leaders. In addition, CRF proved the

best scientific mechanism to evaluate intersectionality and race and gender inequity in traditional institutions. Croom's (2017) study corresponded with this qualitative research study by using CRF as the conceptual framework, with his study detailing social inequities faced by African American women in marginalized workspaces. Cook and Glass (2014) accentuated that in comparison to European Americans, minorities are often invisible in high-status positions of organizations and face a longer career path in the executive leadership pipeline than European Americans (p. 184).

CRF corresponded to the qualitative research questions of this study being consistent with the impact of the intersectional dual identity of race and gender and the lived experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Berry and Candis (2013) declared CRF acknowledged the experiences of African American women were different from those of African American men and European American women, meriting exploration of the multi dimensionalities of African American women through their personal stories and experiences (p. 49). CRF enables researchers to critically observe ways in which organizations such as mainstream nonprofit PAOs can implicitly fail in diversity practices without the voices of marginalized groups. In addition, it added to the body of literature about the intersectional identity of African American women and how race and gender can contribute to barriers to leadership and development.

### **Intersectionality**

A core principle of CRF was the conceptual framework of intersectionality. Proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality stems from African American

feminists who believed multiple forms of oppression together can produce injustice, particularly in traditional European American–led organizations. Crenshaw argued how the United States court system failed to acknowledge African American women’s claims of discrimination while heeding those of European American women and African American men (p. 149). Crenshaw (1991) believed African American women face at minimum two or more oppressive identities, and therefore have little power against structural power systems that discriminate on the basis of race and gender (p. 3). Similarly, Juan et al. (2016) found intersectionality helped to identify differences among women and the multiple perspectives that shed light on their experiences within social contexts (p. 226). The intersectionality approach provided a basis to examine the ways in which race and gender impacted the leadership experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Crenshaw’s (1989) take on intersectionality served as an instrument for social change through translating and evaluating the testimonies of African American women surrounding their leadership experiences as executive directors in predominately European American-led mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Even though Crenshaw first coined the term in 1989, intersectionality remains applicable as a tool for social justice and cultural equity almost 30 years later.

Few-Demo (2014) considered intersectionality as a methodological paradigm to study the ways in which race and gender create narratives that inform organizations’ contributions to the powerlessness, exclusion, and discrimination of African American women (p. 171). Moreover, Croom (2017) upheld that, although research scholars have begun to embrace and include critical race and feminism as theoretical frameworks for

studies, and although intersectionality is an extension of these theories, few researchers have targeted the intersectional identity of race and gender (p. 179). Even fewer are studies directed at the impact of race and gender on African American women in any form of executive leadership in the nonprofit sector or mainstream nonprofit PAOs, highlighting a need for more commitment to this type of research. The intersectionality approach was suitable for examining leadership development and advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. This approach permitted a greater understanding of the relationship between the dual identity of race and gender and the ways in which it informed disadvantage through organizational norms as well as values, either formally or informally (Evans, 2016, p. 570).

The intersectionality approach was essential as the foundation of this qualitative research study. Recent researchers have conducted studies arguing on the basis of group discrimination, representation, social inequalities, and the compounded intersectionality of race and gender. According to Bastia (2014), researchers rarely address the complexity of multiple identities, identifying and integrating differences in inequality based on race and gender (p. 237). The theoretical and contextual standpoints of intersectionality have been widely accepted among feminists, particularly those who are African American, as a concept centered on the interconnectedness of identifiable characteristics of oppression such as gender, race, social class, sexuality, colorism, and others. Cho et al. (2013) described these characteristics as power axes that should be considered in a wide range of fields (p. 787). Davis and Maldonado (2015) suggested intersectionality provides a means of understanding racism and genderism and the ways in which they inform the

experiences of African American women in authoritative positions within predominantly European American led organizations. Researchers in multiple disciplines have utilized intersectionality theory as a pathway to understanding underrepresentation, discrimination, and barriers to entry that hinder marginalized groups from equity and equality based on race, gender, and any other oppressive identity.

My study's qualitative research questions aligned with the conceptual framework, as intersectionality provided a wider lens to better understand marginalized populations, their oppressive experiences, and the professional challenges they faced due to the intersection of racism, genderism, and leadership (Mena, 2016, p. 190). According to Davis and Maldonado (2015), the labor market for women has seen an increase in managerial positions in the United States, yet the number of women holding positions as CEOs or executives is minimal; for African American women, such roles are nearly nonexistent in comparison to European American women (p. 49). Stevens-Watkins, Perry, Pullen, Jewell, and Oser (2014) highlighted that the intersection of race and gender has definite distinctions in hiring opportunities for African American women (p. 562).

For this qualitative research study, intersectionality helped to forge a connection between the obstacles African American women have faced as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs and the actions they took to overcome the obstacles and achieve a degree of accomplishment. Additionally, examining the impact of race and gender on African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs through an intersectionality lens provided opportunities for members of this population to share and provide insight for the purpose of organizational change. As

noted, Davis and Maldonado (2015) affirmed African American women face stiff barriers to executive leadership opportunities and career advancement in predominantly European American-led organizations due to the influence of race and gender (p. 48).

Intersectionality theory served a pivotal role in addressing the pathway to successful leadership for African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

### **Race, Gender, and Executive Director Leadership**

#### **Intersectionality**

Research regarding the intersectionality of race and gender in nonprofit leadership is minimal. Consequently, insufficient evidence was available regarding how having an intersectional identity informs representation, diversity, and hiring and advancement determinations in nonprofit leadership, and specifically in the arts. According to Kim and Mason (2018), few researchers have studied the leadership of nonprofit PAOs, especially as it pertains to people of color (p. 54). Despite Cuyler's (2015) findings that both race and gender negatively affect the recruitment and advancement of women in arts management, studies are few that address the likelihood of race and gender bias impacting such underrepresentation. The context of the nonprofit leadership paradigm provided a background for understanding how race and gender are important aspects of leadership. Allen and Lewis (2016) insisted the exploration and recognition of African American women's leadership experiences is crucial to dismantling ideas that African American women are polar opposites to traditional organizational values, unsuitable for executive leadership because they do not fit into the traditional European American male



paradigm, as they are neither European American nor male. Berrey (2014) asserted that organizations must put in place accountability structures to effectively increase diversity and the presence of women and marginalized groups (p. 350). A historical inquiry of facts outlining the leadership of African American women in the arts provided increased insight and future measures for representation in mainstream nonprofit PAO's.

As past literature revealed, African American women have proven themselves to be strong and standing pillars of support and advocacy within their communities. Rodgers (2017) attested that African American women throughout history have worked both in front of and behind the scenes in supporting and advocating causes, as well as fighting against social injustices in the African American community; in fact, many made it a personal priority to effect change for the better (p. 37). The racial, gender, and social class struggles of African American women have always been major forces propelling self-expression through the use of the arts and diverse platforms, especially in the context of political expression. View (2013) asserted that African American women used music, dance, literature, sculpture, and painting as coping mechanisms to endure oppression (p. 2). African American women have made major contributions to the arts and to society, with evidence dating back to the eighteenth century. According to Young and Reviere (2015), African American women formed Black club movements during the late 1800's to challenge their intersecting oppressions of racism, genderism, and classism most prevalent in the southern region of the United States, as well as in the arts (p. 102). These clubs promoted art education, appreciation, charitable and community engagement, and civic reform (Cummins, 2015, pp. 1-4). The organizational practices of European

American arts and culture leaders excluded not only African Americans from the cultural mainstream, but their art works as well. Such exclusionary practices launched the beginning of African American women's leadership in the arts.

Historically, African American women's leadership toward social reform, activism, creative thinking, and steadfastness, evolved from their resistance to racial and gender oppression, as well as cognitive characteristics of strength. As outlined by Watson-Singleton (2017), the essence of African American women's leadership today mirrors past historical characteristics of strength that African American women used to overcome the multidimensional oppressions of racism and sexism, which may be experienced in executive director leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (p. 779).

Opposition to the historical barriers of racial and gender oppression has proven to be pivotal in the leadership development and advancement of African American women in spite of evidence suggesting that African American women are viewed as being less acceptable in senior-level positions (Domingue, 2015; Festekjian, Tram, Murray, Sy, & Huynh, 2015; Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017). Beckwith et al. (2016) posited that race and gender barriers not only influence the success of African American women, but also contribute to various stereotypes and views that pose threats to attainment, promotion, and advancement in executive leadership positions (p. 122). Additional research concluded that African American women are subjected to distinctive gender and racial stereotypes which they are negatively perceived as being too aggressive, uncontrollable, intimidating, not relatable, and incompetent; attributes that are considered ineffective and not in line with the prototype of leadership associated with mainstream organizations

predominately run by European American males (Donovan & West, 2015; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Rosette, Ponce de Leon, Koval, & Harrison, 2018).

Clearly, African American women lead in spite of challenges and while the presence and the voices of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs are often invisible and unheard in the literature, African American women continue to be prominent leaders through social change efforts as they stress the need for more diversity and inclusive practices, mentorships, internships, and executive leadership opportunities. As claimed by Allen and Lewis (2016), the CRF framework enables investigation of the presence of the intersections of racism and genderism surrounding leadership experiences of African American women (p. 110); including mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

### **Mainstream Nonprofit PAOs and Executive Leadership Development of African American Women**

As intellectuals, poets, dancers, classical musicians, vocalists, composers, filmmakers, sculptors, and other creatives, African American women have proven extremely influential and driven throughout the artistic world, where it is common for their voices to be absent from leadership and decision-making. In the nonprofit sector, minimal studies existed that highlighted the impact of intersectionality on the executive director leadership development of African American women; especially in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (Dickens, Womack, & Dimes, 2017). Despite organizational practices of increasing cultural equity in the arts and diversifying nonprofit organizations, African American women inhabit small spaces as executive director leaders (Adesaogun et al., 2015; Brown & Brais, 2018).

In 2000, Stein argued “the arts serve a larger role in society than just an economic one” (p. 304). In a qualitative study, she examined the recruitment of minority leaders in PAOs. Building on previous data from two studies, those of Rogers and Smith (1994) and Burbridge (1994), Stein found the percentage of minorities hired in leadership positions to be extremely low in PAOs, which historically train and recruit primarily European American males (Stein, 2000, pp. 305–306). A limitation of all three of the studies was the lack of data that identified the race and gender of the participants. Curtis (2017) suggested that exploring intersectional standpoints informs the life experiences of African American women distinctly different from European American women and African American men due to both racial and gender oppression (p. 94). Substantiating the executive director leadership experiences of African American women was recognized in Oikelome’s (2017) qualitative study which indicated that the intersectionality of race and gender also impacted college president leadership development. Participants reported that racial bias was more prevalent in the workplace than gender bias and more leadership development, mentorships with other African American women, and organizational accountability were crucial to navigating the pipeline to achieve success (pp. 29-36).

As entities of the nonprofit sector, mainstream nonprofit PAOs are key agents of social change committed to engaging diverse communities through the presentation of broad levels of programming in various performing arts genres, including music, opera, jazz, theater, and dance. Kim and Mason (2018) validated that the race and ethnicity of leadership was significant to the advocacy of the community and the people served in nonprofit arts and culture organizations (p. 50). Additionally, Kim and Mason provided

evidence suggesting that nonprofit organizations with ethnically representative leaders are more prone to advocate for communities that are marginalized versus organizations that are not (p. 52). Executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs serve to support the nonprofit sector through programming, fundraising, service fees, and government grants and contracts (Jung, 2015, p. 255). Although the underrepresentation of people from marginalized groups in executive leadership is prevalent, Adesaogun et al (2015) attested a diverse and inclusive society is a healthy society in any sector (p. 44). The researchers further suggested marginalized group representation in executive leadership roles yields more positive results in nonprofit organizations (p. 42). Such results could prove beneficial to mainstream nonprofit PAOs by ensuring that leaders from marginalized backgrounds are included in arts equity conversations and decisions that ensure equal access, participation, and cultural sustainment (Kraehe, 2018).

### **Career Barriers and Leadership Development**

African American women have been subjected to barriers, racial and gender bias, and stereotypical forms of oppression since the slavery era. Brown, White-Johnson, and Griffin-Fennell (2013) described this type of oppression as an attack on the self-identities of African American women, one that continues to have great influence on the societal views and portrayals of this population today (p. 525). Researchers identified African American women as having a different experience in the workplace than European American women. In comparison to African American women, European American women tend to be employed in more executive, administration, and management positions, as well as earn almost 10% more in salary (Key et al., 2012). Additionally, more prestige

accompanies European American women in these positions. In addition, Key et al. (2012) found occupational segregation greater between European American and African American women, often leading the latter group to feel it is more difficult for them to advance into executive leader positions.

Despite passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its 1991 amendment, both intended to remove barriers of discrimination, women and minorities still face obstacles to advancement in career development, upper management, and executive leadership. The U.S. Department of Labor created the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission through the Civil Rights Act of 1991 to help to identify barriers keeping women and minorities from upward career progression (McGee, 2018, p. 11). Clevenger and Singh (2013) assessed that gender and ethnicity were leading barriers to advancement based on societal expectations, stereotyping, and discriminatory attitudes with regard to prejudging and deeming women and minorities inadequate to fulfill the duties of the job (p. 379). Beckwith et al. (2016) deemed some of the stereotypical views of women as being passive leaders and not aggressive enough also contribute to limitations of success for women as executive leaders (p. 123).

### **Stereotypes**

Stereotypes affect conscious and subconscious thoughts, creating bias individuals can choose to embrace or ignore (Warren et al., 2013, p. 64). Such stereotypes force women to adjust their behaviors to bias attitudes, or to endure the pressures to keep themselves in good standing with the hope of upward mobility. The more compelling women are in their positions, the less likely they are to conform to negative stereotypes

(Beckwith et al., 2016, p. 123). For African American women, adjustment to stereotypes is often more difficult than for European American women and other women of color.

According to Rosette, Koval, Ma, and Livingston (2016), stereotypical views of African Americans contribute to the belief that African Americans are incompetent as leaders (p. 438). Rosette and Livingston (2012) pointed out African American women appear even less of leaders because of the intersection of their dual identities of race and gender that overlap with stereotypical leadership expectations, supporting past researchers who declared African American women underrepresented in executive leadership positions (p. 1163). Oikelome (2017) contended that the intersectionality theory of multiple oppressions—race, gender, and class—often subjects African American women to more disadvantages than European American women (p. 25). However, Beckwith et al. (2016) postulated that although African American women in the workplace endure bias and discriminatory treatment in being hired and promoted, awareness of such treatment makes them work extremely hard to avoid such perceptions (p. 122).

A qualifying attribute of African American women seeking executive director positions is having a performing arts background which could be a benefit to their leadership in a mainstream nonprofit PAO (Rosette et al., 2016, p. 438). Following an exploration of African American identities, Childs (2014) found performing arts entities play a major role in the stereotypical portrayals of African Americans in U.S. popular culture and help shape the public's views and behaviors toward African Americans

through music, film, and television, in which their portrayals are both positive and negative (p. 291).

### **Biculturalism**

To survive within a bureaucratic, typically European American male-dominated workplace, African American women professionals in many cases understand they must conform as much as possible, leaving their real selves at home so as to fit in and be accepted. Most African American women do not want to be viewed as loud, ignorant, angry, and overbearing, especially when they are trying to advance in their careers. According to Durr and Wingfield (2011), a bureaucratic system of management by European American males set U.S. workplace standards of interrelationships, defining what is acceptable and relatable relative to communication style, behavior, dress code, and skin complexion, i.e., the traditional, conservative black or blue suit with a white button-down shirt, low heels, neat or updo hair, and minimal jewelry (p. 58). Durr and Wingfield also stated that lighter skin tones of African American women tend to be more favorable in organizations. Allen and Lewis (2016) asserted that meeting the standards for acceptability often means African American women must adhere to the norm by transforming themselves and becoming a part of the European American culture (p. 117). In doing so, they often exhibit a bicultural identity in conjunction with both their personal and professional identities.

According to Bell (1990), African American women only began to move up from service positions to professional positions after passage of the Civil Rights Law of 1954, which led to their advancement in the 1970s (pp. 459–462). As researchers revealed, the



new focus for African American women was not only to ensure their families' financial security, which would also contribute to lifting their communities, but to stress the importance of their careers as a permanent means to establish professional identity and professional achievement within mainstream European American organizations (Cummins, 2015, pp. 1-4). In many instances even today, career advancement means African American women must assimilate and conform to the dominant norms of European American standards, living in one cultural context in their personal lives and shifting to another cultural context in their professional capacity.

### **Tokenism**

When selected as a professional candidate, establishing a professional identity, and assimilating into a mainstream cultural climate, African American women often find themselves standing alone as the only representative of their minority group. This is especially true both at the executive level and in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. When a minority group is underrepresented in the workplace, they likely experience what can be referred to as tokenism (Cook & Glass, 2015, p. 138). When African American women are the only representatives of their minority group, their qualifications and capabilities are often overlooked, despite contributions to the organization and a demonstrated ability to getting the job done (Wingfield, 2014, p. 483).

Although researchers have not pinpointed the specific reason behind African American women's limited progression into executive leadership positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, Key et al. (2012) identified a pattern in the research suggesting race and gender unequivocally influence the inequitable outcomes of wages, job segregation,

racial and gender discrimination, and career advancement (p. 395). The presence of these barriers and stereotypes broadens the gap to executive leadership for African American women, including those trying to ascend as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Beckwith et al (2016) suggested that African American women seeking advancement must be motivated, determined, and persistent against the recognized barriers and distorted stereotypes they experience on the presumptions of race and gender (p. 123). Because stereotypes and barriers in the workplace are quite common, mainstream nonprofit PAOs must give consideration to African American women and other marginalized groups in their hiring, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and organizational policies and practices.

### **Diversification**

It is important for African American women to be a part of the decisions about how they are portrayed and represented in the arts. Cuyler (2013) addressed the need to reconsider both affirmative action and diversity as platforms for the recruitment of minorities in performing arts management (pp. 99-102). After assessing the relationship between PAOs and educators of arts management as leaders in the development of a more diverse workforce, Cuyler further suggested organizations can only maximize human capital and engage all communities when they diversify.

Diversifying arts boards is one way to improve arts access and public programming, advance diversification efforts, and maximize senior-level talent acquisition and resources. According to Harris (2014), racial and gender diversity of arts boards aids in the success of nonprofit organizations (p. 114). Despite civil rights and

affirmative action in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations advancing African American women throughout the workforce, evidence points to African American women, along with other marginalized groups, misrepresented in board positions and selected at a lower rate for executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (Bluse, Bernstein, & Bilimoria, 2016; Cuyler, 2017b; Harris, 2014; Hill, 2017; Kim & Mason, 2018). Lim, Clarke, Ross, and Wells (2015) noted, advancing into leadership roles at the executive level continues to be rare for African American women (p. 193). Researchers Cook and Glass (2015) asserted that the promotion of women in the workplace can be an effective way to increase diversity within organizations (p. 138).

### **Summary**

As institutions of power, mainstream nonprofit PAOs traditionally are led by European American men, and although African American women are slowly adopting more roles as arts leaders, their opportunities to lead as executive directors remain inadequate as leadership roles at the executive level are minimal for African American women. Crenshaw (1998) asserted researchers must consider the oppressive identities of race and gender from multiple perspectives of African American women in terms of their individual experiences in institutions of power.

CRF is an untapped framework that researchers can use to examine the underrepresentation of African American women and effect social change in mainstream nonprofit PAOs as power agents in the nonprofit sector. The use of CRF illuminated critical approaches necessary to suspend racial and gender inequity in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (Childers-McKee & Hytten, 2015).

Recent report writers have highlighted the near-nonexistence of African American women in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Researchers have also indicated racial and gender barriers can prevent African American women from leadership recruitment, development, and advancement (Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Cuyler, 2015).

Chapter 2 included a summary of current research studies on African American women and executive leadership. Some of the barriers African American women face as a result of having the dual oppressive identities of both race and gender were outlined, as well as the impact this has on their leadership development and advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Chapter 3 illustrated justification for my study's qualitative design and the implementation of phenomenological research approach. The researcher's role and the methodology appeared, followed by issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a summary.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The nonprofit management and leadership problem addressed in my phenomenological study focused on the underrepresentation of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAO's. African American women who work in various fields of the arts desire opportunities to lead mainstream nonprofit PAOs as executive directors, with limited numbers currently in such roles. However, executive director advancement opportunities are minimal for this population, giving African American women a unique experience unknown to many. In addition to the dual identity of being female and African American, frequently leading to stereotypes and discrimination, executive director positions require a unique experience not always easy to obtain, even with a higher level of education. Earning consideration can be challenging. With my study, I sought to understand the varied experiences of African American women currently holding executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Application of the phenomenological approach helped with understanding their shared lived experiences.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences and perspectives of African American women and their underrepresentation as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. In particular, the study explored how the intersection of race and gender impacted African American women's leadership development and training for advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, and identified key themes in how African American women in executive director positions experience,

were impacted by, and coped with inequalities surrounding racism and sexism, as well as the ways in which they resisted workplace barriers caused by dual intersectional identity.

With a goal of capturing and documenting the perceptions and lived experiences of African American women holding executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, the impact of race and gender identities was recognized, career obstacles and barriers were pinpointed, and strategies to advancement were identified. As suggested by Raheim (2016) for such studies, the perspectives of participants were realized. By administering interviews, I gathered information on lived experiences, providing essential knowledge to expand the present body of literature.

Additionally, the methodology of the study recapped the research questions and consisted of the research approach, research design, the role of the researcher, participant selection, data collection and interpretation processes, and confirmation of findings.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The following four research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

RQ2: How does race impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ3: How does gender impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ4: What strategies would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

I used a phenomenological research approach for this study to explore and address African American women participants as they discussed their experiences as executive director leaders in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. My research discovered how the intersection of race and gender informed their leadership development and advancement. Alase (2017) described a qualitative methodology as a distinct approach that is participant oriented as the researcher uncovers the lived experiences of the sample and interprets the findings (p. 9). I selected a phenomenological design as suitable for trying to gain insight into individual experiences. Phenomenological research relies on textual analysis to expose individual experiences both verbally and emotionally, while exploring commonality between lived experiences (CohenMiller, 2018, p. 271; Moustakas, 1994).

I selected a phenomenological research methodology because it aided in understanding the unique experiences of the participants through qualitative research (see Sheehan, 2014, pp. 10-20). The rationale for using a phenomenological study was based on its connection to the conceptual frameworks of CRF (Delgado, 1993) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). These foundations provided insight into inequities and discrimination unique to African American women. According to CRF and intersectionality, African American women experience institutionalized and societal forms of discrimination due to the overlapping factors of race, gender, and class, which they revealed in discussing their own experiences (Allen & Lewis, 2016). CRF and

intersectionality exposed the recognized underrepresentation of African American women through a qualitative phenomenological study. Because the aim of this study was to understand individual experiences and perspectives of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, Moustakas (1994) affirmed that a phenomenological study would bring new perceptions from the past into the present that would deepen the meaning of experiences (p. 45).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of a phenomenological researcher requires being involved in multiple steps to conducting a thorough qualitative study. The primary role of the researcher is to act as the main instrument while collecting and analyzing all data (Karagiozis, 2018, p. 23). In accordance, my purpose as the researcher was to collect, analyze, and document the lived experiences of African American women who are currently or previously employed as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Participants were recruited through e-mail and telephone. Participants were asked to respond to semistructured questions either through a video call interview using FaceTime. I collected data through note taking and audio recordings using a Canon GX7 camera or Apple iPhone 8 to gather interview responses. I processed and analyzed participant responses, deriving themes from the data that aligned with and answered the research questions. I managed data analysis through the use of NVivo v. 12 software.

I scanned all physical data and stored it digitally in pdf format on an external device that is protected by password. The device will be stored in a safe-deposit box for 5 years, and then the external device will be burned and physically destroyed.



It was important for me as the researcher to remain unbiased during the process. As an African American woman who has worked as a performing artist and in the performing arts field overall, personal experiences may have been similar to those of participants. However, as previously stated, researchers with the same ethnic background as participants does not necessarily mean that they will share in personal experiences (Karagiozis, 2018, p.26). Karagiozis (2018) identified that when researchers have the same ethnic identities there can be an expectation by the researcher to receive answers consistent with those preconceived by the researcher, which can lead to bias. To alleviate potential personal biases, Karagioszis (2018) suggested the researcher keep a diary of personal feelings throughout the interviewing process (p. 25). This helps the researcher to maintain a nonjudgmental mindset. In addition to keeping a personal diary, I also incorporated bracketing or epoché as a way to eliminate any personal biases that might have posed a threat to the responses of the participants. Moustakas (1994) described epoché as a process in which researchers disconnect themselves from any preconceived knowledge while accepting only new knowledge as it presents itself (pp. 84-85). Chenail (2011) proposed that qualitative researchers should conduct interviews with the sole intent of discovering information of which they are presently unaware (p. 257). For this reason, I took additional steps of not disclosing any personal information to participants during the interview process.

## Methodology

### Participant Selection

The population targeted for this phenomenological study was any woman who identified as African American who had previously been or was currently serving as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAOs in the United States. This population was congruous with the research and interview questions, as well as the resources available (see Robinson, 2014, p. 28).

**Sampling.** According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), sampling is a process in which the researcher chooses participants who can provide rich and expert knowledge about the research phenomena. I used purposive sampling to find key informants to validate this qualitative research (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Criterion sampling is best suited as a strategy for participant selection in a qualitative phenomenological research study; therefore, I implemented this method to select participants with predefined criteria and extensive knowledge of executive leadership. Criterion sampling is vital, as it facilitates the selection of a particular group of participants with shared experience (Moser & Korstjens, 2018, p. 10). To delineate a study population, Robinson (2014) suggested meeting appropriate criteria to answer the research questions. To eliminate inaccurate data, the sampling strategy in this study ruled out participants who did not meet the obligatory criteria; as such, participants were homogenous based on demographics and a unique set of characteristics (see Robinson, 2014, p. 28).

**Sample size.** Demographic criteria for participants were they must have been at least 18 years old, of African American descent, female, and either currently hold or have

held an executive director role in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. To add to external validity, participants were not relegated to a specific geographical location or genre of the mainstream performing arts sector. A sample size of nine participants was selected and interviewed, their responses were used to recognize themes and patterns and ensured a collection of an appropriate amount of data. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), with qualitative studies researchers deal with estimates. In addition, such studies require fewer than 10 interviews, with the researcher sampling until data saturation occurs—i.e., when there is maximum data with no new information emerging from additional participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018, p. 11).

Recruiting participants can pose challenges to the researcher in which case snowball sampling or referral sampling can help increase the number of participants for a study (Robinson, 2014, p. 37). Therefore, the use of snowball sampling in conjunction with criterion sampling helped to identify and recruit African American women who met study specifications. To ensure an adequate sample to distinguish themes and patterns, participants were recruited through personal affiliations and recommendations. Women were also sought through contacting PAOs by telephone and email and via professional performing arts blogs.

Upon receiving permission from Walden University IRB, participants were contacted privately and information about the study will be provided.

### **Instrumentation**

In qualitative research, interviewing is conversation with a purpose that is informed by the research questions (Alase, 2017, p. 15). For this phenomenological

study, interviewing served as the primary instrument to collect data from participants about their lived experiences that will be further explored and examined. Brayda and Boyce (2014) posited that interviewing begins with the expectation that perspectives of the participants are purposeful and meaningful (p. 13).

Qualitative interviewing begins with asking questions in line with the research study (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Semistructured interviews one-on-one or video called using FaceTime or Skype assisted in collecting data. Questions were designed to elicit information about the personal experiences of participants in their roles as executive directors, their educational and professional backgrounds, and the impact of race and gender on their leadership development, training, and advancement. Agreed upon by participants, responses were captured and recorded via a Cannon GX7 camera or Apple iPhone 8, in addition to taking manual notes in a journal. Interviews were transcribed using Dragon Speech recognition software, thus ensuring efficiency.

Brayda and Boyce (2014) suggested an interview guide may provide a framework for research questions, preventing researchers from delving into areas unrelated to the research questions (p. 320). Thus, an interview process guide was created to ensure consideration of all questions and issues, as well as stay within the timeframe of the interview.

The interview process guide (Appendix A) was created to address the four research questions of this phenomenological study on the experiences and perspectives of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs and how the intersection of race and gender impacted their leadership development and advancement. The

interviewing process consisted of 17 questions devised for my research study. Interview questions were open-ended and organized in themes according to the research questions.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Upon the approval from the IRB at Walden University, I emailed participants for this study. Potential participants were asked to contact me by e-mail or cellphone. A maximum of nine African American women were interviewed. Since African American women are underrepresented in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, a distinct challenge existed in obtaining enough participants who met the specifications required for this research study (Beckwith et al., 2016; Catalyst, 2017; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Cuyler, 2015; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Stein, 2000; Wilson, 2014). The use of snowball sampling in conjunction with criterion sampling helped to identify and recruit African American women who met study specifications.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Bree and Gallagher (2016) suggested that, during the data analysis period, it is important for the researcher to keep an open mind, accepting and welcoming alternate views (p. 2814). Along these lines, data was examined both during and following interviews as well as during the transcribing process, after which participants were given an opportunity to review the transcripts. This provided triangulation to validate the research. Once all data was collected, I transcribed all data with the use of Dragon speech recognition software. According to Alase (2017), researchers must meticulously authenticate and verify qualitative phenomenological data tools, so the final results are not insufficient (p. 17). I explored NVivo v.12 for transferring data for coding and

analysis and to recognize themes in the data. Throughout the data analysis process, all recorded interview data from participants' responses was examined.

Data analysis began by identifying themes from my notes to separate the participants' experiences (Bree & Gallagher, 2016, p. 2814). According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), there are various ways to identify themes or patterns in qualitative data with guidance by earlier researchers (p. 3352). To transcribe interviews, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method for qualitative analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) foundational method was devised to support researchers in identifying, analyzing, and informing patterns or themes found inside the data from the interviews and will further assist in understanding the lived experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs for this phenomenological research study (p. 82).

Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis method was applied by using the following six actions:

- Action 1: Become immersed in the data before coding through repeated reading while seeking meanings and patterns.
- Action 2: Develop initial codes by hand for potential themes after immersion of the data.
- Action 3: Look for themes after the data has been coded and compiled by groups. Creating tables will help to recognize and group the data into themes. NVivo v.12 Plus software will assist in grouping the data sets.

- Action 4: Review and examine the themes to ensure that all of the coded data supports each theme.
- Action 5: Name themes and write a detailed description of each so that they are clearly defined. Each theme should serve as a map of the data.
- Action 6: Finalize the report in writing of the thematic analysis.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

According to Stewart and Gapp (2017), the qualitative researcher must establish and show trustworthiness and credibility by producing the most honest representation of data (p. 9). For this phenomenological study, credibility was sought through comparisons by way of repeated observations, note-taking, extended engagement, triangulation, and member checking. Gapp and Stewart (2017) referred to these strategies as an articulated audit that builds a train of evidence, in this case, from the four research questions to the study conclusions.

A detailed description of the personal accounts of nine African American women serving as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs was compiled. This came from data collection, compilation, assembly, and reassembly. This method ensured credibility.

#### **Transferability**

Transferability occurs when another researcher can replicate a study's findings in a similar study with the same setting and context (Ngozwana, 2018). In a phenomenological research study, transferability comes through collecting thick amounts

of data with detailed and vivid descriptions of participant experiences (p. 25). Broad and rich details of the experiences of African American women in executive director positions for mainstream nonprofit PAOs was illuminated.

### **Dependability**

According to Lishner (2015), dependability in research refers to ways to show the replicability of the results of a study (p. 52). Lishner (2015) recommends that researchers can assure dependability by (a) replicating the study (b) ensuring data sharing if requested by fellow researchers, and (c) adhering to a mindset of seeking the truth while conducting the research study. For my research study, I kept an audit outline of all records through written documentation for accuracy.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is maintained when the researcher can verify how the data was collected and interpreted (Ellis, 2019, p. 111). To ensure confirmability, data was cross-checked. Any new details arising from data analysis was recorded in a separated journal. To keep bias from interfering and manipulating the findings, I used bracketing to document personal thoughts and feelings so that I remained neutral during the interviewing process and while conducting the study.

### **Ethical Procedures**

This phenomenological research study followed ethical guidelines established by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Every measure was taken to protect the rights of study participants. As required by Walden University, a certification from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was obtained. Individuals were free to



choose whether they wished to participate in this study. Although unaware of any harm associated with participating in this study, to further ensure the ethical treatment of all participants, the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association were upheld. As outlined by Guishard, Halkovic, Galletta, and Li (2018), all participants in the study were treated with respect with the intent of building a relationship of trust (p. 3). In addition to showing respect for all of the participants, professional conduct was maintained. For the safety and security of personal information, all files, audiotapes, and transcripts were kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. All physical data was scanned and stored digitally in pdf format on an external device that is protected by password. The device will be stored in a safe-deposit box for 5 years and then burned and physically destroyed.

### **Summary**

This study was carried out to explore nonprofit management and leadership disparity embodying discrepancies in hiring, executive leadership development and training for advancement, promotion, and other workplace discrimination experiences of African American women as a result of the intersection of race and gender identity. Chapter 3 discussed the research design and rationale for the design, the role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection process, data collection, instrumentation, and the data analysis plan.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences and perspectives of African American women underrepresented in executive director leadership positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs in the United States. The research design focused on the impact of race and gender on the leadership training and advancement of African American women in executive director positions. I used the following four research questions to guide the study:

RQ1: What are the executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

RQ2: How does race impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ3: How does gender impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ4: What strategies would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

This chapter highlights and details facts about the setting of the research, the demographics of the participants, and the ways in which the data was collected and analyzed. This chapter further details proof of the trustworthiness of the study including the ways in which the study was credible, transferable, dependable, and conformable. Additionally, I provide the results of the study and a summary at the end the chapter.

### **Sociodemographics**

The requirements for participation in the study were specified in an e-mailed participant invitation letter. The eligibility to participate required that participants be an African American woman between the ages of 21 and 64 and be currently employed or had been previously employed as an executive director or a senior leader in a performing arts organization in the United States.

Out of 12 women who were responsive to the study, nine met the eligibility requirements and consented to participate. The sociodemographic leadership identities of participants in the study constituted the following: executive director (ED;  $n = 7$ ) and senior leader (SL;  $n = 2$ ). Participants were currently and/or previously employed throughout various regions in the United States in either a mainstream nonprofit PAO ( $n = 8$ ) or cultural performing arts organization ( $n = 1$ ). All participants had a college educational level. Further sociodemographics of participants are included in Table 1. I assigned participants pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

Table 1

*Sociodemographics of Study Participants*

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Mainstream Nonprofit PAO</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Performing Arts Background</i>
P1 – Jasmine	45-50	Grad Degree	Yes	Senior Leader	20+	Yes
P2 – Rose	56-64	Grad Degree	Yes	Executive Director	20+	Yes
P3 – Pearl	40-45	Grad Degree	No	Executive Director	10-20	Yes
P4 -Sapphire	50-55	Undergrad Degree	Yes	Executive Director	10-20	Yes
P5 – Crystal	50-55	Undergrad Degree	Yes	Executive Director	10-20	Yes
P6 – Amber	50-55	Grad Degree	Yes	Executive Director	7-10	No
P7 – Ruby	60-64	Undergrad Degree	Yes	Executive Director	20+	Yes
P8 – Jade	60-64	Grad Degree	Yes	Senior Leader	7-10	Yes
P9 – Ivory	60-64	Undergrad Degree	Yes	Executive Director	2-5	Yes

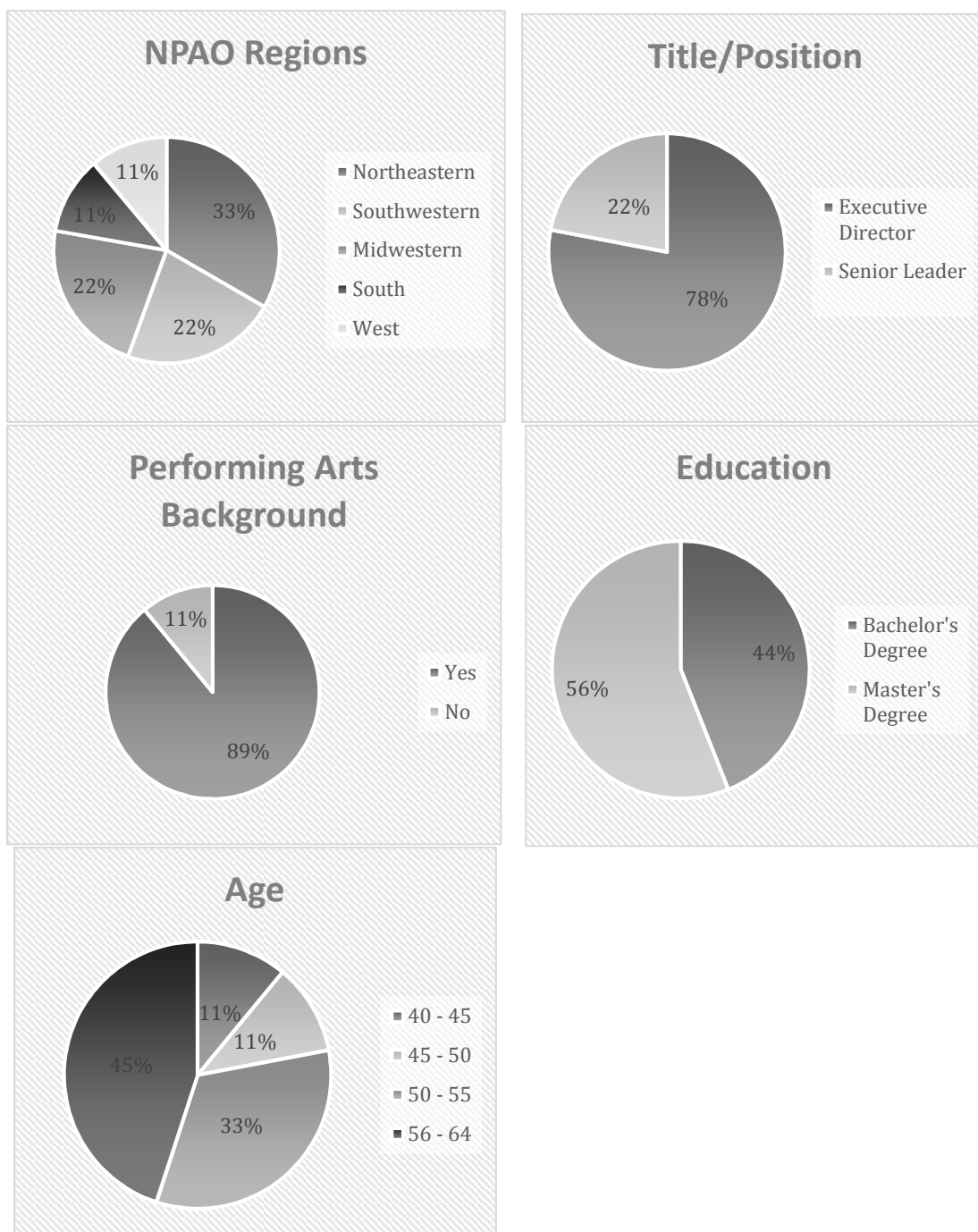


Figure 1. Sociodemographics of study participants.

### **Research Setting**

During the research study, there were no elements of collusion or perceived coercion to participate in the study due to any existing or expected relationship between the participants and myself that may have swayed the analysis and findings in the study. Participation recruitment was completely voluntary, and there was no compensation for participation. There were no negative effects on any participants' health and no minor or serious injuries to any participant as the study did not require human experimentation. All interviews were guided in a safe and confidential setting.

All nine of the interviews were conducted and recorded via FaceTime on an iPhone 8 and using a Cannon GX7. The interviews were conducted in a noise-free, securely locked separate office in my home and participants were also in noise-free, private environments that would not compromise the interviewing process. Prior to the interviews, participants also acknowledged the privacy of their environments.

### **Data Collection**

Upon approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval Number 08-13-19-0265943), 12 participants were recruited and invited to participate in the research study. Each participant was sent an e-mail and called directly using publicly available contact information off of the websites of mainstream nonprofit PAO's. The invitations were sent individually to ensure each individual's privacy. I used purposive sampling and criterion sampling to find and select key participants with predefined criteria and extensive knowledge of executive leadership to validate this phenomenological research study (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018, p.10).

Participants were asked to do the following:

- make themselves available via a one-on-one interview or video call interview using FaceTime or Skype,
- permit the interview to be recorded and allow data to be collected through note taking and audio recordings using a Canon GX7 camera or Apple iPhone 8 to gather interview responses,
- provide their contact information so an interview could be scheduled, and
- sign an informed consent form.

Nine participants met the inclusion criteria, returned consent forms via e-mail, and were contacted to set up a date and time to be interviewed. Due to the nationwide location of each participant, interviews took place in a private environment, separate from the participants' workplace, via FaceTime on an iPhone 8, and were recorded using a Canon GX7 camera with the participants' permission. There were no group calls. Participants were interviewed independently. The data collection period was from September 24, 2019, to October 15, 2019, with interviews spanning from 32–53 minutes with a median time of 42 minutes. No unexpected conditions or changes to procedures occurred during the collection of data.

At the start of the phone interviews, I introduced myself and the project research study. Participants were given fictional names that they agreed upon before the interview began. I discussed all the implications such as the approximate duration of the interview, 60 minutes, the withdrawal process, and confidentiality. I also reviewed elements of the informed consent form. I made participants aware of the voluntary nature of the study

and informed them that if they decided not to participate at any time during the interviewing process, they were free to withdraw. I used an open-ended, semistructured interview guide that included both a sociodemographic and interview questionnaire (see Appendix A) to gather the perceptions of the nine participants for the purpose of the study. With the participants' permission, all responses and observations were captured and recorded on an Apple iPhone 8 and a Cannon GX7 camera, in addition to my use of an Apple iPad to make field notes during the interviews.

Upon completion of the interviewing process, participants were debriefed through member checking and allowed to view their transcripts to ensure accuracy, credibility, and validity. The following were discussed during the debriefing:

- Overview of the study
- Confidentiality
- Compensation
- Transcript copy
- Contact information (see Appendix D).

A review of each transcript of participants' interview responses occurred within 10 days after the conclusion of the interview to ensure that data collected was accurately represented. No additional feedback was needed as there were no interview response discrepancies.

During the data collection, communications with participants required one or more of their identifiers such as name, e-mail address, or phone number to be shared with me. However, complete confidentiality was provided to ensure that the identities of



participants were not directly or indirectly disclosed. I collected all forms including the consent forms and the interview guide. I used a code book to record the names of all participants with a corresponding number and fictitious name. I used the code number instead of the participant's name on all field notes. All the participants' information was kept confidential and secured by locking field notes and forms in a file box. I kept the list of code numbers with the participants' names in a separate lock box in a different location in my personal home office. I retained a link between study code numbers and direct identifiers after the data collection was completed to identify participants who might have indicated that they wanted their data withdrawn. However, there were no participant withdrawals from the study.

### **Data Analysis**

All audio recorded data was scanned using the voice recognition software Dragon Speech Professional Individual, v.15. Data was then transcribed and saved in Microsoft Windows version 10 Word format on my password protected personal computer. During the transcribing phase, researchers must be meticulous in authenticating and verifying the data to ensure that the final results are not insufficient (Alase 2017, p. 17). Participants were also allowed to view and check their transcripts (member checking) to ensure accuracy, credibility, and validity. To maintain privacy, I was the only one to listen to the audio recordings and transcribe all of the data. Each recording had an identifying code. The participants' names did not appear on the transcripts.

I consistently reviewed the nine transcripts of the participants along with my field notes to become acquainted with the details of the collected data. Participant responses

were processed and analyzed to identify patterns of words, phrases, and concepts. NVivo v.12 Plus software was used for thematic analysis to further interpret the data by identifying common themes that existed throughout the coded data. Themes derived from the data that aligned with and answered the research questions were identified. In addition to using NVivo software, I designed a spread sheet using Microsoft Excel that assisted in recognizing themes and patterns in the participants' responses to the 17 interview questions. Data saturation occurred as no new information emerged from the participants or from the maximized data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018, p. 11).

There are many ways to identify themes or patterns in qualitative data with guidance by earlier researchers (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352). To interpret the data for this research study, I selected Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method for qualitative analysis in collaboration with NVivo v.12 Plus software. Braun and Clarke's (2006) foundational method was devised to support researchers in identifying, analyzing, and informing patterns or themes found inside the data from the interviews and further assisted in understanding the lived experiences of the participants as African American women employed as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs for this phenomenological research study (p. 82). Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method and NVivo v.12 Plus software aided in a decrease of probable bias by the researcher.

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method was repeatedly applied utilizing the participants' transcripts and by using the following six actions as outlined in Chapter 3:

1. Become immersed in the data by repeatedly reviewing the transcripts of each participant to become acquainted with the details of the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I carefully reread each response from the transcripts while transcribing the data and paid close attention to the similarities in the experiences of the participants as each related to the research questions, as well as noticed the differences. I noted in a journal recognizable similarities in participant responses to their experiences as well as the differences in participant responses. Participant responses were analyzed to identify patterns of words, phrases, and concepts while seeking meanings before coding.
2. The researcher develops initial codes by hand for potential themes after immersion of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this action, I highlighted and coded in writing on the transcripts specific characteristics of the data and further collated and categorized the data according to the codes.
3. Look for themes after the data has been coded and compiled by groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I created tables on spreadsheets in Excel to group the data into themes. NVivo v.12 Plus software assisted in grouping the data sets into nodes.
4. The researcher reviews and examines the themes to ensure that all of the coded data supports each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this action, I observed meaningful responses that were related to the conceptual frameworks of the study; intersectionality and CRF. I categorized them into themes and eliminated any data that was not relevant to the study.

5. Name themes and write a detailed description of each so that they are clearly defined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each descriptive theme served as a map of the data. 15 interpretive themes derived from the data.
6. Finalize the report in writing of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are examined in the final description and analysis of the lived experiences of the participants as African American women employed as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

### **Proof of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

According to Stewart and Gapp (2017), the qualitative researcher must establish and show trustworthiness and credibility by producing the most honest representation of data (p. 9). For this phenomenological study, credibility was obtained through comparisons by way of repeated observations, note-taking, extended engagement, triangulation, and member checking. Gapp and Stewart (2017) referred to these strategies as an articulated audit that builds a train of evidence. Participants were allowed to view their transcripts to ensure accuracy, credibility, and validity through member checking. Participants were given 7 -10 days to review and submit transcripts. There were no requested revisions.

A detailed description of the personal accounts of nine African American women serving as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs was compiled through data collection, compilation, assembly, and reassembly. This method ensured credibility.

**Transferability**

To establish transferability, broad and rich details of the experiences of African American women in executive director positions for mainstream nonprofit PAOs were used to illuminate the findings of the study. In a phenomenological research study, transferability comes through collecting thick amounts of data with detailed and vivid descriptions of participant experiences (Ngozwana, 2018, p. 25). Transferability occurs when another researcher can replicate a study's findings in a similar study with the same setting and context. By preparing an elaborative description outlining all of the components of the study including the methodology and instrumentation, along with both the collection of data and analysis, future researchers can duplicate a comparable study.

**Dependability**

According to Lishner (2015), dependability in research refers to ways to show the replicability of the results of a study (p. 52). Lishner (2015) recommended that researchers can assure dependability by (a) replicating the study (b) ensuring data sharing if requested by fellow researchers, and (c) adhering to a mindset of seeking the truth while conducting the research study. For my research study, I kept an audit outline (see Appendix E) of all records through written documentation for accuracy.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is maintained when the researcher can verify how the data was collected and interpreted (Ellis, 2019, p.111). Particular methods were used to ensure confirmability. Data was recorded and transcribed by the researcher and cross-checked by participants. Themes were developed from original interviews of participants. Details

arose from data analysis and were recorded in a separate journal and an audit trail was kept. To keep bias from interfering and manipulating the findings, bracketing was used to document personal thoughts and feelings to remain neutral during the interviewing process and while conducting the study.

### **Results**

The 15 themes that originated from using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method for qualitative analysis in collaboration with NVivo v.12 Plus software were produced as a result of the statements given by participants during the interviewing process. In response to the 17 questions asked, nine African American women shared their personal experiences and direct perspectives of becoming executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The results of this phenomenological research study are aligned with the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

RQ2: How does race impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ3: How does gender impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

RQ4: What strategies would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

### Research Question 1: Executive Director Experiences of African American Women

The goal of research question 1 (RQ1) was to empower African American women in sharing their personal backgrounds and career experiences of rising to the top as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. To address the question, participants were asked eight questions from the interview questionnaire (See Appendix B) including questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 16. 5 of the 15 themes emerged for RQ1. They are indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

#### *Themes for Research Question 1*

RQ1	Themes	Participants
What are the executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?	1. Over 10 years of preparation	<i>P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>
	2. Competitive	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>
	3. Challenges	<i>P1, P2, P3, P6, P9</i>
	4. Assets	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>
	5. Support	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>

**Theme 1: Over 10 years of preparation.** The first theme that emerged from the data analysis described the number of years that it took for participants to reach the executive director level in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. With the exception of 3 participants ( $n = 6$ ), 67% of the participants described the number of years to advance into executive director positions as being over 10 years. Two participants worked over 15 years before advancing into an executive director position. Ruby stated, “I worked for many, many years in the arts world before I got this position, about a good 15 years

before I was asked to take on the wonderful position that I have now. But, I have been an executive director for over 20 years. It took me a long time to get to this level. It is definitely not the kind of job that they just give to you. It takes dedication.” Likewise, Jade and Crystal worked over ten years. Jade admitted, “I worked for about 15 years before being asked to take this position.” Crystal shared the number of years that she had to work, “Well, it was definitely over 10 years; about 14 years really. I started out working in the arts while I was in college and I just kept going from there...I was always involved in some form of the arts.” Sapphire responded, “About ten years.” Amber gave a similar response, “Hmm, let’s see, about give or take, 9-10 years.” Ivory shared, “I worked for about 10 years before I became the executive director of where I am now.” In contrast, one participant spent the least amount of time advancing into an executive director position. Pearl stated,

I would say it took me about 3 years after I completed a fellowship before I became the executive director of my own organization. . . . In this particular field, as an African American woman there is not a whole lot of diversity. So, for me it was quite challenging to get the type of job that I was looking for... So, I just decided . . . I’m going to start my own and that’s what I did, you know. It was either that, or starve and I was not about to starve.

Jasmine acknowledged, “Well, I had to work between 6-7 years before I was selected to fully become an Artistic Director.” Rose admitted, “About 9 years after I graduated from college.”



**Theme 2: Competitive.** The second theme that emerged from the data analysis described the level of competitiveness in the performing arts industry for African American women. All 100% of the participants ( $n = 9$ ) described competitiveness as a part of their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Jasmine, Crystal, and Ruby shared similar declarations. Jasmine responded, “It shouldn’t be but it is because I think that African American women have a harder time securing these positions than White women.” Crystal expressed, “Oh, I think it is hard for African American women to become executive leaders in the performing arts industry and any other industry.” Ruby declared, “Oh it is very competitive in the performing arts industry and especially for African American women, but it is competitive everywhere for African American women and executive leadership is even more competitive, but we are there; even if it is in small numbers we are there, we are continuing to rise and we will continue to be there. Pearl expressed,

It is very competitive in the performing arts industry for women because as I said before, this is a field that is dominated by white men. For me, particularly as an African American woman, competition has been four-fold because not only have I had to compete for a position dominated by white males, but I have had to compete with white females, other women of color, and even some black males. So, when you have this many different people to compete with, competition is very stiff.

Sapphire, Amber, and Jade disclosed the difficulties of competing. Sapphire stated, “It is hard. It is difficult because when you have to compete with other people, regardless of

your education and often times your name will even keep you from getting a job. To compete with other people, the competition is very steep and sometimes you are competing with people who don't even have as much education as you do." Amber expressed,

Oh, I think this is an extremely competitive field because of what you're up against; a very bureaucratic system of doing things and providing programming in a very traditional and bureaucratic way and if you don't live in a major metropolitan city, it can be much worse.

Jade attested,

It is competitive; very competitive because as an African American woman many times you have to prove that you are qualified and worthy to be where you are and that makes the competition even greater because you are up against the majority.

Ivory further stated,

I'm not going to lie it is competitive because there are not a whole of these positions that come available. So, it can be difficult in acquiring an executive director position in any area of the performing arts field whether it be for profit or nonprofit.

**Theme 3: Challenges.** The third theme that emerged from the data analysis described the challenges of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Of the participants, 56% ( $n = 5$ ), described the challenges as African American women. Some of the challenges included location, job selection, and training. Jasmine stated,

There have been very few people that I work with that can relate to the struggles that I have endured as an African American woman in this field. My colleagues cannot always see my vision from an African American woman's standpoint and so that makes my position very difficult and challenging.

Rose described her challenge as one that was attributed to geographical location by stating,

The obstacles that I had were I had to go out of the area to get trained because I was unable to get trained in the area where I lived. Upon the completion of training I was hired as an executive director in an arts position in the local area that had an arts program. At the time, the arts in my area were very limited. After canvassing the area, I had to train in other areas that had a strong art program.

Pearl stated,

For me it was quite challenging to get the type of job that I was looking for. Most of these positions are dominated by white men, there are very few people that look like you and me in this field.

In contrast, Sapphire, Crystal, and Jade shared similar experiences. Sapphire responded,

Well, I have had to work very hard to get to this point, but it has been good work because I started out working for myself and building my own organization out of my own expertise in the arts. I am a sort of Harlem Renaissance woman of sorts. I did not face too many obstacles because I made a very early decision to do things for myself because of the obstacles that can arise as a woman and as a Black woman.

Crystal stated,

Well, I started out working in the arts while I was in college and I just kept going from there. I really didn't have a lot of obstacles because I was always involved in some form of the arts and it was well received.

Jade attested,

It has been a path that I have been on. I started from high school and basically worked my way into this position from college. I have not faced any really hard obstacles. Everything has basically just fallen into place from all of my hard work and it has paid off.

**Theme 4: Assets.** The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis described the assets that contributed to the experiences of the participants. All 100% of the participants ( $n = 9$ ) described assets that qualified them to become an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Jasmine asserted, "My greatest asset is my experience because I have worked well over ten years in this field and I have an even bigger love for what I do." Like Jasmine, Ruby's years of service were defined as her greatest asset. Ruby stated, "I think my years of service to the arts are my greatest asset and just my love for it. I have a lot of experience and a vivid background and I love sharing it." Crystal and Jade shared similar responses. Crystal stated, "My arts background because it is extensive." Jade responded, "My greatest asset has been my preparation to be here. I have worked hard and I will continue to work hard because this is the only place that I want to be." Communication was an asset that was contributable to the executive director experience. Sapphire stated,

I like to talk to people. You have to be able to communicate. I think communication is my greatest asset. I can sit with the good ole boys and kick it or whatever. But you have to be able to tell people your vision and point them in the direction that they need to grow and working with other types of people. You can learn from other people and you need to be versatile in dealing with other people. Having different opinions makes a company.

Pearl stated, “My can-do attitude and the fact that I am open and fair.” Amber shared, “My willingness to accept people as they are and work with them the best way that I can.” Ivory responded, “My devout dedication to it.” Love for the arts was also expressed as an asset. Rose declared,

I love art, but the love that I have through the arts is for my fellow man. See art can change so much in this world. My greatest asset is my love for it because I love and I have always loved the arts. When I was a little girl, we had the operettas from NY . . . it was over powering because it was something that I had never seen before. Living in the South, we had that in the Black schools. People wouldn’t believe it, that people from NY would come to train us and folk would be dressed in their Sunday best and I was in the 3rd or 4th grade and I can still remember it because it left such an indelible mark . . . then my love for singing. That’s all I can say . . . it is just my love for it. What is that old saying? Music calms the savage beast.

**Theme 5: Support.** The fifth theme that emerged from the data analysis described the support that participants received that contributed to their experiences as

executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. All 100% of the participants ( $n = 9$ ) described the support given to them before and during their careers. Most of the participants acknowledged a family member as their greatest source of support. Ruby stated, “My father had the greatest impact on my being an executive director in the arts because he taught me at an early age to reach for the stars and I have worked with a lot of them . . . believe me.” Ivory confirmed,

My parents had the greatest influence on me because they were always doing something with me and my siblings and I was always involved in something even though I can honestly say that I do not have any real talent, but I do have a love for it.

Pearl and Crystal shared similar responses. Pearl responded, “Definitely, my parents.” Crystal also responded, “My parents and another executive director that I know.” Rose shared support from a different source and emphasized, “Mine would be . . . from northern states and being exposed to a more diversified way of living. Coming back South, I was able to see . . . the lack of acceptance.” The importance of support was also addressed. Jade stated,

My parents for sure because they instilled this love for it inside of me at a young age and as I was saying before, maybe that could also be another reason for the low numbers. This is something that has to be cultivated early on and so it is important for those of us who are in these types of positions to make sure that we start cultivating it early in children, and particularly African American children.

Amber acknowledged the community and stated, “I would say my family, and my community. I recognized a need and I followed the calling.” Sapphire indicated, “It’s hard for me to say, but probably my mom, and my grandparents; it’s family because they were people with less education, but they worked hard and that is where my foundation for hard work came from.” From a career standpoint, Jasmine asserted, “My previous boss has had the greatest impact on me becoming an executive director because she showed me the ins and outs of being a leader.”

### **Research Question 2: Impact of Race**

The goal of research question 2 (RQ2) was to empower African American women in sharing the ways in which race may or may not have impacted their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. To address the question, participants were asked three questions from the interview questionnaire (See Appendix B) including questions 6, 9, and 14. 3 of the 15 themes emerged for RQ2. They are indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3

#### *Themes for Research Question 2*

RQ2	Themes	Participants
How does race impact the experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?	1. Race	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>
	2. Underrepresentation	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>

**Theme 1: Race.** The first theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about the ways that race has impacted their

experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Of the participants, 67% ( $n = 6$ ), claimed that race did in fact impact their experiences as executive directors in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Jasmine acknowledged,

Yes, race has been an issue because there have been very few people that I work with that can relate to the struggles that I have endured as an African American woman in this field. My colleagues cannot always see my vision from an African American woman's standpoint and so that makes my position very difficult and challenging. Race has made a difference from a personal experience because what I have noticed is that many executive directors don't want to see African American women in these types of positions because they don't want to give up their power. There is a cultural difference on jobs in the hiring process...and it can be extremely intimidating at least it was for me working in an all-white, male dominated environment.

Geographical location also made a difference on the impact of race. Rose pointed out. “

Um, race has been very prevalent in the South which was one of the reasons that I had to leave. I could never find a position there which is one of the reasons I left. When I returned to the South, I had to develop a program that would fit the needs of those served in the area. And of course that meant that I had to incorporate more arts training and programming. I had to sponsor my own program because I could not receive any help of any kind. So, I sponsored my program directly through the federal program. So many times, I encountered problems with employees taking orders from me because I am African American which forced



me to take a look at who I hired which made my program become almost all African American. So, my organization lacked a level of diversity that I would have liked to have had. But because of the area, it didn't work out that way.

As the executive director of a self-owned organization, Pearl contended,

Well of course, I would have to say that race was certainly a factor in me branching off on my own because as I said, this field is dominated by older white men who do not want to relinquish their positions and lot of times they have boards and funding behind them. So, it is hard to get in so to speak. As an African American woman with my own company, I have made sure that my staff is diverse; my organization is completely diverse because I believe that a company should represent the population that it serves.

Sapphire stated other ways that race impacted her experience. Sapphire added,

Um, I love being black, but it can be a hindrance and an inconvenience trying to move up the executive ladder. There are a lot of people who don't want to work with you because of your race based on their views. People don't think you are educated enough to adequately run an organization or be in this type of position.

Colorism was also a factor of race. Amber confirmed,

Race has definitely been an issue for me as an African American woman working as an executive director. I am a dark-skinned African American woman at that. I have received the stares and the unwillingness to participate and be a part of. It was very challenging to say the least. There are many who don't want to see an

African American woman at the head of leadership in these very traditional, white, male run organizations and of course change is difficult for some folk.

Ivory indicated a slightly different response. Ivory pointed out, “Yes, I have experienced resistance with this position and in my previous one. However, it did not stop me.” In contrast, Crystal, Ruby, and Jade shared different viewpoints on the impact of race.

Crystal stated,

I really don't think that race has been an issue in my experience as an executive director, but I do believe that race can be an issue for women trying to get into executive director positions because there is limited access and racism is and has always been an issue for African American women.

Ruby responded,

Well, racism has always had its place in America and probably always will, but as far as my position is concerned it has not impacted me on a career level because I work for a city that has a high percentage of African Americans and the people chose me for this position. But racism can impact jobs most definitely for anyone of color, but particularly for African Americans because we are not always given the same opportunities as our white counterparts. So, it can have a negative impact on anything really.

Jade indicated, “No, not really and I can say that I am really lucky that it hasn't been because it can affect your path, but I have refused to allow it to.”

**Theme 2: Underrepresentation.** The second theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about the reasons African

American women are underrepresented as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Of the participants, 100% ( $n = 9$ ), stated various reasons such as low promotion rates, traditional viewpoints about African American women as executive leaders, and limited hiring. Sapphire commented on the rate of promotion. She declared,

First of all, we don't get promoted that often; that's number one and when we do get promoted it is very few. So it's not like you can reach back and pull somebody up because the numbers are so low that there is no one there for you to pull up and when you don't have a mentor that can guide you through you are pretty much walking alone and people expect you to fail because you don't have anyone to tell you about the pitfalls that are coming or the obstacles ahead of you. So, when you don't have anyone to tell you anything, it makes it hard to thrive in any organization. Another reason that we don't rise is because we are not in the hiring positions. Without Black people in human resources, you can't pick and choose who you want in. If we were in certain seats, then maybe our resumes would make it into the hiring process. But there is no one there to stop them from giving Black people opportunities, so the low numbers continue to exist. When they meet the quota, then that's it and often times Black people get some of the lowest positions and often times someone else is hired with no experience, but they will be trained. And a lot of times we make far less money with far more education.

Some of the participants expressed the lack of organizational changes. Pearl expressed,

I think that the low numbers have to do with the fact that a lot of the mainstream/white organizations want to hold on to the traditional ways of doing things and

you just can't because the population in the United States has changed which means that audiences have changed and you have to be able to reach more than one type of people.

Amber stated, "Well, again, there is very little hiring that takes place because they want to remain the same way and do things the way that they have always done them." Crystal added, "Non-inclusive practices of a lot of the organizations; limited access to jobs, etc." Another response was that there may not be enough African American women in the job pool. Ivory stated,

Well, it could be because there may not be that many African American women pursuing these kinds of positions in the arts and then too, many of these positions are held by white men who have had these positions for a long time.

Jade responded,

Not everyone wants this job and so maybe there aren't a lot of African American women who actually pursue this as a career. I'm not sure because there may not be enough information to show this, yet right . . . But certainly, the low number is an indication that something needs to change.

Ivory expressed,

Well, it could be because there may not be that many African American women pursuing these kinds of positions in the arts and then too, many of these positions are held by white men who have had these positions for a long time.

Minimal hiring was also pointed out. Amber implied, "Very little hiring takes place because they want to remain the same way and do things the way that they have always

done them.” Participants also shared that dual standards, race, and gender could be some of the reasons why African American women are underrepresented as executive directors.

Jasmine stated,

I don't think there are a lot of people who will hire African American women for these types of positions because they cannot relate to them. They can't identify with them and therefore they automatically feel that African American women cannot lead within the traditional model of bringing traditional programming to the table. I have experienced this kind of resistance before, but my work speaks for itself and although it has taken me time to get some on board, I have been able to do so. In essence, it's just a power struggle.

Rose stated, “I would have to say dual standards . . . a lack of funding . . . a lack of acceptance based on color and . . . because there are levels of superiority and inferiority.”

Ruby identified,

There are many reasons why there is such a low turnout and we know that racism and genderism are primarily the main reasons and there is a glass ceiling and a concrete ceiling in African American women's cases that keeps us all from having high numbers in an industry that is dominated by men and mostly white men. But, things are changing and they will continue to change and little by little, we will get there.

### **Research Question 3: Impact of Gender**

The goal of research question 3 (RQ3) was to empower African American women in sharing the ways in which gender may or may not have impacted their experiences as

executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. To address the question, participants were asked two questions from the interview questionnaire (See Appendix B) including questions 7 and 14. 1 of the 15 themes emerged for RQ2 indicated in Table 4 below.

Table 4

*Themes for Research Question 3*

RQ3	Themes	Participants
How does gender impact the experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?	1. Male-dominated	P1, P2 P3, P4, P6, P8, P9

**Theme 1: Male-dominated.** The theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about the ways that gender has impacted their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Of the participants, 78% ( $n = 7$ ), claimed that males dominating the field did in fact impact their experiences as executive directors in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Jasmine stated, “Yes, it has been because as I said most of these positions are headed by males, particularly White. I think that most men feel that women should not have equal power to them and they don’t want to give it up because why would anyone want to give up their power to any one?” Rose indicated,

Well, there has absolutely been a difference because most of my organization was run by women. I had very few men who would even consider because a lot of the men didn’t want to take orders from a woman but especially an African American woman. So, the program became a female-oriented program.

Pearl acknowledged,

Like race, gender is always an issue because most of these positions, in this business, are occupied, again, by men and so it is hard for women period in the performing arts field. As a woman, I have had to fight to break my way the glass ceiling that still exists by the way. However, I am respected in my own organization.

Sapphire emphasized,

Because of the good ole boys club, not only do a lot of men not want to work with a woman, but definitely not a Black woman . . . It doesn't matter how much you have tried to reach that top level; nobody looks at that. All they look at is gender and color which makes it difficult to work with people when in the back of your mind they are judging you not based on your intellect or education, but simply based on your color.

Amber stated, "Truthfully, there aren't a lot of women as executive directors in this field. However, there are women. But what I don't see a whole lot of are African American women. Many times, I have been the only one." Jade shared, "I am a woman and this is a male dominated industry. So, yes it can have its drawbacks." Ivory responded, "I have also experienced resistance with me being a woman but that didn't stop me either."

In contrast, two of the participants did share the same experience. Crystal pointed out, "Gender has not been an issue in my experience as an executive director, but genderism can keep women from getting jobs as executive directors because as we all know, the numbers are not there." Ruby added,

Well, I am a feisty woman who lets nothing keep me back. I am a feminist and yes there are those who would like to keep women back, and we have had to kick a lot of doors down to get to where we are today and I have been a part of that movement and I have experienced being passed over because of genderism, but not in this position.

#### **Research Question 4: Strategies to Executive Leadership**

The goal of research question 4 (RQ4) was to empower African American women in sharing strategies that they believed would contribute to more opportunities for African American women and other marginalized groups as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. To address the question, participants were asked four questions from the interview questionnaire (See Appendix B) including questions 11, 12, 13,14, 15, and 17. Of the 15 themes, 6 emerged for RQ4. They are indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5

#### *Themes for Research Question 4*

RQ4	Themes	Participants
What strategies would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?	1. Mentorships	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8</i>
	2. Internships	<i>P5, P8</i>
	3. Education and training	<i>P2, P3, P5, P7, P8</i> <i>P9</i>
	4. Networking	<i>P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9</i>
	5. Hire and promote	<i>P1, P3, P4, P7, P9</i>
	6. Diversity and inclusion	<i>P1, P3, P5, P6, P7</i>
	7. Advice	<i>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5</i> <i>P6, P7, P8, P9</i>

**Theme 1: Mentorships.** The first theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about mentorships. Of the participants,



78% ( $n = 6$ ), claimed that mentorships impacted their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Jasmine stated, “My previous boss who was the Artistic Director at the time, has been the most supportive.” Rose shared how she was inspired,

Oh, I have had so many. But I think one of the people who inspired me the most was Marva Collins . . . She let me see that it was something that I could do by buying a building and starting a business in her house. So, I started in my house because I had a piano and other instruments. So, I took advantage of what I had.

Pearl stated, “Yes, and I believe that had it not been for my mentor, I probably would not be where I am today.” Sapphire indicated, “The people that guided me, did not look like me because there are not a lot of us in these positions. . . . When you are in these positions, most of them (mentors) are White.” Ruby stated, “I have had several mentors that I have helped me on this path; two in particular who have been with me every step of the way since I decided to take this leap in the arts.” Jade described having a mentor to extra training. Jade pointed out,

I have people who have been instrumental in my life and who have helped me to stay on this journey, who I look up to. So, yes that is very important because having a mentor is like having extra training.

**Theme 2: Internships.** The second theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about internships. Of the participants, 22% ( $n = 2$ ), had arts-related internships that impacted their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Crystal acknowledged, “It was the best thing for me

because I was able to gain some of the experience that I needed to propel me into the position that I have today.” Jade declared,

I most definitely had an arts internship which helped me to land my first job. That is also important because colleges with these types of incentives play a major role in helping students to get jobs while transitioning out of college. It is a very big deal.

**Theme 3: Education and training.** The third theme that emerged from the data analysis described the additional education and training of the participants. Of the participants 67%, ( $n = 6$ ), claimed that they had received additional education and training. Participants expressed the importance of receiving training in and outside of the arts. Rose stated, “I have had quite a bit of training. I have taken workshops in different states. I went to Kentucky. I went to Atlanta and to Wilmington to take training...I was always doing workshops . . . So I have extensive training.” Pearl responded, “Some of it was private that I did on my own.” Ivory, Jade, and Crystal also admitted to additional training. Ruby emphasized the importance of additional training. She shared,

Lots and lots of training because it is important to educate yourself and stay abreast of things in the arts world and in the world period. I try to keep myself educated on so many things. You can never stop learning and I try to live up to that in front of the younger generation so that they understand the importance of the arts and keeping themselves exposed and educated.

**Theme 4: Networking.** The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about networking. Of the participants

89%, ( $n = 8$ ), claimed that they had affiliations through various professional networks outside of their organizations. Ruby acknowledged, “I am a member of many groups and organizations, and networks because I have to be and I want to be.” Rose admitted,

I am at this time. I am not going to name them . . . I may not be as active as I have been in former years because I am retired now, but I still try to stay abreast of the growth of the art world.

Crystal stated, “Well, there are too many to name, but yes.” Jade stated, “Yes I am and I am proud of them all. Amber responded, “I am indeed; quite a few actually.” Ivory, Pearl, and Jasmine also admitted to being members of networks outside of their organizations.

**Theme 5: Hire and promote.** The fifth theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about strategies that would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women. Of the participants 56%, ( $n = 5$ ), claimed that hiring and promoting in mainstream nonprofit PAOs could impact the experiences of African American women as executive directors. Ruby stated,

Hmm, that’s a really good question. In thinking about your question, I think the first thing that they do is to start recognizing that some of them need to get with the program and start to take a strong look around them. The world has changed and it is time for them to start hiring more folk who represent the communities that they are supposed to serve and instituting some of the culture of the people that they serve. I should see more people that look like you in me in these places

which is why so many of us have branched off and started doing our own things; like I did way back in the day.

Jasmine acknowledged, "I definitely think that they should hire more women and women of color." Pearl emphasized, "I believe that these organizations definitely need to change the way that they view people of color and start to promote and hire more women of all backgrounds into their organizations." Ivory suggested making more women aware. Ivory stated,

Performing arts organizations need to find ways to make more women aware when positions become available. I am in the process of working on changes like this in my organization. They need to implement a program that I started in which I train and attract. It involves training your people on the inside to attract people on the outside.

Sapphire expressed a similar response. Sapphire stated,

Hire them and not only hire them but hire them for other roles other than secretaries especially in human resources. It starts with your Human Resource department. Usually, there is a gate keeper who is not looking to hire African Americans. There needs to be. Companies need to implement executive leadership programs in their workforces which will trickle down to HR and help to change the hiring practices. You can't get people in if you don't hire them. You can't do that when you don't have people in HR who don't look like you and have never had those same kind of experiences. I'm not trying to make it about race, but it is about race.

**Theme 6: Diversity and inclusion.** The sixth theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about strategies that would contribute to diversity and inclusion initiatives for African American women. Of the participants 56%, ( $n = 5$ ), claimed that diversity and inclusion in mainstream nonprofit PAOs could impact the experiences of African American women as executive directors. Ruby stated,

They just really need to change and become more diversified in their organizations all the way around; on their boards, in their hiring, in their programming, just everything needs to be revamped in a lot of these old traditionally run performing arts organizations. That's why so many of them are losing money because a lot of the young people are not spending their new earned money in these places because they no longer meet their needs.

Jasmine stated, "They need more mentorships, and more people of color in top leadership positions. They need to be more inclusive all around." Crystal suggested organizations include all women of color. Crystal responded, "Again, inclusion, inclusion, inclusion. African American women and other women need to be included at the leadership round table in order for inclusion to take place throughout the community at large. Without it, the entire community suffers." Amber suggested that organizations compare. Amber responded, "They can start by looking at other organizations that are diverse, and compare their numbers and then begin to implement ways to attract and retain more people of color." Pearl stated, "They need more mentorships, and more people of color in top leadership positions. They need to be more inclusive all around."

**Theme 7: Advice.** The seventh theme that emerged from the data analysis described the perceptions that participants had about strategies that would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women. Of the participants, 100%, ( $n = 9$ ), shared advice that could impact the experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Some of the advice included working with other women as a team, finding a mentor, and inspiring other women. Jasmine advised,

Just keep working hard and trying to break down barriers to get in those types of positions. Keep pushing as hard as you can and also while doing it, inspire others to work towards becoming a leader themselves in their field. Also, get with other women and team up and maybe even create your own because if you have your own then you don't have to worry about someone under estimating you and keeping you under.

Rose stated,

To become a strong leader, you have to have learned how to become a strong follower. When you are a leader you have to also make sure that not only do you lead from a managerial standpoint but you have to learn how to accept other opinions because sometimes it can be helpful. So hard work dedication love what you do because it can become not a laborious act but a level of love and once you are prepared the sky is the limit. If someone else can do it, you can do it to because that's what I did. I always wanted to have my own. I did my own training, spent a lot of money because I did it because that was the legacy that I

wanted to leave. Though it might have been small, but if I could touch one or two people then my living would not have been in vain.

Pearl suggested, “Keep working hard and keep knocking down doors. Don’t give up no matter who tells you that you can’t do it. Just keep chipping away at it until it is yours.”

Sapphire advised,

Keep your mind open. I think that you have to be open minded to do anything and it’s easy to get it closed up. You have to be hard working, willing to tell people how you feel, and in all things, you need education. In order to move forward, you have to have some type of training. Be willing to get more, more education, more work, just more.

Crystal suggested, “Follow your passion.” Amber advised, “Keep breaking the glass ceiling and bust it down if you have to.” Ruby recommended,

I think volunteering is important, find someone that you can model yourself after, find a mentor if you can, and really just be a part of and involve yourself in any area because there is always something that you can give freely and sometimes if people see you enough they will remember and may even hire you which is exactly what happened to me. Work hard and never ever give up because the art world is a special place and there is always room for more.

Jade advised, “Go for it. Find a mentor, don’t give up, work hard, and live your dreams.”

Ivory, added, “If this is what you want to do, then do it and don’t let anything and anyone stop you.”

### Summary

The main purpose of the chapter was to disclose the data analysis outlining the experiences and perspectives of African American women and their underrepresentation as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. In particular, the analysis disclosed how the intersection of race and gender impacts African American women's leadership development and training for advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Purposive sampling and criterion sampling were used to find and select key participants who were of African American heritage, female, between the ages of 21 and 64, currently employed or had been previously employed as an executive director or a senior leader in a performing arts organization in the United States. All interviews were conducted and recorded via FaceTime using an iPhone 8 and a Cannon GX7 camera.

To acquire a broader description of the phenomenon studied for this qualitative research, four research questions were devised to lead the study. Data collection was achieved from interviewing nine participants. Data saturation occurred as no new information emerged from the nine participants interviewed. Using Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis method for a qualitative analysis of the experiences and perspectives of the nine participants along with NVivo v.12 Plus software, I developed initial codes for potential themes after immersion of the data. I reread each response from the transcripts while transcribing the data and analyzed participant responses before coding. The data was further collated and categorized according to the codes. Tables were created to group the data into themes. Tables 2-5, provided a synopsis of 15 themes



for each of the research questions as a result of the data analysis from the feedback of participants.

Research question 1 (RQ1) was devised to amass comprehensive feedback from African American women about their personal backgrounds and career experiences of rising to the top as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The following five themes emerged: 1) over 10 years of preparation, 2) competitive, 3) challenges, 4) assets, and 5) support.

Research question 2 (RQ2) was devised to amass comprehensive feedback from African American women about the ways in which race may or may not have impacted their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The following two themes emerged: 1) race and 2) underrepresentation.

Research question 3 (RQ3) was devised to amass comprehensive feedback from African American women about gender may or may not have impacted their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The following theme emerged: 1) male-dominated.

McConarty and Rose (2017) examined gender inequity in theaters for women playwrights through interviews with 18 participants, seven men and 11 women. The findings of McConarty and Rose revealed women are not only underrepresented in executive leadership positions, but the discrepancy may stem from the systemic decisions of those in power within these organizations, i.e., European American males.

Research question 4 (RQ4) was devised to amass comprehensive feedback from African American women about strategies that they believed would contribute to more

opportunities for African American women and other marginalized groups as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The following seven themes emerged: 1) mentorships, 2) internships, 3) education and training, 4) networking, 5) hire and promote, 6) diversity and inclusion, and 7) advice.

The remaining chapter, Chapter 5, provides an introduction, interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, social change implications, discussion of the study, conclusion, and conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Getting in Formation—Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendation

### **Introduction**

Considering gender inequity in arts leadership presents a different challenge to equality in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (McConarty & Rose, 2017, p. 212), understanding how a small underrepresented group of African American women has been able to rise above obstacles and challenges is necessary in providing hope and assuring equity in arts leadership for other women in marginalized groups. Empirical evidence supporting the experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs is virtually nonexistent. The purpose for this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences and perspectives of African American women and their underrepresentation as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. This transcendental qualitative study was conducted to address a considerable literature gap of research specific to executive director leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The study filled a significant gap in research through an exploration of the impact that the intersectionality of race and gender has on African American women's leadership development and training for advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The study also identified key themes in how African American women in executive director positions experienced, have been impacted by, and coped with inequalities surrounding racism and sexism, as well as revealed the ways in which they resisted workplace barriers caused by dual intersectional identity.

Application of the phenomenological approach led to acquiring broader knowledge provided by participants that allowed individual personal conveyances of

executive director experiences. I conducted in depth and semistructured interviews with approvals by nine African American women in executive director and senior leadership positions. Results from the data analysis were compared to findings detailed in the comprehensive review of the literature in the second chapter of the study to establish whether or not the results would contribute and serve as a source of new information adding to the existing body of knowledge on African American women in executive leadership. The results were substantiated by the prior literature and in line with the conceptual framework of Delgado's (1993) CRF and Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

A significant collection of resourceful findings burgeoned from the data analysis that informed the participants' experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. In congruence with the review of the literature, findings from the study verified that the underrepresentation of African American women in executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, combined with the barriers impeding this population's advancement throughout their careers, was an all-inclusive phenomenon (Beckwith et al., 2016; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Wilson, 2014). The lived experiences and perspectives shared by the nine participants were linked to the four research study questions in response to the 17 semistructured interview questions and highlighted the executive director leadership experiences of African American women working in mainstream nonprofit PAOs and the intersection of race and gender pertaining to executive leadership development and training.

The number of African American women in executive director positions in mainstream PAOs is minimal. This study gave voice to African American women by allowing them to share their experiences and perspectives of becoming executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, along with the obstacles they may have faced, and the coping and support mechanisms assisting in advancement despite population underrepresentation. Findings added to limited research on the shared experiences of African American women working in executive leadership roles. An interpretation of the findings from the themes presented in Chapter 4 is detailed below:

RQ1: What are the executive director experiences of African American women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

The themes that emerged for RQ1 were:

1. Over 10 years of preparation
2. Competitive
3. Challenges
4. Assets
5. Support

For the first research study question, I examined the career paths of nine African American women participants. Interview questions were devised in response to the first research study question. The intention of the 17 interview questions was to gather responses that would answer each of the research study questions. Consequent to the data for research question one, participants described their executive director experience as a labor of love that was hard work, took between three to 15 years to obtain even with

years of training, higher education, and experience. Participants also described their executive director experience as very competitive and extremely challenging. I discovered that the path to leadership included a large gap in representation, poor diversity initiatives on the part of the organizations, limited hiring opportunities and promotions, resistance, bias, negative stereotypes, and minimal support outside of family members. These experiences were congruent to past research studies that affirmed African American women face stiff barriers to executive leadership opportunities and career advancement in predominantly European American-led organizations (Davis & Maldonado, 2015, p. 48). Additionally, I discovered that although there were challenges and barriers to entry, participants mutually reported that an arts background, training, and hard work were contributing factors to their success in becoming executive directors. Beckwith et al. (2016) found that African American women seeking advancement must be motivated, determined, and persistent against the recognized barriers that they face (p. 123). These findings determined that African American women must have a higher level of education, a system of support, experience, and a background in the arts in order to achieve a position as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO.

RQ2: How does race impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

The themes that emerged for RQ2 were:

1. Race
2. Underrepresentation

The second research question examined the intersectional identity of race and the ways that race contributed to the specific executive leadership experiences of the participants. Juan et al. (2016) found intersectionality helped to identify differences among women and the multiple perspectives that shed light on their experiences within social contexts (p. 226). Sixty-seven percent of the participants shared that race did in fact impact their experiences as executive directors. The intersectionality approach provided a basis to examine the ways in which race impacted the leadership experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. These experiences were congruent to past research studies that affirmed African American women face at minimum two or more oppressive identities, and therefore have little power against structural power systems that discriminate on the basis of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 3).

I discovered that participants viewed race as a contributing factor in the current faces of leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Participants expressed that although they have had to be aggressive to gain positions as executive directors, most of the leading positions are still held by European American men leaving African American women underrepresented. Researchers Adesaogun et al. (2015) found that European Americans occupied the majority of leadership roles in nonprofit organizations, providing more empirical evidence of the overall lack of racial equity and diversity in nonprofit organizations (p. 45). One participant stated that race-based views of African American women not being qualified enough to run an organization prevents African American women from moving up the ladder. Another participant responded that there is a

difference between being considered a woman of color and being an African American woman and she preferred not to be categorized as such because African American women are challenged more by race than other women of color. One participant responded that she experienced racism through colorism and she believed that she had not been able to move up in the past due to her deeper skin tone. Durr and Wingfield (2011) found that lighter skin tones of African American women tend to be more favorable in organizations based on a bureaucratic system of management by European American males defining what is acceptable and relatable relative to communication style, behavior, dress code, and skin complexion (p. 58).

In line with the literature in Chapter 2, Rosette et al. (2016) found that stereotypical views of African Americans contribute to the belief that African Americans are incompetent as leaders (p. 438). Beckwith et al. (2016) found that although African American women in the workplace endure bias and discriminatory treatment in being hired and promoted, awareness of such treatment makes them work extremely hard to avoid such perceptions (p. 122). These findings determined that race does impact the experiences of African American women and their opportunities in obtaining executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

RQ3: How does gender impact the experiences of African American women as an executive director in a mainstream nonprofit PAO?

The themes that emerged for RQ3 were:

1. Male-dominated



The third research study question examined the intersectional identity of gender and the ways that gender contributed to the executive leadership experiences of the participants. Cuyler (2015) found in a research study that men dominated executive leadership positions in mainstream performing NPOs, giving further proof of the gender inequity of women in mainstream nonprofit PAOs (p. 17). Seventy-eight percent of the participants shared that gender did impact their experiences as an executive director. The intersectionality approach also provided a basis to examine the ways in which gender impacted the leadership experiences of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

I discovered that participants viewed gender as a leading factor to their underrepresentation as executive directors more so than race. Not only do women hold fewer executive leadership positions than men, but they are underrepresented as nonprofit board members, as well. Participants shared that PAOs are still good ole boys' clubs and that mainstream PAOs are still dominated by men. Branson, Chen, and Redenbaugh (2013) found a minimal presence of women in executive leadership positions in nonprofit organizations such as mainstream nonprofit PAOs (p. 17). Participants also shared that genderism keeps women from being able to obtain positions as executive directors because some men are not comfortable with taking orders from a woman. One participant responded that the field is dominated by older white males who do not want to relinquish their positions of power and are often times back by their boards. Consistent with the previous studies, Cook and Glass (2015) found that the male-dominated composition of boards limits the appointments of women (p. 143). These findings determined that gender

does impact the experiences of African American women and their opportunities in obtaining executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

RQ4: What strategies would contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs?

The themes that emerged for RQ4 were:

1. Mentorships
2. Internships
3. Education and training
4. Networking
5. Hire and promote
6. Diversity and inclusion
7. Advice

The fourth research study question explored strategies that contributed to the executive leadership development and training experiences of the participants. Rosette et al. (2016) found that a qualifying attribute of African American women seeking executive director positions is having a performing arts background which is beneficial to their leadership (p. 438). Of the nine participants, seven had early exposure to the arts at an early age either through music, dance, or theatre. Oikelome's (2017) qualitative study found that the intersectionality of race and gender impacted leadership development and more leadership development, mentorships with other African American women, and organizational accountability were crucial to navigating the pipeline to achieve success

(pp. 29-36). Participants responses addressed the need for more executive leadership training and mentorships within PAOs. Of the nine participants, only two had arts-related internships through colleges, yet several participants expressed that they wished that had been able to do so. Eight of the participants had affiliations through various professional networks outside of their organizations. Participants responded that professional networks were instrumental to their career development. I discovered that participants viewed mainstream nonprofit PAOs as responsible for ensuring equity and equal representation. I also discovered that participants viewed colleges as not doing enough to provide internships for African American students who wish to pursue leadership positions in a performing arts organization. Additionally, I discovered that participants viewed mainstream nonprofit PAOs as responsible for bias training in their human resources to ensure that more diverse applicants get a fair share in being hiring.

Of the participants, five responded that diversity and inclusion in mainstream nonprofit PAOs could impact the experiences of African American women as executive directors. Consistent with the previous studies, Kim and Mason (2018) found that African Americans are underrepresented as arts leaders at a rate not reflective of the communities they serve, with only 3.8% African American women nonprofit arts leaders in the United States compared to 84.3% European Americans (pp. 56–57). Participants shared that mainstream nonprofit PAOs need to become more diversified and inclusive in top leadership. One participant responded that these traditionally run organizations need to diversify throughout the organization including their boards, hiring, and programming. Berrey (2014) found that effective accountability structures increase diversity and the

presence of women and other marginalized groups (p. 350). Researchers Cook and Glass (2015) found that the promotion of women in the workplace can be an effective way to increase diversity within organizations (p. 138).

Watson-Singleton (2017) found that the essence of African American women's leadership is a reflection of historical characteristics of strength that African American women used to overcome the intersectional oppressions of racism and sexism (p. 779). All of the participants recognized the need to support other African American women and shared advice that could impact their experiences as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Participants shared working with other women as a team, finding a mentor, and inspiring other women. One participant shared keep breaking the glass ceiling and follow your passion. Another participant shared keep pushing and inspire others. Another participant shared get with other women, team up, and create your own to avoid the challenges. Another participant offered volunteering and finding someone to model after. Final participants shared never give up because the art world is a special place, work hard, and live your dreams, and don't let anything and anyone stop you. These findings determined strategies that contribute to executive leadership development and training opportunities for African American women and ultimately other women of color in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Considerable limitations confined this phenomenological research study. Each of the qualifying participants were of African American heritage working as an executive director or senior leader in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Consequently, the study was

narrowed by the identities of the participants and their positions as executive directors in singled out mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The given responses from all of the nine participants may not be representative of all experiences and perspectives of African American women working as executive directors in a mainstream nonprofit PAO. Due to the size of the population sample, findings of the research are not depictive of the population at large. As a result, this research is limited as it is not representative of every African American woman working in a mainstream nonprofit PAO as an executive director.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this research study advanced awareness of the lived experiences and perspectives of African American women and their underrepresentation as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. The study explored how the intersection of race and gender impacted African American women's leadership development and training for advancement in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Since research remains scant, a key recommendation is a push for more research development specific to African American women and ultimately other women and/or marginalized groups working as executive directors or senior leaders within the performing arts sector.

A second recommendation is a push for research that explores mainstream PAOs and their perspectives of inclusion at the executive level. Future research may provide meaning and understanding of the underrepresentation of marginalized groups as a whole and explore ways to advance arts equity, inclusion, and organizational diversity policies and initiatives to promote and advance marginalized future leaders.

### **Social Change Implications**

This study empowered African American women by allowing them to share their experiences and perspectives of becoming executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs, along with obstacles they may have faced and the strategies and support mechanisms assisting in advancement despite challenges and population underrepresentation. Findings added to the gap in the research on African American women working as executive directors or in executive leadership roles.

The results of my research study contributed to positive social change in three ways. Firstly, awareness of the lived experiences and perspectives of the nine African American participants who have attained executive director positions in mainstream nonprofit PAOs may inspire other African American women and other women from marginalized groups to pursue executive-ranking positions in the performing arts field. Strategies such as mentoring, additional training, networking, and volunteering were considerable advice from participants to future leaders.

Secondly, there is a possibility for achieving positive social change through leaders of public PAOs who must institute policies of inclusion and invest in education and training while developing and implementing better diversity initiatives and ways to improve recruitment, hiring, and promotion of all marginalized groups into executive director positions. Having a diverse workforce in the decision-making processes of executive leadership ultimately affects all public communities. When cultural arts leaders get in formation, ignored potential can be realized.

Thirdly, there is a possibility for achieving positive social change through sharing the results of this research study to the nine participants, networking groups, mainstream nonprofit PAOs, through publications, and other performing arts leaders.

### **Conclusions**

African American women are underrepresented as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit PAOs. Yet, in spite of challenges to development and advancement in a traditional predominately European American male dominated field, they are making their presence known as arts leaders of change. This phenomenological research study addressed the factual gap in the literature in exploring the significant experiences and perspectives of African American women working as executive director leaders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and responses given supported the need for the study. Nine women raised their silent voices and brought awareness to the experiences of a population underrepresented in executive leadership in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

Although there is a distinct need for additional research, this phenomenological study contributes to an existing body of women's leadership literature by applying intersectionality as the conceptual framework to explore how race and gender identities shape African American women's executive director experiences in mainstream nonprofit PAOs.

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## Appendix A: Interview Process Guide

**Introduction:** Thank you for your future participation in this research study. The sole purpose of conducting this interview is to gain insight of your experience as an African American woman working in an executive director leadership role in a mainstream nonprofit performing arts organization. The questions asked in this interview have been drafted to address whether or not gender and/or race have impacted your leadership training and development for advancement within the organization and if so, in what ways. Please be advised that the interview will be recorded and will take place for approximately 60 – 90 minutes. I am asking for your permission to record the interview for accuracy in validating the data received. All of the information collected from you will be confidential and your name will be anonymous. Your participation in this research study is on a voluntary basis with minimal risks to your privacy. All measures will be taken in protecting the information that you disclose in this research study and your identity will remain confidential to this research only. The data that you provide will be securely kept, stored, and locked inside of a cabinet for the purpose of this research only. Data received electronically will be protected by a password. There will be no compensation for this interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me. Before the interviewing begins, please provide an answer for the following questions.

### Sociodemographics of Participant

Please circle one:

Of what ethnicity do you identify with?

- a. African American citizen born in the U.S.
- b. African American born in Africa, and you are a naturalized citizen of the U.S.,  
and if so from what country in Africa \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Bi-racial/African American
- d. Multi-racial/African American

What is your age?

- a. 21-25
- b. 25-30
- c. 35-40
- d. 40-45
- e. 45-50
- f. 50-55
- g. 56-64

What is your educational level?

- a. High school diploma
- b. Some college, but no degree
- c. 2 yr. college degree
- d. 4 yr. college degree
- e. Grad school, but no degree

f. Grad school degree

g. Doctorate degree

If you have a college degree, what type of degree is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a performing arts background, and if yes, please describe?

a. Yes,

\_\_\_\_\_

b. No

Of what region in the United States do you reside?

a. Northeast

b. South

c. Mid-West

d. West

Are you or have you ever been an executive director in a nonprofit performing arts organization? (Please circle)

a. Yes

- b. No

If you answered no, are you or have you ever been in any senior-level position in the performing arts field?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If you are currently working as an executive director, how long have you been doing so?

- a. 1 - 2 years
- b. 2 - 5 years
- c. 5 - 7 years
- d. 7 - 10 years
- e. 10 - 20 years
- f. Over 20 years

If you previously worked as an executive director, how long did you work?

- a. 1 - 2 years
- b. 2 - 5 years
- c. 5 - 7 years
- d. 7 - 10 years

- e. 10 - 20 years
- f. Over 20 years
- g. Retired

If you are currently working in a senior-level position in the performing arts field, how long have you been doing so?

- a. 1 - 2 years
- b. 2 - 5 years
- c. 5 - 7 years
- d. 7 - 10 years
- e. 10 - 20 years
- f. Over 20 years

If you previously worked in a senior-level position in the performing arts field, how long did you work?

- a. 1 - 2 years
- b. 2 - 5 years
- c. 5 - 7 years
- d. 7 - 10 years
- e. 10 - 20 years



- f. Over 20 years
- g. Retired

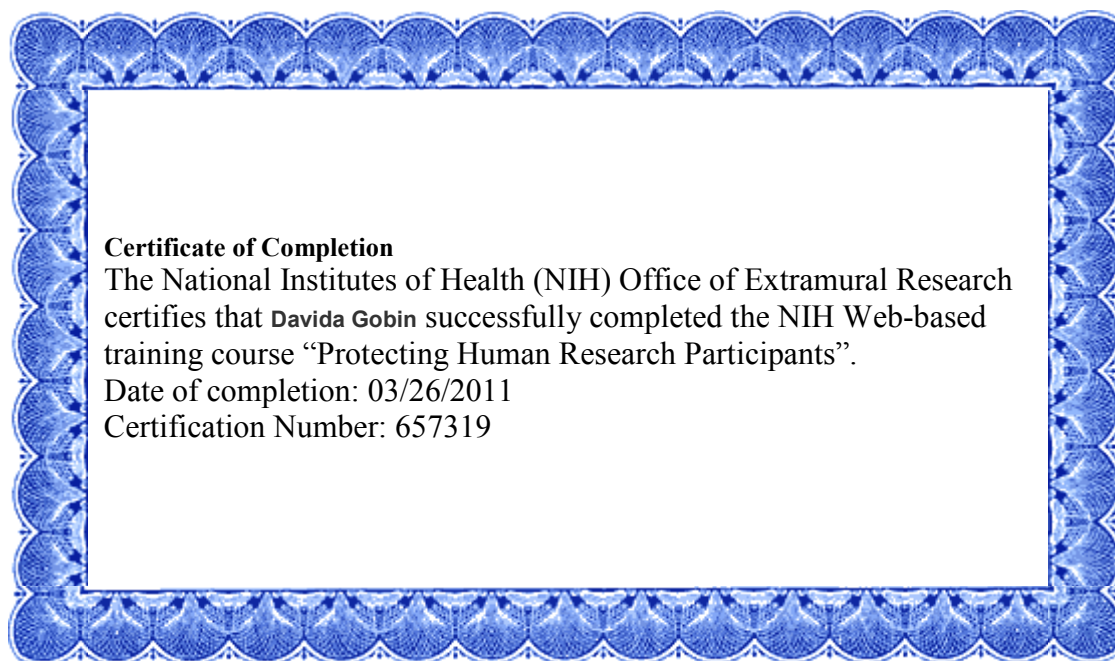
## Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

1. What is your title and please describe your position and duties as an executive director?
2. In terms of size, would you say that you work for a small, mid-size, or large performing arts organization?
3. Before you became an executive director, what type of work were you doing?
4. How many years did you have to work to become an executive director?
5. In thinking of your executive director path, share your experience in climbing the executive ladder and any specific obstacles that you encountered.
6. As an African American, has race been an issue in your experience as an executive director, and if so, in what way?
7. As a woman, has gender been an issue in your experience as an executive director, and if so, in what way?
8. How competitive would you say it is in the performing arts industry for women, particularly women of color to become executive leaders?
9. Given the fact that African American women are underrepresented as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit performing arts organizations, what would you say are the reasons for the low numbers?
10. Who or what has had the greatest impact on you becoming an executive director?
11. Do you currently have or have you previously had a mentor that has helped to guide you on your leadership path?

12. In college, did you have an opportunity to receive an arts-related internship?
13. Have you had any other training outside of college that might have helped your career in becoming an executive director?
14. Are you a member of or affiliated with any professional arts-related organizations and/or professional women's networks, or minority-led networks?
15. What can mainstream nonprofit organizations do to increase the number of African American women and other women of color into the executive director pipeline?
16. What would you say is your greatest asset in working as an executive director for a performing arts organization?
17. What suggestions would you give to any woman or member from a marginalized group aspiring to become an executive director leader in a mainstream nonprofit performing arts organization?

Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated. Thank you for devoting your time and attention to this interview.

## Appendix C: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion



## Appendix D: Debriefing Form for Participation in Research Study

Thank you for your participation in our study! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

### Purpose of the Study:

We previously informed you that the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of African American women as executive directors in mainstream nonprofit performing arts organizations. The goal of our research is to understand how race and gender impacts African American women's leadership development and training for advancement in mainstream nonprofit performing arts organizations.

### Confidentiality:

This study will not reveal the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, also will not be shared. Only aggregate data will be reported in any reports or publications derived from this research. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by storing interview response information and participant information electronically in password protected documents. Additionally, all participants will be matched to a unique identifier tied to the response data and all

participant names will be stored separate from the data collected. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by Walden University.

There is no financial compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation would be greatly appreciated as findings from your interview will add to minimal research studies on the experiences of African American women working as executive directors or senior leaders in nonprofit performing arts organizations and will help to increase awareness.

Transcript Copy and Final Report:

If you would like to receive a copy of your interview or the final report of this study when it is completed, you may do so.

Useful Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, its purpose or procedures, or if you have a research-related problem, please feel free to contact the researcher. Davida S. Gobin at [davida.gobin@waldenu.edu](mailto:davida.gobin@waldenu.edu), or call or text Davida Gobin at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you may call the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University at 1-800-925-3368 ext. 312-1210 or (612) 312-1210, or by way of the email address: [irb@mail.waldenu.edu](mailto:irb@mail.waldenu.edu)

**\*\*\*Please keep a copy of this form for your future reference. Once again, thank you for your participation in this study!\*\*\***

## Appendix E: Audit Outline

<b>Closing Dates</b>	<b>Key Steps / Applications</b>	<b>Summary</b>
May 22, 2019	Proposal URR Approval	Dr. Matarelli
May 30, 2019	Proposal Oral Defense	
May 30, 2019	Official PhD Candidate Status	
June 13, 2019	Sent in IRB Application	Had meeting with chair. Agreed on submission to IRB
June 27, 2019	IRB sent application back for revisions.	Made revisions
July 22, 2019	Second submission of IRB application	Made revisions
July 31, 2019	IRB sent application back with 6 revisions	Made revisions the same day and sent to chair
August 13, 2019	IRB Approval	
September 9, 2019 – October 3, 2019	Began data collection; recruitment of participants	Nine participants secured
September 24, 2019 – October 15, 2019	Interviewing took place	Nine interviews conducted in home office using Apple iPhone 8 via FaceTime and recorded using Cannon GX7 camera
October 16, 2019 – October 25, 2019	Debriefing of participants	
November 5, 2019	Began transcribing data and Ordered NVivo v.12 Plus	
	Began Chapter 4	
November 10, 2019	Data Analysis	
December 5, 2019	Results	
January 3, 2020	Chapter 4 completed	
January 3, 2020	Emailed participants	
January 6, 2020	Chapter 4 Submission to chair	
January 8, 2020	Began Chapter 5	
January 21, 2020	Chapter 5 completed	
January 21, 2020	Dissertation Review	
January 26, 2020	Dissertation submitted to chair	



February 26, 2020	Final Study Committee Approval	
March 1, 2020	Final Study URR Approval	
March 12, 2020	Form and Style Review	
April 9, 2020	Final Oral Defense	
April 22, 2020	CAO Approval	