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Black Women Nonprofit Executives' Use of Sustainable Funding Strategies in Marginalized Communities

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2020

Abstract

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by

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MS, The New School, 2004

BA, Mount Holyoke College, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Lack of funding resources, inadequate staffing, poor capacity building, and difficulties in attracting individual donors are problems for small Black-led nonprofit organizations. Black women lead a majority of nonprofits in low socioeconomic and under resourced neighborhoods and have deep connections with and cultural awareness of community needs. However, little is known about how Black women leaders of nonprofits employ effective strategies to overcome funding and staff capacity challenges. The purpose of this study, which had resource dependency theory as its foundation, was to examine Black women nonprofit executives' perceptions of obstacles in securing organizational funding and strategies for overcoming them. The research question focused on the perceptions of Black women nonprofit executives to securing funding to adequately lead organizations in under resourced communities. Data were collected from a purposive sample of 9 Black women nonprofit executive directors and senior executive staff who participated in semistructured, open-ended interviews. Thematic analysis involving inductive coding and categorization of interview data produced 3 key themes: Black women leaders emphasize adaptability and resiliency, fundraising practices are driven by resource dependency, and funding barriers are multilayered and structural. The key findings revealed Black women nonprofit executives employ multipronged approaches responsive to internal and external challenges. The implications for social change include informing public policy and grant makers of factors that impact nonprofits sustainability and the importance of expanding funding and capacity building resources to strengthen nonprofits in historically marginalized communities. Improved sustainability may redress historical inequities and promote social gains for the community members.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to those who have transitioned and continue to guide me from the other side of the sunset through each challenge and success: my late father Olukose Anthony Decosta Wiles, Sr.; my grandparents Percy and Iris Wiles and Keith N. McKen; as well as my uncle Keith S. McKen and eldest brother Anthony "Tee" Decosta Wiles, Jr. I pray that they may always rest in perfect harmony and peace.

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Thank you to my mother Amma McKen; my grandmother Mildred McKen; and my godmother Dr. Kokavah Zauditu-Selassie, who supported me through this process and are women who continue to inspire me with their grace, character, and humility. I am so grateful for my brother Alade Shola McKen, who continues to inspire me and encouraged me to keep pushing through this journey. I am grateful for all my siblings, children, family, and friends who were a part of my motivation team and provided a listening ear.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Organizational sustainability and financial viability are some of the most

complicated and critical issues facing the nonprofit sector. In this study, I examined the

dynamics of Black women nonprofit executives' fund development strategies and

sustainable methods for leading organizations in communities faced with a multitude of

complex issues. Such issues relate to poverty, economic disinvestment, and being

marginalized from access to essential resources to support the economic and social

ecosystem (Hastings & Snowden, 2019; Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011).

Nonprofit organizations contribute to the economy and fill the gap left when government

and for-profit businesses are unwilling or unable to meet community member needs, and

they are well positioned to serve as leaders of the social change movement (Gulati-Partee,

2001; Jones & Mucha, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2018). This study yielded insight into how

Black women nonprofit executives experience fundraising and fund development. As

research supports, Black women's experiences are distinctly different from other

ethnicities and genders (Hossein, 2017).

Few studies have been conducted, however, on how Black women nonprofit

executives experience fundraising and sustainability. Including voices that have been

historically marginalized in research may broaden the discourse on these topics and allow

it to be more diverse and reflective of the nonprofit sector. The social implications of this

study include creating new ways of thinking about how to support Black women and

minority leaders, how to develop innovative leadership development programs, and how

to structure funding priorities by grant makers. The study can also help to spur critical influencers and organizations in the nonprofit sector to reflect on the struggles Black women leaders endure and be a catalyst for developing strategies to break down barriers for access to funding and support.

In this chapter, I provide background information on Black women-led nonprofit organizations as well as the specific operational and management processes that Black women nonprofit executives engage to secure funding and sustain the work of the institutions they lead. I also outline the study's problem statement, purpose, research question (RQ1), theoretical foundation, and nature. After defining key terms, I discuss the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

Nonprofit sustainability has dominated research on the nonprofit sector for decades, with topics including organizational approaches to obtaining resources, strategies for maintaining financial and staffing stability, governance models, and ways that top executives contribute to strong leadership. Hu and Kapucu (2017), for instance, focused on factors contributing to organizational effectiveness and nonprofit sustainability as well as minority leaders' fund development strategies for organizations in underresourced communities, finding that nonprofit organizations who integrate, operationalize, and track strategic plan recommendations are able to overcome challenges with financial uncertainty and imagine possible opportunities. Hossein (2017) similarly examined how Black women nonprofit executives overcame barriers to success,

including downplaying ideas and strategies to adhere to funders' requests and guidelines to secure resources.

Helming an organization is an initial barrier faced by many Black women nonprofit executives. The nonprofit sector continues to be dominated by White men in senior level positions. Although women overall have made some strides in ascending to senior level positions with 42% of organizations having female executive directors, there is still a significant gap in the number of Black women at executive levels (Community Wealth Partners, 2015; Medina, 2017). Black executive directors or presidents in the nonprofit sector accounted for only 6%, of all such leaders in 2017 while 87% of all executive directors or presidents were White, 3% were Asian Americans, and 4%, Hispanics/Latinos (Medina, 2017). Davis and Maldonado (2015) argue that Black women are skilled and educated and have a desire to serve in executive positions, yet they are not given the opportunity. Indeed, the percentage of Black women in executive and senior level positions in U.S. nonprofits with higher education degrees is high, with 70% having earned master's degrees and 66%, doctorates, according to Catalyst (2019).

Black women nonprofit executives are often overlooked for high-level executive roles in organizations serving relatively affluent communities and become leaders of nonprofits in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Biu, 2019), yet the percentage of Black women who lead organizations in such neighborhoods is lower than that of White men and women. The void of women's voices, specifically Black women's voices, in leadership positions may contribute to inequities in the nonprofit sector and inhibit access to resources. One reason is that Black-led nonprofit organizations have a unique position

in historically marginalized communities, where they can develop cultural competencies that align with the needs of those they serve, establish trust, and build community and family connections (Sobeck, Agius, & Mayers, 2007). As Gooden, Evans, and Pang (2018) noted, minority-led and Black-led organizations are particularly poised to serve communities reflective of their ethnic demographic because they establish a deep level of trust with community members. In addition to the trust that is developed, Black-led organizations also are delivering culturally competent services that meet the needs of those they serve with a focus on empowerment, equity, and access to resources (Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018; Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun, 2017).

However, Black leaders of nonprofits face challenges, including financial, capital, and human, related to building and sustaining resources within their organizations and may struggle to survive. The capacity building of Black-led organizations also includes their leadership. Although several researchers have studied leadership behaviors among nonprofit leaders (Eldakak, 2014; Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018), few have studied how Black female nonprofit executives raise funds to sustain organizations, according to my review of the literature.

The nonprofit sector is robust and continues to grow alongside the needs of U.S. communities due to the void left by the government and the private sector, with approximately 1.41 million nonprofits registered with the Internal Revenue Service in 2013, representing a 2.8% increase from 2003 (Urban Institute, 2015). Many unregistered collectives, fiscally sponsored projects, and churches operate in the U.S. nonprofit sector, as well (Urban Institute, 2015). The growing sector contributed an estimated $905.9

billion to the U.S. economy in 2013, accounting for 5.4% of the country's gross domestic product (Urban Institute, 2015). Although the nonprofit sector is voluminous and a critical driver of social change, nonprofit executives face challenges in serving communities where resources are scarce and obtaining the funding to support critical programming to empower community members.

The fundraising process is the principal place where an organization describes its vision for change in the communities it serves and creates a space for the management of external relationships (Cause Effective, 2019). In this space, executive directors and development staff communicate with funders; the process is critical for establishing pivotal relationships with the gatekeepers of resources for nonprofits. However, fundraising staff who represent ethnic minorities experience a series of challenges, including lack of access to specific social networks connected to wealth and navigating funding spaces dominated by Whites (Cause Effective, 2019). Fundraising is the link and relationship builder for the entry point for funds for the organization. As the philanthropic landscape changes and more donors of color become viable resources for funding Black-led organizations (Banks, 2017; Mottino & Miller, 2005). Black leaders may see this as an advantageous opportunity. In the current landscape, many Black-led organizations have to develop strategic and opportune positioning for access to funding, yet there currently is a lack of research, based on my review of the literature, dedicated to how Black women leaders navigate the fundraising terrain.
I conducted this study to address the dearth of research on Black women nonprofit executives and Black women-led nonprofits. The voices of Black women are

disproportionately missing from research with many studies focused on leadership, women's leadership, and women leaders in the for-profit sector, according to Davis and Maldonado (2015). Furthermore, Davis and Maldonado argue that there is a lack of examination of the lived and individual experiences of Black women leaders with most research focused on the barriers to entry, opportunity, and challenges with career advancement within the corporate sector, predominantly White institutions, and academia. This research contributes to the literature on nonprofit management and sustainability (Gooden, Perkins, Evans, & Yali Pang, 2017; Hu & Kapucu, 2017) and leadership and fund development strategies (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018) as it relates to communities in economically challenged and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Knowledge from this study may provide policy makers, nonprofit grant makers, philanthropists, capacity builders, and leaders with an understanding of the complex issues Black women nonprofit executive face and the implications of ignoring those issues.

Problem Statement

Black-led nonprofits situated in underresourced and disadvantaged communities often face challenges with fundraising and the ability to support organizational sustainability (Cause Effective, 2019; Philadelphia African American Leadership Forum, 2016). As a result of their limited capacity in terms of raising funds and having adequate staffing to support fund development, many nonprofits suffer and risk survival (Terrana, 2017). Thus, the Black women executives who lead many of these organizations often have to make decisions relative to how to fund programming in vulnerable communities that their counterparts in more affluent neighborhoods, who may have more lucrative

funding networks and do not need to establish their acceptability by funders, do not have

to contend with (Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018). Black women nonprofit executives face

multiple barriers to funding, staff capacity, and sustainability in negotiating resources.

Researchers have examined nonprofit management and sustainability (Gooden et al.,

2017; Hu & Kapucu, 2017) and leadership and fund development strategies (AbouAssi &

Tschirhart, 2018) as it relates to communities in economically challenged and

disadvantaged neighborhoods but have not yet turned their focus to the barriers faced by

Black women leaders of nonprofits. Specifically, there is a lack of research regarding

what Black women nonprofit executives need to do to overcome challenges and prevail

relative to developing revenue generating strategies to support the organization. In

conducting this study, I sought to fill the gap in understanding of the lived experiences of

Black women leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to obtain

an understanding of how Black women nonprofit executives perceive their experiences

leading organizations in low socioeconomic and disadvantaged communities, specifically

how they navigate and obtain financial resources. I examined the insights and

sensitivities of Black women nonprofit executives working for social service

organizations in economically challenged communities in New York with limited

resources including being understaffed and lacking adequate funding. The data collection

method consisted of semistructured interviews with Black women nonprofit executives.

Research Question

RQ1: What are the perceptions of Black women nonprofit executives in regard to overcoming funding acquisition barriers in order to serve their nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities effectively?

Theoretical Foundation

Resource dependency theory was the theoretical foundation for this study, which was designed to clarify Black women nonprofit executives' use of specific strategies to secure funding as well as how they perceive their ability to access, negotiate, and legitimize the need for resources. Resource dependency theory, as a theoretical foundation, supports understanding the perceptions of reciprocal relationships such as between a funder and an executive leader (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Additionally, resource dependency theory provided a lens to comprehend the behaviors and decisions of Black women leaders concerning obtaining and securing resources. As organizations contend with uncertainty relative to how they will ensure the survival of programs and services, nonprofit executives have to think strategically about resources (Froelich, 1999). The dependence on funding and revenue from foundations, corporations, government, and individuals poses a substantial risk to organizations that have to continually change in structure, staffing, and programmatic goals (Froelich, 1999). My examination of the perceptions of Black women leaders situated in a historically marginalized community included understanding how the leadership balanced control, community assets, and approach to securing resources. The theoretical framework of resource dependency theory provided a lens for examining sustainable funding strategies

and helped to uncover how dependence on specific resources impacts Black leaders'

decisions, including revenue diversification, establishing legitimacy, as well as a reliance

on one source of income.

Nature of the Study

This research was based on a descriptive phenomenological design. The study

used phenomenological design to understand the lived experiences of Black women

nonprofit executives and to examine their behavioral decisions. Phenomenology focuses

on how individuals perceive and interpret their human experiences (Patton, 2015; Rubin

& Rubin, 2012). As a part of the study, I selected a purposeful sample of nine Black

women nonprofit executives and conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews to

explore how they perceived their leadership experiences, nonprofit sustainability, and

fundraising strategies. The use of purposeful sampling was designed to select a group that

is not generalized and is based on a specific criterion, which is especially useful in

selecting groups of people who have experience with a precise phenomenon (Patton,

2015). I conducted in-person and face to face interviews, which was recorded and

transcribed. This study employed a level of rigor that is reflective of a quality process for

qualitative research which includes rich interviews in alignment with the goals of the

study as well as protocols and practices that ensure accuracy, transparency, and in-depth

description of the process of data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis (Tracy,

2010). Qualitative research is an effective method for studying vulnerable and

disadvantaged groups of individuals, explicitly examining the challenges they face (Flick,

2017). Thus, this study's use of qualitative methodology was appropriate to study the

perceptions of Black women leaders who support organizations located in marginalized

and economically under-resourced neighborhoods.

Definitions

Black/African American: Terms (e.g., *African American women/Black women*,

women of African or Black origin, and *women of African descent*) that are used

interchangeably to refer to women of African descent and those who have origins from

the African diaspora (Johnson, 2019).

Capacity building: Specific activities that support the efficiency and function of

the organization, strengthen a nonprofit organization's operations, management, and

systems, and help support the realization of its mission (Brothers & Sherman, 2012).

Marginalization: Lack of representation and inclusion as a result of the absence of

power and full incorporation into the benefits of society and the economy as well as

decision-making (Gardberg & Newburry, 2013).

Nonprofit organization: An entity that provides a public benefit and is a federally

tax-exempt entity that carries out the mission without a profit (National Council of

Nonprofits, 2019).

Revenue diversification: A strategy used by nonprofit organizational leaders to

have different streams of income (Sherer, Suddaby, & Rozsa de Coquet, 2019).

Sustainability: A term that refers to both financial and programmatic long-term

stability within an organization and the ability to maintain revenue and programmatic

choices over some time and with minimal risks (Board Source, 2019).

Assumptions

Assumptions provide transparency and clarity around the premises that were created, variables of this study that could not be proven but will be accepted as valid as well as how they were applied to create research design decisions, interview questions, and the selection of participants. Furthermore, assumptions provide a context for how the findings and qualitative inquiry are shaped as well as the idea that phenomena are studied within a particular context considering external factors and data gathered through mechanisms that allow for the lived experiences to emerge naturally (Patton, 2015).

In this study, I assumed the participants were able to select their cultural identity and ethnic make-up based on the definitions that I described. My second assumption was that the participants were able to answer frankly, openly, honestly, and straightforwardly and that I would receive a variety of responses. The third assumption was the participants would make connections between their identity and their leadership role. My fourth assumption was Black women nonprofit executives that have the required experience would be accessible and be open to participating in this research study. Participants' accessibility and openness was a necessary component for me to be able to acknowledge, record, and interpret participants' lived experiences along with their perceptions of these experiences (Patton, 2015). My fifth assumption was based on the race and gender of the executives as well where the organization was located and that their experiences would be different relative to their relationship with funders and donors and that race, gender, and locale have some type of impact. In order to ensure these above assumptions are met,

I secured the identity of each of the participants and maintained confidentiality as a part of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The study was based on examining the unique leadership characteristics and strategies employed by Black women nonprofit executives in urban cities in neighborhoods with minimal and low resources. Thus, the study included Black women leaders who are executive directors or senior executive staff in small to mid-size nonprofits and excluded middle managers in nonprofits as well as organizations situated in communities that did not meet the criteria of being under-resourced. The locale was an essential factor in the examination as this provides a particular nuance relative to the challenges experiences by poverty stricken and low economic neighborhoods. The scope of this phenomenological research study included a limited number of Black women who were purposefully selected to participate in the study who identified with the established criterion. Purposeful sampling includes a reliance on a developed criterion by which to select participants, and the rubric for selection can be subject to the researcher's perceptions and ideas around what should be included (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In addition, the study focused on Black women leaders who were in the position to make leadership positions relative to resource acquisition, funding, and finance and thus excluded women leaders whose decisions are dependent on higher level staff to decide on funding strategies. Additionally, the study did not focus on several topics relative to nonprofit sustainability including discussing mergers and acquisitions, leveraging a set of strategies to reduce revenue uncertainty in only in one funding area (Besel, Williams &

Klak, 2011), or the effect of performance measures (Holzer & Kloby, 2005). The study focused on the lens and perceptions of Black women leaders who have an impact on operations and funding strategies, not necessarily the insights of Board leadership or other influencers.

Transferability is a critical component in establishing rigor in qualitative studies relative to the ability to apply the study's findings to similar participants or phenomena (O'Neill, 1995). The transferability of this study and its replication in another setting was established through the apparent alignment of the theoretical foundation with the themes that emerged in the literature review alongside the findings from the data collection. Thus, when applied to a similar population with the same criterion of an urban setting, generalizability can be attained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study were related to the duplication of a natural setting. For instance, due to the nature of funding acquisition in the government and private sector funding availability is impacted by location; thus, generalizability may be challenging to obtain relative to specific segments of resources. Additionally, the researcher was a part of the data collection process in phenomenological studies, and a limitation of this study includes ensuring bias and the impact of the researcher's experiences was be eliminated. There were steps taken to reduce bias from the study, including using a purposeful sample of participants outside of the scope of my influence, being personally aware of my own bias and perceptions, and maintaining an ethical distance from the study and my own notions. In addition, I journaled and kept field notes

during the process of being fully cognizant of my own ideas, thoughts, and beliefs while

conducting interviews and collecting data (Saldaña, 2016). My work in the nonprofit

sector for the past 19 years was disclosed in the research, gave context as well as ensured

that none of the participants that were interviewed I have worked with directly or had any

impact on their funding decisions in any of my volunteer or work experiences. The ability

to ensure that researcher bias is eliminated is an essential component of establishing rigor

in a qualitative study during the research design phase, participant selection, and

interview process (Saldaña, 2016).

Significance

This study was designed to add to the body of research focused on nonprofit

sustainability and Black women nonprofit leaders' strategic funding choices and capacity

building techniques to ensure the organization is sustained and thriving into the future.

This study is essential as it focuses on women from an minoritized ethnic group that is

often unrepresented in the literature on the nonprofit sector and gives voice to their

concerns and unique experiences. While nonprofit sustainability and fundraising are

widely examined, this study fills a gap in the research around exploring the narrative of

how Black women leaders persevere through constraints, external challenges, and a

political climate of navigating complex networks of funders. Black-led organizations

have distinct ways in which they persist and maintain sustainability, often characterized

by strong community connectedness, trust, and unique conceptualizations making

meaning around organizational survival.

The body of knowledge around nonprofit sustainability and resource acquisition has been focused on the dynamics of resource dependency, revenue diversification, as well as building partnerships (Adesaogun, Flottemesch, & Ibrahim-DeVries, 2015; Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018; Kearns, Bell, Deem, & McShane, 2014; McDonald, Weerawardena, Madhavaram, & Sullivan, 2015). This study seeks to add value to the nonprofit sector relative to broadening the thinking already conducted by other nonprofit leaders, funders, and capacity builders centered around resource allocation and sustainability and to expand the narrative by including specific strategies organized by Black women led organizations in historically marginalized communities. It contends that an examination of neighborhood specific challenges in tandem with resource constrained organizations is necessary to add to the body of knowledge around how nonprofits survive, manage finances, and access resources. Studies and programs focused on leadership training, capacity building firms, and funders can benefit from an in-depth examination of how Black women leaders perceive financial and programmatic viability as well as how their nuanced environment impacts their decisions. This research was designed to add value to the sector that is continuing to seek answers relative to how people and women of color gain access to capacity building resources as well as increased representation in leadership in nonprofit organizations but what is needed to change the dynamics of inequity (Biu, 2019; Cause Effective, 2019).

Nonprofit organizations serve multiple populations and communities with critical services that seek to improve and empower communities. This study was designed to focus on nonprofits in marginalized communities that often are recipients of unjust and

inequitable allocation of resources (Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Luchian, & Luchian, 2018). Furthermore, this study has direct positive social change outcomes, including contributing to understanding the underlying perceptions and experiences of leaders of nonprofits in low socioeconomic neighborhoods, amplifying the stories and voices of those communities through the lens of those leaders intending to transform and heal social ill through direct programming.

The implications for positive social change include shifting the dynamics between nonprofit leaders, funders, and policy makers and creating mechanisms and policies to enhance opportunities for communities and their leaders. This expansion would encompass a narrative that is inclusive, removes perceived and real barriers as well as open space for mutual exchange of ideas and tools. Once leaders of nonprofit organizations have access to innovative and sustaining strategies to support the organization, they can move from surviving to thriving organizations with clear long-term plans, processes, and systems. Black women-led organizations that are supported by comprehensive funding policies can also hire qualified staffing that together can develop robust fund development plans that will enable the organization to grow and offer programming that further transforms fledgling communities. This research can aid the entire nonprofit sector and build mutual exchanges of resources, whereby funders and donors can learn how best to solve community challenges alongside leaders who are on the ground with well-developed and trusted models for long term success and sustainability.

Summary

In this chapter, I focused on providing a context for the research, including the background, significance of the study and its importance to the field, and resource dependency theory as the theoretical foundation. Descriptive phenomenology was used as a part of the research design to examine Black women's nonprofit executives' perceptions, which are appropriate as it gleans in on comprehending how they interpret their lived experiences as leaders who are responsible for fundraising and securing significant resources for organizations to operate and sustain long term. The nonprofit leaders will be selected from a purposive sample of executives leading in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in New York City and New Jersey. In particular, the lived experiences of 9 Black women nonprofit executives were explored using face to face semi-structured interviews to examine how they manage complex funding environment, organizational capacity, as well as how they balance the needs of the community with maintaining a sustainable institution.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature and the theoretical foundation of the study, and I explore the gap in the literature regarding the lack of research on Black women nonprofit leaders in marginalized communities specifically on the strategies they employ to obtain vital organizational resources.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations provide vital resources to communities and contribute to society by providing services that the government or the private sector is otherwise unable to offer (Greller, 2015; McDonald et al., 2015). In addition to adding value to society by fulfilling economic, social, and environmental needs, nonprofits help to further social justice imperatives (food security, labor issues, housing, educational achievement, and access to arts and culture). Although nonprofits are addressing critical social issues and pushing forth an agenda of social change, their leaders often have to contend with multiple challenges related to sustainability while fulfilling their mission and programmatic impact (Lee, 2017).

Nonprofit leaders often have to expend time making decisions about the allocation of their time and human capital resources. They must make sound strategic choices about the quest for funding and leverage their relationships with funders for grants from other philanthropic partners (Kearns, Bell, Deem, & McShane, 2014). Creative strategies are often necessary to handle the uncertainty and changing demands of the external environment while meeting the complex needs of the community. Nonprofit organizations rely on multiple sources of funding to support operations and programming, divided among government and foundation grants, contracts, earned income, special events, memberships, individual, and corporate giving. Each of the resources depending on the type of services provided may vary in terms of the percentage of support, and the leadership of the organization has the responsibility to ensure that the

funds are used appropriately, secured adequately and that a level of transparency is

provided to key stakeholders about the use of funds (Kearns et al., 2014). Nonprofit

leaders must examine the dynamics around securing funding and analyze the restrictions

placed on the funding and the amount of effort required to secure the funding. The level

of effort required can be a deterrent to applying for certain funds, as organizations with

limited capacity may not have the ability to apply and maintain the grant or opportunity.

The stakes are high because each level of funding provides a certain level of power and

can provide visibility and establish legitimacy for the organization (Kearns et al., 2014).

Underresourced nonprofits face additional challenges that include the

socioeconomic burdens of poverty, crime, isolation, and low educational attainment in

the community. As community-based organizations face those challenges, they are

susceptible to a discontinuance of grant funded programs and not providing the vital

services needed to eradicate and address the social ills of the community (Ceptureanu,

Ceptureanu, Luchian, & Luchian, 2018). The leadership and positioning of organizations

in underresourced or disadvantaged communities is, thus, of critical importance,

especially in regard to leaders' ability to leverage and secure resources.

The majority of Black-led small nonprofit organizations located in

underresourced socioeconomic neighborhoods are run by women and are underfunded

(Philadelphia African American Leadership Forum, 2016). Currently, there are numerous

programs and funding resources available to assist small and disadvantaged nonprofits.

However, according to Terrana (2017), many of these nonprofit organizations have

limited capacity building resources, and a shortage of staff inhibits leaders' ability to

identify, apply, or take advantage of funding resources. This problem impacts Black women's nonprofit executive leaders' ability to effectively obtain resources to serve vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and implement the mission of the organization (Adesaogun, Flottemesch, & Ibrahim-DeVries, 2015; Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018). Minoritized and racialized organizations experience challenges in obtaining funding and maintaining high-level senior staff, which results in challenges in the overall success of the organization (Goodman, Majee, & Reed Adams, 2018; Terrana, 2017). As a result, it requires more time and effort to apply for and secure funding as well as legitimize organizational impact to funders (Terrana, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was to explore how Black women-led small nonprofits in marginalized communities perceive their ability to effectively provide services with limited resources including being understaffed, lack of adequate funding, and planning. Specifically, I sought to understand specific leadership approaches that contribute to overcoming limitations in attaining diverse funding resources, network connections, and mentorship. The study addresses the call by McDonald et al. (2015) for additional research on nonprofit sustainability and the types of tactics leaders employ to remain financially solvent. In addition, this research contributes knowledge on Black women-led nonprofits that serve and are situated in marginalized communities and the kinds of approaches their leaders undertake to maintain strong institutions and serve the various needs of their communities.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the literature search strategy, describe resource dependence theory as the theoretical foundation, and review the major themes that emerged from the

literature. The analysis includes the identification of the gap in the literature around how Black women nonprofit executives manage resources under constraints, the current context of funding in the nonprofit sector, as well as characteristics of Black-led and Black women-led nonprofit organizations.

Literature Search Strategy

In my search for scholarly literature, I focused on factors contributing to organizational effectiveness and sustainability in nonprofits, people of color, and Black leaders' barriers to success in the community they serve, as well as how Black women executives and leaders overcame barriers. The key words searched were *Black or African American women*, *nonprofits*, *minority groups*, *disadvantaged or marginalized neighborhoods or communities*, *nonprofit leadership style*, and *funding or philanthropy*. I used the databases using the EBSCOhost service at the Walden University library including: SAGE Journals, Public Policy and Administration, Business Source Premier, Political Science Complete, Business and Management, PsychINFO, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search.

Other search terms used to locate relevant scholarship included *agency development*, *ethnic agencies*, *ethnic communities*, *ethnic-specific services*, *overcoming service barriers*, *program development*, *resource dependency theory*, *nonprofit vulnerability*, *fiscal and nonprofit sustainability*, *racialized women*, *fundraising efficiency*, and *revenue diversification*. The search also included a review of peer-reviewed journals and seminal works in books focused on resource dependency theory, specifically Pfeffer and Salancik (1978/2003).

Theoretical Foundation

Resource Dependency Theory

This descriptive phenomenological study was guided by resource dependency theory as a theoretical foundation to understand the relationship between nonprofit executives and funders and how funding impacts how the leader functions. Resource dependency theory was used to underpin the understanding of how the funder perceives the nonprofit and the benefits it might provide to society (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003). Resource dependency theory developed by Pfeffer & Salancik (1978/2003) provided a lens to understand the behaviors and actions of organizations in their quest to obtain and secure resources, in which they are heavily dependent upon for their survival and stability. As access to resources continues to change over time in the nonprofit sector, organizations must employ alternative strategies to remain solvent (Froelich, 1999). Nonprofit organizations as dependent on funding from foundations, corporations, government, and individuals risk changing their structure, goals, and mission in order to align with the funder's priorities and obtain funds (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018; Froelich, 1999). Additionally, the balance of control, power, and access to those resources by those leading in marginalized communities is inequitable and leads them to employ specific and alternative strategies to remain stable. There are four main hypotheses underlying resource dependency theory which include, one, balancing the dynamics of power and its impact on securing resources; two, control of resources is determined by who holds power; three, obtaining resources impacts decision making and

validity; and four, organizations have to contend with balancing the uncertainty of

available resources.

   Balancing the dynamics of power. The foundation of resource dependency

theory is based on the dynamics of power and the influence of the external environment

on an organization's sustainability relative to its ability to not only acquire financial,

physical, and labor resources but reliance on external forces (Minor, 2011; Pfeffer &

Salancik, 2003). The idea is that while organizations have limitations based on how they

obtain the resources from external forces, they also can maintain their unique character

and make decisions that are in alignment with their mission and purpose. Also,

organizations can impact the external environment through negotiation and advocacy. A

further iteration of the dynamics of power within resource dependency theory is the idea

that different levels of power, social, and political effect and impact the relationship

between the organization and those providing resources. Resource dependency posits that

because some organizations have different levels of power based on their

interdependence and proximity to specific social networks that have more influence than

others (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

   Resource dependency also includes the perspective that leaders and managers

must develop specific tactics and actions in response to the environment due to their

levels of power and agency (Malatesta & Smith, 2014). Organizations depend on

resources from the environment for its operations and stability, and as a result, those who

are in positions of power to provide those resources exert a certain level of authority and

control. Leaders within organizations must continually negotiate and reduce ambiguity

relative to how resources are obtained and craft responses to pressures from the external

environment (Malatesta & Smith, 2014). Organizations have varying degrees of

dependence on resources depending on their mission, core programs, and the historical

and typical funders of their work. Each one of the external resources has its guidelines,

limitations, and requirements which guide how they distribute those assets. Thus,

organizational leaders shape their choices by a deep understanding of the essential

characteristics of their own organizations and develop a decision-making rubric which

includes the importance of the resources, the extent the resources are necessary to meet

the mission and produce efficiency as well as to analyze the landscape of all the providers

that may be able to support the organization (Malatesta & Smith, 2014). Furthermore, the

principle carries forward the idea that organizations are dynamic, active, and strategic in

their decision making rather than passive participants in their response to external

influences.

Determination of control of resources. The second primary hypothesis of

resource dependency theory is that the level of control of specific resources is determined

by who holds the power of the distribution of those resources. Further, the assumption is

that the organization's desire and try to reduce their dependence on those entities and

level the amount of control to maintain its own identity and purpose. An underlying

assumption of resource dependency theory is the behavior of organizations is heavily

influenced by its reliance on resources that are deemed most important to its existence

and operations (Nienhuser, 2008; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Organizations do not operate

in random and arbitrary ways because they rely on all kinds of resources to operate

effectively and efficiently. Also, resource dependency theory defines what constitutes a critical resource that is external to the organization, which essentially means that in the absence of that resource, it would jeopardize the operation of that organization (Nienhuser, 2008; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Furthermore, how leaders of organizations make decisions can be explained by the relationship of their dependence and interdependence of that specific resource.

Impact on decision making and validity. Resource dependency theory also rests on the idea that it has an impact on decision making and establishing validity as an organization (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). To the extent that nonprofits can maintain a sense of autonomy and independence as well as less concentration and urgency of resources for survival, AbouAssi and Tschirhart (2018) argued that leaders of organizations have a more profound sense of agency and ability to negotiate terms and conditions with funders. Although the degree of need for specific resources effects how organizations react and negotiate with funders, further, low dependency leads to an organization having voice and choosing to cease a relationship and on the contrary, those with higher dependency on resources leads them to adjust and long-term commitment to the funder (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018). Resource dependency theory highlights the continual struggle for independence and for nonprofits to be able to have a voice and make decisions. The conditions set by external resources specifically by government funders can set the tone for how nonprofits operate and dominate either the direction of their mission, goals or programmatic structure (Verschuere & De Corte, 2014).

Balancing uncertainty of available resources. Froelich (1999) argued that as

nonprofits confront the multiple challenges of balancing uncertainty and the influences of

funders, they continue to maintain a commitment to the mission and purpose of the

organization and try to divert from dependence on only one source of income.

Furthermore, because the external environment is volatile and unpredictable at times,

organizations experience challenges due to the external environments' inability to be

reliable. Uncertainty and the inability to predict the responses of funders and the external

environment is a critical element of resource dependency theory and organizations often

strive toward solutions to lessen ambiguity including collaborating with other institutions

(Guo & Acar, 2005), diversifying funding streams (Froelich, 1999), as well as

strengthening donor networks (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018).

Resource Dependence Strategies

Organizations employ different methods to obtain resources, and each has varying

degrees of impact on reliance on those sources. Those strategies include creating

alliances, merging, and producing the appearance that someone influential on the Board

or advisory group or committee can influence decisions (Malatesta & Smith, 2014;

Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Each of these strategies helps to reduce constraints on the

organization, manage interdependence and self-sufficiency; secure and advocate for

resources. Resource dependency theory aids in explaining why each of these strategies

are employed as well as the benefits and disadvantages of each (Malatesta & Smith,

2014).

Resource Dependence Challenges

Nonprofit organizations rely on multiple streams of revenue to support the

activities of the organization. This reliance and need to lean on various entities to

maintain, grow, and advance the organization puts pressure on the leadership to

continually raise funding to ensure its solvency and viability. The external environment,

precisely the priorities and direction of funders, have led to nonprofits changing in some

instances, the direction of their mission and ways they operate, and, in some cases,

mimicking the function and structure of for-profit corporations (Froelich, 1999). Each of

the funding sources, foundations, corporations, and government all lead to a different set

of behaviors by nonprofits, which in one respect leads organizations to mold and shape

their priorities to match the preferences of the funder. Corporate funders drive

organizations to employ for-profit strategies and to change their structure, and similarly,

foundations grants lead the organization to change its initial goals to align with the

foundations' guidelines and purpose (Froelich, 1999). Concerning government support,

many nonprofits feel they can rely on government funding due to its accessibility and, in

some cases, represents more than 50% of the total revenue of the organization (Froelich,

1999).

Some of the other challenges with resource dependence include the potential of

goal displacement, process and structure constraints, and the perception of one source of

revenue being a stabilizing element of the organization (Froelich, 1999; Kearns, Bell,

Deem & McShane, 2014). Resource dependency can lead to negative impacts on

efficiency and agency morale as well as focus heavily on procedures and losing its unique

character to mirror the characteristics and expectations of the funding source (Guo & Acar, 2005). Diversification of resources has been offered as a solution to resource dependency and to ensure that organizations maintain their independence and distinctive character but has been criticized for making the differences between the nonprofit sector and other sectors hard to identify (Froelich, 1999).

Another challenge with resource dependence is its reliance on social networks, and those exchanges determine access to certain levels of opportunities to connect organizations with available resources (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Thus, those organizations with access and ties with higher level benefits and resources are better able to leverage funding.

Previous Applications of Resource Dependency Theory

Researchers have used resource dependency theory to inform and examine: 1) the dynamics of collaborations (Guo & Acar, 2005); 2) the result of funders performance mandates on nonprofit performance measurement (Thomson, 2010); 3) self-regulation practices among nonprofits (AbouAssi, 2015); 4) how power and influence create bias in resource distribution (Nienhuser, 2008); and 5) the causes of nonprofit vulnerability (Neinhuser, 2008; Zhai, Watson, Gilchrist, & Newby, 2017). Resource dependency theory has been used to explain the behaviors of organizations about reducing ambiguity and interdependence, and how an organization can sustain itself is based on the management of its external relationships (Hillman, Wither & Collins, 2009). The theory has helped to explain organizational behaviors, decision making, and operations.

In the search to systematize a more thorough understanding of specific choices, nonprofit leaders make when deciding to engage in a collaboration Guo and Acar (2005) conducted research using resource dependency theory as a lens. As nonprofits continue to work on solving different problems in society, the decision to combine resources and jointly work on issues is common, often in all types of formats and structures. Also, using resource dependency theory as a framework for understanding projects collaborations occur because organizations seek to try to reduce uncertainty in their environment and dependence on obtaining additional resources outside their agency, which often may be difficult to obtain (Lu, 2015). Furthermore, outside of mandated governmental collaborations, resource dependency theory explains the impetus and reasoning for organizations to join forces, partner, and share resources.

The types of collaborations vary as the approaches; some include joint delivery of services, forming alliances, sharing information and physical space, formal partnerships as well as mergers and acquisitions. For example, according to resource dependency theory, organizations engage in mergers and acquisitions to eliminate interdependence on other organizations and especially in a tumultuous and changing external environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Yin & Shanley, 2008). The theory also helps to illustrate why organizations rely on inter-organizational exchanges and relationships to obtain power and assets (Bae & Garguilo, 2004). Mergers and acquisitions force organizations to think about the risks, cost-benefit analysis of the tradeoffs, and the results of elasticity that happens as a result of that transaction.

Performance measurement continues to be one of the primary tools for funders and, in particular, governmental agencies to measure an organization's accountability, effectiveness, and utility. Researchers have examined to what extent do funders' mandates affect outcomes. Thomson (2010) contended that resource dependency theory highlights the notion of an organization's reliance on another organization for its survival, including substantive information, funding, and staffing. The result is that outside agencies such as funders can impose constraints on nonprofits, and they may begin to seek to change how they operate internally to meet those demands. The idea of being compliance with a funder has varying degrees of operationalization and consistency; each organization will respond relative to the importance of that funding source as well as the degree the funder can exert control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003. Thomson (2010) concludes that the findings of the research are in alignment with resource dependency theory as a driver for organizations to produce and institute performance measurement mandates by funders is due to the pressure they receive. The funder, as an external resource, has a certain level of control over how the organization behaves and operates.

Organizations with limited resources can become extremely dependent on funders for support and financial stability. This dependence AbouAssi (2015) contends can shape how an organization regulates and monitors its activities and operations. Even when organizations can obtain revenue through multiple channels, they are still subject to the rules and guidelines set forth by some external party such as a governmental entity. Self-regulation is defined as adhering to the policies and practices set forth by the relevant industry that the nonprofit operates, which has helped to produce a level of trust by the

public because they are being held accountable to generally accepted industry standards.

Thus, the decision to adopt self-regulation practices has been tested using resource

dependency theory. Each nonprofit operating in an industry and adheres to the industry's

standards helps to legitimize and build its reputation, which attracts different levels of

funding and opportunities. AbouAssi (2015) contends that interdependence itself

demonstrated by self-regulation, which is a crucial tenet of resource dependency theory,

leads to a strong case as to why the theory can be used to explain the effectiveness of

self-regulation and the linkages between organizational stability and sustainability.

Organizations operate outside their internal operations and infrastructure and are

subject to creating perceptions about the environment. Thus, resource dependency theory

has been used to explain organizational decision making and choices, which are

influenced by subjectivity and interpretations (Nienhuser, 2008). Additionally,

organizations make decisions based on what is available at the time, and that specific

information can be interpreted, and its meanings influenced by the selection and

deference for that information. The determining factor becomes who has the power to

interpret that information and how might they control the translation to others.

Examining the causes and symptoms of nonprofit vulnerability gives context for why

some nonprofits survive, and others fail. The researchers draw from resource dependency

theory to demonstrate why revenue diversification is an important tactic and strategy for

a nonprofit's financial viability (Zhai, Watson, Gilchrist, & Newby, 2017).   Furthermore,

having more funders reduces the risk of closure and less funding restrictions, which can

enable an organization to have a deeper level of autonomy in pursuing its mission. Zhai,

Watson, Gilchrist, & Newby (2017) demonstrated other causes of nonprofit vulnerability

such as mission drift, high staff turnover, poor planning, inadequate accounting

information systems as well as funder expectations around the percentage of

administrative costs that can be allocated and tied to their support.

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) advocate for continual exploration and development

of the theory as opposed to just an initial acceptance of the ideas presented in the theory.

Research in resource dependency theory continues to be used to illustrate and explain

interdependence and inter-organizational exchanges. Thus, organizations must think

strategically about the benefits that they can gain and lose from each of the various

options to optimize how resources are distributed and managed. Organizations have

multiple strategies to manage resources, and resource dependency theory helps to support

not only an understanding of external behaviors but how leaders contend with their

internal processes and practices.

Rationale for Theory Selection

I explored the strategic choices of leaders, how they contend with the uncertainty

of funding sources, and manage the resources that they acquire to sustain the organization

and provide quality services. The rationale for the selection of resource dependency

theory is that it helped to explain why organizations engage in specific activities to obtain

resources to support their success and survival (Malatesta & Smith, 2014; Pfeffer &

Salancik, 2003). In addition, the theory provided a critical lens in which to analyze the

behaviors and decision-making processes of leaders of nonprofit organizations. The

theory helped to synthesize principles of power, positioning, and social networks and

how they impact how organizations leverage and secure resources (AbouAssi &

Tschirhart, 2018; Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

The theory provided a framework for understanding how Black women nonprofit

executives obtain funding and engage in revenue-generating strategies to support

organizations. In particular, the study explored the dynamics of power and social

networks, which are some significant tenets of resource dependency theory to explore

how leaders in marginalized communities are impacted in their ability to secure resources

such as financial, labor, and capital. Communities situated in poverty-stricken

neighborhoods operate from a space of continually advocating for more substantial

resources to support infrastructure, access to adequate education, social services, and arts

and cultural experiences (Garrow, 2012; Holley, 2003; Terrana, 2017). Thus, leaders of

nonprofits located in under resourced communities may struggle to obtain resources that

provide a basis from which to examine how nonprofit executives leverage support. There

has been little to no research on how Black women nonprofit executives obtain resources

for organizations in marginalized communities, and this is intended to build on the

application of resource dependency theory as a lens from which to understand their

positioning and challenges.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

The literature reviewed examined different aspects of the nonprofit sector and

how leaders in organizations understand their role in the sector. In this section, I will

examine the current context of the nonprofit relative to the demographics of the leaders of

institutions as well as how funding has been directed to Black-led organization. I then

will analyze the characteristics of Black-led and Black women-led organizations to examine the distinctive qualities and how they might impact the acquisition of resources.

Funding Environment in the Nonprofit Sector

The nonprofit sector is largely dominated and led by Whites, with 84% in a leadership role and 15% of people of color in senior-level positions other than the Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer (Schwartz, Weinberg, Hagenbuch, & Scott, n.d.). Juxtaposed against the profile of the nonprofit sector is a disparity, whereas, within the general population, 30% are people of color (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Many minority-led nonprofits (37%) do not have a person of color in the lead executive role. Organizations that serve marginalized communities are primarily located in neighborhoods characterized by people of color (African, African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American). Also, almost half at 49% of people of color are more likely to work for identity-based organizations and focused on issues and communities that affect people of color (Biu, 2019).

Villanueva (2018) argued that philanthropy, which at its core is guided by the residual effects of colonialism and oppression, reinforces the division between communities that have access to resources and those that are less empowered to those same resources. Foundations which are one available resource to nonprofits further support a history of practices that are inequitable and are headed by those who in power to make decisions, with representations of staff that are not diverse; 92% of foundation CEOs are white (D5 Coalition, 2016), 89% of foundation boards are white, and only 8% of foundation funding supports organizations that serve communities of color

(BoardSource, 2017). Further, Conrad (2018) cited that 16% of foundation board members and 24% of grant maker employees are made up of ethnic minorities compared with 36% of the population. Organizations of color, indigenous people, and people of African descent must continually prove their legitimacy and are heavily examined and criticized for the lack of resources, which thereby leads to them not being funded (Villanueva, 2018). In addition, there is a disproportionate ethnic rate of representation of people who are considered the gatekeepers and first contact with executives of nonprofits, with 32% and 8% of foundation CEOs being people of color and only 3% of philanthropic organizations are led by Black chief executives (D5 Coalition, 2016). Additionally, the statistics reflect a disproportionate rate of ethnicities at some of the institutions that feed into philanthropic organization such as corporations, venture capitalists and financial management companies, with 2.7% of African Americans at senior level staff at financial management services companies and 88% of venture capital companies being white males, with 1% being Black (CB Insights, 2010).

Resources and funding provided by foundations are the smallest among organizations that are led by a person of color (Cohen, 2014). However, many foundation grants specifically focused on racial justice work are directed to minority-led organizations (Schwartz, Weinberg, Hagenbuch, & Scott, n.d.). The number of grants that are directed to minority-led organizations is much smaller, and there is a gap in funding support for organizations led by people of color. Furthermore, close to 80% of foundations do not accept an unsolicited proposal. Program officers and people in leadership positions are charged with creating strategies and tactics to find grantees that

match the priorities of the foundation (Conrad, 2018). In the quest for producing an exhaustive, scrupulous, and objective grant process, Villanueva (2018) argues that on the contrary, the process produces barriers for minority-led or people of color-led organizations. The level of bias and inequity around funding harms Black-led or minority-led organizations and limits their ability to provide funding to operate their organizations. Thus, minority-led and Black-led organizations have less access to funding opportunities.

Nonprofit organizations engage in multiple tactics to acquire funding and sustain in various environmental, economic, and social changes. In the next section, I discuss the characteristics of Black-led nonprofit organizations and the specific tactics they employ to obtain resources and sustain their work.

Characteristics of Black-Led Nonprofits

Black-led organizations often are characterized by one, offering programs that support and encourage cognizance and a deeply embedded understanding of their communities' culture; two, being perceived to more open by community members and thus reach unreachable populations; three, consider the entire community as opposed to only those who are being served by the agency; four, actively seek to develop secure connections and partnerships among community members (Holley, 2003). One of the critical elements of Black-led organizations is to build community and to create connections among individuals, groups, organizations across ethnicities and geographic communities.

The characteristics of Black and minoritized communities include elements of isolation from others, challenges with gaining support, access to financial, educational, housing, social, and health-related resources (Ailshire & Garcia, 2018). As a result, organizations in these communities must develop different sensibilities to serve constituents keeping in mind cultural, language, and educational barriers and constraints. These organizations position themselves with the community, primarily if their staff reflects the community, which helps to foster trust, understanding, and the ability to translate their needs (Holley, 2003). While Black-led nonprofits are uniquely positioned to serve and understand marginalized communities, Holley (2003) argues finding funds to support these organizations is an essential part of adding to the strength of their work and that access to those funds is often difficult due to how funders view the importance and relevance of the organizations work. Furthermore, organizations need more support in developing Board leadership, identifying funding sources, meeting with potential funders, grant writing, as well as strategic planning (Holley, 2003). Additionally, Holley (2003) advocates for more specific research in this area and what specific skills are needed to strengthen organizations that serve communities of color as well as coaching funders about the importance of funding the building of institutions and cultural capital.

Culturally specific programs. Many Black-led organizations are founded to serve particular communities that otherwise would not be served or supported. Moreover, culturally specific programming has led to stronger outcomes in the population served as many of these organizations serve as a bridge and intermediary for filling the gap in social, educational, and economic achievement (Gooden, Evans, Perkins, Gooden, &

Pang, 2018). Many Black-led organizations focus on issues related to health, education, youth, arts and culture and are most likely to serve young people and immigrants, be representative of the constituents they serve and in locations with the most need (Branch Associates, 2016; Gooden, Evans, Perkins, et al., 2018). These organizations are often situated and located in marginalized and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods are economically separated by race and ethnicity, leaving Black, Latinos, and Native Americans in some of the lowest income neighborhoods in the United States (Ailshire & Garcia, 2018). Furthermore, designed to address the needs and interests of disadvantaged populations and neighborhoods, Black-led nonprofits shed light on the critical social problems plaguing the community.

Black-led and minority-led become advocates for policy changes to further advance these communities (Lu, 2015). These organizations are recognized as credible representatives of the community they serve as well as the greater community due to being intimately in touch with the issues and providing solutions to address them immediately. Black-led organizations also tend to place value of the cultural identity of the constituents served and become a part of the delivery of services as well as the leadership of the organization (Gooden, Evans, Perkins, et al., 2018).

Accessibility, trust, and connectedness. Black-led organizations develop and institute community building strategies in their service delivery models. Additionally, these organizations have greater access, and grassroots approaches to addressing community needs and develop a deep sense of trust. This trust provides an intimate entry point to learn about the challenges and barriers community members experience in

realizing their potential and obtaining resources to support all areas of their well-being. Thus, Black-led organizations are positioned to serve better communities to reflect on their ethnic and racial groups because they are more open and seek to build strong relationships (Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018). Further, nonprofit leaders who share the same cultural identity of the supported communities are better equipped to provide culturally competent services, a balanced approach to service delivery, and demonstrate positive impact (Calzada & Suarez-Balcazar, 2014; Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018; Holley, 2003; Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun, 2017). The focus on developing strong linkages between the cultural identity, traditions, norms, and practices of an ethnic group has been deemed to provide high community engagement, and trust between the nonprofit agency and groups served (Flores & Matkin; 2014; Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun, 2017).

Black-led nonprofits focus on the cultural competency of their leaders, programs, core values, and service models that speak to the impact they have on the communities served, and without these things, there would be a void in service (Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018). Cultural competence in ethnic specific organizations plays a significant role in their service delivery and ability to provide a sense of belonging to the community as they may be isolated by mainstream society. One of the core tenets of cultural competence and culturally specific work is the ability to continue to learn and gain insight directly from community members. The process is ongoing and self-reflective with an eye on appreciating each person's culture and how to holistically implement its practices (Calzada & Suarez-Balcazar, 2014; Zeitlin, 2014). These ideas further express

how Black leaders are critically positioned in marginalized communities, and thus,

funding is an essential aspect of their work to continue to sustain viable and critical needs

of the community and reduce inequities within the broader society.

Community centered. In conjunction with a focal point of sustainability for the

organization, Black-led and minority led organizations to concentrate not only on those

who receive direct services but instead the entire community. The idea is to build secure

networks and supports so that the entire community is uplifted and heal from social ills,

including poverty, violence, and educational, health, environmental, and food injustices.

Community building is viewed as a significant function of Black-led and minority led

organizations, transferring values and norms embedded in the lives of the families served

into the service delivery model (Flores & Matkin, 2014; Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun,

2017). Additionally, Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun (2017) advocate for more research to

support funders understanding the scope and size of community-based organizations

serving ethnic communities so that they fund the services that are necessary for

advancement and progression.

Acknowledgment and legitimacy. Racial and ethnic minority groups face

challenges in the workplace and, in particular, perceptions of their leadership being

primarily characterized by being occupied by while males. The perceptions of Black

leaders are paradoxical, in that in one sense, people perceive them being strong and

resilient as an asset but at the same time do not want them to exhibit what is considered

as an overbearing strength (Flores & Matkin, 2014). The idea that being powerful, either

by demonstrating specific skills or speaking up for oneself, is sometimes not honored.

Black leaders have to contend with stereotypical images and perceptions. While these

stereotypes and bias provide walls and division between groups, Black leaders have to

develop a dual identity to mask who they are and conform to the status quo.

Legitimacy is a core issue for nonprofit sustainability, which is often determined

by those outside the organization such as funders, elected officials as well as the general

community. These entities and communities further establish the norms and generally

held beliefs and values that an organization should uphold and be measured (Garrow,

2015). The challenge becomes when Black-led organizations do not operate within the

norms established by society because they do not benefit the community they serve and

decide to incorporate other principles and service models that better match the cultural

identity of their constituents. Garrow (2015) contended that organizations located in

communities with populations predominated by minoritized groups are perceived as

weaker and have to prove their validity. Smaller organizations have less access to

resources and less legitimacy and are prone to closure. However, Garrow (2015)

concludes that even more substantial organizations that have budgets over $5 million

coupled with being in a predominantly Black neighborhood as at higher risk of closing

and not surviving. While the research provided some insights on the survival of

nonprofits in marginalized communities, only a few variables were tested, and Garrow

(2015) acknowledged that its limitations included its inability to evaluate whether

demand for service was a variable that affected nonprofits closure. In addition, while

quantitative analysis provided some insights into the possible causes of closure of

nonprofits, a qualitative analysis with more in-depth insight into the lived experiences of

the leadership of the nonprofits might provide some context for causes of closure with more a nuanced introspection around funding decisions, planning processes, staffing, perceptions of neighborhood level challenges, and allocation of resources.

Legitimacy also speaks to the organization's ability to implement and institute best nonprofit management practices. The organizations' viability is evaluated relative to its ability to plan to include strategic plans and succession plans as well as robust evaluation tools and a sound fiscal system (Garrow, 2015). Some of those best practices of nonprofits also include their ability to advocate on behalf of their constituents and leverage their positions with state and local elected officials and policy makers. Nonprofits have to develop secure networks with elected officials to be able to leverage and be aware of funding opportunities (Allard & Smith, 2014). The more nonprofits are in communication with elected officials, the more likely they can obtain funding. However, even with this established strategy to obtain funding, nonprofits who serve predominantly black populations are less likely to receive funding (Allard & Smith, 2014; Garrow, 2015).

Overcoming Barriers in Marginalized Communities

Minority and Black leaders have had to develop tools and strategies to not only sustain their organizations but remain personally and professionally flexible to successfully manage multiple challenges. Flores and Matkin (2014) found in their research that minority leaders who led in marginalized communities were found to be resilient in running their organizations as a result of using their passion for serving the community as a driver for commitment. Leaders also found inspiration from their

perceptions of other influential leaders, such as a family member or a public figure. Also, leaders were guided by expectations to follow suit of their forebears and elders of their community or cultural identity. They also overcame barriers by developing a deep sense of resilience and ignoring attacks from others as well as a strong sense of self-worth (Flores & Matkin, 2014). In addition to a deep sense of belief in themselves and confidence, they also developed a deep belief in high performance standards while overcoming the challenges of racial stereotyping. While at the same time, minority leaders faced challenges of mistrust from within the community (Flores & Matkin, 2014; Weng, 2014).

Minority founders experience challenges that are different from other organizations that contextualize how they gain support from external agents such as funders, elected officials, and the communities they serve. Terrana (2017) examined the experiences of minority founders in low-income urban neighborhoods as well as how they overcame challenges and their impetus for founding an organization in a low-income and minority area. In the face of challenges in underrepresented neighborhoods, founders persisted and were ignited by a deep sense of commitment and passion for the work (Terrana, 2017; Weng, 2014). Terrana (2017) examined how the founders' function under duress and constraints. One of the constraints and challenges faced was obtain funding from all types of funders primarily through individual giving either because there was a lack of understanding from the community, available financial resources, as well as social barriers such as connections to social networks with high net worth individuals (Terrana, 2017; Weng, 2014). Terrana (2017) used resource dependency theory as a

framework for understanding minority founders' behaviors and the interdependence among organizations that is indicative of minority-led institutions. The founder's funding acquisition choice was explained using the resource dependency as a framework, including deciding to engage in partnerships and establishing legitimacy.

Fundraising and Planning Challenges

Black-led organizations are often more vulnerable to economic challenges such as recessions or national and local policy changes. Furthermore, Black-led nonprofits are disproportionately more dependent on government funding than white-led organizations as well as have fewer cash reserves, which makes them more vulnerable to unexpected government changes or direction (Branch Associates, 2016; Garrow, 2015; Garrow, 2012; Terrana, 2017). For example, the 2007-2010 recession disproportionately affected nonprofit leaders of color, with 28% of people-of-color-led organizations being impacted by the recession compared to 18% of white-led nonprofits (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011). The ability to have cash reserves has been an indicator of financial health for nonprofits (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011), which can support organizations during economic downturns as well as support innovative programming and risk-taking. Also, in tandem with having fewer financial resources, Black-led organizations are serving the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations with the least of amount funding.

Moreover, as Black-led organizations are serving and situated in communities populated with racial groups that face discriminatory practices relative to the allocation of resources, their ability to secure funds is mirrored by these same inequitable policies, especially at the local government level. Many Black-led organizations, especially

organizations with less than $1 million budgets, rely heavily on government funding and at the local level, thus are impacted by these practices (Garrow, 2015). These organizations are often engaged in providing social services to the community and in support of low-income populations.

Government funding is one of the predominant funding sources of nonprofit social service organizations, which leaves them significantly reliant despite their budget or staff size (Allard & Smith, 2014). Further, organizations located in low income neighborhoods are challenged by unbalanced social policies and isolation as well as a scarce resource environment and are subjected to racialized policies that eliminate them from higher levels of funding (Allard & Smith, 2014; Garrow, 2015).

Compounded by the multitude of socioeconomic challenges within the community, Black-led organizations perceive funders as having a negative perception and distrust of Black-led leaders specifically related to financial management, accountability, and capacity within the organization (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011). Leaders of Black-led organizations tend to feel that funders will not fund their organization or with less money because they prefer to fund organizations were there is relatability (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011). Thus, due to the lack of Black or people of color at foundations in decision making positions, there is a disconnect.

Garrow (2015) argued that poverty compounded with a predominantly Black neighborhood has resulted in more significant discriminatory practices relative to funding, and the perceptions of this racial group affect how they are funded. Besides, corporate funders are likely to follow the direction of government funders to avoid

contentious social issues and are less likely to fund organizations in under resourced communities (Garrow, 2015). Thus, particularly among human service organizations, they are less likely to receive critical funding for operations and programming, becoming at risk for closure. Garrow (2015) argued further that nonprofits in disadvantaged neighborhoods are subjected to the dynamics of racial discrimination that privileges organizations in White neighborhoods over Black neighborhoods. Additionally, it further perpetuates disinvestment in neighborhoods dominated by racial and ethnic minorities.

While the Branch Associates (2016) report mentioned some apparent disparities between Black-led and White-led organizations, they were unable to conclude if Black-led organizations received less foundation funding than White-led organizations. Many funders of nonprofit organizations post-recession adopted strategies to avoid risks in funding, and some of those strategies included funding fewer organizations as well as not funding those they were unfamiliar with and could not verify their financial durability (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bellmedi, 2011). Thus, there were some inconsistencies relative to who has access to resources depending on the type of funding and funders' internal priorities.

Characteristics of Black Women Leaders of Nonprofits

In this section, I examine the literature on Black women-led nonprofit organizations, leadership qualities as well as operational and management strategies implored to sustain their organizations.　　　　The nonprofit sector in the United States has over 1.5 million tax-exempt organizations organized to serve a religious, scientific, educational, or social purpose (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2016). The

leadership of the sector is comprised of nonprofit executives, where 84% are white, only 10% are African American, and 4% are Hispanic or Latino (Teegarden, 2004). Gooden, Evans, & Pang (2018) research validates that this study is essential to fill the gap on the inclusion of Black women nonprofit executives voices relative to nonprofit leadership in a goliath industry dominated by White leaders. Gooden, Evans, and Pang (2018) examined African American women-led nonprofits in three cities in the United States through a qualitative case study approach. The study was designed to impact nonprofit courses offered at the university level to address a diverse curriculum, reflect the demographics of the students, and a culturally competent pedagogy of learning. The study examined nonprofits capacity building alongside how their missions, programs, and outcomes were culturally specific and added value to their work in serving ethnic communities. Thus, this research on Black-women nonprofit executives is adding to the scant research on the challenges they face as they serve and lead in under-resourced communities. Furthermore, the qualitative research conducted by Gooden, Evans, and Pang (2018) speaks to the value of understanding the lived experiences of Black women leaders and developing a sincere inquiry about their perceptions of the mission, service delivery, leadership approached, and impact made within their organizations that is often missing from the research. Black women leaders' experiences absence from the research is the impetus for further conversation about their role and how they navigate the terrain of the nonprofit sector.

The nonprofit sector consists of numerous organizations that have been committed to varying and robust social justice initiatives to support marginalized and

racialized populations, often solving problems that private or government sectors are unwilling to embark on. These organizations are often led by Black women whose insight, sensitivity, and connectedness has added value to the community (Hossein, 2017). Further, Hossein (2017), recognizing the intentional elimination of Black women nonprofit executives' experiences and contributions to the nonprofit sector, describes through case studies the lived experiences of Black women leaders in Canada. Hossein (2017) uses Black liberation theory, which uses concepts of self-help, mutual aid, and support as a lens through which to examine how Black women serving marginalized communities have overcome barriers to access to funding, being acknowledged, and legitimized in the nonprofit sector. These hurdles are lessened by using economic systems from within the community to pool resources, social enterprises, and fees for service while trying to navigate the networks, political systems, and circles that would give them access to resources (Hossein, 2017).

The risks of using alternative program strategies. Even while Black women leaders employ alternative strategies to obtain resources, they struggle to maintain the funds necessary to sustain the work of the community. The work also has to support the mainstream agenda of what is needed to solve social problems and racial work to serve communities can be rejected. Black women-led organizations often fear not being funded or unfunded if they go outside of the ideas and mandate of funders even when a specific method or program would adequately serve the population (Hossein, 2017). Black women leaders are often downplaying their work in order to avoid those who hold power from feeling disgruntled or comfortable. Thus, they must be careful and mindful of their

approaches in order to secure funding (Hossein, 2017). The idea of working to empower marginalized communities often headed by Black women is juxtaposed against systems that seek to keep them restrained and isolated from resources necessary for their existence.

Resilient leadership. Black women leaders have served the community with a strong belief and ideal around being genuinely passionate about service, upliftment, and change in the community and using their experiences to mentor themselves to push forward. Black women leaders often recognize their constant fight to be recognized by mainstream society and, at the same making conscious affirmations to the community; they serve to stand in a place of power (Dillard, 2016). Black women leaders of nonprofits in marginalized communities must work to dispel negative stereotypes about the community as well as their personhood by external forces to build a contextual understanding and positioning for multiple levels of giving by institutions and individuals. The Black women that lead these nonprofits are guided by principles that drive their work and a deep connection to the community. Dillard (2016) argues that to truly understand the complexities of Black women leaders' choices, subconscious reality, and tools of resilience, it is imperative to engage in conversations with them about their experiences, perceptions, and leadership. Thus, using a qualitative methodology to understand the perceptions of Black women, nonprofit executives are appropriate, given the complexities and nuances of their situations.

Driven by social justice. Black women leaders bring varying degrees of experiences to the nonprofit sector, many of whom have advanced degrees and a wide

range of professional and leadership training experiences (Gooden, Evans, & Pang, 2018;

Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019). While Black women nonprofit executives bring

professional experiences and high educational attainment, they experience more

significant hardships in fundraising, mostly associated with a lack of connections to

social networks (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019). However, it continues to be

driven by social justice initiatives and the desire to change the community served

(Terrana, 2017). Black women leaders see their work as a service to the community and

humanity, and ultimately, they seek to change the way communities operate and envision

themselves. The drive to incorporate a deep sense of social change is characteristic of

how Black women lead and specifically in disadvantaged and impoverished communities

and is often tied to their own cultural identity (Ngunjiri, 2016). In addition to a sense of

connection and determination to change the community, they were also driven by their

sense of spirituality and being of service (Ngunjiri, 2016; Terrana, 2017). The coupling of

social justice work and spirituality led Black women leaders to make ethical decisions

and the ability to face challenges with poise and fearlessness. Black women leaders are

inspired by a sense of duty and accountability to change the conditions of their

communities despite obstacles (Flores & Matkin, 2014). The focus is less on an

individualistic point of view but that of a collective healing process that involves all

members of the community and all aspects of social change (Ginwright, 2015) including

obtaining resources, political influence, as well as the social, emotional, and mental

stability of those being impacted. Social justice work is embedded in the work of Black

women leaders and involves reframing and redesigning the consistent narrative of failure

that dominates social policies. In this reframing, Black women leaders' have to examine how social justice work impacts their ability to leverage resources to support the transformative work necessary for radical change.

Nonprofit Sustainability

Nonprofit organizations continually are searching for ways to remain viable, sustain programming, and strengthen their ability to fundraise. While different factors can impact the financial viability of an organization, nonprofit leaders must think strategically about reducing uncertainty and vulnerability (Hu & Kapucu, 2017; Lin, & Wang, 2016). While leaders of nonprofits employ different strategies, including strategic planning, diverse revenue sources, board engagement, as well as cutting back programming, Hu & Kapucu (2017) argued that strategic planning is one of the most effective strategies. Furthermore, better management practices can have a direct impact on the organization's financial performance. Financial vulnerability has been used to measure whether a nonprofit is sustainable and can survive internal and external challenges, some of those indicators vary among researchers including centered on a singular revenue stream, weak equity balances on the statement of financial position, as well as significant and consistent decreases in fund balances, high debt ratios and administrative costs (Hu & Kapucu, 2017; Lin, & Wang, 2016).

Financial performance alongside management practices tends to be one of the determining factors in analyzing a nonprofit's survival. Measures of financial health include efficient fundraising, the ratio of revenue to fundraising expenses, and measurements of total public support as well as the ratio of total contributions to total

expenses (Hu & Kapucu, 2017; Lin & Wang, 2016). In addition to examining these ratios, the amount of time before an organization runs out funds to cover its expenses, also known as a run rate, is another factor.

The financial performance measurements of small and minority organizations are scrutinized by its reliance on one revenue source and can be deemed as financially vulnerable and lacking the ability to be sustainable long term. Many organizations and, in particular, small and minority owned organizations rely heavily on government funding, which puts them at risk, especially in times of high economic turbulence or when there is a change in priorities of a funder. During financial calamity or economic hardships, nonprofits that have already established external funding relationships and equity ratios that were a considerable fair better and were able to persevere (Lin & Wang, 2016; Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018). The implications for Black-led and Black-women led organizations that have limited external relationships have to be examined and how it impacts their ability to maintain through all economic challenges. Lee and Novell (2015) argue that more research is necessary relative to understanding what implications of turbulence on nonprofits are stewing from external factors. In order to manage uncertainty and a heavy reliance on one source, nonprofits have sought to diverse their revenue in the attempt to distribute funding and improve its finances as one strategy toward being sustainable (Froelich, 1999). Organizations have sought to think creatively about systems and processes that can add value to their overall long-term health.

Nonprofits continually grapple with illustrating their impact but also projecting their future outcomes. Sustainability encompasses multiple factors, and each one

beckoning an analysis and attentive approach, but all adding value depending on the type and size of the organization (Lin & Wang, 2016). Often faced with being accountable to funders, nonprofits tend to shift towards measurements focused on their finances and actual tangible outcomes. Johansson and Lu (2017) advocated for nonprofits to blend and embrace learning and accountability, which diverts the focus to a more sophisticated analysis of the impact and growth of the organization. The value of learning from failures, trying something new, and being innovative is not as understood by external stakeholders, such as funders, but may be a turning point for nonprofits to survive, especially in how they impact the community and obtain revenue. A model for nonprofit organizational development and sustainability can include forecasted and expected outcomes, adaptive learning, valuing questions and learning as well as a recognition of the complexity of exacting outcomes, systems, and results (Johansson & Lu, 2017).

Researchers have questioned the idea of associating sustainability with an organization surviving and call for a more expansive definition as one of many conditions leading to an ability to thrive (Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018). Additionally, Moldavanova and Goerdel (2018) used resource dependency theory as part of their framework to explain how nonprofit leaders and executives hold a specific type of power because their role warrants a level of responsibility in securing resources. The deepening of that power and leveraging the organization's history and assets is the subject of this study. Moreover, the importance of nonprofits being linked and having social ties as a result of their history, place in the community, and the report of its long-standing work is acknowledged as an asset to leveraging resources (Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018).

Organizations that have an established social connectedness are more likely to survive long term and endure the internal and external crises. The ties between sustainability and resource dependency theory are the idea of being able to control the environment as outside influences impact resource acquisition.

Lee and Nowell (2015) advocated for more research centered on measuring the performance of nonprofits outside its financial well-being, including integrating various views that have been previously researched. Some of those views included one, the capacity of a nonprofit to obtain resources through well-developed organizational social networks and use them to support sustainability (Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018); two, how an organization organizes its staff and operational models to provide services; three, the scale and breadth of programs and services; four, the outcomes and impact garnered as a result of programs and activities; and five, how the organizations serve and provide the needs of its constituents. Measuring how well a nonprofit is performing and adding value to a community and further the greater society has been essential to understanding if a nonprofit will be sustainable in the long term. Moldavanova and Goerdel (2018) used resource dependency theory as part of the framework to explain how people in leadership and executive positions hold a specific type of power because their role warrants a level of responsibility in securing resources as well as the importance of social connectedness. The deepening of that power and leveraging the organization's history and assets is the subject of this study.

As nonprofits contend with the multifaceted aspects of remaining sustainable, the approaches continue to be explored. Devalkar, Sohini, and Arora (2017) cite that donors

and funders need transparent systems to report to supporters how the funds will be

utilized and sustained beyond the point of their gift. The idea of providing some level of

certainty for the donor is the same challenge nonprofits struggle with as they search to

manage their funding portfolios. One approach that may provide some level of solvency

and trust from donors is to request funds for the later phases of a project where the

organization can demonstrate outcomes already achieved as evidence of their competence

(Devalkar, Sohani, & Arora, 2017). This approach extends beyond the traditional belief

in the organizations' mission and core purpose as a rationale by donors for choosing to

donate or just funding already implemented work with actual outcomes. Devalkar,

Sohani, & Arora (2017) acknowledge that their model has a level ambiguity due to the

nature of how funding flows in the nonprofit sector, so there are some limitations within

the model. The model asserts that nonprofits that are reliant on other sources for funding

embark on programs and activities with the existing resources available and further

implement other activities when they have less dependence on ambiguous expectations of

finances. However, the uncertainty of funding can affect programming, and the impact on

the community served, and the research is based on assumptions that the probabilities of

leveraging the results from a completed phase are fixed.

Nonprofit sustainability for organizations located and serving marginalized

communities should include an examination of the interactions within the location or

neighborhood as well as its socioeconomic condition. Low-income communities have

more social service nonprofits in general than other communities, with having established

three times more organizations than high income neighborhoods (Lee, 2017). In tandem

with the high number of social service agencies, low income neighborhoods are characterized by high Black and Latino populations (Lee, 2017; Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun, 2017). In addition, the density of Black or African American populations and the budget size of an organization has been correlated with a shorter organizational life span (Lee, 2017). There is a gap in the research in contextualizing sustainability within marginalized communities with few studies examining low income communities and the nonprofits that provide those services access resources to sustain the organization.

As organizations navigate the external influences that affect their survival, they adapt, and resource dependency theory helps to explain some of the choices made by organizational leaders to sustain (Froelich, 1999; Lee, 2017; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). While situating organizations in the context of their locale is a part of a more recent study, the focus has been on neighborhood impact, how the conditions of the community affect the organizations' solvency, and how nonprofits add value to the vibrancy and health of the community (Lee, 2017). The leaders who operate organizations situated in under-resourced neighborhoods have received less attention (Katz, 2014; Terrana, 2017), which this study intends to explore and, in particular, how Black women nonprofit executives perceive sustainability and how communities that are predominantly low income and Black navigate challenges.

The literature highlighted the various dimensions of nonprofit sustainability, including aspects of financial performance, staffing implications, capacity building, keen fiscal management and planning as critical aspects that add to an organization's ability to thrive. Additionally, from the perspective of marginalized communities and Black-led

and Black women-led organizations, the literature presented various factors that affect how they function, operate within the community, and make decisions to sustain. This study examined and addressed specifically how Black women nonprofit executives operate and create funding and revenue generating strategies. Further, how these funding strategies contribute to nonprofit long-term survival. I examined the unique characteristics of Black women-led organizations and how these distinct qualities contribute to external perceptions about their organizational viability. Black women-led organizations distinctions characterize the fundamental qualities necessary to build, organize, galvanize, and heal the community. Black women-led organizations face two challenges simultaneously: demonstrating legitimacy and solvency while meeting the demanding needs of the community.

This study focused on the themes of nonprofit sustainability, the impact of a community's locale on its fundraising capabilities, Black women leaders' specific leadership strategies, and the leadership approach necessary to navigate organizational capacity and to balance resources. Resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003) provided a lens and framework for understanding how the resources necessary to operate are secured and how the constraints of the external environment contextualize behaviors and choices. Nonprofit sustainability has been researched extensively and is an extension of the work explored in the nonprofit sector and sustainability literature (Lee & Nowell, 2014; Lee, 2017; Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Luchian, & Luchian, 2018). The impact of community's locale and neighborhood characteristics on obtaining resources have been previously examined, and researchers

continue to identify how minorities navigate challenges leading in disadvantaged and low-income neighborhoods (Flores & Matkin, 2014; Lee, 2017; Terrana, 2017, and Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun, 2017). Black women leader's specific leadership strategies and community building approaches have been minimally researched in conjunction with understating minority leaders' functionality (Flores & Matkin, 2014; Hossein, 2017; Terrana, 2017). Thus, this study addressed the dearth of research on Black women nonprofit executives and how they navigate obtaining resources to ensure the survival of the organization they run in ways that are long term and durable.

Summary and Conclusions

The focus of this research was to examine and understand how Black women nonprofit executives obtain resources and how they overcome barriers to strengthen the organization and continue to serve the community. Black women leaders have to employ unique strategies that are derived in part from their work experiences, relationships they have developed over time as well as the funding communities' perceptions and grantmaking operations. Resource dependency theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978/2003) served as a basis from which to understand organizational leaders' choices and directions relative to securing funding as they try to gain control and predict their level of solvency and expectations of funding.

In this chapter, I explored resource dependency theory and how researchers have used the theory to understand how organizations balance power and negotiate resources, how the dynamics of power and how resource allocation is controlled as well as how nonprofits try to balance the ambiguous nature of resource acquisition. Researchers

applied resource dependency theory to contextualize nonprofit leaders' decision making

processes and specific strategies to maintain a solvent organization (Malatesta & Smith,

2014; Nienhuser, 2008; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978/2003). Resource dependency theory

provides a lens by which to examine behaviors, choices, and to predict the future

outcomes of an organization as it faces ever changing external influences and

interdependent factors that impact its trajectory.

   Additionally, in this chapter, I examined the current context of fund development

in the nonprofit sector and how the fundraising environment impacts how minority and

Black-led nonprofits negotiate to secure resources. The research demonstrated that more

research is needed to understand the complexities of how the locale of a nonprofit,

specifically in an under-resourced community, impacts how funders perceive a

nonprofit. Also, Black women nonprofit executives are doubly challenged as they

position their skills, cultural identity, and advocacy for marginalized communities in the

quest to access funding (Hossein, 2017; Terrana, 2017). This chapter addressed the

characteristics of Black-led and Black women-led organizations to demonstrate the

unique traits, challenges, and assets they possess and how that impacts the decision

making of its leaders. Lastly, this chapter examined best practices centered around

nonprofit sustainability and what measurements constitute a durable organization. The

exploration of sustainability will add to the literature centered on the most effective

methods to operate an organization long term, and the specific strategies groups and

communities employ to survive.

This study added value to the literature on the application of resource dependency theory to understand the dynamics of a unique subset of leadership; Black women nonprofit executives. There is little known about how Black women nonprofit executives make decisions, operate social networks as well as handle the challenges funding organizations located in disadvantaged and economically challenged neighborhoods. This study contributed to the research about nonprofit sustainability, leadership, and how social change is funded through the efforts of Black women-led organizations. Further, this study emphasized fund development strategies necessary for longevity and success.

Chapter 3 addresses the specific research design and methodology for this study. This study used a qualitative framework of descriptive phenomenology to discuss the gap in the literature. Specifically, in person and phone interviews were conducted to understand Black women, nonprofit executives lived experiences as the guiding visionaries who serve as strategists, fundraisers, and planners to implement the vision and mission of the organization. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the data collection methods, the guiding research question, how the interviews were conducted as well as ethical considerations with respect to the participants, and the study overall.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to obtain an understanding of how Black women nonprofit executives perceive their experiences leading organizations in low income and disadvantaged communities, specifically how they navigate and obtain financial resources. The study included a subjective probe into the consciousness of the participants, which is part of the core of phenomenology (Qutoshi, 2018). To gather clear descriptions of how Black women nonprofit executives', experience their situations, I conducted semistructured, open-ended interviews with a focus on how participants formulated perceptions of activities as well as on identifying any gaps and shared commonalities. The population included a purposive sample of nine Black nonprofit women executives.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) contend that interviews are a useful tool to learn how the participants interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they operate. The interview questions, research design, and methodology were centered on answering the study's RQ and eliciting more understanding of the challenges of Black women nonprofit executives who serve underprivileged communities relative to their fundraising and revenue generating strategies. The RQ was, What are the perceptions of Black women nonprofit executives in regard to overcoming funding acquisition barriers in order to serve their nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities effectively? My findings provided more insight into the lived experiences of Black women leaders.

In this chapter, I provide the rationale for the research design and methodology (i.e., descriptive phenomenological) in relation to the study's purpose and RQ. I describe

my selection of phenomenology as a research method, my professional experience in the nonprofit sector, and how any biases or ethical issues were addressed relative to data collection. I also describe the participant selection process, sampling procedures, and data collection instruments. Last, I address issues of trustworthiness and how validity and reliability were instituted as well as ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study I explored how Black women nonprofit executives have dealt with obtaining funding to ensure that the organizations they lead, which have been historically marginalized and underresourced, are sustainable. Specifically, I used a descriptive phenomenological study approach to investigate the lived experiences of Black women nonprofit executives who lead in disadvantaged and low socioeconomic communities and examined themes related to nonprofit sustainability; the effect of a community's location on fundraising success; and specific leadership strategies and approaches necessary to steer organizational capacity and balance financial, capital, and human resources. For the study, I drew from a naturalist research paradigm. This paradigm is based on the supposition that the reality people experience is varied and that the best way to understand it is by interpreting people's perceptions of it (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Another premise is that multiple perspectives of truth can both coexist and change (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). With this filter of understanding, I examined the experiences of Black women leaders and, in particular, their interpretation of their current knowledge, prior experiences, and hopes for the community they serve. Rubin and Rubin (2012) asserted that naturalist researchers should seek to contextualize their interpretations of

participants' reality without making judgments or definitive conclusions; instead, researchers should gather detailed and vivid descriptions of complex experiences. I concluded that a qualitative, naturalist approach was an appropriate method to fully understand how Black women leaders perceive their experiences as fundraisers and champions of the work of their organizations.

Phenomenological researchers seek to uncover the lived experiences of people as they occur to examine complex behavioral choices (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Phenomenology is an appropriate approach to understand how people come to understand their experience. It is designed to understand not just the observations of those experiences but the ideals and the connections that are made as individuals make meaning (Patton, 2015; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenology allows for the selection of participants who have lived through and experienced an event or occurrence; the selection is not necessarily generalized (see Patton, 2015). Phenomenology was thus appropriate for this study. Another reason is that the study was focused on a specific population group, Black women nonprofit executives.

Phenomenology is based on the idea that how people experience the world provides insight into how they create meaning (Qutoshi, 2018; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Phenomenologists thus focus on individuals' meaning making as an essential element of the human experience and hold the assumption that there is a form to shared experiences (Patton, 2015). Descriptive phenomenology, which is the core of this research method, is focused on the transcendental nature of experiences; participants can be objective about what is seen and known through a more global lens (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016;

Sloan & Bowe, 2013). The idea that people can rationalize and understand with a level of certainty how their reality is constructed, how ideas come together, and how they gather meaning is the focus of descriptive phenomenology.

In undertaking a descriptive phenomenology. I examined how Black women leaders construct and make meaning of their experiences in managing and raising funds for nonprofit organizations. Additionally, I designed this research to understand the lived experiences and intricacies of Black women leaders in nonprofits as they navigate the terrain of building an active organization with sustainable funding to ensure that the communities served are strengthened. The complexities of human behavior are better understood by analyzing the phenomena rather than an external description of reality that does not have a context for the meanings created (Sloan & Bowe, 2013). Thus, in studying Black women nonprofit leaders, my goal was to understand how they experienced being leaders, what their perceptions of their decisions were, and what their internal and external challenges and successes were.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher in this descriptive phenomenological study included being one of the primary instruments for collecting and analyzing data. In a qualitative study, the researcher is often an instrument in the study (Karagiozis, 2018). My role was to collect and analyze the perceptions of the participants and ensure that bias was reduced or eliminated from the process (see Burkholder et al., 2016) through active participation in the data collection as an interviewer. Interviews create space to actively listen to and engage with in participants a welcoming and warm manner in which the participant feels

open to sharing their personal stories and experiences (Karagiozis, 2018). I understood

that my role as a researcher and as a participant observer was to ask open-ended

questions to ensure that I did not interject any personal biases while conducting

interviews. The interviews involved developing a good relationship with participants, so

they felt comfortable sharing their experiences in a natural way. Developing such a

relationship is one of the criteria for being an effective interviewer (Kawulich, 2005).

Furthermore, during the interviews, my role was to remove myself from the process so

that I was actively listening to what was being communicated and not weighing in on the

responses and creating bias. Also, bias was managed by communicating with each

participant before the interview and being clear about the process, time commitment, and

purpose (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In addition, I asked open-ended questions to allow

the participant to feel free to express themselves without feeling pressured.

I also recorded field notes from the interviews while I observed the participants

during the interview. Thus, notes relative to the participant's body language and reactions

to the questions were kept. In addition, I engaged in bracketing, which involves making

notes of my own personal biases and perceptions before conducting the interviews.

Bracketing allows the participants in a qualitative study not to be swayed by the

researcher's personal experiences or biases (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford,

2016). Additionally, it ensured a careful selection of participants using a specific

criterion and did not include any previous personal and professional relationships or

impact on funding decisions.

The impetus for this study was guided by my personal and professional experiences in the nonprofit sector and a desire to understand it more entirely as a Black woman of African descent with origins from both the United States and the Caribbean. I have more than 20 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector, including the strategic management of socially conscious complex organizations. In the past 20 years, I have assisted in the development of cutting-edge and innovative arts, human services, cultural and educational organizations including holding positions as a Program Director, Associate Executive Director, Director of Finance, Business Manager, Director of a nonprofit incubator, Grants Manager, and Director of Programs and Strategy. In my various roles, I worked primarily for organizations that have been led by Black men and women and served people both youth and adults in under-resourced communities in urban cities including New York City, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Hartford, and Connecticut.   In many of my roles, I was deeply involved in management, fund development, strategic planning, and supporting the financial viability of the organization, which led me to a desire to understand further the impact of resource dependence, nonprofit sustainability, and practical strategies employed by Black women leaders. My deep understanding of the nonprofit sector as a professional supported my interview process. Additionally, I have served as a grant panelist for arts and cultural funders in New York and New Jersey, which has enhanced my ability to understand how nonprofits formulate their cases for support and funding.

Methodology

The methodology of the research consisted of precise alignment of the research design, the research question, instrumentation, interview questions, and data collection. Also, the alignment included ensuring the theoretical foundation supports each of the elements of the study. This qualitative phenomenological study was based on understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Therefore, within each of the parts of the research, the goal was to use tools, methods, and strategies that helped to support exploring and understanding the participant's perceptions and beliefs. Thus, I selected interviews as the instrument which supported gaining greater insight into the participants thinking as well as interview questions that supported providing clear descriptions of events and activities. Interviews helped provide an intimate overview of how the participants see the world and their experiences, which was critical for understanding Black women's nonprofit executives and their unique understanding of the intersection of working in marginalized communities and seeking financial resources. The goal was to gain insight into what unique and complex events occur as Black women nonprofit executives navigate resource acquisition.

Participant Selection Logic

In selecting participants, I chose Black women executives working in New York and New Jersey metro areas that were closely aligned with the established criteria. Researchers are involved in establishing a specific rubric by which to create a criterion, which helps to streamline the progress (Roulston, 2010). The participants were chosen based on the size and location of the organization they lead. The focus was on

organizations with budgets between $200K and $90 million and in neighborhoods

described as having over 55% minority population. Also, I sought executives whose

organizations were focused on arts, culture, and social service.

The study was designed to examine and understand the challenges of Black

women nonprofit executives who lead in marginalized communities. The sample was

reflective of a demographic of specific leaders in the New York City and New Jersey

metro area. Concerning identity, the term "Black women" was used instead of African

American women to shift from the racialized context of how Black women have

culturally identified (Hossein, 2017). Also, the study incorporated a more inclusive

description of Black women in the African diaspora who are both African American,

African, and Caribbean American and may choose one or all the categories as definitions

of their cultural and racial identity. In many instances, Black women from the African

diaspora have been absent from research about the nonprofit sector and social economy,

so the study attempts to address the inclusion of their stories (Hossein, 2017).

The study included a three-pronged approach to the selection process. As

recommended by Anney (2014), purposive sampling involves selecting participants that

have specific knowledge of the subject matter and that have relevant information related

to the research question. Participants included nine Black women who led arts, cultural,

housing, youth development, and social service agencies in low-income areas of New

York City with organizational budgets size between $200K and $90 million. First, I

determined participation selection by which organizations met the criteria established

above through researching GuideStar, which has public information relative to budgets,

missions, and programs. I then researched if their Executive Directors or Senior

Directors were Black women by researching GuideStar and LinkedIn with the matched

budgets size and organizational descriptions and searched for their executive directors

and senior directors.

Second, once those parameters were set, and the population of the study was

established. I selected a purposive sample from the group by choosing organizations that

met the criteria and by reviewing the Internal Revenue Service 990s available online to

investigate which organizations received a combination of funding from individuals,

government, corporate, and foundations. Third, I communicated with colleagues in the

nonprofit sector for recommendations for women leaders who might be a good fit for the

research inquiry. Snowballing sampling was employed, whereby participants are asked

to recommend other participants that might fit the criteria to be selected for the study

(Patton, 2015).

Participants were invited for participation by email with a follow up phone call. I

obtained phone numbers and emails through researching relevant contacts on GuideStar

and LinkedIn as well as on each organization's website. Websites can be a tool to gather

staffing profiles, phone, email, descriptions of their responsibilities, and relationship to

the organization (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I developed a recruitment email (see Appendix

A), which was sent to each potential participant to invite them to participate in the

interview for the study. Participants were required to agree to the informed consent via

email so that they are aware of their rights and confidentiality within the study as well as

their consent to participate voluntarily.

Based on the epistemological approach, the level of saturation depends on the breadth and depth that is reached through understanding the purpose of the research (Baker, Edwards & Doidge, 2012). The purpose of the research was to underst1`and and explore the lived experiences of Black nonprofit women executives. Researchers contend that a single participant might work, but in cases where there is a time constraint and hard to reach populations, a smaller sample of 10-20 will be more feasible (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012). I researched 19 Black women leaders with the final sample consisting of 9 Black women leaders. Furthermore, Mason (2010) contends that due to the labor intensity of qualitative research and the desire to uncover and understand meanings in people's experiences, the smaller sample size may be more reasonable.

Instrumentation

Semi structured open-ended interviews were used in this study as a primary instrument. The interviews were conducted face to face with an option for phone interviews if they were unavailable with either the Executive Director or one member of the executive leadership team. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed.

Basis for interview questions. The interview questions were aligned with the research question based on the themes that emerged from the literature review including focusing on one; specific strategies employed by Black women nonprofit executives to obtain resources and balance organizational capacity; two, nonprofit sustainability; three, the impact of a community's locale on fund development; and four, if their cultural identity impacts how they perceive their experiences as an executive leading an organization in a disadvantaged neighborhood (see Appendix B).

Each interview consisted of questions based on the themes that emerged from the literature review in Chapter 2. The interview questions were aligned with the following themes: 1) nonprofit organizational capacity and sustainability; 2) Black women nonprofit executive leadership strategies and decisions regarding funding acquisition; 4) the impact of a community's locale on nonprofits fund development; and 5) cultural identity impact on leadership and fundraising experiences (see Appendix B).

An interview protocol was developed to guide the interviews, which included an interview script. In addition, I conducted content validity of the interview questions by inviting 11 faculty members within Walden University's Public Policy and Administration department to convene an expert review panel of the interview questions. I made a request to each of the faculty members, and I received feedback from four members of the panel. The panelists received an email with a short description of the study and an interview guide with seven proposed questions and a column to provide qualitative feedback. Their suggestions were incorporated relevant to the interview questions prior to beginning the study to ensure they were valid, appropriate, and aligned with the research question. In order to ensure consistent rigor of the study, content validity was embedded into the process as it establishes that clear protocols and procedures are in place, and the interview questions are relevant, aligned, and easily comprehensible by the participants (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The data collection included semi, structured open-ended face to face interviews. The inclusion of face to face interviews allowed the participants to

thoroughly reflect on their experiences, which were recorded, transcribed, and then coded

for patterns and themes that emerged. Interviews as a data collection method aligned with

the purpose of the study, which was designed to obtain an in depth understanding of the

experiences of Black women executives and examines the fundamental qualities of their

thinking, perceptions, and emotions. Patton (2015) contends that interviews as part of a

phenomenological study should be designed to describe the phenomenon of interest as it

is lived on an everyday basis to synthesize the dynamics of perceptions and choices of the

persons being studied. The focus is on gleaning a clear description of specific situations

without an interpretation of that experience. The experiences can be captured through

stories, narratives, and lived actual occurrences (Patton, 2015). The critical element was

to provide a vivid description of the occurrence as close as possible to its original state

and thought. Interviews were one of the primary data collection techniques for the study,

and each interview was longer than 30 minutes. I emailed each participant an informed

consent before the interview and requested an affirmation of their participation

beforehand.

The interviews were conducted via face to face and phone as a second option to

understand the participant's thoughts and perceptions about leadership, under-resourced

communities, and their experiences leading and securing funding for their

organization. Phone interviews have several advantages, including being recorded and

the transcripts transcribed for accuracy; this provides multiple access points for

participants because the interviews have fewer barriers to participation in terms of timing

and location (Opdenakker, 2006). Conducting a qualitative interview is beneficial

because observation alone cannot capture a person's perspective, and their thinking can be made more overt (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The virtues of conducting a phone interview are that it can be real-time communication. However, face to face was the first option as body language, and cues from the participant can be captured (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I emailed each participant a suggestion for a location for face to face interviews. Once I received an email stating they consented, I set up a day and time. We mutually agreed upon the day and time, taking into consideration a convenient location, preferably their office for the participant, as well as ensured it was safe, private, and in a quiet space in which to conduct the interview.

The face to face and phone interviews began with a brief introduction describing the purpose of the research, informing them they can stop at any point if they were uncomfortable and if they needed further clarity as to any of the questions. I used an auto recording device on my phone and downloaded a copy of the audio recording immediately after the interview and paid a nominal fee for automated transcripts of the interviews.

In addition to recording each interview, I took notes to include any of my insights and reflections from the interview. The audio recordings were transcribed, and a copy was provided for each participant to review. I provided the participants with seven days to review the transcripts and make changes if no response was received, as I communicated, I assumed the transcripts are accurate. After conducting the interview, I made sure they had my contact information and indicated if they are interested, I would

provide them with a one to two-page summary of the findings once the study was complete.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was to examine and understand how Black women leaders of small nonprofits in under-resourced communities serve with limited resources. The study was designed to understand if contributing factors, skills, and characteristics of Black women leaders support their perceptions of how they secure funding to sustain their organizations. The analysis of data included a review of the face to face or phone interviews.

I reviewed each interview and used Atlas.ti software to code each of the interviews based on the themes identified in the literature review, including nonprofit sustainability, characteristics of Black women nonprofit executives' leadership, how locale impacts fundraising, the level of dependency on resources, as well as strategies to obtain and secure revenue. The interviews were designed to gather rich and exhaustive information that described the experiences of Black women executives with vivid stories (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews should be treated as a course of events in a story that provide enriching plots, sequences, and answer how the participants come to interpret their experiences (Karagiozis, 2018). Thus, the interviews were designed to uncover rich information as the participants shared stories about their experiences as leaders.

The data analysis consisted of an exploring method, explicitly using holistic coding to form the initial codes. Based on the use of a phenomenological approach designed to understand the lived experiences of the participants, holistic coding is aligned

with identifying possible themes and categories that might emerge (Saldaña, 2016). Thus, the research question was designed to understand the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and experiences. The analysis included using Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software to code and label the completed interviews and field notes. The use of holistic coding is tied to understanding themes that emerge from the data and to synthesize data to create broad themes (Saldaña, 2016). Thematic analysis was employed in conjunction with in vivo coding as the second cycle of coding, which helped to support the formation of categories and allow for more distinctions of the codes (Roulston, 2010; Smith & Firth, 2011). Once the codes were identified, then they were transformed into categories. The in vivo codes helped to gather specific behaviors and approaches of the participants (Saldaña, 2016), which are critical elements in understanding decisions and choices, perceptions of sustainability, the funding, and philanthropic environments as well as their strategies they employ to secure resources.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential factor in qualitative research, and specific measures were put in place to ensure that the research responded to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Credibility seeks to ensure that the research methods employed in the study have precedent in other research studies of similar nature. In particular, the data collection methods, analysis, and theoretical foundation of the study all align. The theoretical foundation was based on resource dependency theory, which sought to use a lens for understanding how leaders who are reliant on resources for an organization's survival make decisions in the selection

of a specific resource. This study sought to thoroughly comprehend the decisions of

nonprofit women leaders in securing resources and navigating funding acquisition in the

nonprofit sector by using a descriptive phenomenology, which was designed to

understand the lived experiences. The analysis used holistic and in vivo coding, which

was appropriate because they are designed to uncover the actual views of the participants

historically from marginalized communities where their voices are silenced or muted

(Saldaña, 2016). The idea was to unearth the actual words used by the participants to

capture the meanings that are part of their experiences.

Creditability

Credibility is an integral part of the process, which includes adopting research

methods that are clear and generally accepted in the field of qualitative research, such as

the design of the questions and data collection methods (Shenton, 2004). I implemented

an interview protocol, data collection methodology, and research design, which added

value to a valid and reliable study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I ensured that I briefly shared

my personal and professional experiences with the participants in order to establish trust

and comfortability. I also journaled to reflect on the process, utilized qualitative data

analysis application to support the organization and analysis of the data gathered.

Interviews help to uncover the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the participant

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Thus, it was vital for me to examine my feelings and thoughts

through journaling so that bias was managed appropriately.

I familiarized myself with the organizations and participants in which I intended

to study. Shenton (2004) recommends that the sampling selection be congruent with

similar studies and credibility also speaks to those strategies in how the data is collected, and in particular, participants will be encouraged to be honest and authentic in their responses, and they have the right to refuse a question or withdraw from the study. Also, the researchers contend that a level of rigor should be established to lend the study to being credible (Patton, 2015). The study included: an interview protocol, a document review protocol, open ended semi structured interviews, recording and transcription of the interviews using professional tools, research participant follow-up to ensure accuracy of the interviews and an allowance to add additional information and the use of qualitative software Atlas.ti to organize the interview data and create codes for analysis.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the notion that the study can be replicated and applied to similar situations and groups (Shenton, 2004). Information about the organizations and the participant's characteristics is provided, which provides a context for the study. This data was gathered, which meets the criteria for the ability to transfer results from this study to another. External validity was established by providing a clear and through description of the research design, data collection methods, sample selection, and criteria as well as how the data was reviewed and analyzed in the study. I demonstrated the methods for data collection by describing the semi structured interview process.

Dependability

Dependability is addressed by applying high rigor to research to ensure rich data is collected and that the sample represents an appropriate measure to ensure saturation (Tracy, 2010). Saturation was established by conducting interviews with nine women

leaders, whereas 8-12 participants is a generally accepted amount for qualitative studies (Baker, Edwards & Doidge, 2012). Also, techniques were employed to ensure dependability, including a detailed description of the participant selection of Black women leaders and the data collection processes. I provided in the data analysis, information about the codes established, and the raw data, field, and journal notes used to establish an analysis.

Confirmability

Concerning confirmability, the research addressed any missing information or issues associated with research that could not be addressed but may be for further research (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, the study had a comprehensive audit trail, which is a diagram of the entire research process and reflexivity (Shenton, 2004). The audit trail ensured that the research was detailed, comprehensive, and rigorous. The strategies employed are replicable in other studies as a result of the rigor attached, including member checking by the participants, who received an opportunity to review the transcripts and ensure the accuracy of the interviews.

<div align="center">

Ethical Procedures

</div>

I employed ethical procedures as mandated and required by the Walden University Institutional Board of Review (IRB), which included not selecting participants where there was a potential for a conflicting interest; in particular, not using participants where I have had any personal or business relationships or had any influence. Also, I ensured the confidentiality of the participants by providing a thorough understanding of both orally and written about how the research was conducted and how the results will be

shared. I ensured they were informed of their rights to participate in the study as well as if they would like to choose not to continue in the study. The data was stored in a safe and secure file on my computer and google drive that requires two-password protection to gain entry, which can only be assessed by me, and the participant's names and documents are kept confidential. The documents were scanned into the password protected drive as well; all data and documents will be permanently deleted in five years. The role of the researcher is to ensure that the participants feel safe, free, and able to quickly exit without feeling pressured to provide transparency, authenticity, and integrity throughout the entire process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Summary

This chapter provided the approach and process by which this phenomenological qualitative study will be conducted. This chapter provided a description of the research design and decision for choosing each of the methods. Also, a full explanation for ensuring a rich and detailed research process, including participant selection, data analysis, basis, and alignment of the interview questions with the research question were provided. Also, a description to address trustworthiness, reliability, and credibility was added as well how the research addresses transferability and ethical concerns. The chapter outlined how a full exploration and understanding of how Black women nonprofit executives make funding acquisition choices and how they navigate running an organization in a specific locale. Based on the research problem, which is that there is a lack of information relative to how Black women nonprofit executives navigate and secure funding for the organization in neighborhoods that have been historically

marginalized. Thus, an in-depth understanding and exploration of their lived experiences seem an appropriate process to unearth their perceptions. The research design aligns with an interview process, which allowed for their perceptions and thinking to be unveiled as they experience them in everyday circumstances.

In Chapter 4, I will share the results of the study and continue to discuss the specific data collection conducted, how trustworthiness was established, and evidence relative to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Also, I will provide an analysis of the interviews conducted and a full description of the themes that emerged.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this qualitative descriptive phenomenology study, I examined the perspectives of Black women nonprofit executives who serve historically marginalized communities on funding acquisition strategies. I also explored Black women leaders' perceptions of fundraising as well as how they manage the landscape of resource acquisition and the strategies they employ to manage and sustain organizations. The nonprofit sector has become an increasingly competitive market for funding with substantial increases in the number of nonprofits seeking funding, decreases in government funding, and for-profit entities entering markets that have historically been served by nonprofits (Topaloglu, McDonald, & Hunt, 2018). Many nonprofits who receive funding from government sources and private support from grants and individuals are often small and struggle to survive financially (Topaloglu et al., 2018). Nonprofit leaders face challenges in raising funds to support the work of their organizations. However, Black women leaders who serve underresourced communities face a dual challenge in navigating the nonprofit sector's competitive dynamics alongside the burdens of poverty, divestment, and inequities within low socioeconomic neighborhoods (Flores & Matkin, 2014; Hossein, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insights about the lived experiences of Black nonprofit executives leading organizations in underresourced communities as well as to explore aspects of underlying funding barriers affecting funding acquisition. I designed the study to address the problem of sustainability and

funding challenges with limited capacity and barriers to funding within an increasingly

competitive philanthropic environment. To address the gap in knowledge, I used Pfeffer

and Salancik's (2003) resource dependency theory to guide the development of the RQ

and interview questions and yield the final study results based on the perspectives of

Black women nonprofit executives. The RQ was, What are the perceptions of Black

women nonprofit executives in regard to overcoming funding acquisition barriers in order

to serve their nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities effectively? The

central themes for this study that emerged from the literature review included (a)

nonprofit sustainability, (b) the impact of the locale and demographics served on the

leaders' fundraising capacity, (c) Black women leaders' specific leadership and

fundraising strategies, and (d) Black women leaders' approach to navigate funding

barriers to manage organizational capacity and obtain resources. In this chapter, I

describe the demographics of the organizational leaders, outcomes of the data collection,

data analysis, and trustworthiness of the data. The specific RQ is answered in the data

analysis section.

Data Collection

The participants for the study were women who racially and culturally identified

as Black and people of African descent and who were senior executives. To identify

participants, I used GuideStar, a national database of nonprofits registered with the

Internal Revenue Service as tax-exempt (GuideStar, 2020), and LinkedIn, a social

network for professionals (LinkedIn, 2020). I researched nonprofit organizations in New

York and New Jersey by first searching the GuideStar database by location, focusing on

organization with budgets under $5 million. I then researched organizational websites on LinkedIn for contact information. I learned through my initial research of organizations that I needed to expand the search parameters to include social service organizations with larger budgets. My outreach included sending e-mails to 23 leaders, nine of whom agreed to participate. Of the 23 leaders I sent e-mail correspondence to, 11 did not respond, and 10 stated they were interested. Of the 10 who stated they were interested, seven confirmed an interview.

Also, I engaged the snowballing method after each interview by inquiring with the participant if they were aware of any other leaders who fit the criteria for the study. The snowballing resulted in two additional participants, with my final interviews consisting of nine participants who led organizations in New York City. Snowballing can be a useful technique in qualitative research because it provides a unique way to reach specific groups of people with shared experiences who may be hard to reach and who sometimes come from social or professional networks that form naturally (Noy, 2007). Snowballing is one of the most commonly used techniques in the qualitative study and contributes to developing a unique body of knowledge that is both didactic and mirrors perceptions of reality similar to the interview process (Noy, 2007). Thus, snowballing was an appropriate approach in this research study, which was designed to garner rich and meaningful data through open-ended, semistructured interviews. Each participant from the study who responded agreed to participate in the study before the interview by consenting via e-mail.

I initially contacted the potential participants via an e-mail message or a LinkedIn message. The e-mail message included the recruitment letter, with a short description of the study, setting, privacy, and duration of the interview. Once I received a response from the participant, I sent a copy of the informed consent, which included two sample interview questions. After this, I confirmed the date and location of the interview. I conducted face-to-face interviews as a primary method of data collection. For those participants who could not meet face to face, I received consent to conduct a phone interview as an alternative. Phone interviews are advantageous because they can be recorded and transcribed quickly and because they provide a means of participation for interviewees who would not otherwise be able to participate (Opdenakker, 2006). The interviews were managed by adherence to an interview protocol and were held in private locations at the executive's offices to ensure confidentiality and no undue burdens. All nine interviews were conducted within 19 days during January 2020.

I recorded both face-to-face and phone interviews using a digital recording application on my phone. An interview script was used (see Appendix B), and each of the interviews lasted up to 30 minutes. I used the exact questions as outlined in the interview script and provided clarification to any questions as requested by the participant. I also took notes during and after each interview, and I immediately had the audio recording of each interview transcribed using a software application. The files were delivered within 24 hours, and, after reviewing them for accuracy, I sent them to each participant for review with a formal thank you for participating in the study. Each participant had 7 days to review the transcript, and two participants responded with comments and revisions to

the transcripts. I edited the transcripts and sent them back for the final review. The final transcripts are saved in an encrypted file on a cloud-based, password-protected application, as well as my password-protected personal computer to which only I have access.

I proposed studying eight to 12 participants who were leaders of organizations in New York and New Jersey. However, I achieved data saturation after seven interviews. I conducted two additional interviews to ensure that sufficient saturation was reached. Francis et al. (2010) argued that while there is no definitive way to account for how saturation has been reached in interview-based studies, one method includes developing criteria for when the researcher will stop searching for new codes and data to emerge. I established two interviews as the integer to be the measure by which I would research more potential interviewees; if I did not reach saturation, I would try to interview two more participants.

The only variation in the study from what was proposed in Chapter 3 was that I was only able to reach one executive from New Jersey, who subsequently was unable to confirm availability for an interview. I was able to reach the remaining participants from New York; thus, this study consisted of nine Black women nonprofit executives from New York City only.

Demographics

The study included a purposeful sample of nine Black women nonprofit executives from arts, cultural, youth development, housing, financial literacy, gender-specific, and social service organizations in the metro New York area. The organizations

had annual revenues ranging from $112K to $86 million and have been in operation from

1 to 43 years. The leaders of the organizations have been in their roles from 1 to 41 years,

with 4 executives who are founders of their organizations. Table 1 illustrates the

organizational and participant demographics of the nine leaders selected.

Table 1

Demographics of Participant Organizations and Leaders

Nonprofit organization	Age of organization (yrs.)	Annual organizational revenue	Leaders' years in the organization
Organization 1	43	$1.43M	30+
Organization 2	25	$1.2M	25+
Organization 3	41	$2.4M	40+
Organization 4	1	$250K	1
Organization 5	40	$1.1M	5
Organization 6	6	$111K	5+
Organization 7	24	$2.1M	3
Organization 8	33	$86K	2
Organization 9	15	$500K	7+

Data Analysis

The primary data collection method for this study were interviews and I used

Atlas.ti 8 to manage and organize the interview data and the identified common themes

that emerged from the interviews. I incorporated Saldaña's (2015) qualitative content

analysis methodologies to yield meaningful results from the data within the interviews

inductively. I engaged in two cycles of coding; the first cycle used the holistic coding

process by pulling large sets of data to identify common categories across the data sets.

The identified categories were aligned with the themes that emerged from the literature

review. The categories included skills used to overcome barriers in running the

organization, origins of the organization, characteristics of leadership, nonprofit sustainability, impact of cultural identity on fundraising, impact of physical locale on fundraising, impact of community demographics on fundraising, fundraising strategies, dependency on resources, challenges based on race, and barriers to funding.

For the second cycle of coding conducted, I re-read each of the interview transcripts and used an in vivo coding process to induct codes aligned with the theoretical foundation, resource dependency theory, and the themes that emerged from the literature. I incorporated the use of a qualitative analysis tool, Atlas.ti 8, with the content analysis methodology to identify and analyze the data. In vivo coding is a verbatim coding that uses words or short phrases from the data that are participant-generated and are valuable for capturing words that are unique to a specific culture (Saldana, 2016). The in vivo coding was used as it is particularly useful for beginner researchers and to describe lived experiences of a group or population (Saldaña, 2016).

The codes that were developed illustrates a more in-depth analysis of the data. The newly developed codes were organized into categories in Atlas.ti related to the following (a) skills used to overcome barriers (see Table 2) and (b) strategies to obtain funding (see Table 3).

Table 2

Initial Codes: Skills to Overcome Barriers

Codes	Voice of the leaders
Being resourceful with less/Adaptable	"I think I'm very entrepreneurial" "that entrepreneurial kind of quality" "being adaptable and being able to adjust to the situations at hand."
Clear communication of mission and goals	"being able to communicate with them in a way that we all have a common goal in place"
Commitment and determination	"what drives me is just intuition to do something that you believe in" "commitment, determination, and drive. And not to give up." "we're always told that we can't do it. But I am always the one who says that we can." "not giving up, and even when the difficult times come, the rejections come when you didn't get that grant or that funding" "I just push through to get to it" "because you don't have a lot of resources, you got to be nimble because you don't have a lot of capacity" "anything is possible - that seed was planted and learning from mistakes that things could be possible" "determination and the belief that we can accomplish anything if we invest the time and energy"
Connect and build relationships	"being a connector and a communicator" "creating opportunity, building partnerships, building relationships" "able to leverage different relationships or bring different partners" "learned really how to sharpen the skills as a negotiator, sharpen my skills with regard to cultivating relationships"
Connected to the community	"built strong partnerships relationships with the local community"
Establishing a transparent organizational culture	"very focused on culture first"
Having support networks	"learn is to cultivate many networks of support." "You need many circles of support for different reasons"
Help staff/funders understand racism, diversity, and equity	"undoing racism for the whole organization so people can understand those unconscious things that we don't look at or think about" "pushing back against this notion that the implicit biases that exist with regards to how black women are seen"
Patience	"a lot of patience for both the staff and the clients"
Self-care/wellness	"generating space for myself to work on myself and my own wellbeing, I'm a better leader, and I'm more effective as a fundraiser"
Planning/Strategic Planning	"think strategically and looking at the big picture"
Honesty	"I'm also very honest" "telling the truth about how we serve"

Table 3

Initial Codes: Strategies for Obtaining Funding

Codes	Voice of the leaders
Shifting the narrative around the need	"You get more success when you're saying that you're serving people in underserved communities, or under-resourced communities" "people want to give to them -at risk, underserved and marginalized. And so, we changed the language" "I think it's a narrative shift from this deficit-based narrative shift that, donors are used to hearing that separates them from their money"
Self-awareness about fundraising style	"I am understanding more about what my style is in terms of being a fundraiser" "I had to get good at government entity, I had to get good at individuals and develop those skill sets."
Building relationships	"if you don't have a relationship, if you haven't done due diligence and that it takes about a year in most cases" "connecting with the people who are already connected in that world" "with foundation[s] it was about understanding the types of relationships that I needed to build" "lean into the funders and supporters that believed in my leadership" "learning the nuances and the ins and outs of relationship building"
Diversifying funding streams	"not getting comfortable with any one funding stream we've had to really focus on individual funders, corporate foundations who really understand what we're doing you can no longer depend on that particular pot of money" "to grow and be competitive, you have to be able to access individual donors, major donors, and you have to have the infrastructure in place to allow you to do that" "generating resources for your organization requires intentionality, requires you to differentiate"
Developing strong outcomes and needs assessment	"we do the needs assessment and let them know exactly what the clients need, what the staff need" "metrics and how quantitative data demonstrate impact"
Identifying capacity needs	"need a seasoned development person to help us" "I think it is just the capacity. I think that also speaks to your board. And if you don't have a board that has extensive networks or has capital" "to access individual donors, major donors, and you have to have the infrastructure in place to allow you to do that"

The third category of codes developed consisted of types of funding barriers. The main theme funding barriers had multiple dimensions, and in order to extrapolate a clear understanding of these perceptions, I created four subthemes: (a) personal, (b) social, (c) external environmental factors, and (d) organizational (see Figure 1). Some of the concepts coded in Atlas.ti include the following:

a) Funding barriers - personal: multiple job responsibilities, fundraising is stressful, lack of relationships with funders.

b) Funding barriers - social: lack of social networks connected to wealth, discomfort with connecting with social networks outside of their community.

c) Funding barriers - external environmental funding: racism, ageism, sexism, lack of understanding of population, inequitable funding distribution, funders lack connection to the work, funders not understanding the unique model, funders desiring conformity of models within the field, lack of the base of individual donors, community not investing in the organization.

d) Funding barriers - organizational: lack of dedicated staff, lack of diversification of funds, lack of board connected to wealth.

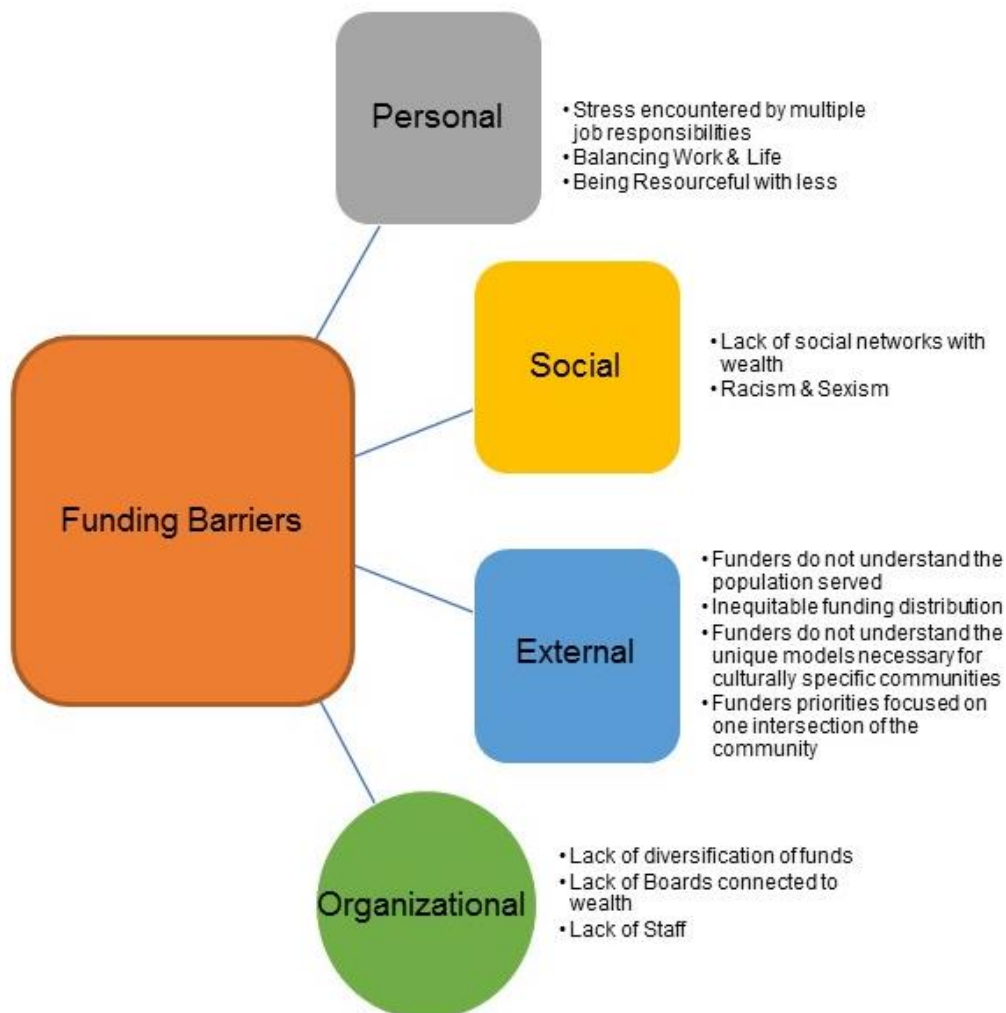*Figure 1*. Funding barriers experienced by Black women nonprofit executives.

I used pattern coding as the last step in the analysis of the categories to develop themes aligned with the research question and the theoretical foundation of resource dependency theory (see Table 4). Pattern coding organizes data into major themes and can also provide insights into relationships and causes in the data (Saldaña, 2016).

Resource dependency theory aligned with the data analysis, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Table 4

Resource Dependency Theory Alignment With Emergent Themes

Resource dependency theory	Emergent themes/subthemes
Balancing the Dynamics of Power	Adaptability and Resiliency
Control of Resources is Determined by Who Holds Power	Funding barriers are multilayered: social
	Funding barriers are multilayered: external environment
Obtaining Resources Impacts Decision Making and Legitimacy	Funding barriers are multilayered: organizational
Balancing the Uncertainty of Available Resources	Fundraising practices are driven by resource dependency
	Funding barriers are multilayered: personal

Discrepant Data Assessment

The data collected in this study was assessed for discrepant data. In the review of each transcript, discrepant data or outliers were coded in the qualitative analysis software. While the coding process identified emergent themes, there were a few perspectives that were outside of the thematic analysis. Many of the perspectives around funding barriers were similar among organizations with budgets under $10 million. However, the barriers were still consistent with perspectives from external environmental factors relative to perceptions of marginalized communities. Thus, concluding that the locale of the organization and the demographics of the community served is still a prominent challenge to being able to secure funding and support funders' understanding of the totality of the issues affecting those communities.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The ability of the researcher to establish credibility in qualitative research studies is recognized as one of the most significant components of the process, which ensures that the study is consistent with actual behaviors and conditions being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Also, qualitative researchers recommend that several strategies be implemented to ensure researchers establishment of rigor and credibility including reflection during the process. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).   Reflection is used to analyze the researcher's subjectivity as well as their impressions of the data as well as monitoring their interpretations of ideas and meaning making (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

I established credibility by employing the following strategies: one, conducting content validity by convening an expert review panel of 11 members of the Walden University Public Policy and Administration department to review interview questions; two, usage of open-end and semistructured interview questions; three, audio recorded each interview for transcription and accuracy; four, follow up review of transcripts by all interviewees to verify the data; five, journal writing during the data collection process; six, implemented the use of qualitative data analysis software to synthesize and analyze the data for coding, categorization, and emerging theme identification. These activities are consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) techniques to establish credibility, including a direct review of materials for accuracy from the sources that they were directly derived and allowing correcting any errors and inconsistencies with

interpretation. Also, I adhered to the interview scripts and, during the data collection process, was clear about not injecting at any point personal opinions, including not reacting to any information with verbal, physical, or facial expressions. I remained focused and neutral throughout the process in order not to influence the study.

Transferability

I established external validity by demonstrating the specific steps and processes that occurred to collect and analyze data. One of the critical components of establishing the study can be replicated and applied to other related topics or subject matter is to clearly describe and outline the setting, the participant selection, sample size as well as protocols to collect the data (Shenton, 2014). External validity is established by generalizing the sample size, participant selection, and the setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In this study, I outlined the data collection methods, sampling techniques, as well as how interview questions were reviewed before data collection by engaging a panel of expert reviewers in content validity. This study can be replicated by using the interview questions, protocol, sample size, and participant selection criteria as well as the primary research question to guide inquiries about other identified marginalized groups and racialized communities.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative studies speaks to the notion that the data is stable and reliable as well as setting parameters in place should the conditions of the study change it can remain intact (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The level dependability was established by implementing clear qualitative study protocols, including attention to the data collection

methods and data saturation. I planned to reach 8-12 participants, which is a primarily accepted number to reach saturation (Baker, Edwards & Doidge, 2012), and I ended with nine participants as my final number of interviewees.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative studies ensures that the research is comprehensive, rigorous and the process is well documented ((Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). I was cognizant about keeping accurate and confidential records of the process, including documentation of interviews, written notes, journaling, coding development, and notes. The establishment of an audit trail is an essential facet of confirmability in research whereby the data and the process can be verified (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail created an organized and detailed record of all the records, notes, memos, raw data, instrument development information, which operationalizes the research process.

Results

The results from the study were generated from a review and synthesis of interviews along with three cycles of coding, categorization, and thematic content analysis. The interview review consisted of analyzing data to gather information to answer the overarching research question which was: What is the perception of Black women nonprofit executives in overcoming funding acquisition barriers in order to serve their nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities effectively? After coding, classifying, and developing patterns, three themes emerged from the data (a) adaptability and resiliency, (b) fundraising practices driven by resource dependency, and (c) funding barriers are multilayered and structural.

Black Women Leaders Emphasize Adaptability and Resiliency

This theme is built upon the perceptions of Black women leaders relative to how they examined and understood the skills and qualities to overcome challenges within their work. Many of the executives conveyed a deep sense of their strength, character building, and leadership styles that guided their ability to withstand the various hurdles in running their organizations. Of the nine leaders, five expressed determination, drive, and commitment as critical components of being able to sustain their organization through challenges, uncertainty, and change. The ability to withstand challenges alongside a deep sense of drive and resiliency supported many executives in being able to remain consistent in their service. One leader articulated, "what I do comes from my heart because I care for the children" and another leader stated, "just trying to always give myself a pep talk to keep going" and another leader stated, "some of those things were determination and the belief that we can accomplish anything if we invest the time and energy" and another leader spoke as well to having a level of tenacity, by stating "so that persistence and having to work longer, any long hours and clean the toilets until you can pay a custodian or get a parent to volunteer. You have to be willing to do whatever it takes and to get it done." Many of the leaders spoke of fulfilling the work of the missions of their organizations despite limited resources. As one leader shared relative to working with fewer resources, "because you do not have a lot of resources, you got to be nimble because you don't have a lot of capacity. You've got to think about how do you create capacity with limited [resources]?" These sentiments led executives to think creatively, strategically, and create changes in ways where they went beyond the call of duty and

were radical – developing programs to fill gaps in the community, creating opportunities, building robust systems, and pushing the beyond was status quo.

Part of the pathway to being radical change-makers and serving the community effectively is being honest, integral, and clear about the values, mission, and culture of the organization. The transference of the mission was made explicit by executives to the staff, board, funders, and community served. The notion of changing a community and making an impact was understood by many of the executives as core to their work, and the way to reach any level of change happened first by the specificity of communicating the core values and mission. One leader revealed, "what I feel confident in is that I was able to make explicit our social justice and end goal and … to explicitly say that the work that we're doing is to help young people understand how to navigate the world in which they live" and another shared, "it was important to align the mission with what I saw around me."

The Black women leaders also spoke about their ability to be adaptable and empower the community and staff. Some of the characteristics of adaptability included code-switching, patience, and being resourceful with less. Code-switching is the ability to shift and move between different groups in order to be understood and accepted. Code-switching is a sociolinguistic technique that is employed by African Americans using Black lingo and Latino Americans who integrate English and Spanish is known as Spanglish and adopt dual dialects and linguistics to maintain cultural belonging to their own culture and understanding by the White dominant group as well as a means for survival (Myers, 2019). With regards to code-switching as a necessary component to

overcoming barriers, leaders noted, "One of the primary skills and qualities I have to employ is "code-switching" and on a day to day basis…. I have to work hard to convince school districts that the model, approach and pedagogy is essential. Code-switching has been not only a process but a coping mechanism as well." Another leader shared about a meeting with a potential funder, "we know that the meeting would go back and forth in Spanish and English and Spanglish, right? We are just going back and forth, and it works. It has been amazing to me the times that we've shown up and see our own at the table, and they just don't get it." While code-switching has been employed, it still doesn't always yield results, is often disappointing, and part of a survival tactic of Black women leaders to be armored and operate within the complex dichotomy of their cultural identities.

Part of being adaptable was also employing a deep sense of patience to be effective in running the organization and getting results related to raising funds. One articulated in what has led them to overcome barriers, "so patience, a lot of patience for both the staff and the clients" and another leader shared relative to funding barriers and noting it's an ongoing process, "so the skill that I'm learning to employ, I guess mostly it's probably patience. Being patient because I'm used to getting things a lot quicker. I'm not used to hearing "no" that much. I'm used to when I work hard for things, I get the results right away."

Many of the executives cited on numerous occasions having to find ways to get the work done in creative ways often with great sacrifice and hard work and with fewer resources. One executive lamented, "when it was time for us to meet payroll, there was

always a check in the mail that would cover those resources, that payroll. I never knew

from month to month where the funds were coming from, but for some reason, God had,

I kid you not, God made a way for us." Another leader shared, "fundraising was also

scary and nerve-racking, and there were many nights I stay up thinking, are we going to

make payroll?" and another leader shared in that sentiment, "work-life balance is always

a struggle. They're those things that are a struggle because you're trying to make payroll.

Right? And so, I think that that is what I'm constantly thinking about." Leaders also

shared their creative acumen, including, "I think more times than not we end up being the

people who take over organizations and have to do that, have limited capacity" and

another leader expressed, "I think I'm very entrepreneurial, so I think that has been kind

of the main thing that has, I think led to my success in this role." Leaders were

continually thinking about how the strategies implemented would lead them to

effectiveness and long-term sustainability, including, as one executive shared, "re-

imagining it and figuring out what it would look like to be sustainable." Their

entrepreneurial spirit and inner zeal guided the executives. The Black women's leaders

own inner drive, adaptability, patience, and another coping mechanism has led them to be

radical in imbuing change and transformation in their organizations.

Upon further examination of Black women leaders' impressions about

sustainability and funding barriers as well as the ability to confront the complicated

dynamics, many leaders built strong connections within the community and were

strategic thinkers. The leaders were adept in making connections and saw that as a

critical component to running their organization, fundraising, building a meaningful

rapport with the community, and dedicated staff to support the work. Black women leaders were dedicated to serving the community in ways that were authentic and embedded in their role positionality. There was a deep sense of solidarity and connectedness with the community as opposed to distancing and serving others. One leader shared, "It is about representing the constituency, serving, being part of that constituency. We're not helping our constituency or talking about our constituency as them and us. We are part of this whole community." Another shared how they are connected to the community, "organizations like ours that are doing the work that we do, that are grounded in the communities, that are informed by the issues that affect our community." The ability to connect with the community allowed Black women leaders to understand the needs, relevant programming deeply, and thus translate that into an appropriate funding request or community initiative. One executive shared her experiences in working within a predominantly Black community who were having challenges with specific programs in their communities, "the staff couldn't win over the community. And then I was able to come in and bring the community in and win over the community." The Black woman leader's connection with the community enabled trust and assurance.

Fundraising Practices Are Driven by Resource Dependency

This theme was constructed by many Black women executives who reported the desire to push the envelope against specific funding models and requirements set forth, but they struggled to operate within a system built with constraints while being dependent on funds for their survival. One leader articulated the funding system was synonymous

with a dance composition, where if you are unfamiliar with the "movements", you do not gain access. One leader posed the question of how to get funders to invest in the "excellence and beauty" that already exists within the community alongside the challenges faced and questioned how funders could recognize both. They all recognized that relationship building was a pivotal element to fundraising and spent considerable time creating ways to develop and build relationships with funders and donors. Additionally, each funding stream, government, foundation, corporate, and individual all require a different approach, skills, and relationship-building strategy.

While the hypotheses of resource dependency theory were prevalent throughout the executives' fundraising strategies, including balancing power dynamics, control of resources determined by who holds power, obtaining resources impacts decision making, and the continual balancing act of uncertainty of resources. Many leaders highlighted having to develop strong relationships with funders in order to leverage funding. One leader identified their relationship with government funding more as a right than less than a privilege looking through the lens that government resources come from tax dollars, so they should be equitably shared.

Concerning the impact of resource dependency on decision making, each Black woman leader asserted some level of reliance on resources from funders and how that impacts their ability to hire, expand programs, and pay adequate wages. The uncertainty of resources was a consistent driver of resource dependency, as cited by leaders with fragile operating budgets and lack of contingency funds and reserves. One leader expressed that it felt like each fiscal year they were starting with a zero budget, indicating

the need to raise their entire budget and a reliance on year to year funding but a desire to acquire multiyear funding. In addition, the reliance on year to year funding creates a tremendous burden on executives. Nonprofit sustainability was recognized by all the Black women leaders and the vision toward remaining solvent and are working to develop strategies for continuity of the organization and the community served.

Funding Barriers Are Multilayered and Structural

The Black women nonprofit executives interviewed expressed multiple challenges and barriers they experience in securing funds for their organizations. The challenges were multi-layered and spanned across four fundamental areas: personal, social, external environment, and organizational. This theme represents difficulties that Black women leaders faced in sustaining their organizations and ensuring its survival in the market.

Personal barriers. The first element of funding barriers refers to nonprofit executives' barriers experienced in leading with competing priorities that they grabbled with, including stress, having to manage with fewer resources, and coping with balancing work and life. The results indicated that each of these elements was linked to the lack of resources to hire an adequate amount of staff, and many executives emphasized handling multiple responsibilities beyond their primary roles. Also, their deep desire and passion for the community were reported as one of the driving forces to keep working with less with the strategic vision to expand funding resources. Many of the leaders cited seeking specific grants to keep the organization going, leveraging relationships with funders for additional support, seeking bridge loans, forgoing their pay, and even using their personal funds at the infancy stages of the organization to cover gaps in funding.

Social barriers. The second element of funding barriers is categorized as social barriers. These barriers referred to the social networks, relationships, and connections necessary to obtain funding. Many executives reported that their lack of personal connections or their boards' connections to wealth was a challenge in raising funds from individual donors. One leader reported:

> But I think sometimes I don't have access to those places and spaces where people who have money want to engage. So, I think that's always the question that we have to answer. I think I have a very strong network from... If you think about my educational background, you think about my experience. But that doesn't necessarily get me access to the boardrooms of major corporations or what have you. And that's why you need a board to be able to do that, to help you with that. But then it's, "How to get access to those folks?"

This sentiment was shared by many Black women leaders and the need to continually focus on attracting and building boards that can connect them to resources and funding. Additionally, underlying social networks and connections were many of the Black women leaders were well educated with multiple degrees from many prominent and prestigious universities; but were still challenges in leveraging relationships with wealthy social networks.

Organizational barriers. The third element to funding was synthesized from the results and linked to being underfunded. A few executives reported a heavy dependency on one area of funding and the lack of diversification of funds as well as lack of staff to support a more in-depth focus on raising funds in certain areas. The inability to hire

development staff hindered the executive's ability to fundraise effectively. They were handling the negotiation, writing proposals, as well as reporting on results. A few executives shared the value of having a creative and talented staff and how it supported them in taking their organization to the next level and higher capacity. One leader shared, "Everybody on my staff comes to the table, and everybody speaks, and everybody's heard. It's a brilliant and intelligent staff." Another leader shared similar sentiments about the value her staff brings to the organization in areas of innovation and forward-thinking, "that's why it's helpful that most of our staff is under 30 because they're constantly teaching me and pushing back when I go to my old traditional overworked and underpaid ways. No, nobody's doing that anymore." Concerning supporting the organization, Black women-led organizations have to think strategically about how to surpass the organizational barriers that are linked to their ability to successfully funds, investing in staff and infrastructure is among the priorities. As one leader asserted, "I think where we've been able to invest in staff too, one, either be support and development or to create more opportunities to share our story and tell our story, I think we've been able to do that…we have to be in a position to really to leverage what we have." Black women executives have to leverage all opportunities alongside multiple challenges, which they report requires creativity, tenacity, and strategic thinking.

External environment. The fourth element to funding barriers was categorized as external environmental factors that affect access to resources. Black women leaders articulated that some of those challenges were the system itself as well as was how those

in leadership positions in the philanthropic community respond and perceive Black women leaders.

Structural racism was cited as part of the problem, that the funding model itself is set up for Black women-led organizations not to survive as well as implicit biases and racism is demonstrated in the selection of nonprofits for funding. Some of the executives mentioned that seeing more organizations led by White leaders serving communities of color having more success in funding and funders not recognize the investments of Black-led organizations was disheartening and frustrating. Also, funders not understanding the deep-seated connections and understanding that Black-led organizations have in serving their communities as well as being compared to other models for other communities that don't fit the needs of communities that represent African, African- American, Latino, Asian or Native American communities. Many executives also shared their desire to have deeper connections with funders as well as establishing authentic relationships whereby funders have a desire to understand the critical issues facing the communities served.

Many executives expressed having multiple degrees, credentials, training, and years of experience in the nonprofit sector and for-profit sector and still having to prove themselves over and above their White counterparts and feeling underestimated. One executive asserted, "We always have to prove ourselves in order for us to get what we want. And no matter how great and how wonderful we may think it is, there's always somebody out there who is going to think it's not." Another leader cited, "as a Black woman I am often underestimated, and people ask a lot of me, funders ask for more site

visits than usual, they ask for more data. It has made me think and reflect about my qualifications even though I have obtained a lot, gone to a prestigious liberal arts college." Black women leaders come with a multitude of experiences and knowledge, leveraging them simultaneously against having to establish legitimacy and face resistance. In light of these obstacles, they have found strength and drive to continue to serve the community.

Summary

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study explored the perceptions of Black women nonprofit executives funding strategies and activities to sustain their organizations located in marginalized communities. The data collection methods, including open-ended semistructured interviews of 9 Black women nonprofit executives from organizations in New York City. I engaged in three levels of coding: holistic, in vivo, and pattern coding to develop themes from the data.

This qualitative study revealed answers to the main research question through the emergence of three major themes: one, adaptability and resiliency, two, fundraising practices are driven by resource dependency; three, funding barriers are multilayered and structural. The three themes revealed the challenges Black women executives faced in obtaining funding and how they navigated those hurdles. The first theme highlighted while Black women leaders faced burdens and high levels of stress, they employed acquired and innate skills and strategies to sustain their organizations and remained optimistic about the future of the organization. Black women leaders cultivated innovative programs and were dedicated to supporting the empowerment of the

community served. The first theme, adaptability, and resiliency, emphasized Black

women leaders' ability to leverage, build, and create deep relationships in the

community. Black leaders had a profound understanding of the needs of the community,

whereby they were able to translate that awareness into funding negotiations and

acquisitions.

The second theme, fundraising practices are driven by resource dependency,

which was connected to Black women's leaders' strategies to obtain funding resources,

indicated their unique positioning with funders and the desire to develop stronger links.

The second theme interprets how Black women leaders incorporated specific fundraising

strategies based on identified gaps in their budgets, leveraging relationships with funders,

organizational capacity, and desires to grow and expand their organization. It revealed

that many Black women leaders were reliant on various sources of funding, including

from government and foundations. Many Black women leaders also were continuing to

grapple with individual giving and corporate funding, which was identified as needing

more staff capacity, social networks with high-level influences well as boards with

connections to wealth. Fundraising strategies were guided by a heavy dependence on

specific funding sources and were the impetus for how leaders prioritized funding

strategies. The main hypotheses of resource dependency theory emerged from the data as

related to the second theme as revenue acquisition strategies in the nonprofit sector are

sometimes precarious and built on the nuances and power constructs of the philanthropic

sector. Funders specific policies often control how the resources are allocated across

communities, each having their specific guidelines surrounding how to distribute those funds.

The third theme, funding barriers are multi-layered and structural, revealed the complex dynamics that Black women leaders have to endure. Additionally, Black women leader's management of those dynamics causes a tremendous amount of burden while simultaneously trying to cope with structural and systemic racism. Black women leaders continued to be creative, determined and engaged in deep strategic thinking to sustain their organizations.

The study revealed and highlighted various subtleties of the lived experiences of Black women nonprofit executives working to sustain and secure funding. The problem addressed in the study was the gap in knowledge of understanding how Black women nonprofit overcome barriers, and there was little known about the extent of those barriers as well as its impact. The purpose of this study was designed to explore Black women's experiences and make space for their perceptions as they cultivate and empower historically marginalized communities. The challenges they face are in tandem with the undue burdens of poverty in under-resourced communities. In Chapter 5, I interpret key findings, discuss the limitations of the study, offer recommendations for future research, and present a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences Black women nonprofit executives and how they perceive navigating and securing funding specifically for organizations in low socioeconomic and disadvantaged communities. This study was essential to investigate and make space for the voices of Black women nonprofit executives whose experiences are underrepresented in the research literature (Hossein, 2017). Additionally, I explored perceptions of Black women leaders in communities that have been historically underrepresented, underresourced, and marginalized. Conducing a descriptive, phenomenological qualitative study allowed me to obtain a comprehensive and rich understanding of the lived experiences of Black women nonprofit executives.

Key findings of this study indicated three overarching themes: (a) Black women leaders emphasize adaptability and resiliency, (b) fundraising practices are driven by resource dependency, and (c) funding barriers are multilayered and structural. The themes clarify the perceptions of Black women leaders' regarding funding acquisition strategies in the nonprofit sector and specifically for their organizations located in urban and historically marginalized communities. Aligned with the theoretical foundation for this research and the study's literature review, the findings revealed that Black women-led organizations face multiple and multilayered challenges in obtaining resources and are impacted by the structure and power dynamics of the philanthropic sector. These

challenges are linked to other social and organizational deficits and influencers affecting

funding acquisition.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of what

underlies the decisions, choices, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of Black women

nonprofit executives in an increasingly competitive nonprofit sector. I built upon existing

literature to answer the central RQ: What are the perceptions of Black women nonprofit

executives in regard to overcoming funding acquisition barriers in order to serve their

nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities effectively? Flores and Matkin

(2014) emphasized that there was limited research on the perceptions and experiences of

senior leaders in nonprofits and their strategies to overcome hurdles. In conducting this

study, I wanted to further learn about specific strategies that are employed to manage

identified obstacles relative to raising funds effectively. Resource dependency theory

(Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) was used as a theoretical framework to understand the

underpinnings of the behaviors of Black women nonprofit executives as well as their

perceptions of the external environment's response to their decisions and choices.

Black Women Leaders Emphasize Adaptability and Resiliency

Participants in this study confirmed Holley's (2003) argument that Black-led

organizations are connected to the issues of the community, trusted by the community,

have a deep understanding of the culture and needs, and authentically attempt to develop

meaningful relationships with those they serve. Additionally, in concurrence with the

literature (Holley, 2003; Hossein, 2017; Lu, 2015), participants in this study shared their

genuine desire for the empowerment and healing of the community as a whole.

Furthermore, participants in the study confirmed Gooden, Evans, and Pang's (2018)

argument that Black-led organizations' desire to actively seek and build relationships in

the community makes them better positioned to serve their communities. Many

participants articulated that because of their positionality, funders should recognize their

value and unique approaches to resolving and supporting the issues affecting the

communities served. Participants were of the opinion that funders were financing

organizations serving marginalized communities led by White leaders instead over their

Black counterparts and hope that Black women's leaders' position in the community

would be recognized and valued.

      The idea that Black women leaders who lead organizations in marginalized

communities demonstrate the ability to recover quickly from difficulties is in alignment

with Flores and Matkin's (2014) arguments that leaders from minoritized groups have to

develop other skillsets to effectively overcome barriers that are adversely different from

their White counterparts in the field. Moreover, the literature revealed that Black women

leaders' resilience was as a result of their sincere dedication, drive, and inner zeal.

Additionally, as Flores and Matkin revealed, many participants shared descriptions about

the impetus for their long-term commitment to the survival of their organization. The

sentiments included drawing inspiration from others and a robust sense of self-worth and

value. In alignment with the literature (Terrana, 2017; Weng, 2014), the results showed

that passion was a high driver for success in overcoming barriers. Participants in the

study were able to overcome barriers related to racial stereotyping, racism, sexism, and

fewer resources, and as the results revealed, often went beyond their obligations as executives of their organizations.

The findings confirmed previous research about Black women leaders' inspiration and impetus to their change communities in spite of the many hurdles that they face (see Flores & Matkin, 2014). In addition, Black women leaders in the study reported having a strong allegiance to the community alongside a strong belief in the mission of the organization and a social justice pedagogy that involved centering healing and empowerment as core components of their work. Black women leaders in the study also emphasized empowering and developing their staff as a critical component to healthy programmatic and organizational outcomes. Adaptability was revealed in the findings as a core skill, including one participant expressing that the ability to code-switch is a mechanism to cope, as well as to move between different groups, and garner acceptance and understanding within the community. However, this mechanism was not revealed in the previous research as a part of Black women leaders' ability to be adaptable and tread new pathways. Some Black women leaders in the study reported having to develop skills to establish connections with funders, individual donors, and other key stakeholders, and stressed the need to employ specific skillsets to get the funder's attention. Others felt uncomfortable with being inconsistent with how they communicate naturally in order to gain the attention of donors.

Fundraising Practices Are Driven by Resource Dependency

Nonprofit sustainability and financial viability are some of the driving forces around Black women leaders' fundraising goals, and the literature revealed that nonprofit

leaders strategic footing put them in a better place to eliminate levels of uncertainty and vulnerability (Hu & Kapucu, 2017; Lin & Wang, 2016). Although Black women leaders in the study reported having a reliance on distinctive funding sources, including government and foundation, they felt some sense of vulnerability to periodic funding gaps during the fiscal year either as a result of waiting for reimbursements from government funding or the timing of the majority of their funding. Some leaders expressed having experienced worry about how to continue paying staff until funding was received, as well as feeling as though they were starting their budgets from scratch each year.

In addition, Black women leaders in the study reported that their reliance on certain levels of funding impacted their ability to hire staff and expand programming, and that these challenges drive how they sought funds (e.g., seeking funds for programming and capacity building as well as trying to diversify their funding pool and multiyear funding). The findings of the study confirmed Froelich's (1999) argument that nonprofit leaders have sought to manage uncertainty and reliance on one source of income by diversifying their revenue. Additionally, the results of the study highlighted that Black women leaders were continually thinking about specific fundraising strategies to ensure the sustainability and long-term success of the organization, including building all levels of revenue.

Funding Barriers Are Multilayered and Structural

Black women leaders' perceptions of the funding environment were consistent with Villanueva's (2018) argument that the fundraising process generates barriers for

minority-led organizations and impedes access to certain levels of funding. Black women leaders in the study reported having experienced several layers of challenges, including overt and systematic racism, ageism, sexism, as well as barriers connected to social and external environments, and organizational contexts.

Personal barriers. The results of this study confirm some of the knowledge about the personal challenges that Black women leaders face. Previous literature asserted that Black women leaders have to employ alternative strategies to pool resources for their organization including engaging in social enterprises and more fees for service models (Hossein, 2017). However, the previous literature did not focus on the implications of the personal sacrifices associated with seeking funding. Black women leaders in this study expressed experiencing stress, shifting to attain an appropriate work-life balance, foregoing their salaries, and using personal resources to cover their budgets. Additionally, findings from the study indicated that from Black women leaders' recounts of strategies to overcome barriers, they also were focused on self-care and wellness, pointing to self-healing as a prerequisite for healing the community as well as being grateful, courageous, and having compassion for others and themselves.

Social barriers. The findings from the study reveal and confirm the previous literature centered around the lack of social connections as one the biggest inhibitors to building an individual giving pool in Black-led organizations (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019; Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018; Terrana, 2017; Weng, 2014). All of the participants shared one of the challenges with obtaining resources from individuals was a lack of relationship with social networks with wealth and lack of understanding from the

community around giving to nonprofits. Additionally, participants shared that building

their board was a continual struggle, especially with individuals connected to access to

resources. Some Black women leaders expressed that they had some people that were

willing to support with advice and in-kind support but unwilling to make a commitment

to the Board officially. Previous literature asserted that organizations with established

social connections have a higher chance of ensuring internal stability and crises are

mitigated (Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018), and none of the Black women leaders

reported having reserves or other resources to support crises.

Findings from this study supported previous research that revealed that while

Black women nonprofit executives have great professional experiences and educational

attainment, they are more still more likely to experience significant hardships in

fundraising as a result of a lack of connections to social networks (Kunreuther &

Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019). All the Black women leaders reported having multiple degrees

and professional training, with many having experience in the nonprofit sector for over

20 years. Two leaders in the field with over 40 years' experiences were still challenged

with developing strong social networks with wealth. One leader reported that the

"playing field is not leveled" and asserted that "historically, Black people and people of

African descent here in the United States and it's the same in New York City…. just

because of our history and the challenges we've had to overcome, historically we don't

have the connection to wealth or people who are connected to as many corporations and

ability to donate or contribute particular skills either because of their family background

or where they've been able to work." Other Black women leaders in the study shared that

there are people in the community and young professionals of color who are giving, but they have not figured out how to connect with these young professionals in a way that benefits their organizations, and cause them to feel a connection to the work and mission.

  Organizational barriers. Black women leaders in the study reported that lack of capacity and ability to hire dedicated staff was a significant inhibitor to raising funds successfully. Participants emphasized having to wear multiple hats as fundraisers including writing proposals, research, and developing relationships with funders. The literature confirmed that Black-led organizations experience challenges in obtaining funding and maintaining high-level senior staff, which results in deficits in the overall success of the organization (Goodman, Majee, & Reed Adams, 2018 Terrana, 2017). Furthermore, the results of the study supported Holley's (2003) argument that organizations need more resources to support fundraising, including meeting with potential funders and grant writing.

  Many participants in the study emphasized having to make shifts in staffing over the years to sustain the budget, which included not having a full fundraising team or staffed development position at all. Additionally, several Black women leaders reported the importance of investing in staff to ensure team buy-in, mission alignment, effectiveness, and a clear understanding of goals, objectives, and priorities of the organization. Black women leaders reported that it is insufficient to simply hire staff, because it is equally essential to invest in listening, ongoing training and communication, learning from mistakes, and building robust systems to add value to the overall vision of the organization.

External Environment. The previous literature in Chapter 2 revealed that people of African descent, Black-led organizations face a myriad of challenges in the quest to secure funding including having to establish legitimacy and being scrutinized more heavily than their White counterparts for lack of resources and capacity (Villanueva, 2018). The scrutiny paradoxically leads them to being denied funding (Villanueva, 2018) and having more significant hurdles in running and sustaining their organizations. Many participants in this study shared having to prove themselves and the extent to which they establish legitimacy with funders was a constant battle. The results of the study revealed that structural racism was systematic for some of the challenges that Black women nonprofit executives face, and the funding model is designed to deny some level of access to funding. Previous research confirmed these notions that philanthropy which still has the lingering impacts of colonialism and oppression and reinforces the division between communities who have access and those who do not (Villanueva, 2018).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Black women leaders are troubled with the uncertainty of going against the mandate of funders relative to introducing new models or specific methods that may adequately serve the unique needs of the community (Hossien, 2017). Many of the Black women leaders in the study expressed disgruntlement with having to use language that was deficit-based to describe the community. Black women leaders in the study questioned the notion of having to make a case for the needs of the community to obtain funding with linear language without having the opportunity to share examples of excellence as well as having to demonstrate that their management and program models that went against the status quo were successful.

The literature revealed that many organizations that serve Black populations are heavily reliant on specific funding sources, particularly government funding. Thus, in order to ensure funding success, they must establish relationships with elected officials, and even with a developed strategy, they are less likely to obtain funding (Allard & Smith, 2014; Garrow, 2015). However, the results of the study suggest that many Black women leaders have established relationships with elected officials and are successful with government funding, but the challenges include having to be subjected to grant panels which may not be familiar with their long-standing history and having to re-apply each year for the same pool of money.

Theoretical Foundation: Resource Dependency Theory

Resource dependency theory was used as the theoretical foundation for the study, which supports a lens from which to view relationships based on power dynamics, reciprocal relationships, and negotiation of the distribution of resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The theoretical framework of resource dependency theory provided a rationale for Black women nonprofit executives sustainable funding strategies and helped to unearth how dependence on specific resources impacts Black women leaders' decisions with regards to revenue diversification, establishing legitimacy, and reliance on a single source of income.

Findings from the study supported the literature centered on resource dependency theory (see Table 4). The findings from the literature extends the knowledge on resource dependency, including identifying adaptability and resiliency as part of the elements by which parties balance the dynamics of power. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) argued that

while organizations experience limitations on how they obtain the resources from external resources, they still can maintain their unique character and make decisions that are in alignment with their mission and purpose. Many of the Black women leaders in the study exerted different levels of resiliency, characters, and commitment to their organization mission, and even while seeking resources, they did not compromise their mission for the sake of receiving funding nor did they seek funding that went against their core values.

Resource dependency theory asserts that the control of resources is determined by who holds power (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The research results indicate that funding barriers are multi-layered, and specifically, with social barriers which create tensions and inhibit Black women leaders from obtaining resources. Those in positions of power and have access to social networks with wealth establish a paradigm of control that determines who can secure certain levels of funding. The research results were in contrast with the literature asserting that organizations with established social connections are more likely to survive. While many participants reported a desire to expand and grow their social network, it was not linked directly to their ability to survive, and other fundraising strategies were employed to ensure their longevity. Nonprofit sustainability and resource dependency theory are linked to the notion of controlling the environmental influences that impact resource acquisition long term; thus, Moldavanova and Goerdel (2018) argued for an expansion of what encapsulates the definition of nonprofit sustainability. The definitions of power embedded in resource dependency theory leave Black women leaders susceptible to being defined by external forces. Previous literature

suggests creating models of sustainability that value adaptive learning, purposeful questioning, and learning, as well as acknowledging the complexity of exacting outcomes and results (Johansson & Lu, 2017).

Evidence from this study supported and extends the knowledge of one of the hypotheses of resource dependency theory that contends that obtaining resources has an impact on decision making, strategic thinking and legitimacy (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The findings in the study contributed to expanding ideas around the impact of securing resources from external parties who are leaders in the philanthropic sector, legitimatizes their work, and opens them to other opportunities for funding. The other side of legitimacy is that findings in the study revealed that participants felt undue pressure with having to prove themselves even after with providing all the data, outcomes, and requirements of funders; they still felt that due to their cultural identity and the location of their organization, they had to demonstrate more than their White counterparts. Additionally, the findings indicated that funding barriers are multi-layered relative to internal and external factors, such as organizational constraints and the hurdles experienced from access to funders.

The findings of the study also extended the knowledge relative to another hypothesis underlying resource dependency theory, balancing the uncertainty of available resources. The findings also highlighted the funding barriers that Black women leaders experience relative to personal challenges that impacted their work and what tools they employed to overcome them. The participants cited challenges such as making personal sacrifices, handling multiple roles beyond their primary roles, and balancing work-life

obligations. While these challenges were expressed, they are related to the ability to expand the capacity of their organizations, including hiring adequate fundraising staff to support revenue generating efforts. Additionally, balancing uncertainty of resources was evidenced in the findings as many Black women leaders reported various fundraising and management strategies to ensure a balanced budget, leveraging relationships with funders, and ongoing strategic visioning and long-term planning.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study that arose from the study include issues around transferability and researcher bias. I was able to ensure alignment within the study by addressing the extent to which the findings could be generalized beyond the study with generally accepted methods in the field of qualitative research relative to data collection, research design, and interview protocols (Shenton, 2004). The study outcomes could be transferred and generalized with other marginalized groups following the research design, protocols, and sampling. However, while the nature of the study is about a specific geographic area, the transferability of the study generalization is limiting because the sample is reduced to leaders who are executive directors of a specific ethnicity and gender in urban cities. The results may have limited meaning to executive directors in rural or suburban neighborhoods. The qualitative study was designed to purposively sample and interview 8-12 participants. Saturation was reached when it was evident that no new codes and information from the interviews were found.

To ensure data accuracy and enhance confirmability within the study, member checking was employed by having each of the participants review the interview

transcripts. Member checking ensures that the participants are actively apart of the research process, and that they are engaged in checking for any inaccuracies of the data collected in the interviews, which gives agency to the participants (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). In addition to ensuring the validity of the data, member checking also reduces researcher bias. An audit trail was established with comprehensive documentation of all notes, memos, raw data, and coding notes.

In a phenomenological qualitative research study, the researcher is the primary instrument. The potential for personal bias and perceptions to intercede the study are increased in qualitative research (Patton, 2015); thus, its essential for specific measures to be in place to reduce the possibilities of bias. In this study, I adhered to a strict interview protocol including using an interview script with predetermined questions as well as averting from interceding with my thoughts, body language, and impressions during the interviews. Also, I journaled during the interview process to examine my own personal thoughts so that bias was appropriately managed.

Recommendations

In consideration of the findings from my analysis within the study and the literature review in Chapter 2, I suggest four recommendations for different avenues of research. The first recommendation is to extend the scope of the study to understand the lived experiences of Latino, Asian and Native American women who work on the ground in marginalized communities. Previous research focused on minoritized and racial groups and often including people of color as a whole (Goodman, Majee, & Reed Adams, 2018; Terrana, 2017), the nonprofit sector could benefit from a segmented analysis of each

ethnicity of women. As indicated, this study does not focus on all minority women but only women who identify as originating from African descent (African, Latino, Caribbean, and African American).

The second recommendation is that the study be extended to other states. While an attempt was made to study Black women leaders in New York and New Jersey, this study only reflects organizations located in the metro New York City area. Research conducted in other urban cities such as in New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Chicago as well as leaders of organizations in rural areas, could add value to the nonprofit sector and further impact policies of public and private funders. Additionally, a study that investigates the perceptions of Black women leaders in Southern states would also add to the research on Black women's voices in the nonprofit sector.

The third recommendation is that while this study focused on the perceptions of Black women leaders who were all at various stages of leading their organizations and who were not considering shutting down due to the inability to continue to operate, additional research on nonprofits that are unable to find any solutions to their challenges and are on the edge of closing would be beneficial. Previous research indicated that a qualitative study of the reasons and causes of the closure of nonprofits would add value to the literature on the disbanding of organizations (Garrow, 2015). A study investigating Black-led or Black women-led organizations that closed or were on the verge of closing to support more significant insights into what potential indicators of failure were, thus supporting the field in mitigating its demise.

The fourth recommendation is an expansion of the financial structures alongside fundraising strategies employed by Black women leaders. As previous researchers have indicated (Moldavanova & Goerdel, 2018) a more expansive view of nonprofit sustainability is needed. The findings in this study added some value to the definition, however, more research around defining the value of financial structures and models would be beneficial. While this study is focused on one subset of Black women leaders in the nonprofit sector, developing a quantitative study with a national approach could add substantial value to the research. The findings of the study could be expanded to develop a survey instrument distributed to a national population of leaders to define and determine regional differences and how traits and skillsets vary based on region, organization size, and years of expertise in the field.

Implications

The gap in the literature surrounding making space for the voices and perceptions of Black women nonprofit executives and their fundraising strategies was addressed in this study. The narrative in the philanthropic sector is dominated by stories of inequitable access to funding by people of color and in particular, people of African descent but was missing was the actual lived experiences of those who are centered in a narrative characterized by oppression and tension was missing. The original assumptions and underlying hypothesis inherent in resource dependency theory as first described by Pheffer and Salancik (1973/2003) were used as a lens for this study and highlight the power control dynamics within the funding sector, and the management of uncertainty of resources by Black women leaders. The same was also used to underline possible

strategies by funders to mitigate the balance of power in resource distribution. The theory

supports an explanation of the frailties of resource distribution where the dynamics of

power between a funder and those seeking funding is built on some level of privilege.

The dynamics of power are also determined by those who have access to funding and are

controlled by those who hold power. The question of how to relinquish that power so

that it is divided equitability, creates partnerships, and shared learning for everyone

involved is addressed in this study. The findings in this study indicate that Black women

leaders are not only equipped with professional and personal resources, they are also

willing to engage funders in dialogue, conversations, and broad and intentional

dissections of complex social issues. The theoretical implication is that the findings

suggest that a closer examination into the policies, procedures, and grant funding process

on all levels including government, corporate, and foundations, are necessary to develop

ways to incorporate the expertise of Black women leaders into the vetting and decision-

making process. This study also offers emerging Black women leaders an understanding

of the scope of the nonprofit sector to proactively consider effective fundraising

strategies, identify areas for leadership mentorship, and to integrate their own

experiences.

The gap identified in the literature was that there was little to no research on

how Black women nonprofit executives handle obtaining financial resources with

limitations to access as well as the strategies that they employ to surmount those

obstacles. I addressed the knowledge gap by exploring the lived experiences of Black

women leaders to understand what the specific barriers, and their thoughts, ideas, and

behaviors when encountering challenges. Additionally, through interviews, data analysis, and thematic content analysis, the findings from this study provided deep insights into what Black women leaders actively incorporate on a daily basis to handle fundraising challenges both internally and externally, and the issues they still continue to grapple with that either need more support or some other levels of intervention to mitigate barriers.

Impact on the Philanthropic Sector

This study provides meaningful information to public and private funders who are at the helm of creating policies that impact how Black-led and minoritized groups gain adequate access to funding. For public funders, this study provides insight and information for considerations to amend and revise its funding processes, from how they vet organizations to how the panel process operates with tax dollars at stake to fund critical and vital social issues. For private funders, this study provides some evidence to inform how they engage grant seekers and understanding what is most needed to sustain their organizations. The study can also support private funders in how they vet and make inquiries into understanding Black-led and Black women-led organizations that serve historically marginalized communities. Funders can learn to translate their connections and trust within the community as a valuable asset. Findings from the study indicate that Black women leaders' connections to the community have successfully driven purposeful programming in addition to their deep understanding of issues facing the community. Using the expertise of Black women leaders who understand the heart of complex social issues affecting the community can provide learning and a more significant societal

impact. Specifically, the findings on funding barriers can be helpful for funders to examine their policies, interactions, and impetus for how they fund Black-led organizations. The findings can also be a catalyst for dialogue that creates new and innovative ways to examine their definitions and criterion for sustainability and a purposeful inquiry into challenges and mistakes along the way.

Significance to Nonprofit Leaders and Practitioners

The results of the study indicate that Black women-led organizations while resilient and able to achieve more with less resources, that should neither be the norm nor acceptable terms of operation. The findings from the study are also supported by much of the previous literature and indicate that Black women leaders' affinity, beliefs, and embeddedness into the community will remain constant, and new business models can be employed in partnership with all levels of funders and donors. Some of those models might benefit from implementing more earned income opportunities through social entrepreneurship building on the trust and connection to the community and creating opportunities for learning and investment. Additionally, partnerships with key influencers who have alliances with the issues affecting the community and culling together opportunities for individual and corporate donors to learn about ways to provide resources. Ultimately, the ownness of these shifts and changes are not entirely not on the leaders or practitioners themselves but on funders and donors to answer a call to action to further distribute resources by those closest to the issues. Black women leaders have an opportunity together to demonstrate, through evidence-based research, the needs, opportunity, and gaps to be addressed alongside strong outcomes and financial models.

Impact on Positive Social Change

      The findings of this study have a high potential to impact positive social change on a local and national level. One of the implications for social change is to engage in open conversations between those seeking funds and the philanthropic sector around the impacts of racism and sexism in the sector. The idea is to address these issues with an extraordinary effort toward eradicating racial inequities in a system that is historically plagued by systems built on privilege and lack of access for marginalized groups and communities. Second, the findings from this study may be shared with others who have an interest in access and equity to funding resources on a national level and are interested in addressing dated policies that may not match effective strategies for funding organizations addressing intersectional community issues. This study was designed to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of Black women nonprofit executives who lead organizations located in historically under-resourced and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Embedded in this study is understanding the complexities of cultural identity and its impact on raising funding as well as perceived barriers to access to funding. The studying supported an analysis of perceptions of Black women leaders whose voices were missing from the literature. This study has the power to change the social conditions of Black women leaders and the philanthropic community and empower and heal the greater community through addressing power imbalances and control of resources. This study added to the literature and made visible the experiences of Black women leaders' experiences, which was a holistic and active embodiment of addressing

the erasure of less dominant experiences and deep-seated unjust practices that undervalue members of society.

Conclusion

The three overarching themes that emerged from the study provided insight into the strategies, tactics, and resolutions employed by Black women nonprofit executives to adequately overcome impediments to obtaining funding. Black women leaders face multiple challenges to securing funding, and their ability to navigate the various nuances of fundraising was supported by inner zeal and determination even when situations seem insurmountable. Some of those challenges include battling both systematic and structural racism, inequities in access to resources, and simultaneously managing both internal and external issues. The results indicated that Black women nonprofit executives navigated obstacles by demonstrating tenacity, adaptability, and determination. Black women leaders employed these skills, coupled with strong professional acumen and training, while continuing to grapple establish relationships with funders, increasing their social networks connected to wealth, as well as strengthening internal organizational capacity. There was little research on the perceptions of Black women leaders in the nonprofit sector with regard to kinds of battles they face on a daily basis in finding and securing funding to ensure that the core mission of their work is realized. The findings from the study provided a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black women nonprofit executives and how they negotiate and build fundraising strategies to sustain their organizations. The findings added to and extended the knowledge about resource

dependency, nonprofit sustainability, and information about Black women-led organizations.

The findings and recommendations from this study will provide nonprofit leaders, funders, practitioners, policy-makers, and capacity builders a basis for analyzing and understanding the perspectives of a sub-set of leaders, and will add value to how marginalized and racialized groups experience a very nuanced aspect of nonprofit leadership and managing – funding acquisition. The ability for nonprofit leaders to have success in this area is recognized as one of the cornerstones of effective leadership and management as a nonprofit executive. This study will in many ways, confirmed existing and previous literature, but also expanded the literature, and new discoveries emerged. Some of those new findings included the discovery, as some Black women leaders lamented, of the disproportionate number of organizations led by White leaders being financed to serve communities of color, citing a disconnect from the perspective of funders and not recognizing the value that Black-led and people of the color-led organizations in serving their communities.

The second discovery was that while staffing inconsistencies and lack of staff were cited as a challenge to being able to adequately fundraise, the study found that although staffing is one important component, but training, ongoing professional development, and mission alignment were even more essential to maintaining dedicated staff. Many Black women leaders struggled with ensuring that development staff were consistent and invested in the organizations. Staffing contributed to high level outcomes and robust business models overall.

The third discovery was that while Black women leaders were adaptable and resourceful, previous research did not identify code-switching as a coping mechanism by which Black women leaders used to shift and move between different groups garner acknowledgment and understanding. Black women leaders may have changed their language and modes of operation so that they are understood in multiple circles, citing the cultural identity formation of Black women as complicated and multi-faceted. However, some Black women leaders felt discomfort with having to communicate in ways that felt less than natural to gain funders' attention and operating within their own style and personality was more comfortable.

The fourth discovery was that Black women leaders periodically felt a level of funding vulnerability mostly due to having a heavy reliance on specific funding sources and there were gaps in funding due to timing or other constraints. They struggled to find resources to fill those gaps and their ability to fund their general operations was at risk. The findings indicated that Black women leaders were continually thinking about strategies to attain sustainability and thrive at all times. Previous studies did not focus on the personal sacrifices that Black women leaders would often make, and this has caused a tremendous burden on a cohort of leaders who add value to a large group of communities. These personal challenges were not due to lack of leadership, skills, or professional development, but often a lack of access and investment in Black women-led organizations. However, it was revealed was that because of Black women leaders' unwillingness for organizations to fail and close, they made personal investments in the future of the organizations.

In conjunction with these findings, it was discovered that Black women leaders were taking back their power by focusing on self-care and wellness, healing, and empowerment, starting with themselves and thus making different business decisions. The findings cited the ability of Black women leaders to exhibit self-care as being much a personal decision as it was a business decision. Resiliency and adaptability were key factors, but resilience was also a movement in resistance. The ability to resist the status quo, to resist oppressive policies, attitudes, and external behaviors and to resist models that did not fit the complex issues of their communities. All these actions, ideals, and behaviors ultimately lead to changing the social conditions of society opening new ways to excite more dialogue, interpretations of a community's reality and conscious rallying of making change.

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Appendix A: Invitation Recruitment Letter

Greetings,

My name is Ayoka Wiles-Abel, and I am a Ph.D. Student of Public Policy and

Administration with a concentration in Nonprofit Management and Leadership at Walden

University. I am conducting a research study about the experiences of Black women

executives in nonprofit organizations and how they navigate funding acquisition. In

particular, I am interested in the experiences of Black women leaders in marginalized or

disadvantaged neighborhoods. I am seeking to explore and understand how you perceive

your particular organization and what you have experienced in your executive role. I

would like to know if you will participate in a 30-minute interview, and I will provide

you seven interview questions for you to review before our meeting for the interview.

Please note the process is entirely voluntary, and I can share the results of the

transcription with you to ensure that it accurately reflects your responses and before I

include it in my study. Your responses will be kept confidential, and I will not share your

identity in the study. My preference is for interviews to be held at your institution in a

quiet and private setting to ensure confidentiality. I can also make a copy of my

completed research available to you if that of interest. If you are interested in

participating, please email directly at [redacted]. Thank you again, and if you have any

questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and attention.

A. Ayoka Wiles-Abel

Ph.D. Student, Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Questions and Script

Greetings, and thank you again for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My name is Asakuia Ayoka Wiles-Abel, and I am a Ph.D. Student of Public Policy and Administration with a concentration in Nonprofit Management and Leadership at Walden University. The goals of the study are to learn about the experiences of Black women leaders in nonprofit organizations. In particular, I am interested in your experiences in how working for an organization located and supporting marginalized or disadvantaged communities impacts how they are funded and what you experience as a nonprofit executive in acquiring and seeking funding to support the sustainability of your organization. My questions are designed to get a sense of how you think about raising funds for your particular organization and what you have experienced in your executive role. I am interested in your candid experience and accounts; there is no right or wrong answer, and I am here today to make space for your story and experience as you see and perceive it. I want to share now and review the consent form, which establishes that you have been informed about the study, are participating voluntarily, and may exit the study at any time. The interview should take no more than 30 minutes, and I will be recording the interview so that I can accurately transcribe it after. I will share the results of the transcription with you to ensure that it accurately reflects your responses. Your responses will be kept confidential, and I will not share your identity in the study. Do you understand everything that I have communicated? Do you have any questions before we begin? Thank you again for your participation.

Interview Questions

1. Can you share the origins of the organization? How long you have been a part of the organization and in the nonprofit field in general?

2. What are the qualities and skills that you have to employ to lead your nonprofit organization?

3. How have those qualities allowed you to help the organization to move beyond barriers?

4. What are your perspectives on your ability to fundraise and secure revenue for your organization?

5. What are your perspectives on how the location of the organization (in terms of demographics, income, educational attainment and other areas that define the community as marginalized) and the specific community you serve have an effect on your ability to fundraise, secure revenue as well as create reliable, long term revenue streams?

6. What barriers do you face when seeking funding acquisition and resource development in order to serve nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities?

7. Do you apply to specific funders and not to others because of the cultural or racial identity of the community you serve? If so, what successes or setbacks have you encountered using that approach?

8. How, if at all, do you see your cultural and racial identity affecting your ability to fundraise or sustain your organization? If so, in what ways does it affect the ability to raise funds (positively and negatively)?

9. How does your racial and cultural identity affect your relationship with the board and staff in terms of your ability to effectively fundraise for the organization?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me about your experience as a leader, and what resources you see as needed to more fully achieve your funding goals within the organization?