# The Intersection of Multiple Identity Formation and Leadership Development as a Black Lesbian Leader: A Critical Autoethnographic Case Study

Brandynicole Brooks

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

June 13, 2018

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## Dedication

To the generations of Black women, Black Lesbians, and Black Lesbian Leaders before and after me. May my voice help to elevate and locate your voices among the academic discourse.

> Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference -- those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older -- know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support. (Lorde, 1984, p. 112)

Abstract

In this project, narrative inquiry is used to create a critical autoethnographic case study and explore how the multiple minority identity development of a Black lesbian Leader informs her leadership development. Although Black people, women, and lesbians have pushed to gain access to leadership roles in the midst of changing social and political climates, Black Lesbian woman leadership development and leadership practices have been excluded from current literature. This project explores the interconnected condition of these multiple identities and fills this gap in research while giving voice to an often silenced population: Black Lesbian Leaders. Data for this project are from the personal diaries, journals, and previous school assignments and projects completed by the researcher. A thematic analysis of the collected data, across three theoretical frameworks, provides insight into the leadership development of the researcher, a Black Lesbian Leader, facing complicating factors such as gendered racism, the stereotyping of Black women, antigay prejudice, and the proverbial concrete ceiling. This dissertation project has implications for (a) surfacing and systematically addressing microaggressive experiences within a clinical setting, (b) for engaging in research that surfaces the personal narratives of Black Lesbian Leaders as a leadership development means for self-reflection and self-assessment, and (c) for the creation of leadership development programs specific to the intersectional experiences of Black Lesbian Leaders.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Black lesbian poet Audre Lorde (1984) perfectly described the complex nature of intersectionality as "constantly being encouraged to pluck out some aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing and denying the other parts of the self" (p. 120). Too often, Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals have been silenced within both the LGBT community and the Black community. For Black lesbians, the silencing of the women's voice in both of these communities is daunting. As a Black Lesbian Leader focused on supporting other Black Lesbian Leaders through their multiple identities and to their full potential as leaders, there is undoubtedly a theoretical basis for how these women embrace multiple identities and how embracing these identities prepares us to lead others.

The title *Black Lesbian Leader* encompasses four unique identities that intersect to make a meaningful whole. These identities are based in race, gender, sexual orientation, and one's own identity as a leader. Identifying as a Black Lesbian Leader in America means accepting these identities when the predominant culture suggests one should feel shame and steady invalidation of her being. Although Black people, women, and lesbians have pushed to gain access to leadership roles in the midst of changing social and political climates, Black Lesbian woman leadership development and leadership practices have been excluded from current literature. As suggested by Chin (2010) "the social justice movements of the 20th century (e.g., the women's, civil rights, and gay pride movements) ushered in a commitment to diversity in our nation's institutions and communities . . . yet the literature on leadership has generally not incorporated such issues" (p. 150).

Even in the midst of an increase in the diversification of the global economy, people of color, particularly women, are underrepresented at the executive levels of leadership in corporate

America. According to Barnes (2017), "women of color comprise approximately one-third of the representative gender in the workforce . . . only 5.3% of these women are (Black) and hold leadership positions" (p. 47). Current studies specifically site racism as the leading factor in this underrepresentation. Holder, Jackson, and Ponterotto (2015) asserted "some companies are hesitant to appoint Black women to positions of prestige and high visibility, often because of the belief that they lack the skills, leadership ability, savvy, and drive to successfully compete" (p. 165). Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) suggested "thicker barriers posed by racism combined with sexism" is the barrier to advancement women of color encounter (p. 172). Although Black women are the largest female minority group to receive bachelor's, master's, and graduate degrees since the mid-1970s (Holder, Jackson, & Ponterotto, 2015), "these women experience greater negative stereotypes as a result of the combined effect of being female and [Black]" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 174). Current theories of leadership overwhelmingly disregard issues in diversity whereas identity development models fail to address the impact the intersections of one's identity has on the development of leadership styles. At present, "models of leadership derived from traditional paradigms have little to say about equity, social justice, or diversity; they do not strive toward inclusiveness or the removal of barriers" (Chin, 2010, p. 153). This study, as indicated previously, seeks to examine the intersectionality of these issues of equity, social justice, and diversity and how it informs leadership development for Black Lesbian Leaders.

## Purpose Statement

Current studies exist with focus on lesbian identity formation, leadership development for women, (Croteau, Talbot, Lance, & Evans, 2002) and leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 1988) however; there are limited studies on the formation of these identities and leadership

development or practices for Black Lesbian leaders. Additionally, these two phenomena—identity formation and leadership development—have not been examined as a unit with the application of intersectional analysis or feminist theory and understanding. Therefore, in an effort to understand my own identity and development as a leader, as well as inform the development of future Black Lesbian Leaders, the purpose of this research project is to understand how the development of multiple identities of a Black Lesbian informs her leadership development and leadership practices from the analytic lenses of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and queer identity development (Cass, 1979). Understanding the multiple minority identities embraced by Black Lesbian Leaders and how these identities inform their approach to leadership is an opportunity to continue to break the silence of Black women living in the margin of lesbianism. It is the hope that this study will first act as a catalyst to give voice to other Black Lesbian Leaders who have for so long not had a voice within the discourse on leadership development. Secondly, the aim of this research is to inform the creation of leadership development programs specific to the intersectional experiences of Black Lesbian women and act to close the gap in current research focused on the leadership development and leadership practices of Black Lesbian women.

Leadership identity development (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Day, 2001) will be explored across the identities of race (Carson, 1994; Parker, 2001), gender (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), sexual orientation (Renn & Bilodeau, 2004), and culture (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). The manifestation of leadership identity and development will be assessed utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI; Posner & Kouzes, 1988).

Chin (2010) asked, "in examining the contexts in which leadership is exercised, how might gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation alter the exercise of leadership and influence

the perception and expectations of the leader?" (p. 154). This project sets out to answer this question with the following additional questions as its guide:

Central question: How does the development of multiple minority identities inform the leadership practices of a Black Lesbian Leader?

1. How does the racial identity of being Black inform lesbian identity development and leadership development?
2. How does the sexual orientation identity of being a lesbian inform leadership practices?
3. How do these identities, as a whole, inform leadership style?

## Philosophical Stance and Conceptual Framework

Through a critical social science and postmodern research approach, this study will present a critical autoethnographic case study. Historically, social science research presented a "static system of individual classification" which "creates a monolithic view of leadership development operating in a historic fashion according to its own natural laws and rules" (Davis, 2012, p. 9). This suggests the history of social science research has focused on one view or perspective by which all other perspectives are judged and created a division between various classes of people and identities. The philosophical stance and conceptual framework for this project is couched in critical research that speaks to the epistemological worldview of a Black Lesbian Leader who has experiences of racism, discrimination, and marginalization (Bernal, 2002) thereby challenging this historic view of social science research. Critical research is "informed by critical theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, [and] queer theory" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 60). Broido and Manning (2002) grouped these theories under the title of constructivist theoretical perspectives, stating "in relation to research, these theoretical

frameworks attend to issues of power, representation, identity, and social justice" (p.437)—topics aligned with the foundation of this study. Bowleg (2008) included intersectional research in the discussion of critical research approaches suggesting intersectional research understands "social identities and social inequality based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, and sex/gender are interdependent and mutually constitutive" (p. 312).

Postmodernism is presented from two standpoints. The first speaks of the purpose of postmodernism. Broido and Manning (2002) suggested postmodernist theorists "examine power and privilege and the ways that identity (e.g. race, gender, class) influences the power available and unavailable to certain groups" (p. 438). The second standpoint focuses on the output of the research. "Postmodernism favors descriptive and individual, interpreted mini-narratives, which provide explanations for small-scale situations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 11). Waugh (1992) suggested the outcome of postmodernist research is an "emphasis on the increase of being and the jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game, be it pictorial, artistic, or any other" (p. 123). "New rules are created in the process of the art, writing, or . . . research" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 438). The method of autoethnography aligns with postmodernism because of the singular use of the researcher as the subject with the output occurring in narrative.

*Autoethnography* is defined as "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742). Chang (2015) contributed to this definition by suggesting "autoethnography pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences" (p.209). These experiences are collected through a process of collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data,

and report writing (Chang, 2008; Chang, 2015, Ellis & Bochner, 2000). These data come from memories, document review, interviews, and participation. Analysis and interpretation seeks to "decipher the cultural meanings of events, behaviors, and thoughts" (Chang, 2015, p. 209) with the ultimate goal of self-examination and a means to "deal with human relations in multicultural settings" (Chang, 2015, p. 213). The benefits of autoethnography are threefold and speak directly to the personal purpose of utilizing this method. These three benefits are:

1. "offering a research method friendly to researchers and readers;
2. enhancing cultural understanding of self and others; and
3. it has a potential to transform self and others toward the cross-cultural coalition building" (Chang, 2015, p. 213).

## Preliminary Literature Review

Lincoln and Denzin (2000) suggested "critical theory calls for a radical restructuring of society toward the ends of reclaiming historic cultural legacies, social justice, the redistribution of power and the achievement of truly democratic societies" (p. 1056). Broido and Manning (2002) further defined critical theory as a means for theorists to "challenge the idea that the current structures of society are inevitable" (p. 437) and "claim that society, in its current form, is oppressive" (p. 437). The two notions of critical theory most closely connected to the philosophy guiding this research are:

1. "Facts are inextricably linked to values (and) the interconnected nature of oppressions (e.g.; racism, sexism, heterosexism) means that they must be considered and dismantled simultaneously (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 437)" and
2. Critical research has the "capacity to emancipate, empower or otherwise make free a particular oppressed group of people" (Seale, 1999, p. 9).

Critical race theory "is a challenge to the foundational assumptions of traditional liberalism" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 439). Its theorists "assert that racism is a normal, not aberrational, aspect of contemporary society" and "because of their history of and experience with oppression, racial and ethnic minorities have a unique perspective on race and racism and a 'unique voice' unavailable to white people" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 439; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 9). The guiding principle of critical race theory for this project is the understanding that this voice is "systematically excluded from the elite discourse on power; if society is to become more just and equal, these voices must be included in leadership, as opposed to, service roles" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 440). Flores (2000) further highlighted this premise stating "the task of critical race scholars is to uncover and explore the various ways in which racial thinking operates" (p. 437) in an effort to create a just society, or a society "in which all members have the same basic rights, security, opportunities, obligations, social benefits, and the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society" (Ingram & Walters, 2007, p. 27).

Queer theory "seeks to understand why we have developed binary categories such as homo/hetero and how such terms have developed in popular and disciplinary culture" (Tierney, 1997, p. 34-35). Further, queer theory aims to shift focus from specific populations to "sexual categorization processes and their deconstruction" (Gamson, 2000, p. 349). The premise "heterosexuality is constructed as normative in society" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 441) is an additional underlying focus of queer theory. Queer theorists, and this research project, focus on destabilizing "heteronormativity, the assumption that heterosexuality is the basis of society" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 441) and "how particular institutions work to heterosexualize . . . and to what material effects" (Gamson, 2000, p. 258).

Intersectional theory postulates that "people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structured power" (Richardson & Loubier, 2008, p. 143). The three identities of Black, woman, and lesbian are examples of these multiple, layered identities. "Studies examining the interaction of multiple factors in leadership style have been rare" (Richardson & Loubier, 2008, p. 143), whereas conclusive evidence regarding the impact of multiple identities on leadership style does not currently exist. An intersectional approach to studying the impact of multiple identities on leadership development and practices provides an analysis of complex identities recognizing the indivisibly connected nature of each identity (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

From a postmodernist perspective, research occurs and is reported outside of the confines of journal articles and written reports based upon the confines of academia. "Research conducted from postmodern and critical theory frameworks is focused on identity, power, and oppression" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 439). Tierney (1997) stated:

> the point is not merely to study the world but to change (and) assemble new practices, languages and ways of seeing and hence acting in the world so that individuals and groups will not of necessity need to subsume their identities into a homogeneous mass. (p. 24)

As Collins (1998) presented, "postmodernity represents particular challenges to scientific understandings of the world, especially the functionalist and empiricist traditions of American sociology" (p. 96). Additionally, this approach "provides important intellectual tools for examining cultural products as texts" (Collins, 1998, p. 195) which are committed to "decentering power and deconstructing narrative that support such power" (Collins, 1998, p.

195). This coupling of postmodernism and a critical theory approach—utilizing critical race theory and queer theory—are the foundation and purpose of this study.

## Definitions of Concepts

There are three concepts that act as the foundation for this research project. A full exploration of these concepts will occur in Chapter 2. The definitions presented below are those accepted in current literature and help to frame the current project.

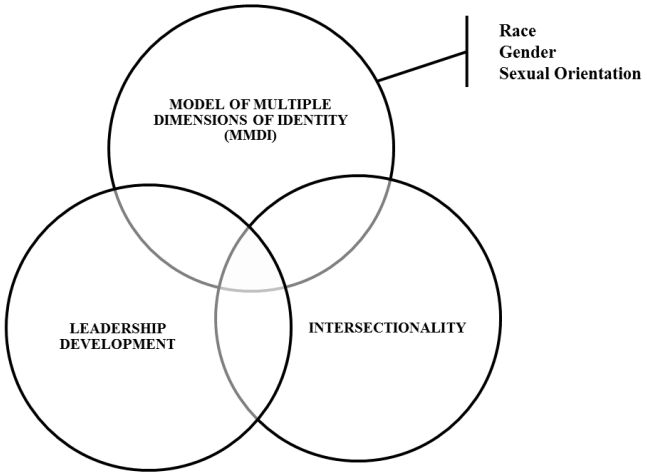


*Figure 1:* Project concepts

1. *Model of multiple dimensions of identity (MMDI).* **"**A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity that depicts a core sense of self or one's personal identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 405).
2. *Intersectionality*. Intersectionality has been described as the interaction of multiple identities and how these identities work together to shape some aspect of an individual's experiences. More specifically, the term was created to describe "various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244).
3. *Leadership development*. "Leadership development is defined as expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership

roles and processes" (Day, 2001, p.582). These roles may come with or without a formal authoritative appointment while processes focus on empowering people to work towards a common goal.

An additional concept to be examined during the process of this study is power. An accepted definition of power is "the ability of persons or groups to command compliance from other persons or groups" (Chafetz, 2003, p. 32). This concept of power has been difficult for individuals to understand as it does not refer to personal power, but to perceived systemic power. Systemic power refers to the advantages or privileges granted to a specific group of people because of their membership in that group (Blauner, 2001, Milville & Ferguson, 2014, Brooks, 2015). Power leads to privilege or unearned entitlements and advantages (McIntosh, 2000). Johnson (2006) compiled an extensive list from a wide variety of sources that illustrates what the privilege of power looks like in everyday life. Some examples specific to this project include:

- Race: "Whites are more likely to be given early opportunities to show what they can do at work, to be identified as potential candidates for promotion, to be mentored, to be given a second chance when they fail, and to be allowed to treat failure as a learning experience rather than as an indication of who they are and the shortcomings of their race" (Johnson, 2006 p. 27).
- Gender: "In most professions and upper-level occupations, men are held to a lower standard than women. It is easier for a *good but not great* male lawyer to make partner than it is for a comparable woman" (Johnson, 2006, p. 27).
- Sexual orientation: "Heterosexuals can rest assured that whether they're hired, promoted, or fired from a job will have nothing to do with their sexual

orientation, an aspect of themselves they cannot change" (Johnson, 2006, p. 29).

**Complicating Factors**

No research project focused on multiple minority identities can be effectively carried out without addressing the experience of "life in the margins," especially for Black Lesbian Leaders. This term, *life in the margins,* refers to the marginalization of minority identity groups when oppression and discrimination occur solely on the basis of these identities. Multiple studies (Debebe & Reinert, 2014, O'Brien, Franco, & Dunn, 2014, Miville & Ferguson, 2014, Gredo, 2010, Barnes, 2017, O'Neill, Shapiro, Ingols, & Blake-Beard, 2013, Collins, 2012) have named oppression, discrimination, and the host of isms (e.g. sexism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.) as barriers to success. Blustein (2006) used the term *social barriers* and defines these as "barriers that function to inhibit equal access to the resources necessary for a satisfying work life" (p. 154). Here, these factors are identified as complicating factors. From a mediation and conflict resolution perspective, "complicating factors are problems in the conflict process that get *laid over* the core, making the core issues harder to see and address" (Burgess & Burgess, 1996, p. 2). In the field of Social Work Practice with children and families, complicating factors are "conditions/behaviors that contribute to greater difficulty" in building resilience (Sawyer & Lohrbach, 2005, p. 51). This study pulls these two definitions together and identifies complicating factors as systemic factors that create greater difficulty for individuals who are marginalized to readily access their true abilities throughout their lifespan and development. The term *complicating factors*, instead of barriers, is being utilized as barriers suggest challenges that cannot be overcome, but, as will be seen in the stereotype of Black women as superwomen, there are few factors that can and do stop the upward mobility of the Black woman.

Research focused on social categorization theory (Blustein, 2006; Devine, 1995) has suggested social categories support the understanding of "how human beings establish various sorts of out-groups within their individual and collective social, economic, and political interactions" (Blustein, 2006, p. 154). Social categories allow individuals to organize and process information that is unique to their experiences. These categories are more about the individual organizing their perceptions of others into "meaningless categories that have no inherent value" (Blustein, 2006, p. 154) than on scientifically based knowledge. Social categorization allows individuals to develop prejudgments or prejudices solely on the basis of differences in skin tone, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity which ultimately "affects judgments about individuals' capacity to function in the world" (Blustein, 2006, p. 154). "The process of social categorization is pervasive and has functioned in both overt and covert ways" (Blustein, 2006, p. 155). One particular impact of social categorization is an implicit hierarchy. This hierarchy has created complicating factors "in which groups have greater advantages than others generally based on demographic characteristics" (Blustein, 2006, p. 155). Complicating factors function to create "inequity in education, access to the supportive conditions needed to achieve the full range of one's talents, and employment and advancement opportunities" (Blustein, 2006, p. 155).

Black Lesbian Leaders face multiple stigmatizations (Remedios & Snyder, 2015) because of social categorization which acts as a complicating factor. These factors, which have been thoroughly defined and analyzed in research, include gendered racism (Monnat, 2010, Miville & Ferguson, 2014), the stereotyping of Black women (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008, & Monnat, 2010), the concept of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903), and antigay prejudice (Herek, 2009, Lehavot & Lambert, 2007). There is also literature that identifies the

"pressures related to heterosexism and homophobia in organizational America" (Gedro, 2010, p. 552). Each of these concepts informs minority identity development and should be considered throughout the process of this research project. The purpose of this section is to provide clear definitions of these complicating factors.

Complicating factors are presented here as they act to frame the full understanding and analysis of this research project. The majority of these factors will not be revisited, as their existence already permeates every aspect of the lived experiences of Black Lesbian Leaders. However, through the process of data collection and data analysis, one of these factors is revealed as a means of coping for the subject of this project: double consciousness. The emphasis of this project is on how the multiple minority identities inform Black Lesbian leadership development in spite of these complications.

**Gendered racism.** Both racism and sexism have been studied in-depth over the past several decades. The focus here is not to reexamine the *what*, *how*, or *why* of racism and sexism, but to introduce these two concepts as complicating factors for Black Lesbian Leaders. From a leadership perspective, women and women of color have faced significant challenges rooted in racism and sexism. Each of these *isms* assume "the superiority of one group over another . . . and extends beyond personal values and beliefs" (Ponds, 2013). Racism and sexism are embedded in institutions via racist and sexist policies and practices, in the media via stereotypes and constant portrayal of racial and gender minorities, and at times within the personal sphere or individuals' homes as a component of internalized expressions of racism and sexism. As more attention is being given to the influence of race and gender differences in leadership (Chin, Lott, Rice, & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007, Eagly, 2007, Rhode & Kellerman, 2007), there is a presumption of gender and racial equality in leadership (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). However, the

literature suggests there are still gender biases in leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007, Fletcher, 2004, Suyemoto & Ballou, 2007).

It becomes difficult for Black Lesbian Leaders to ascertain if the prejudice they are experiencing is based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or some other dimension of diversity. This acts as a complicating factor in discerning an appropriate action to take to lessen the impact of this gendered racism. As a result, Black women "receive lower pay than white men and women as well as men of color, and they must learn to maintain a positive self-image when confronted with *microaggressions* that could halt promotions, mentoring and success" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 173) and leaves "Black women suffering stigmas that are applied only to them" (Monnat, 2010, p. 642).

**The stereotyping of Black women**. Stereotypes are a kind of social or cognitive categorization applied to individuals based on perceived categories (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). Whether these stereotypes place a positive or negative connotation on a specific category, there is a type of automatic response that occurs when specific stereotypes are observed. "Cultural stereotypes often lead to involuntary or spontaneous activation of our preconceived ideals and (we) act on those stereotypes" (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p. 132). For Black women, these gender and race stereotypes act as complicating factors in their professional development and attainment of leadership roles (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

"The symbolism attached to Black women as breeders and sexually promiscuous beings stems from a history of slavery and Jim Crow racism" (Monnat, 2010, p. 642) and continues to inform and permeate media stereotypes today. In their extensive works, Black Feminists (Hill-Collins, 1990; hooks, 1981, Lorde, 1984, Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008; West, 1995) outlined specific identities placed upon Black women as a result of this history and the "political

economy of domination fostering Black Women's oppression" (Monnat, 2010, p. 642). One additional identity, which originated as a term to name a Black women's experience from a place of empowerment, has now fallen amongst negative stereotypes that impede continued progress (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, Wallace, 1979) These identities were not created by Black women nor did they support the self-interest, self-worth, or self-esteem of Black women:

1. *Mammy*: "The myth of the mammy was created as a devaluation and degradation of Black womanhood" (Nance, 1996, p. 546). She was portrayed as a demure, obedient, and loving of her White children even in the midst of having her own. Ultimately, as described by Hill Collins (1990), the mammy projected "the ideal relationship to elite White male power" (p. 71).
2. *Jezebel*: "or that of the sexually aggressive female" (Nance, 1996, p. 546). This identity placed upon Black women often gave permission for the rape and sexual abuse of Black women.
3. *Sapphire*: "the sharp-tongued evil woman was used to satirize and dehumanize Black women's strength" (Nance, 1996, p. 546).
4. *Black matriarch*: White sociologist and Assistant Secretary of Labor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, placed the blame for the demise of the Black Family on domineering Black mothers or the matriarch. In a 1967 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, he argued "the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well." (p. 29).

5. *Superwoman:* "a Black woman who can handle large amounts of distasteful work and does not have the same fears, weaknesses, or insecurities as other women" (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p. 138).

Each of these identities, stereotypes, and myths directly and negatively impact the professional experience of Black women. Black women identified via the Mammy stereotype are often placed in subordinate positions without the likelihood of advancement (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008; West, 1995). The qualities imbued within the mammy stereotype—nurturing, caring, and supportive—do not align with the qualities of influential leaders and therefore interrupts Black women's professional development. The jezebel stereotype is typically seen as underqualified for positions as there is an assumption that these women used their sexuality to advance in their professional endeavors. These women are then left to move beyond this stereotype which may impact opportunities to be mentored by those already in power—white males. By attempting to actively disengage from this stereotype, a Black woman may inadvertently play into the sapphire stereotype. Those who are labeled with the *sapphire* or *Black matriarch* stereotypes may develop an image of being women with negative attitudes, which becomes limiting because "people expect Black women to be hard and tough, which . . . overshadows their talents and professional skills" (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p.142). Finally, the Superwoman stereotype sets Black women for failure. This stereotype paints the image of a Black woman who is "a high-potential employee who is a viable candidate for advancement" (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p. 143) which places her in a position to be "isolated and segregated from others because (she is) seen as being more competent in comparison to (her peers" (Reynolds-Dobbs, 2008, p. 143) and are offered little support as coworkers expect them to succeed in all things. When they fail to meet this standard consistently, their upward mobility is

also negatively impacted. Finally, in their work with Black women, King and Ferguson (2001) additionally identified the following as elements of complicating factors for these women as a result of these stereotypes: isolation, high visibility, a need to invest in alliance-building with the power elite, personal overload when participating in two cultures, and the ambiguity of participant in a nontraditional profession.

**Double consciousness**. Du Bois (1903) wrote of double consciousness as "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others … his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (p. 3). Brannon and Markus (2015) explained "this twoness stems from multiple sources including slavery and segregation, and is fueled by contemporary racial disparities and the ongoing experience of prejudice, discrimination and inequality" (p. 586). In bringing DuBois' idea to the 21st century, Davis (2005), suggested "the common interpretation of double-consciousness as a psychological condition affecting the development of black identity and consciousness directs one's attention towards strategies aimed at self-identity" (p. 149). Black (2007) reinforced this idea suggesting "having two antagonistic identities means that a lot of time and energy is spent negotiating and enduring the conflicts between who one is as a person and how one struggles to live with the misrepresentations of the outside world" (p. 394). Factoring in the sexual orientation of lesbian as an antagonistic identity can only increase this negotiation and endurance. There exists an idea that being Black, from an identity and a cultural perspective, is associated with an array of negative interpretations (Dukes, 2018). As will be seen in the following section on antigay prejudice, there are also negative interpretations associated with being a lesbian. The experiences of double consciousness among Black Lesbian Leaders requires an alternation between the triality of being Black, a woman, and a lesbian as either a Black woman, a lesbian woman, or one of the three.

**Antigay prejudice**. The term *homophobia* was first introduced in 1972 by psychologist George Weinberg. The term expressed "that hostility to homosexuality, rather than homosexuality itself, posted a threat to mental health" (Herek, 2009, p. 65). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) moved to remove homosexuality as a mental illness from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or DSM in 1973, however the groundwork had already been laid for "legitimating society's stigmatization of homosexuality" (Herek, 2009, p. 65). Herek (2009) and others (Herek, Chopp, & Storhl, 2007) have worked to move away from the use of the term *homophobia* as it presents an individual pathology when sexual or antigay prejudice speaks to the "internalization of societal stigma" (Herek, 2009, p. 65). Lehavot & Lambert (2007) suggested antigay prejudice is rooted in "two types of expectancy violations: those pertaining to sexual orientation per se, and perceived violations of traditional gender roles" (p. 279). The term prejudice is utilized to "emphasize people's more affective, hedonic reactions towards social groups and their implications for general attitudinal dimensions" (Lehavot & Lambert, 2007, p.280).

In 2016 antigay prejudice resulted in a 17% increase in the number of hate violence homicides in the United States (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), 2017. NCAVP (2017) reported 77 hate violence homicides of LGBT people. Black LGBT people were among those being disproportionately represented in these statistics at 64% of the total number of lives lost to antigay crimes. Antigay prejudice does not solely appear through violence. Within professional settings, LGBT individuals also experience prejudice connected to their sexual orientation. Gedro (2010) identifies the following as key pressures unique to lesbians that are rooted in antigay prejudice and expectancy violations:

1. Heterosexism: "the pervasive assumption of heterosexuality" (Gedro, 2010, p. 558);

2. Invisibility versus visibility: balancing the "pressure to conform to societal expectations of heterosexuality" (Gedro, 2010, p. 558); and
3. Gender expression and gender role: "how a person represents or expresses their gender identity to others, often through a combination of behavior, dress, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics, or other gendered-related behaviors" (Gedro, 2010, p. 158).

For Black Lesbian women, an additional experience of antigay prejudice lies within the Black community. "As LGBT people of color, Black lesbians may feel a need to choose between their LGBT identity and being a member of their ethnic/racial group" (Walsh, 2016, p. 1237). Studies from the past decade represent the idea that Black men and women hold disproportionately negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (Battle & Lemell, 2002, Durell, Chiong, & Battle, 2007; Greene, 2009; Jenkins, Lambert, & Baker, 2009). These negative attitudes tend to be rooted in religion (Greene, 2009; Griffin, 2006; & Lewis, 2003). Although Walsh (2016) cautions against accepting the belief that Black men and women hold more antigay prejudice than other communities, the personal experiences of Black Lesbian women cannot be dismissed. Boykin (1996) completed an entire volume focused on the homophobia that is evident within the Black community. The text cites the work of Black intellectuals from The Isis Papers of Frances Welsing (1991) to Nathan and Julia Hare's (1984) assertion that "homosexuality does not promote black family stability and that it historically has been a product of the Europeanized society" (Boykin, 1996, p. 160). Quotes such as these do not stop there. Tony Brown's Journal, Muhammad Ali, Sister Souljah, and other prominent and well-respected Black public figures have spoken out negatively against Black gay and lesbian individuals (Boykin, 996). Many of these figures were individuals to whom young Black boys

and girls were taught to look up to and respect. However, it has not yet been fully understood how this expectation impacted the development experiences of Black gay and lesbian people.

Fassinger, Shullman, and Stevenson (2010) identified four types of stigma faced by LGBT individuals in leadership. Cultural and societal stigma "capture the ways in which heterosexist assumptions are deeply and nonconsciously embedded in societal institutions such as law, religion, health, and the workplace" (Fassinger et al., 2010, p. 205). This level of stigma upholds the idea of heterosexism and "renders LGBT people either invisible or sick/immoral/evil" (Fassinger, et al., 2010, p. 205). Individual stigma ties to Herek's (2009) explanation of homophobia as personal and realized through enacted, felt, and internalized stigma. Each of these speaks to individual behaviors, awareness, and acceptance of stigmatizing views of LGBT persons.

**The glass ceiling**. The phenomenon of the glass ceiling was initially introduced in reference to the experience of white women reaching the highest level of leadership and being stunted because of gender stereotypes (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Barnes, 2017; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). In the 1990s the term *glass ceiling* was a metaphor for women's lack of access to executive leadership roles (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). By the 2000s the term had evolved to the concrete ceiling (Barnes, 2017; Catalyst, 2004; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008) as a metaphor that "represents the degree of difficulty African American women face in striving to conquer the challenges of becoming a leader" (Barnes, 2017, p. 47). The point being that concrete is more difficult to break through than glass because of negative stereotypes, being a double minority, having to overcome cultural differences, and lack of access to "networking opportunities, ethnic role models and mentors, and high-visibility assignments" (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p. 130).

## Significance

The significance of this study is in addressing the above mentioned complicating factors while also addressing the current state of Black Lesbian Leaders in the workforce. Current research shows 7.8% of the total employees in Fortune 500 companies are Black women and only 1.3% is executive/senior-level officials and managers (Catalyst, 2017). According to the Center for American Progress (Warner & Corley, 2017) there were no Black women heading Fortune 500 companies and only 2.2% of board seats held in Fortune 500 companies are held by Black women (Alliance for Board Diversity, 2017). The identified barriers for Black women range from "sex discrimination . . . hostile work environments, negative stereotypes about women in leadership, and bias" (American Association of University Women, 2016; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010, Barnes, 2017, Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008, Pfaff, Boatwright, Potthoff, Finan, Ulrey, & Huber, 2013). Hall (2015) suggested "the lack of empirical concern for Black women and an understanding of their sociocultural environment is [*sic*] apparent" (p. 137) in the literature as well. At present, there is no data specific to Black lesbian women in the workforce.

According to a 2016 Gallup poll, 4.1% of adult Americans identify across the LGBT spectrum. This number is an increase from 3.5% in 2012 (Gallup, 2016). A study by the Center for Talent Innovation (2013) suggests 41% of American LGBT employees do not disclose their sexual orientation at work for fear of discrimination and advancement barriers. Lesbians are more likely to experience discrimination at work due to the intersection of their gender and sexual orientation. Because of this discrimination and ultimately, barriers, lesbians and gay men continue to keep their sexual orientation identity invisible in order to elevate their careers, but to what personal detriment?

This study is significant as it sets out to highlight the importance of the experiences of Black lesbian women and their attempt to rise to positions of leadership within organizations across disciplines and how barriers have complicated the multiple minority identity and leadership development of these women. Further, this study is significant because it highlights the negotiation of multiple visible and invisible identities that Black lesbian Leaders experience. It sets out to increase empirical support for the study of the intersections of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, give volume to the silenced voices of Black lesbian women, and is seeking ways to encourage higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy among these women.

According to Ferguson, Carr, and Snitman (2014), "the process of negotiating multiple identities has the potential to create significant conflict for sexual minorities of color" (p. 54). Visible identities such as race and gender are those that cannot be hidden as readily as the invisible identities of sexual orientation, some disabilities, and the like. When considering visibility for (sexual minorities of color), making the choice to avoid identification with certain identities "may be among the most effective protective strategies" (Ferguson et al., 2014). "When negotiating multiple identities, sexual minority individuals must assess the costs and benefits of invisibility and visibility" (Ferguson et al., 2014, p. 55). This invisibility can lead to a level of disempowerment as the individual begins to see this identity as secondary to more visible identities. Patton and Simmons (2008) suggested this concealment of an aspect of identity may lead to emotional difficulties and an inability for holistic development. Additionally, "the concealment of one or more identities for the purpose of guarding against the distress evoked by prejudiced contexts has the potential to damage one's overall sense of self" (Ferguson et al., 2014, p. 55). The fragmentation of identities that occurs when individuals attempt to protect themselves from prejudice "also has the potential to generate psychological

distress" (Ferguson et al., 2014, p. 55), as "constant vigilance and monitoring to ensure that identities remain discrete from one another [is] a psychologically energy-taxing endeavor that has the potential to deplete one's psychic resources" (Ferguson et al., 2014, p. 55).

"Unfortunately, there are few studies that provide empirical support for development models addressing the intersection of ethnic and sexual identity" (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014, p. 237). This lack also extends to leadership development as it relates to ethnic and sexual identity. Ultimately, the voice of Black Lesbian women is missing from discussions of leadership. "In our culture, people are assigned based on prejudices and *isms*, and . . . it is necessary to learn how these broad and pernicious influences in our culture deeply affect the intrapsychic lives" (Holmes, 2012, p. 188) of each of us. "Racism, poverty, sexism, and heterosexism all harm their victims. For individuals, healing from this harm by making one's experiences and point of view public remains one of the most fundamental contributions of breaking silence" (Collins, 1998, p.48).

Research and understanding of the lives of Black women has boomed from a sociological perspective since the 1960s. Prior to this, the experiences of Black women were expressed through "elite discourses [which] present a view of social reality that elevate the ideas and actions of highly educated white men as normative and superior" (Collins, 1998, p. 45). Because of these elite discourses and social theories that portray Black people as inferior criminals who are sexually deviant, Black women "have long had *no say* in determining the knowledge included in the American national *library* and, in turn, in holding the power that the *library's* knowledge defends" (Collins, 1998, p. 45). "Breaking silence enables individual African-American women to reclaim humanity in a system that gains part of its strength from objectifying Black women" (p. 47). This project's significance for Black women is to "lay the

foundation for a collective group voice" (Collins, 1998, p. 48) akin to scholars (Morrison, 1970; Shange, 1975; Walker, 1982; Collins, 1989; Williams, 1988) before.

> Integration of an ethnic and sexual minority identity is positively correlated with having higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, greater levels of life satisfaction, lower levels of psychological distress and stronger social support networks. (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014, p. 237)

These outcomes speak directly to the self-awareness and "interpersonal skills . . . needed for communicating a vision and motivating, directing, and supporting followers as well as interacting with other leaders and superiors (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009, p. 64). Finally, Day et al. (2009) suggested "identity development should be incorporated as an integral aspect of leader development" (p. 64). The internal and external understanding of a leader's identity development provides the opportunity to recognize "a confident, consistent identity (which) provides someone with a dependable display of leader attributes and behaviors" (Day et al., 2009, p. 64

## Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions represent those ideas, experiences, or concepts the researcher accepts as true and therefore brings to the research. Broido and Manning (2002) stated "research can never be independent of the researchers' or respondents' assumptions . . . [and] the race, gender, class, and other social identities of the researchers . . . inevitably influence the research process and findings" (p. 439). In a similar way, the researcher's worldview will impact how the research questions are developed and how data is collected and ultimately analyzed. "Worldviews and systems of knowledge are symbiotic . . . how one views the world is influenced by what knowledge one possesses, and what knowledge one is capable of possessing is influenced deeply

by one's worldview (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p.398). The research questions presented have been developed using a diunital worldview that has been described as culturally embedded into the Black experience. That is, the cultural nature of being Black in places where racial and cultural identity are seen as synonymous this worldview observes the world from a *both/and* perspective (Alcorn, 2017; Borum. 2012; Jackson, 2005). Black intercultural literacy comes from a place of "being in an enabled state of mind to consider personal-cultural differences and commonalities diunitally (you are one, the other, *and* both; Black and American)" (Alcorn, 2017, p. 81). Therefore, the presentation of the research questions and emerging responses to those questions should be understood as a both/and, not dichotomously. Another key assumption that will impact this research project lies in the previously discussed critical race theory. This theory postulates racism permeates all aspects of human interactions and therefore influences individuals, institutions, and society (Broido & Manning, 2002). Interactions described by this researcher will be viewed through an assumption of racist influence, due to life experiences and their interpretation. However, an important goal of this project is to effectively process those feelings and how their presence informs leadership development. A second set of assumptions is based in the oppressive experiences of ethnic, gender, and sexual identity minorities. Bell (2012) defined oppression as a person being "systematically denied equal justice, opportunity, freedom, or the development of their full humanness" (p. 1). He goes on to describe oppression from the lens of understanding its four interrelated parts—ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized. "Oppression always begins from outside the oppressed group, but by the time it gets internalized; the external oppression need hardly be felt for the damage to be done" (Bell, 2012, p. 3). For Black women, "there is an interrelated character of race, gender, and class oppression" (Nance, 1996). "Black women cannot dissect their lived experiences in theoretical

and single-axis ways. . . this identity . . . results in the marginalization of Black women in compounded and real ways because of their unique experiences and interlocking systems of oppression that work against them" (Tillapaugh, Mitchell, & Soria, 2017,p. 25).

Creswell (1994) stated "defining limitations of a study establishes the boundaries, exceptions, reservations and qualifications inherent in every study" (p. 110). An autoethnography undoubtedly has its limitations due to the use of self as the only subject of research. Although the following study utilized interviews with personal and professional contacts in the subject's life as a place of corroboration, verification, and depth, the self-narrative that emerged is unique. Limitations that appeared in the study focused on the ethical questions which were difficult to answer within the complicated methods of autoethnography (Mendez, 2003). These ethical questions come from three types of ethics: relational, procedural, and situational. Ellis (2007) spoke of relational ethics as the need to "recognize and value mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between research and researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (p. 4). From a teleological perspective, this means identifying the greater good. This project seeks to give space and voice to individuals who have not been able to freely speak of their experiences. Procedural ethics speak to "seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving human subjects" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 263). This project was presented to the institutional review board (IRB) to ensure participants in this study are fully informed of any potential risks. The IRB determined this project is exempt from the review process due to the absence of testing and evaluation as defined by the IRB. The IRB's nonhuman research determination letter is shown in Appendix A. Finally, situational ethics are "the unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). "These responsibilities go beyond review boards

and beyond edicts like *the greater good* and *do no harm*" (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). Tracy (2010) and Ellis (2007) suggested situational ethics are addressed through constant evaluation of the current situation being addressed in the study to ensure "the greater good." This study utilized process consent which "happens when researchers check in with participants during each stage of a project . . . to ensure participant's continued willingness to take part in a study" "(Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 57), to address both situational and relational ethics. "In qualitative research it has been argued that informed consent is almost impossible to achieve due to the changing nature of the data collection inherent in this type of inquiry" (Usher & Arthur, 1998, p. 695). For this study, process consent was achieved through "ongoing consensual decision-making, where emerging difficulties [were] discussed openly" (Ramos, 1989, p. 61). This process created the opportunity for the researcher and those involved in the research project to develop a continuous level of mutual participation and mutual affirmation (Munhall, 1991). During the rewriting of narratives and assessment utilizing various theoretical models, the researcher reviewed the participants' consent and checked in to ensure continued, willing participation.

## Delimitations

"Delimitations [are] parameters that narrow the scope of a study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 147). This project focuses solely on the development and experiences of the researcher as a Black lesbian and her leadership development. Other race, gender, and sexual identity categories are not being explored as a part of this project due to the amount of research already available on these topics. The intent of this project is to begin closing a gap in literature and provide a foundation for future research specifically focused on the lived experiences of Black lesbian Leaders. Current literature and research focused on the experiences of white males and females,

or individuals who do not identify as sexual minorities will not be reviewed, as this literature will not aid in informing this project. However, due to the egregiously limited research and literature focused on Black Lesbian experiences, research on lesbians (regardless of race or ethnicity) will be included. Finally, methodological procedures outside of autoethnography will not be used in this project, as current research suggests "life stories provide . . . leaders with a self-concept that can be expressed through the leadership role" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 402) and leadership development "rests heavily on the self-relevant meanings the leader attaches to . . . her life experiences" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 395).

## Conclusion and Plan

This introduction is a frame for the following research study. The following sections: the literature review and methodology will provide a more in-depth discussion of the concepts, theories, and method presented here. Throughout Chapters 2 and 3, personal narratives in the form of vignettes about the researcher's lived experiences are presented to begin introducing the reader to the self-narrative style of autoethnography. These vignettes have been chosen from a vast array of narratives captured throughout the researcher's life and speak to pivotal points in not only identity development, but also in the development of this project. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of this research project with additional discussion on the theories presented in Chapter 2 and suggestions for future research.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Introduction

Social science researchers have created a formula for what "research" should look like and how it should be reported. Studies utilize the literature review to present definitions of concepts presented throughout the project's written report, to understand the researcher's theoretical framework or to identify gaps in literature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, Creswell, 2014). Most research methods fit neatly into an "Introduction-Literature Review-Method-Findings-Discussion-Conclusion" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 159) framework. Although this framework is rarely utilized for autoethnographic projects because of their creative and narrative nature, scholars who have honed the autoethnographic method have accepted its use in an effort to advance autoethnography as an accepted and credible research method (Chang, 2008).

Literature reviews take on many forms of organization and presentation, especially those in qualitative research. This literature review will utilize an adapted version of the dimensions of diversity wheel (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003) as seen in Figure 2 to organize the chapter as the definitions of key terms in this project are presented. An underlying assumption of the dimensions of diversity is the complex nature of internal, external, and organizational dimensions of identity. The internal dimensions refer to those parts of identity that cannot be controlled, such as race and gender. External dimensions are identified as religion, work experience, and marital status, or those parts of identity that tend to change over time. Finally, the organizational dimension is furthest away from the core of personality and is characterized by work location, management status, and seniority within the workplace (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003). These dimensions act as filters through which individuals develop assumptions

about the behaviors of others which then guides their behavior, decision-making, and, ultimately, development. The internal dimension refers to aspects of identity that are beyond the individual's control. This is where race, gender, and sexual orientation directly impact the individual and how they perceive the world. The external dimension focuses attention on how an individual's geographic location, religion, peer interaction, and work experience impact their understanding of the world around them. As individuals age and increase their experiences with the external dimension, the aspects of the internal dimension become tightly woven and unrecognizable on their own. As mentioned in the introduction, this is an autoethnographic case study focused on how the multiple identities of a Black Lesbian Leader inform her leadership development and leadership practices. In order to carry out the research of this project, these identities will be separated and rewoven with particular focus on leadership development.

"Identity refers to the individual's answer to the question 'Who am I'" (Debebe and Reinart, 2014, p.276). The answer to this question "is forged in social interactions, which are embedded in a complex, differentiated, and stratified society" (Debebe & Reinart, 2014, p. 277). From the time of birth, individuals develop a sense of identity based on societal expectations of the roles they are to perform (Debebe & Reinart, 2014). Tajfel (1978) defines *social identity* as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 62). Figure 3 is an illustration of how the internal dimension of the dimensions of diversity wheel has been adapted to explore identity development from individual identity to leadership development and practices.

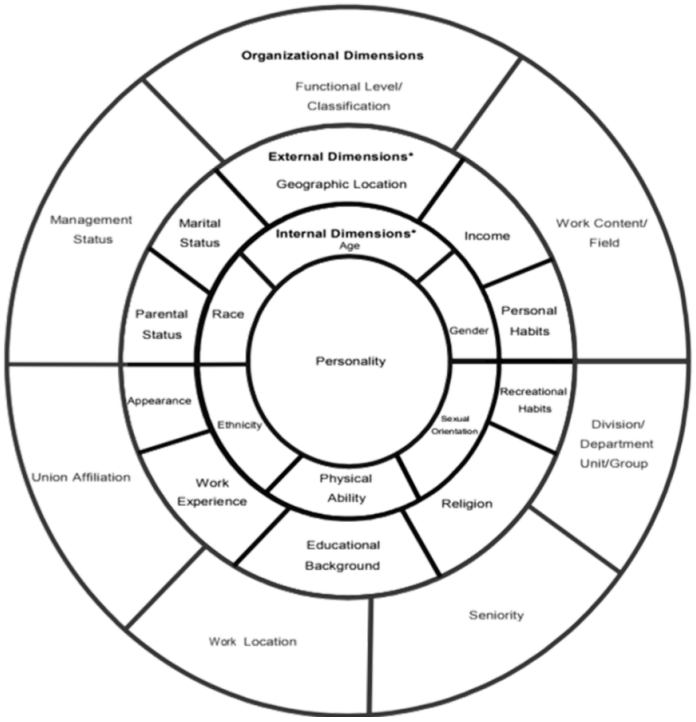


*Figure 2*: Dimensions of diversity wheel (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003)

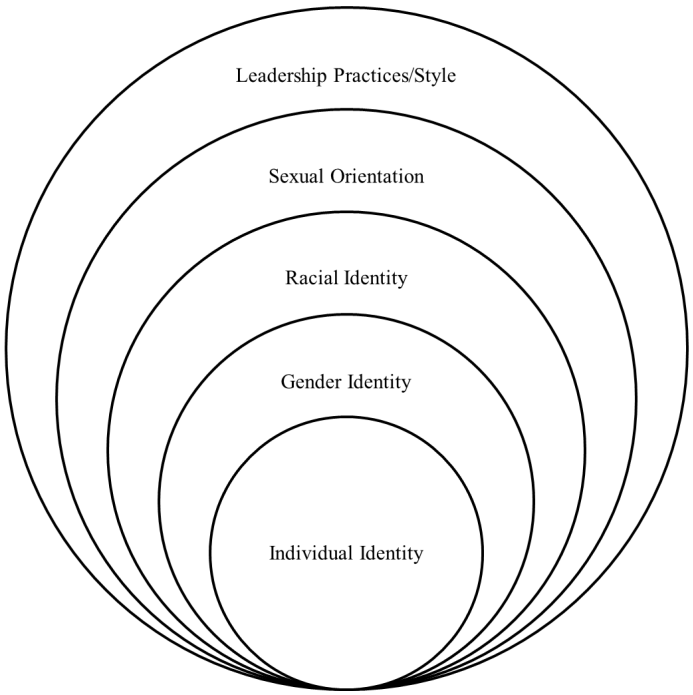


*Figure 3*: Adaptation of the internal dimension of the dimensions of diversity wheel.

This chapter is focused on defining the following constructs and concepts: autoethnography, multiple identity development, and intersectionality, the use of the term Black versus African American, and the theories used as a guide for this narrative project. The final section provides an introduction, of sorts, to the subject of this case study.

## Autoethnography

A full review and critique of the methodology of autoethnography follows in Chapter 3. At its core, autoethnography is a qualitative research method that allows the researcher to become the subject of research. Autoethnography "locates the deeply personal and emotional experiences of the researcher as subject in a context that relates to larger social issues" (Olesen, 2003, p. 360). This provides the opportunity for the researcher or subject to identify experiences in her life that have influenced how she moves about the world. More specifically, this method creates the space for lived experiences to be expressed and analyzed through the lenses of varied theoretical approaches and models of development. Jones (2009) and Jones, Kim, and Skendall (2012) utilized the autoethnographic method to explore the multiple dimensions of identity. This approach is taken for this project as well, as an exploration of the development of Black, woman, and lesbian identities.

*Autoethnography* is defined as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). For use in this project, autoethnography is identified as the appropriate methodology because of its connection to intersectional research. Intersectionality will be fully defined later, however the connection between autoethnography and intersectional research is the "shared goal of social change through the creation of evocative stories" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). This approach is "meant to invite the reader into the story in such a way as to promote a

more just society" (Jones, 2009, p. 290). Sharing stories throughout time has served to bring others into the experiences of people different from themselves so as to create a space of understanding for the lived experiences of others.

**Black Versus African American**

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*As I sit at the table with elders in the field of Black Social Work Practice, I listened as the subject of the conversation shifted to racial identity within the Black community. One of these elders, a senior officer in our shared discipline's national organization turned to me and asked, "Do you prefer African American or Black?" Stunned by the fact that I had been noticed, even though the three of us were seated at a small table in the hotel's bar, I felt the need to show my confidence in that moment. "I prefer Black," I said while sitting up a half an inch straighter and giving her direct, but respectful, eye contact. "I just don't have a connection to Africa," I continued, "that places me in the mindset of calling myself African American. Why does my 'American' have to be prefaced with 'African?' The terms I prefer to use are Black American and white American." The elders seemed impressed by my confidence as I slowly engaged in their conversation. "Hopefully, tomorrow, after my presentation you feel differently," the senior officer said followed by a sip of her drink. I attended the presentation and listened attentively, but my thoughts were not changed. It took me too long to finally come into my Blackness and Black is what I knew and know myself to be.*

---

Identifying as Black or African American is a deep-rooted personal debate for many Black Americans. The nomenclature of Black identity is rooted in a history of enslavement, oppression, and racism. Throughout history, Black people have been named outside of themselves as niggers, Negros, coons, colored, Black, African American, people of color and the like. Initially, terms were created as a means to categorize vast groups of individuals based on geographical location and physical characteristics. However, the historical definitions led to the creation of an imbalance of power and the illusion that Black people are less than. According to

Witzig (1996) von Linne identified Africans as "black . . . crafty . . . indolent, negligent . . . governed by caprice" (p. 675). Volumes upon volumes of research that followed von Linne's delineations and descriptions continued to define Africans in this way. Although it is clear the most derogatory of these terms did not originate as derogatory, experiences over time led to its current meaning (Kennedy, 2002). As time passed, and movements developed to realign the meaning and power of being Black, so too did new definitions and subconscious meaning shift. DeWalt (2011) states "during the Black Power period, Black became the identity label that was reclaimed as a positive identity, challenging the negatively imposed connotations previously associated with it" (p. 6). The term African American refers to the attempt to reclaim an identity that was "eroded through enslavement" (DeWalt, 2004, p. 7). However, those outside of the Black American experience do not have to prefix their identity in connection to their familial continent of origin. W.E.B. Dubois (1903) sums it up as an experience of double consciousness—a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 2). The term *African American* creates a thin veil that allows Black Americans to see themselves as American, but still qualifying they are not *fully* American (DuBois, 1903).

To that end, this study uses the term *Black* as this term is most aligned with the subject's racial identity. Of note, is the capitalization of the word black in reference to Black identity, Black Americans, and Black experience. As noted by Wallace (2016), "capitalizing the term Black is appropriate because it refers to the people of African diaspora whereas the lowercase 'b' implies a color" (p. 8).

**Multiple Minority Identity Development**

The essence of this project is to grasp an understanding of identity development across the spectrums of race, gender, sexual orientation, and leadership. There are several identity development models for each of these categories, so many so that not all could be discussed here. The models chosen for this project have been empirically researched and present identity development as occurring in stages or phases. An additional criteria for use of the models identified is the in-depth analysis and application each theorist used to develop the models. This creates the opportunity of application across multiple experiences, leading to richer conversations.

Prior to the dissection of these models, a foundational understanding of multiple minority identity development is important. An accepted conceptual model is the MMDI (Jones & McEwen, 2000). This model was developed out of a need to build upon "developmental models and related research (that) have addressed only a single dimension of identity, such as race or sexual orientation" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 405). Informed by the work of Deaux (1993), the theorist who "distinguished between social identities and personal identities and described them as *fundamentally interrelated*" (Jones, et al., 2012, p. 701), the MMDI filled a gap in literature by providing an empirically tested model concerning the development of multiple identities. Prior to the MMDI, Reynolds and Pope (1991) created a model regarding multiple identities that was primarily concerned with multiple oppressions and how individuals can function through these oppressions. Important to note here, is the inability to separate a discussion on multiple identities, specifically minority identities, from identifying the impact of oppression. Beyond the identities of white, heterosexual, male, individuals experience oppression due to any one or multiple identities. To ignore or avoid a discussion on oppression

would be a disservice to a study on the identity development of a Black lesbian. Within Jones and McEwen's (2000) seminal research to create this model, it was found that "salience of identity dimensions was rooted in internal awareness and external scrutiny, and lack of salience seemed prevalent among those more privileged identity dimensions" (p. 410). This suggests "systems of privilege and inequality were least visible and understood by those who are most privileged by these systems" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p 410). This leads to the assumption that identity is shaped through experiences based on internal and external awareness.

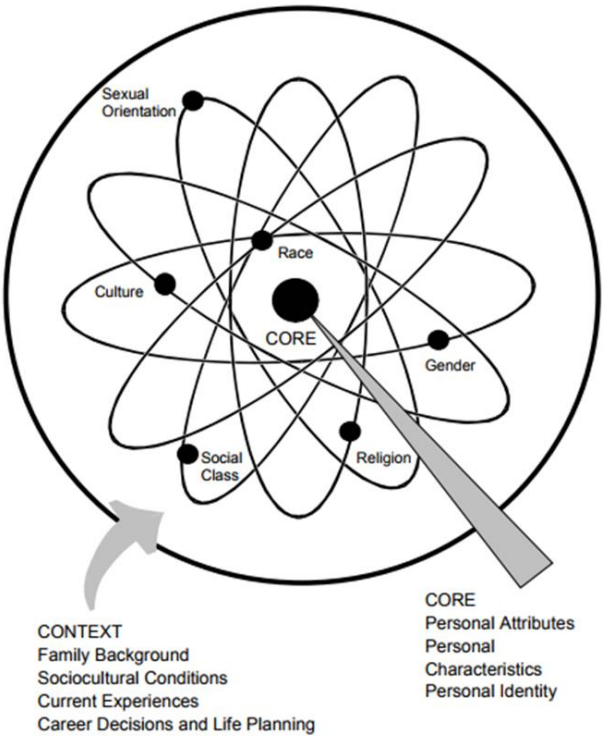


*Figure 4:* Model of multiple dimensions of identity (MMDI; Jones & McEwen, 2000)

The conceptual model for multiple dimensions of identity is an "illustration of one person's identity construction at a particular time" and depicts the "possibility of living comfortably with multiple identities, rather than simply describing multiple dimensions of identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 408). The model provides a depiction of relationships among socially constructed identity dimensions "recognizing that each dimension cannot be

understood in isolation" (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007, p. 3). The model illustrates identity dimensions as intersecting rings around a core, "signifying how no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p.410). These rings are surrounded by a circle which represents "the context within which the individual experiences multiple dimensions of identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 410). For participants in their study, identity dimensions were perceived as both internally and externally defined. Specifically, this model "addressed multiple identities more broadly than multiple oppressions and provides a dynamic representation of the fit of the core self with other identities and the changing relative salience of particular dimensions of identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 411). The use of the MMDI, serves as the reason for exploring the identities of Black, Lesbian, and Leader as a unit rather than individual parts. However, as previously stated, these individual identities are developed through processes and stages that should be understood in an effort to apply this understanding to the whole.

Following is an explanation of the parts of this whole - gender identity development (Katz, 1979), racial identity development (Cross, 1971, 1995), sexual identity development (Cass, 1979), and leadership development and practices (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 1988).

**Gender identity development.** "Gender refers to the roles and expectations attributed to men and women in a given society, roles which change over time, place, and life stage" (Phillips, 2005, p. 1). Gender is presented across disciplines as a social construct that varies over time based on society, culture and norms. Katz (1979) suggested "people may be described and categorized along many dimensions, but few seem to be as salient as gender" (p. 155). To hone in on this point, Katz (1979) applied this idea into the context of new born babies and when

adults interact with other adults whose gender identity is ambiguous. Specifically, "knowing that a newborn is alive and healthy, for example, is insufficient without being told whether it is a boy or a girl" and "adults. . .show. . . anxiety in the presence of adults whose gender category is ambiguous because of dress or behavior" (Katz, 1979, p. 155). Gender is assigned at the time of birth, and even before. The way individuals interact with one another and the ways in which individuals are socialized are largely based in gender.

The acquisition of gender information has been studied since the beginning of the field of psychology. Four specific theories were developed to express how gender is learned and formed. First of these is Bandura and Walton's (1963) position of direct reinforcement which speaks to how parents' gender-based response to their children's behavior, either positive or negative, will reinforce the child's understanding of gender. Second, is Mischel's (1966) perspective of the impact of modeling processes in gender-role acquisition. This means "acquiring the constellation of behaviors involved in gender-role patterning is accomplished primarily by years of observing parents and imitating characteristic behaviors of the same-sexed parent" (Katz, 1979, p. 157). Third, is Freud's (1927) psychoanalytic perspective of modeling in which children choose who they will model based on an "affective bond" (Katz, 1979, p. 157.) The fourth and final theory removes the responsibility of the parent to model or teach gender-role acquisition and places the emphasis on the child's behavior and cognitive processes (Katz, 1979). Kohlberg (1966) postulated that gender roles emerge after a child has self-identified as boy or girl.

Prior to the creation of a newer model of gender identity formation, Katz (1979) identified several problems with the above theories. First, three of the four theories assumed the parent as the primary and most significant sources of gender-role acquisition. These did not take

into account children raised in foster homes or orphanages, or those raised by same-sex parents. The last point of omitting same-sex parents is understood due to the timeframe of these studies. Secondly, each theorist identified a different age at which gender identity occurred. For some this age was as young as infancy whereas others suggested as late as 5 or 6 years old (Katz 1979). Katz (1979) takes this information as the foundation of where a proposed model of gender identity formation is formed and created a three stage model. This model suggests three overlapping developmental levels of gender roles. These three levels include:

1. Learning what is appropriate behavior for a male or female child,
2. Acquiring concepts about what is appropriate as a potential male or female adult, and
3. Behaving in ways that are deemed appropriate for male and female adults across the life span.

The first stage of this model focuses on understanding what society deems as acceptable based on gender. This understanding occurs across the timeframe of infancy to grade school. Katz (1979) points out the shift from parents as the key influencers of gender identity development to peers as the key influencers. The second stage of female identity development spans from early adolescence to late adolescence and is concerned with "adjusting to physical sexual maturity, developing relationships with the opposite sex, and considering future options with regard to vocation and marriage" (Katz, 1979, p. 171). In this second stage, the circle of influence on development is same-sex peers. Finally, the third and final stage, which occurs in young adulthood focuses on young women "finding a mate and developing a marital relationship, having children and parenting, and establishing one's vocational competence" (Katz, 1979, p. 171). What is of importance in this final stage is the idea that women, even in today's society, predominantly base gender identity success on their status as wives and mothers.

However, Katz (1979) suggests with mothers entering the workplace identity development continues well beyond marriage. Additionally, Katz (1979) suggests "that female sex-role identity may either take a much longer time to develop or may change more drastically over the life span than does male identity" (p. 171). Unfortunately, however, although women who are in the workforce may build their identity on workplace competence, Katz (1979) states "competence [for women] is not defined in terms of academic and occupational excellence but in terms of their ability to conceive, gestate, deliver, and nurse a baby and thus ultimately *prove* their feminine identity" (p. 172). Present day research regarding female competence is less drastically specific regarding the expectation for women to simply be mothers, however, the expected characteristics of women are aligned with Katz' 1979 notion. Guillen, Mayo, and Karelaia (2016) state "gender roles prescribe women to display communal characteristics (e.g., helpful, empathetic)" (p. 5). Inesi and Cable (2015) suggest women are seen as less competent than men because "the stereotype for women—warm and nurturing—is inconsistent with the drivers of career success—agency, assertiveness, and dominance" (p. 617). In their study, Inesi and Cable (2015) identified the gender hierarchy as an underlying driver of gender based discrimination—when women act outside of the traditional expectation of femininity, this threatens the hierarchy. When the hierarchy is threatened women are evaluated more on their alignment with gender expectations than their job performance, creating a picture of low competence. A final word regarding this theory is Katz's (1979) final thoughts of how the model is based largely on traditional gender-role acquisition and "is not meant to deny that some follow different routes (e.g., not marrying or becoming homosexual)" (p. 174) which suggests this model considers lesbian women as realizing their gender as female in a different sequence or via differing means than their straight counterparts.

**Racial identity development.** The use of the term *race* "as a way to classify large divisions of *Homo sapiens* originated with Carl von Linne" (Witzig, 1996, p. 675) in 1758. He postulated "there exist three races, and that these races are Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid is rooted in the European imagination of the Middle Ages, which encompassed only Europe, Africa, and the Near East" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 258). These three races were imagined in the essays of Count Authur de Gobineau published in 1853–1855 in France (Ladson-Billings, 2003). The division of humans into the categories of Europeans, Americans, Asiatics, and Africans was solely based on physical and psychological impressions (Witzig, 1996). "Race is therefore an unscientific social construct; that is, the concept of race is created from prevailing social perceptions and is without scientific foundation" (Witzig, 1996, p. 676). Witzig (1996) focused on race from a medical perspective and in the field of psychological analyses race reflects a social construction that is not rooted in biology or physiology (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999, Helms & Cook, 1999, Helms, Jernigan & Mascher, 2005). Even in the midst of race being a social construct with little to no inherent meaning, the development of a racial identity remains a unique process for individuals of marginalized groups.

"Racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership or belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership" (Helms, 1990, p. 3). The focus then of racial identity theory is on the ways in which individuals overcome internalized racism and achieve "a healthy socioracial self-conception under varying conditions of racial oppression" (Helms & Cook, 1999, p. 81). The work of racial identity development theorists centers on the "societal structural dynamics of discrimination, prejudice, and institutional forms of oppression on individual development and seeks to "explain the effects of sociocultural, sociohistorical, and sociopolitical discriminatory

forces on identity development" (Ferguson et al., 2014, p. 51). "Race awareness, in a primary sense, is defined as a consciousness of the self as belonging to a specific group which is differentiated from other observable groups by obvious physical characteristics which are generally accepted as being racial characteristics" (Clark & Clark, 1947, p. 169). Cross' (1971, 1991) nigrescence theory outlines how Black individuals moved from identification as Negro to African American to Black in four stages. This theory describes a widely accepted model of Black racial identity development. Cross (1991) referred to this theory, in its seminal work, as "an identity change process as a Negro-to-Black conversion experience, the kind of process that could be seen in Black behavior during the Harlem Renaissance" (p. 189). Later, this theory was reimagined as a "resocializing experience, one that transforms a preexisting identity to one that is Afrocentric" (Ritchey, 2014, p. 101). Theorists have "interpreted Nigrescence as the developmental process of becoming Black, an explanation of the Black identity and consciousness process for Black Americans" (Ritchey, 2014, p. 101). "The study of nigrescence (a French word that means the *process of becoming black*) evolved in the late 1960s as observers . . . tried systematically to map and codify the identity transformation that accompanied . . . the Black power phase of the Black Social Movement" (Cross, 1991, p. 147).

Broadly, the stages of the Cross (1991) model can be described as understanding the identity to be changed (*preencounter*), "the point at which the person feels compelled to change" or *encounter* (Ritchey, 2014, p. 34), the psychological struggle of changing identity (*immersion–emersion*), and the full acceptance of a racial identity that is focused on diversity and activism (*internalization commitment*). Cross' (1991) model is based in the idea of Black people's desire to be accepted among the mainstream from an early age. VanAusdale and Feagin (2002) suggest Black children understand the negative connotation placed on Black identity by the age of three.

In their study, *Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children*, Clark and Clark (1947) showed Black and white children four dolls that were only different based on the diapers they wore and their skin tone. As a result of asking a series of questions Clark and Clark (1947) reported 59% of children (both Black and white) showed a preference for the white doll which implied a "concomitant negative attitude towards the brown doll" (p. 175). "The importance of these results for an understanding of the origin and development of racial concepts and attitudes in Negro children cannot be minimized" (p. 175). "Nigrescence theory highlights [a] desire to assimilate as the first struggle within its model. Although each of these stages will be narrated and assessed in later chapters for the purpose of data analysis, here is a brief discussion of each of the stages. Of note is that "nigrescence is not a process of mapping the socialization of (Black people)" (Cross, 1991, p. 190), but a "model that explains how *assimilated* Black adults, as well as *deracinated, deculturalized,* or *miseducated* Black adults transform by a series of circumstances. . . into persons who are more Black aligned" (Cross, 1991, p. 190).

***Preencounter.*** The preencounter stage of nigrescence theory suggests Black individuals feel "low salience to race neutrality to [expressing] anti-Black [behaviors]" (Ritchey, 2014, p. 101). These feelings are collectively referred to as the three identity clusters of this stage. The first of these clusters is low-salience attitudes. "Persons who hold low salience views do not deny being Black, but this *physical* fact is thought to play an insignificant role in their everyday lives" (Cross, 1991, p. 190). Vandiver et al (2001) express this identity cluster as assimilation. "Assimilation identity describes a cluster of people who show low salience for race but strong reference group orientation centered on being American" (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 176). One factor previously analyzed in the pre-encounter phase was the concept of self-hatred. Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, and Worrell (2001) define Black self-hatred as "a Black person's

hatred of the self because of race" (p. 175). Although it was initially postulated that self-hatred is true for all Black individuals in the preencounter phase, Cross (1991) later acknowledged, "the concept of Black self-hatred is no less complex than any other aspect of Black psychological functioning" (Cross, 1991, p. 185). Therefore, not all Black individuals experience self-hatred at this phase.

The second cluster, social stigma attitudes, suggests Black individuals in the pre-encounter phase see "race as a problem or a stigma" (Cross, 1991, p. 191). Individuals find interest in Black culture to join with others who are seeking to face issues of social discrimination rooted in race. When asked about their Black identity, these individuals "invariably respond by telling you what it is like to be oppressed" (Cross, 1991, p. 191).

Anti-Black attitudes is the final cluster within the preencounter phase. In the history of discussions on being Black this idea of anti-Blackness manifests in assumptions about an individual's desire to be white through both direct and indirect actions. Direct actions refer to clear statements of reflecting anti-Black feelings whereas indirect actions surface through a Black person's "idealization of white people and white culture" (Vandiver et al, 2001, p.176).

A final characteristic of preencounter is race neutrality in which people closely identify other aspects of their lives as more important than race. Ritchey (2014) suggests "typically this stage occurs when someone does not realize that they have been raised with white westernized ideologies, because it is embedded in their culture" (p. 102). Cross (1991) states any Black person who has passed through the formal education system in America is faced with "historical distortions about Africa and the (Black) experience" (Vandiver, et al., 2001, p. 177). When these distortions are believed or not challenged, behaviors begin to evidence "the trait called *miseducation"* (Vandiver, et al, 2001, p. 177), a term attributed to Carter G. Woodson from his

1933 text *The Mis-education of the Negro.* Internalization of these distortions is what places individuals in the space of pre-encounter.

***Encounter.*** This second stage of the "nigrescence process tries to pinpoint those circumstances and events that are likely to induce identity metamorphosis in an individual" (Cross, 1991, p. 199). Moving from the pre-encounter stage occurs as individuals are directed to a resocialization or transformation through understanding the true nature of the Black experience. The individual must encounter an event that will shape how race is viewed, both their own race and that of others. This encounter does not have to be negative in order to be impactful. It has to create some level of tension that leads to personalization. Personalization means the encounter "has a personally significant impact to be the catalyst to spur change in their thinking" (Cross, 1991, p. 197). The key point of this encounter is that it "shatter the relevance of the person's current identity and world view, and at the same time provide some hint of the direction in which to point the person to be resocialized and transformed" (Cross, 1991, p. 199).

Significant to this research project is Cross' (1991) statement regarding "middle-class Blacks who have somehow managed to avoid or escape racial incidents at earlier points in their lives" (p. 199). For these individuals, nigrescence begins "after a startling racial episode in college or at their place of employment" (Cross, 1991, p. 199). Often, it is not a singular incident that acts as the precipitating encounter event but multiple small incidents or microaggressions. "Microaggressions are subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solorzano, 2000, p. 60). "In and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence" (Pierce, 1995, p. 281).

***Immersion–emersion.*** Identified as "the most sensational aspect of Black identity development, for it represents the vortex of psychological nigrescence" is the third stage of immersion-emersion. Understanding of this stage comes from the understanding of the nuances in the terms immersion and emersion. Immersion means to become deeply involved in a particular event or subject. For Cross (1991) this meant "a bifurcation of vision regarding the world and society" (Vandiver, et al., 2001, p. 177). This means seeing everything Black or Afrocentric as good and everything white or Eurocentric as evil (Vandiver, et al., 2001). This is the stage in which Black individuals begin to take on a new worldview informed by intense Black involvement. Everything important to the individual in immersion-emersion is relevant to Blackness. "Individuals in this stage are described as hungrily consuming Black literature and devoting much contemplation to the forms of being Black (Vandiver, et al., 2001 p. 177). From the outside, the individual has not yet made a change in their outward actions; however they have made a commitment to change. Cross (1991) cautions "there is a price that is paid by the individual and, often by society as well," (p. 203) as a result of immersion activities. Specifically, "rage, anxiety, and guilt, emotions that are potentially destructive when uncontrolled, fuel these explorations of Blackness" (Vandiver, et al., 2001, p. 177). Emersion at this stage occurs as individuals move through this rage towards eurocentric culture to guilt about believing previous distortions to developing a sense of pride in "one's Black self, Black people, and Black culture" (Cross, 1991, p. 203).

***Internalization and internalization commitment.*** The final stages of Cross' (1991) model were condensed from two to one between 1979 and 1991 because "few attitudinal difference exist between the psychology of Blacks in the Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stages" (Vandiver, et al., 2001, p. 179). Internalization and its commitment is

characterized by individuals moving away from a romanticized view of Blackness and embracing a racial identity that is rooted in involvement in diverse organizations and activism when it is necessary. Another important aspect of this stage is in "self-healing" (Cross, 1995, p. 96) which replaces feelings of inferiority and insecurity by feelings of Black pride and self-love (Vandiver, et al., 2001, p.179). Cross (1991) further stated "internalization marks the point of dissonance resolution and reconstruction of one's steady state personality and cognitive style (p. 220). Benjamin, Constantine, Richardson, and Wilson (1998) suggest Black identity development models support Black individuals in the process of shedding "a poor self-worth and move toward embracing appositive Black self-definition" (p. 96). This is what the final stage of internalization accomplishes.

Black identity development acts as response to the oppressive experiences of Black people. "Racism, domination, and privilege are interwoven into society" (Ritchey, 2014, p. 104) which leads to racism and race related stress being experienced culturally, individually, and institutionally. Healthy racial identity development is important to functioning and finding one's place in society. Ultimately:

> Healthy racial identity development is achieved when Blacks progress through a series of linear stages commencing with degrading thoughts and feelings about themselves and other Blacks accompanied by idealized beliefs about whites, and ends with internalized positive feelings about themselves, other Blacks, and racial groups. (Benjamin, et al., 1998, p. 96)

**Sexual identity development.** In the1970s, focus on the identity development of gay and lesbian people grew. Although these studies utilized the term *homosexuality* to refer to individuals who identify as gay and lesbian, this term is problematic because of the history of

negative connotation it brings. Therefore, for the purpose of this project, the terms gay and lesbian will be used instead. Cass (1979) developed a model for gay and lesbian identity formation in an effort to document the process "by which a person comes first to consider and later to acquire the identity of (gay or lesbian) as a relevant aspect of self" (p. 219). The model is based in two assumptions: "identity is acquired through a developmental process; and the locus for stability of, and change in behavior lies in the interaction process that occurs between individuals and their environments (Cass, 1979, p. 219.) Cass' (1979) model focuses on the *how* of identity formation for gay and lesbian individuals and differs from those before it due to their focus on delineating the *types* of (gay and lesbian) identities and on identifying the types of problems these individuals face.

The Cass (1979) model presents six stages of development that gay and lesbian individuals move through as they acquire a gay or lesbian identity. These stages are presented along with "paths of development or stages of action" (p. 220). Identity foreclosure is also presented across this model, when a person who is going through the stages "may choose not to develop any further" (p. 220). This means an individual is unable to make progress towards the full realization of a gay or lesbian identity as the result of outside influences, specifically the influence of interpersonal relationships (Cass, 1979). This can manifest in self-hatred, asexuality, or severe behaviors such as substance use or abuse, and suicide. Additionally, Cass (1979) takes into consideration that development as gay or lesbian occurs on two paths: public and private. This means individuals may have completed the stages in their personal lives but have not shared their identity publicly. Finally, "the model rests within the framework of interpersonal congruency theory. . .(which) is based on the assumption that stability and change

in human behavior are dependent on the congruency or incongruency that exists within an individual's interpersonal environment" (Cass, 1979, p. 221).

The identity formation or development of gay and lesbian individuals is seen as the process by which individuals redefine themselves as gay or lesbian. This occurs through the response to six questions that are posed internally across six stages.

***Identity confusion.*** In the first stage of identity confusion, individuals seek to answer the question could I be gay? In order to ask this question, individuals have become aware, for the first time, of gay or lesbian thoughts, feelings, and in some instances attractions. The initial response in this stage may be to avoid information connected to lesbian or gay individuals, deny this aspect of their identity or avoid those individuals for whom they have had thoughts or feelings of attraction. Cass (1979) identifies the needs of this stage as needing to explore this identity free from judgment and with support to explore their identity as normal within the spectrum of identities.

***Identity comparison.*** This stage moves away from the question of could I be gay to questioning who else around me is gay or lesbian. Here, individuals have accepted the possibility of being gay or lesbian and being open to exploring what it means, to society, to be gay or lesbian. Individuals at this stage are seeking to understand how openly gay and lesbian individuals are treated by their peers, family, and society. While individuals are exploring others, their previous alienation moves to isolation. The need for individuals as this stage is to be able to define their own experiences, receive information regarding this new identity and opportunity to grieve perceived losses.

***Identity tolerance.*** The third stage of Cass' (1979) model has been identified as the stage at which the greatest number of risks for safety has been identified. In this stage, the individual

has created a "self-image further away from 'heterosexual' and more toward (gay or lesbian). In an effort to address the feelings of identity confusion and avoid further alienation, the individual feels the need to contact others who identify as gay or lesbian as "something that has to be done" (Cass, 1979, p. 229). Here, the idea of being gay or lesbian is tolerated within oneself, but is not yet accepted. Although making contact with others is important, it is the "quality of that contact" (Cass, 1979, p. 230) that is more critical. The impact of a negative experience could lead to foreclosure at this stage rather than moving to the next stage.

***Identity acceptance***. Although this may seem to be the final stage of this model, identity acceptance is focused on obtaining a sense of validation and normalizing this new identity. Contact with other gay and lesbian individuals increase while the individual becomes more comfortable with a gay or lesbian self-image. Here, a positive connotation of what it means to be gay or lesbian is developed in spite of what those outside of the gay or lesbian experience may say or feel. The ultimate task of this stage is to address the inner turmoil or discomfort around no longer living up to the expectations of society when it comes to sexual orientation and sexual identity.

***Identity pride.*** Cass (1979) states the individual "enters stage 5 with an awareness of the differences (incongruency) that exist between the individual's own concept of self as being totally acceptable as (gay or lesbian) and society's rejection of this concept" (p. 233). The individual faces this incongruence by separating themselves from heterosexual individuals and by being fully immersed in the gay and lesbian experience. They have begun to identify with the gay subculture by "voraciously consuming gay literature and culture" (Cass, 1979, p. 233). With this stage, "there is a strong sense of pride in being gay, typified in slogans such as 'gay is good' and 'gay and proud'" (Cass, 1979, p. 233). At the base of this stage is the awareness of a them

and us philosophy which espouses all things heterosexual as negative and all things gay and lesbian are positive. Another aspect of this stage is when the gay or lesbian individual begins to have feelings of anger towards the increased inconsistency between the values of the gay and lesbian community and those of the heterosexual community. These feelings of anger couple with feelings of pride which "energizes persons into action against the established institutions and creates and activist" (Cass, 1979, p. 233).

***Identity synthesis.*** The final stage of this model occurs when being gay or lesbian becomes another aspect of a person's identity such as being a wife, mother, daughter, aunt, or sister. Here, there is greater congruency because gay and lesbian individuals realize they are accepted by some heterosexual individuals just as they begin to accept heterosexual individuals back into their experience. The person's "personal and public sexual identities become synthesized into one image of self, receiving considerable support from their interpersonal environment" (Cass, 1979, p. 235.). This final stage allows for the individual to now integrate their gay or lesbian identity with other aspects of their identity.

Cass (1979) suggests this model is nonlinear, and that individuals may stay at one particular stage for some time. There is no way, according to its theorist, to determine how long this process takes because of its complexity. Finally, the process of moving through the stages to synthesis does not only occur for the individual, but for their family and close friends as well.

Cass (1996), Rowen and Malcolm (2003), and Adams and Phillips (2009) have reviewed Cass' original model of sexual identity development to assess its application since 1979. As a result, Cass (1996) added the prestage of identity formation which highlights "the assumption of one's sexual orientation as part of the heterosexual group" (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014, p. 231).

Other theorists also identified Cass' (1979) model as comprehensive and applicable across various populations when aspects of race and culture are also examined.

**Critiques of identity development models**. Critiques of identity development models focus on three areas: the limitation of the linear stage model, the lack of addressing differences between males and females, and "the lack of addressing how racial and ethnic aspects of identity influence (other) identity development" (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014, p. 235). Even in the midst of these critiques, Cass' (1979) and Cross' (1991) models are still predominantly accepted when addressing sexual identity formation and race identity (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014) with these caveats presented in the application of these models.

Theorists (Brown, 1995; Edwards, 1997; Weinberg, 1986) who have critiqued linear stage models "proposed that linear models were constricting and resulted in only one path of identity, without looking at the possibility of many parts to multiple identities that start at different points" (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014, p. 235). For Cass' (1979) model "work with women participants who were struggling with their sexual orientation found linear models did not fit in the development of lesbians" (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014, p. 235). For Cross' model, Vandiver (2001) suggests the need to further explore this focus on one path because "there are multiple nationalistic identities" (p. 207) that inform identity development.

Differences between the development of males and females have not been taken into account except when the focus is on gender identity development. However, theorists (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001, Edwards & Brooks, 1999) recognize differences occur due to the unique socialization of men and women. Men are provided opportunities to openly explore the identities associated with gender and race whereas women

are able to explore sexuality more openly (Kennedy & Oswalt, 2014). These differences will impact the application of most identity models.

Ferguson, Carr, and Snitman (2014) stated identity development "theories were primarily based on dominant cultural group memberships (e.g., white, male, verbal, heterosexual, English-speaking, middle-class, mental and physically able-bodied, Christian), which integrated the experiences of privilege as a basis of identity" (p. 51). This speaks to the final critique, presented here, regarding the impact of racial and ethnic identities on other identity development. By not taking the impact of racial and ethnic identities into consideration "social barriers and forms of oppression were not conceptualized and thus were not considered as possible hindrances for individuals developing a healthy identity" (Ferguson et al., 2014, p. 51).

"People who have multiple identities – for instance a person who is female, Black, and a lesbian – often encounter more challenges regarding identity development since these identities may be in conflict" (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996, p. 510). These critiques create further support for the significance of this current study as these identity models are pulled together to explore multiple minority identity formation.

**Intersectionality**

Race, gender, and sexual orientation are social and cultural constructs that bring definition and meaning to a person's being. Black, woman, and lesbian are neatly situated amongst these identities that have gained the title of *minority*. Pulling these three identities together—Black, woman, and lesbian—requires their assessment through an intersectional lens.

In the 1970s, 80s and 90s feminist theorists, sociologists, and psychologists began to discuss and develop a new perspective of addressing the oppression experienced by Black women. Hill-Collins (1989) noted "African-American women have been neither passive victims

of nor willing accomplices to their own domination. As a result. . . Black women have a self-defined standpoint on their own oppression" (p. 747).

"Black movements led by Black men were sexist. . . women's movements led by White women were racist" (Gopaldas, 2013, p. 90), both of these movements focused either on Black man's equality with White men or women's equality with White men, but neither focused on the interlocking identities of Black women. Black women are unable to separate race from their gender which ultimately "results in the marginalization of Black women in compounded and real ways because of their unique lived experiences and interlocking systems of oppression that work against them" (Tillapaugh, Mitchell, & Soria, 2017, p. 25). As noted by hooks (1981) "no other group in America has had their identity socialized out of existence as have Black women" (p. 7).

The Combahee River Collective, a group of Black lesbian feminists, was deemed one of "the first groups to promote an intersectionality framework" (Mehrotra, 2010, p. 420). This framework sought a complete analysis that highlighted an understanding of the interlocking systems of oppression as it relates to race, sexuality, class and gender. The Collective argued "we . . . find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 234). The third, and current, wave of feminism elevated the conversation of the gender and race discrimination of Black women further with the introduction of *womanism*. Alice Walker coined the term "womanist" in her book *In Search of our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Hill-Collins, 1996). In this volume, Walker (1983) provides four definitions of womanist. First, *womanist* was defined as "a black feminist or feminist of color," (Hill-Collins, 1996, p. 10) to expound on this definition Walker then "suggests that black women's concrete history fosters a womanist worldview accessible primarily and perhaps exclusively to Black women" (Hill-

Collins, 1996, p. 10). Further, Walker (1983) compares womanism and feminism through the use of shades of the same purple hue: "womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender" suggesting the work of feminists and womanists is similar but with a more specified focus on the Black woman experience. In all, this term of womanism provided the opportunity for Black women to address feminist issues and challenge patriarchy, oppressive rituals and norms (Cannon, 1988, Floyd-Thomas, 2006, Mitchem, 2002, Williams & Wiggins, 2010) and "interject social justice ideals in relation to educational opportunity, economic liberation, and political power" (McClellan, 2012, p. 91) while still remaining focused on Black communities through the Black Liberation Movement. *Womanism* brought together ideologies that at initial review seemed incongruent (Hill-Collins, 1996) and gave voice to the experience of Black women who felt shunned on the basis of race in the Women's Movement and on the basis of gender in the Black Liberation Movement. This study is built on the foundation of womanism.

Crenshaw (1989), who was the first to coin the term *intersectionality*, first discussed this idea in her essay titled "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." The term *intersectionality* was created to describe "the various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's employment experiences" (as quoted Gopaldas, 2013, p. 90). Crenshaw's explanation further states "Black women are discriminated against in ways that often do not fit neatly within the legal categories of either *racism* or *sexism*—but as a combination of both racism and sexism" (Smith, 2014).

Intersectionality has become a key concept discussed within Black feminist theory and has begun to be used in other social science arenas. The term iterates the experience of Black women as it relates to the various levels of oppression they face. The theory of intersectionality

seeks to pinpoint and identify the various intersections Black women face while also introducing the need to address these oppressions in a united front. Addressing only one aspect of an individual's oppressed identity does not move the individual or the practitioner to the underlying need of facing and defeating oppression. Over recent years, there has been an evolution of the term *intersectionality* to move away from solely focusing on the intersections of Black and woman but also on similar intersections for everyone. Alexander-Floyd (2012) quoted Crenshaw as saying her "own use of the term *intersectionality* was just a metaphor" and that she is "amazed at how it gets over- and underused" (pg. 4).

It is clear there are vast interpretations and ways to implement the idea of intersectionality. The intersectional approach has been presented as a form of analysis from the macro and microlevel in three forms. Gopaldas (2013) suggested the macro-level analysis using the "concept of intersectionality refers to the multiplicity and interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender" (p. 91). The microlevel analysis then focuses on the fact that individuals live at the intersection of multiple identities and thus see social advantages as well as disadvantages based on membership in the dominant or subordinate group.

Crenshaw (1991) carried her original conceptualization of intersectionality further by introducing three forms of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality refers to "ways deeply embedded inequalities not only amplify, but also uniquely define, women of color's confrontations with both sexism and racism" (Alexander-Floyd, 2012, p. 8). Political intersectionality speaks to the plight of Black men and White women as seen through antiracist and feminist laws and practices. Representational intersectionality speaks to interpersonal and internalized oppression. When taking

intersectionality into consideration, multiple studies have addressed how the intersections of race and gender impact leadership development, but fall short when incorporating sexual orientation.

## Leadership Development

In the 1980s there was a shift in the study of leadership from transactional to transformational (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001). The transactional model of leadership "offered little advice for dealing with the turmoil of the late 1970s and 1980s, when *constant change* became the norm" (p. 1). Transformational leadership, on the other hand, "encompassed: visionary (Sashkin, 1988), *charismatic* (Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; House, 1977), or transformational models (Bass, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986)" (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001, p. 1). This was followed by a distinction between the terms of leadership and management (Bass, 1985). Still, "many approaches to leadership development are not innovative and are based around four areas" (Boaden, 2006, p. 8)—skill-building, concepts, building teamwork, and feedback. Doh's (2003) approach through a model of competency focuses on strategic and global issues "within the context of sensitivity to diversity, interpersonal skills and communities, and anticipating the future (p. 57). According to Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, and McKee (2013) "leadership involves complex interaction between people and their social and organizational environments" (p. 65) and development "emphasizes the enactment of leadership built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect" (p. 68), therefore it is imperative to understand social interactions that occur "within the leadership process" (Day et al., 2013, p. 68.)

**Leader versus leadership development**. To fully understand leadership development, it is necessary to differentiate leader development and leadership development. Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) defined leader development "as the acquisition or development of within-

individual attributes such as knowledge, knowledge structures, skills, abilities, and competencies" (p. 159). Focus of leader development is on individual leaders (Day et al., 2009). In contrast, leadership development "focuses on a process of development that inherently involves multiple individuals" (Day et al., 2013, p. 64) and "is thought to occur mainly as a function of between-individual processes" (Day et al., 2009, p. 159). Leader development is connected to human capital whereas leadership development focuses on social capital. O'Toole (2001) separated leader and leadership development with two distinct questions:

1. "What qualities do we need to develop in our leaders" (leader development) and
2. "What qualities do we need to develop in our organization" (leadership development) (p. 163)?

A growing body of leader and leadership development has highlighted "an increasingly critical and strategic imperative for organizations and argues organizations that wish to survive and succeed in today's . . . business environment need to develop leadership at all levels" (Dalakoura, 2009, p. 433).

Day et al. (2009) contrasted leader and leadership development across the spectrums of competence base, leadership model, skills, and beliefs and attributes. Leader development is focused on intrapersonal and individual self-awareness with a commitment to diversity, openness to others, and loyalty (Day et al., 2009). Leadership development is interpersonal with focus on relational social awareness with an inclusive attitude that underscores a common purpose, collaboration, conflict management, and group commitment (Day et al., 2009). "In addition to building individual leaders by training a set of skills or abilities and assuming that leadership will result, a complementary perspective approaches leadership as a social process" (Day, 2001, p.586), with the expectation of creating a leader in each person within the organization.

**Diversity and leadership.** Leadership development theories and models have disregarded diversity and diversity issues (Chin, 2010). Although various fields of study have focused on incorporating issues of gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, and class in methodology and practice, the field of leadership has left these topics on the wayside. Textbooks approach issues of gender and culture by dedicating a single section or chapter on these topics, but the vast majority of the texts focus on leadership styles and practices. "This approach treats women and minorities as special populations and culture as what others have, which suggests an ethnocentric view of leadership" (Chin, 2010, p. 150). Further, "paradigms of leadership that inform management policies, practices, and decisions have generally reflected structures and cultures of North American organizations run by white, heterosexual men" (Chin, 2010, p. 150). Studies of leadership tend towards this North American view of what it means to be a leader and create a white ethnocentric vantage point as litmus for all other styles of leadership (Bjerke, 2000, Gupta, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorman, & Kao, Sinha, & Wilpert, 1999).

Women in leadership positions face gender bias along with other challenges placed before them. However, models developed to specifically incorporate gender and leadership (Bem, 1974; Eagly, 1987; Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1985; Ridgeway, 1992) have not been adopted into major theories of leadership (Chin, 2010). Members of nonwhite racial and ethnic groups have been gaining access to leadership roles in the last couple of decades . . . however, "they remain underrepresented relative to their numbers in the population" (Chin, 2010, p. 151). Identifying LGBT individuals in leadership is difficult as many LGBT individuals maintain an invisible sexual orientation for myriad reasons. It was however reported more LGBT individuals were open about their sexual orientation and willingness to be visible in 2010. Unfortunately,

the only organization collecting information specific to LGBT visible leaders, The Gay and Lesbian Leadership Institute is now obsolete. Ultimately, "leadership theories need to be inclusive and incorporate explanations of how dimensions of diversity shape our understanding of leadership" (Chin, 2010, p. 151).

***Women and leadership development***. Focus on the unique leadership development needs of women has surged over the past decade across multiple disciplines (Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli, & Bilimoria, 2008). Typically, these studies center around the challenges women must overcome in the face of sexism and gendered expectations (Hopkins et al., 2008; Debebe, Anderson, Bilimoria, & Vinnicombe, 2016; Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Sugiyama, Cavanaugh, van Esch, Bilimoria, & Brown, 2016). Others turn to identifying specific leadership styles in which inherent characteristics attributed to women align with the tenets of a specific style (e.g. authentic and transformational leadership) (Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015; Marshall, 2007; Eagly. 2007; Hopi & Matilal, 2007). "Women's leadership styles tend to approximate good managerial practices more than men's styles; however, women face more prejudice, so it is more difficult for them to be effective in leadership roles" (Fassinger, Shullman, & Stevenson, 2010, p. 208).

"The aim of women-only training for management and leadership positions primarily addresses the social-psychological issues facing women managers at work" (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002, p. 300). Debebe et al. (2016) outlined five themes in the literature focused on women's leadership development programs—sex composition of leadership programs, intersectionality in women's leadership programs, theory and design of women's leadership programs, evaluation of women's leadership programs, and embedding women's leadership programs in organizations. In addition Hopkins et al. (2008) presented assessment, training and education as key components of leadership development for women.

Woman only training has evolved from focus on "identifying and remedying perceived deficiencies in women such as a lack of ambition and assertiveness" (Vinnicome & Singh, 2002) to building upon the differences between men and women in leadership roles. An intersectional approach to women's leadership focuses on three ideas. First, women's experiences of leadership are influenced by multiple minority identities (e.g. gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, nationality) (Debebe et al., 2016; Hopfl & Matilal, 2007; McClellan, 2012; Clarke, 2011). Second, the importance of social identities is influenced by organizational culture (Debebe et al., 2016; Eagly, 2007; Clarke, 2011). Third, women leaders typically hold both subordinate and dominant positions with social identities (Debebe et al. 2016) which lends to experiences of feeling uplifted and hindered simultaneously. Therefore, the third theme identified for women's leadership development, is the need for theory and the design these programs follow to inform development in the midst of this contradiction. Effective women's leadership programs will focus on development while also acknowledging women's differences in learning and leading (Debebe, 2016; Clarke, 2011; McClellan, 2012; Eagly, 2007). "Contradictory role expectations for women based in societal and organizational norms, place women leaders in a double-bind situation wherein any course of action can result in negative evaluations" (Debebe et al., 2016, p. 240). Therefore, women's leadership development programs must remain aware of all of the social identities women bring to leadership (Clarke, 2011; Sugiyama et al., 2016; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003). Not only should these programs set out to develop women leaders but they should also be embedded within organizations to shift organizational culture away from male-dominance and expectations (Hopfl & Matilal, 2007; Clarke, 2011).

A thorough review of the leadership competencies a woman holds is important to her success in leadership roles. This assessment occurs through the use of specific research-based assessment tools as well as through 360-degree feedback (Hopkins et al., 2008; Sugiyama et al., 2016; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003; Pfaff, Boatwright, Potthoff, Finan, Ulrey, & Huber, 2013). However, in the process of obtaining feedback through assessments, it is necessary to consider the climate of the organization as it relates to gender expectations and the gendered biases found in assessment tools. "The anomaly of a woman executive in a male-dominated organization may itself affect ratings" (Hopkins et al., 2008, p. 352). Training and education programs have shown to improve leader-related outcomes by 7-18% (Hopkins et al., 2008, Collins & Holton, 2004). One study, (Debebe, 2011) focuses on leadership development for women occurring through a gained awareness of patterns of thinking and acting, obtaining resources that affirm gendered experiences, and breaking through to new insights on future practice.

No one leadership development program for women has emerged from the literature, however effective women's leadership development hinges upon the incorporation of an intersectional approach couched in a response to various levels of assessment, training, mentoring, and organizational change.

***Black women and leadership development***. Literature focused on the leadership development of Black women is woefully limited. As focus has increased on women in leadership, Black women have been lumped into the conversation through the introduction of intersectional theory and analysis with the mention of race and gender. Here again, the literature about the leadership development of Black women accentuates the barriers women face rather than the process of development for Black women leaders (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010;

Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Two key processes of leadership development for Black women that arise are mentoring and ways to overcome the barriers of gender and race.

An extensive search of leadership development programs specific to Black women returned literature highlighting the significance and importance of mentoring for Black women leaders (King & Ferguson, 2001; Patton, 2012; O'Brien, Franco, & Dunn, 2014; Barnes, 2017). "The essence of mentoring is the development of individuals on both professional and personal levels" (Patton, 2012). Mentoring enhances career development particularly when individuals are mentored by others who share similar cultural experiences and characteristics. The concept of collective endorsement highlights the significance of mentoring. Collective endorsement occurs when relationships are built with those who have the ability to designate an individual as a leader (Debebe et al., 2016). This relationship is strengthened through mentorship. "The successful establishment of a leadership relationship produces positive spirals of influence" (Debebe et al., 2016, p.240) which supports leadership development. Although "Black women perceived mentors as important for achieving success and managing career issues . . . it was difficult for Black women to find mentors (O'Brien et al., 2014, p. 250).

Theorists present myriad ways for Black women leaders to overcome barriers of racism, sexism, classism, and the like (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008; O'Brien et al., 2014; Barnes, 2017) to move and remain in leadership roles. These responses include sage advice akin to being true to oneself (Barnes, 2017), facing oppression head on (hooks, 1990), self-care (Barnes, 2017), taking on more masculine traits (Hopfl & Matilal, 2007), and the cultivation of relationships with both male and female mentors (Hopkins et al., 2008; Clarke, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2014). A qualitative study of Black women identified "active resistance as a coping strategy against oppression" (O'Brien et al., 2014, p. 250). Other studies (Bell,

Meyerson, Nkomo, & Scully, 2003; Bowleg, Brooks, & Ritz, 2008) found women also leaned on the principle of collectivism as a strategy to elevate other women leaders.

For Black women, leadership development in the literature focuses on building relationships in the face of adversity and maintaining confidence that these relationships will ultimately result in elevation to leadership ranks. The limited studies specific to the development of Black women leaders suggests current leadership development programs created by and measured against the white male or female experience are suitable for Black women.

***Lesbians and leadership development.*** LGBT "leadership represents a distinctive leadership experience worthy of empirical attention (Fassinger, Shullman, & Stevenson, 2010, p. 201). Unfortunately, the term nascent continues to be used in reference to LGBT leadership literature. Current leadership development research is centered on the experience of emerging student leaders. There is limited research focused on individuals who have obtained a degree and are now working in their identified field.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Renn and Bilodeau (2005) focused on LGBT leadership as it intersects with their LGBT identity and proposed the different forms leadership takes for LGBT college students. Their study found "the more LGBT students lead LGBT organizations, the more out they had to be, and the more out they were, the more reasons they found to be in leadership positions" (Fassinger et al., 2010, p. 207). Their study did not speak to those leaders who identify as LGBT and lead organizations not focused on LGBT causes. Komives, Dugan and Segar (2006) and Martinez, Ostick, Komives, and Dugan (2006) studied the influence of higher education on college student leadership with approximately 50, 000 college students. 1,600 of these students self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (LGB). A key outcome of this study was the statistically significant differences found between LGB students and straight

students in regards to socially responsible leadership (Fassinger et al., 2010). LGB students scored higher in the areas of civilly managing controversy, recognizing community interconnectedness, and holding the belief that changes were possible and could be achieved through people working together (Komives et al., 2006). Martinez et al. (2006) found LGB students were less like to share responsibility with others and commit to group goals and attributed this to "identity development trajectories, organizational homophobia, and students' positions as outsiders with their groups" (Fassinger, 2010, p. 207).

Coon (2001) completed a dissertation study focused on openly gay men and lesbians in prominent positions ($N = 80$). This study found most of the participants viewed their sexual orientation identity from a positive lens as it supported their professional lives. Participants also described effective leadership practices they felt were directly connected to the sexual minority identity (Coon, 2001). Practices of challenging the status quo of organization's culture, building collaborative and inclusive relationships, empower other marginalized people, promoting a shared vision, and presenting with honesty and integrity (Coon, 2001). Fassinger et al. (2010) acknowledged that "some LGBT leadership is unintentional and emerges out of local activism" (p. 201) however "what is not known is whether and how a leader's lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity might influence the enactment of a leadership role" (p. 202). This seems to be the limit of studies on LGBT individual's leadership development and practices. Further, literature discussing LGBT leadership tends to highlight the negative experiences of LGBT individuals that results from discrimination related to sexual orientation (Button, 2001; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Gedro, 2010; Herek, 2009 Lehavot & Lambert, 2007 Ragins, 2008; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). Those studies focused solely on the leadership development of

lesbians (Gedro, 2010; Collins, 2012; Fassinger et al.; 2010; Renn & Bilodeau, 2004, 2005) are limited and hone in on the experiences of discrimination as well.

**Leadership identity theory**. Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005) developed a leadership identity model focused "on development as much as leadership to shed light on how the (leadership development) process occurs" (Day, et al., 2014, p. 64). Leadership development, like adult development, follows stages. Individuals develop skills and abilities based on learning from one stage to the next. From the leader development perspective, this means development of skills that support the mission and vision of an organization, building self-confidence, a self-image, and an emotional awareness (Komives, 2000). The leadership development perspective focuses on networking, building relationships, enhancing social awareness and empathy, and developing a team orientation.

The work of Komives et al. (2009) aligned with this research project's focus on development across stages. The leadership identity development model focuses on "purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process-oriented" (Komives et al., 2013, p. 13) leadership. This model of leadership development is comprised of six stages in which individuals "engage individual factors with group factors" (Komives et al., 2013, p. 15). This engagement moves individuals from a dependent view of self with others to one of independence within a leader role. The stages, as presented by Komives et al. (2013), follow.

1. Awareness (Stage 1): becoming aware that there are leaders . . . who are external to self like the President of the United Sates;
2. Exploration/engagement (Stage 2): a period of immersion in group experiences usually to make friends and a time of learning to engage with others;

3. Leader identified (Stage 3): viewing leadership as the actions of the positional leader of a group and an awareness of the hierarchical nature of relationships in groups;
4. Leadership differentiated (Stage 4): viewing leadership also as nonpositional and as a shared group process;
5. Generativity (Stage 5): a commitment to developing leadership in others and having a passion for issues of group objectives that the person wants to influence and,
6. Integration/synthesis (Stage 6): acknowledging the personal capacity for leadership in diverse contexts and claiming the identity as a leader without having to hold a positional role (Komives, 2005).

**360-degree feedback in leadership development**. In 1990, Posner and Kouzes set out to "develop a conceptual framework for understanding leadership" (p. 206). Although they found "a plethora of research studies on leadership over the past three decades" (p. 205), "the field lacks consensus around such issues as what leadership is, how it differs from management, and whether it can be measured or taught" (p. 206). The LPI was created to answer these questions in two stages. First, Posner and Kouzes (1990) obtained a qualitative perspective of leadership via a 37-question survey and 38 in-depth interviews. From this analysis, the researchers identified five leadership practices: "challenging the process, inspiring the vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart" (Posner & Kouzes, 1990, p. 207). The second stage of the creation of the LPI involved "repeated feedback from respondents and factor analyses of various sets of behaviorally based statements" (Posner & Kouzes, 1990, p. 207) that were measured via a Likert scale. These procedures culminated in a 30 statement

instrument which measures the five leadership practices both from a self-assessment and an other assessment. The tool provides the opportunity for leadership to receive 360-degree feedback through a "more complete and accurate picture of an individual's performance" (Day, 2001, p. 587). This type of feedback has been identified by theorists (Atwater & Waldman, 1998; Day et al., 2009; Hooijberg & Choi, 2000; Seifert & Yukl, 2010) as a key influencer of leader and leadership development. "360-degree feedback can help people understand systematically the impact of their behavior on others" (Day et al., 2013, p. 70). It also "gathers and reports on ratings of leader behavior and/or effectiveness from multiple sources such as subordinates, peers, bosses, and possibly even external stakeholders" (Day et al., 2013, p. 70). In addition, "self-awareness and identity also can be developed through feedback (which) can help provide individuals with an understanding of how others see their leader abilities" (Day et al., 2009, p. 67). This is significant because being a leader and leadership do not occur in silos, but in connection with others.

Although the LPI does not solely focus on the leadership development of Black Lesbian women, it does provide a foundation for understanding leadership practices while also acting as a catalyst for the analysis of leadership practices development. Posner and Kouzes (1990) concluded their discussion of the LPI with "preliminary research utilizing a pre- and posttest administration of the LPI suggests that leadership skills can be taught and/or enhanced" (p. 214). In 2002, Posner and Kouzes conducted case studies and psychometric processes to validate the LPI tool to ensure it continued to capture and express the five practices of effective leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). This tool has been utilized and accepted for the past three decades to identify key characteristics of leaders.

**Leadership development and life narrative**. Theorists (Ligon, Hunter, & Mumford, 2008; Shamir & Eilam 2005) have conducted studies to understand the development of leadership through the use of life narratives or stories. Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggested "we should view leaders' life-stories as stories that constructed self-knowledge, self-clarification, self-presentation, and self-expression" (p. 413)—all characteristics identified as those of authentic leaders. The life-stories of leaders "should be approached as depositories of meaning and analyzed to discover those meanings" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 413). The sources of life-stories and life narratives are biographies, autobiographies, interviews, observations, and public appearances. Ligon et al. (2008) suggested "life narratives . . . serve two other key functions" (p. 314). First, the events of life narratives provide "life lessons in episodic form used to define goals, causes, actions, and context" "(p. 314). Secondly, Ligon et al. (2008) suggested "life narratives provide a vehicle for people to communicate personal understanding of their lives in reference to the current situation" (p. 314). Across disciplines, it is understood that life narratives inform mental models and therefore "represent a key underlying mechanism by which life experiences are related to . . .development" (p. 314). As a result of their study, Ligon et al. (2008) concluded "outstanding leaders rely on past experiences in sense making activities," (p. 329), "life riddled with instability and uncertainty may give rise to the opposite orientation toward others" (p. 329), and "experiencing events that emphasize positive views of others as well as empathetic understanding of their strife is strongly related to outstanding performance" (p. 330) as a leader. Ligon et al. (2008) and Shamir and Eilam's (2005) studies are relevant to this research project as they highlight how life-stories and life-narratives can inform the how of leadership development.

**Subject of the Case Study**

*My eyes were first opened to a world beyond the Conservative Christian confines of small town Texas known for having both the most churches and the highest teen pregnancy rate in the state when I left the Southside of Abilene to attend college. Entering college afforded me the opportunity to explore a new way of thinking, interacting, and understanding my peers and myself.*

*In deciding on a major in Social Work and ultimately a career in Child Welfare, I had not yet realized my full identity – a Black female struggling with her sexual orientation. My purpose for studying both psychology and social work was to move towards being a catalyst for change for those who were disadvantaged or living on the margins disadvantage. I set out, like many new Social Work students, to save the world. I was determined to put my beliefs, experiences, and knowledge into practice. It had not dawned on me that I faced the same or similar challenges as those I hoped to save and my identities indeed were my disadvantages. As I earned a Bachelor of Behavioral Sciences in Psychology and a Bachelor of Social Work and continued my matriculation towards a Master of Social Work degree, my eyes began to open about my own identities, and my own intersections.*

*I began to see color lines and understand my own history when I immersed myself, at a young age, in the history of a small town 34 miles outside of "Bombingham, AL." My mother was born in Alabama in 1951, right in the midst of the Jim Crow South. Throughout my childhood, Black History Month did not include conversations about her being among the first to desegregate her high school in Walker County, AL. There was no discussion about her experience of using a "colored only" water fountain, but this was her story – her truth. I lived a sheltered life. I did not experience overt racism until well into my twenties. The experience of being called a nigger bitch changed my perspective. Those words threw me into a time previously only painted in my mind through texts and visits to the Birmingham Civil Rights Museum. I had the privilege of reaching out to my mother and discussing my feelings and emotions about this experience. I had the ability to lean on a strong support system to face that moment and the others that followed, because of my support system, I was able to use the experience to motivate me to move beyond the first barrier – race.*

*Being raised by a single Black woman who spent most of my childhood either in the pulpit or in an Air Force Training Instructor's uniform gave me a unique perspective of what it meant to be a Black woman. My mother was one of seven children – six girls and one boy. Mommy and three of her sisters raised children on their own and proved to be the backbone of their families. My understanding of my family's history and meaning was based on knowing our matriarch. My entire childhood and upbringing, I was surrounded by women taking on the traditional male roles of the family, being the breadwinners, making the decisions for the family, and ensuring all of the children's basic needs were met. On the outside looking in, there was a clear blur of the gender lines but for me and my existence, this was just the natural way of things, something I had known my entire life. Within my upbringing and experience, within my mindset, there was absolutely nothing women could not do. Until the time when I overheard a conversation regarding my mother being a minister and that she was not allowed in the pulpit because she was a woman, and this became my first awareness of the second barrier – gender.*

*As I worked towards realizing my new dream of becoming a Social Worker, I struggled with knowing and understanding my identity. I had been involved in deep and meaningful relationships with males from college onward. However, no matter how deep these relationships, or how close I felt to these males, I knew the feelings I had for females starting at the age of eight were more than just passing. I struggled my way through all of Cass' Stages of Coming Out until I reached the place of identity pride. In the midst of this struggle, I again found strength in my support system and found the courage to come out as a lesbian. This brought turmoil, disdain, pain, and ultimately the breakdown of the most important relationship in my life – the one with my mother. So,* as *I began looking for another place to belong and connect, I turned to Greek-lettered organizations. One in particular stood out for me. I expressed interest in being a member of this organization and was told "we are not interested in lesbians joining our sorority . . . we are built on Christian principles, and that is not of God." While I fully understand and understood this is not the stance of all members of this specific organization, this became my first awareness of the third barrier – sexual orientation.*

**Gaps in Literature**

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*Following the first meeting with my dissertation chair I immediately walked over to the school's computer lab and began my research. I had an idea of what I wanted to focus on with my research, because I wanted to find support in creating a leadership development initiative specifically for Queer Women of Color. I logged into the computer, pulled up the school's library and typed into the search bar "Black lesbian leadership development." Nothing. Literally nothing came back in the search results. All I received was the message, "No results match your search for* black lesbian leadership development *glaring at me in red. I leaned back in the chair, took a deep breath, and thought "At least I know there's a gap in the literature."*

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Current studies focus on the multiple dimensions of identity and leadership development in silos. Research on the leadership development of women, the leadership development of individuals who identify across the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) spectrum, and the leadership development of Black people also exists. However, there are limited studies on how a leader's self-perception of leadership and the perception of others are developed and impacted at the intersections of three specific identities: Black, lesbian, and woman. This study sets out to examine the intersection of multiple identity formation and the leadership development of a Black lesbian Leader. The theories discussed above will be applied to personal narrative as a foundation for the analysis of these multiple identities at the intersections. The findings and ultimate recommendations of this study will be applied to the development of a leadership program specifically for Black Lesbian Leaders, but the ultimate goal is to continue the critical work of breaking the silence about the experiences of Black Lesbian Leaders seeking to climb in leadership ranks.

As the concept of intersectionality continues to be explored and recognized across disciplines, and as the impact of the racial and gendered identities of Black women on leadership

development come to the forefront, research is necessary to include the voice of Black women who also identify as sexual minorities. This study will fill the gap in current research by giving voice to the personal perceptions of leadership and the perceptions of others on the leadership of Black lesbians. The following chapter will provide a more in-depth definition and analysis of autoethnography as a qualitative research method.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Making Choices

Although the research question is the guiding principle of any project, the way in which the question is explored is tantamount. The choice of methodology is the place in which the researcher is able to approach a subject from a captivating space. Delving into a project focused on understanding and describing how identity at the intersections of being Black, of being a woman, and of being a lesbian inform leadership style means examining multiple perspectives from the position of self. It means examining the self through the lenses of culture, theory, and development. This project examines these lenses employing use of personal narrative and an emerging qualitative research method: autoethnography. The purpose of this chapter is to address the question why qualitative inquiry/research, outline the epistemological approach of this project, define autoethnography as a research method, identify key sources of information, and finally, identify how autoethnography has come to be recognized as an accepted method of qualitative research.

## Qualitative Inquiry and Research

Merriam and Tisdell (2006) suggested that even before understanding qualitative research, a clear understanding of research is necessary. Although there is a multitude of definitions for the term *research* an accepted definition "is the notion of inquiring into, or investigation of something in a systematic manner" (p. 3). Research can focus on the expansion of understanding and knowledge; it can also be used to improve practice. It ultimately sets out to evaluate, investigate, or address a specific problem or phenomenon. Two specific styles of research—quantitative and qualitative—are discussed throughout matriculation in any field of research. Quantitative research focuses on identifying constructs, cause and effect, and

understanding based in numbers. It focuses on controlling environment, variables, and expressing outcomes through statistical data. "Qualitative research focuses on human intentions, motivations, emotions, and actions" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 21). Clissett (2008) suggests qualitative research contains a range of approaches in the exploration of "human experience, perceptions, motivations, and behaviors" (p. 100).

Unlike the hard sciences of chemistry, physics, and biology, qualitative research offers nuanced, complex, and specific knowledge about particular lives, experience, and relationships rather than general information about large groups of people. Qualitative research delves into the "experience, thought, perception, (and) affect" (Fischer, 2006, p. xvi) of intention, motivation, and action. It identifies life events as entities to be explored rather than measured. Qualitative approaches provide a means of examining phenomena that are not always aligned with the function and structure of experimental methods (Fischer, 2006). This project falls solidly within these parameters. Qualitative researchers act as quilt makers, brick layers, and performers who "study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5). These researchers approach research from "interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary" (Nelson, 1992, p. 4) perspectives. They are performers with a breadth of knowledge in various fields and understand "that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, "that science is power," and that all researchers "tell stories about the worlds they have studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 9).

McLeod (2001) suggests qualitative research seeks to "describe, analyze, and interpret the constructive aspects of the social world" (p. 133). In qualitative research, "the researcher-

practitioner consciously embeds himself or herself amidst theory and practice" (McIlveen, 2008, p. 13). Theories are principles that have been studied and postulate a new basis for reasoning and knowledge. They are often based in quantitative study that sets out to define relationships between two entities. In qualitative research, the concept of theory is connected to the researcher's methodology "and the epistemologies underlying it" (Tavallaei, & Abu Tallib, 2010, p. 571). According to Merriam (1997) and Schwandt (2007), theory and qualitative research do not typically maintain a solid relationship. "The qualitative researcher intends to create an appropriate theory which suits his topic by using the inductive method" (Tavallaei & Abu Tallib, 2010, p. 572). "The ultimate purpose of the qualitative research method is earning a deeper understanding about a phenomenon or event in real-life, therefore the basic structure of this research method cannot be based on theory" (Tavallaei & Abu Tallib, 2010, p. 576) as it is understood in quantitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggested the way in which the researcher approaches a project, or the theory she uses, is guided by her "epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises" (p. 31). This qualitative definition of theory guides the process and practice of qualitative research. It further guides the creation of a paradigm or approach to action.

## Epistemology

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*Growing up in the church meant my reality was based in Christian values and beliefs. My knowledge came from being in the church whenever the church doors were opened. The parts of my childhood I do remember were spent in the church having good, clean fun. This wasn't a weird experience for me, as I was a child. Children's knowledge about most things comes from their world – parents, siblings, classmates. My world from the age of 2 until the age of 23 was my mother, who was a minister, and an Airman in the United States Air Force. My actions were shaped by biblical and military teachings. There was little room for creativity or interpretation.*

*Truth, in my family, was whatever mom and the Bible said. What was the Word was the Word, and who was I to question that? Not I, until the day, I began to question everything.*

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Ontology asks "what is reality?" (Guba, 1990). It provides a baseline regarding assumptions about what is real and how constructs are identified in research (Saunders, 2015). Epistemology asks *how is knowledge known*" (Guba, 1990) and is based in assumptions that arose from cultural and social identities. It also speaks to how claims to new knowledge are justified. Within the quantitative field, these claims to new knowledge are based on statistical data. Qualitative research however, accepts new knowledge that arises from learned and lived experiences is credible when specific criteria are met. "It is [our] own epistemological assumptions that will govern what [we] consider legitimate for [our research]" (Saunders, 2015, p. 127). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) provide a more direct definition of epistemology through the question "how do I know the world" (p. 245). The world is known through observation, interaction, learning, and experiencing. Together, ontology and epistemology create a research philosophy, which "refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (Saunders, 2015, p. 124) and knowledge claims. Conducting research in any field is about developing knowledge. Conducting qualitative research through the use of an autoethnographic case study yields the opportunity to identify multiple vantage points when it comes to the project's epistemological foundation.

Many projects (Ellis, 1998; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2000; Stapleton & Wilson, 2004) that utilize the method of autoethnography "deal with identity questions, precisely because this method gives the researcher the avenue to question how their own identity comes into play in the research process" (Dumitrica, 2010, p. 23). Identity is a construct that cannot be studied from outside in. Identity formation is an individualistic experience that shapes thoughts and

perceptions which impacts affect and leads to action. It is nonlinear and cannot be understood through the use of weights and measures. Seeking to understand the multiple social identities of Black Lesbian Leaders, means conducting research "to create a picture which covers the whole image in it" (Tavallaei & Abu Tallib, 2010, p. 571). It means understanding the environment to support others to better understand what is going on in day to day life (Jeffries, 2005). The evolving nature of research on identity development recognizes identity as a social construct that includes the identities of race, gender, social class, and sexual identity, all of which have been explored here (Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012). Because this project is focused on the impact of multiple identity formation for a Black Lesbian Leader, several epistemological perspectives arise. Her lived experiences shape the way she observes, understands, and evaluates interactions with others. Just as with intersectionality, there are multiple perspectives from which to observe this project. One specific epistemological perspective will not suffice. Therefore, this project's epistemological approach is postmodern critical social constructionist interpretivism.

1. *Postmodern*: the purpose is to "deconstruct, problematize, question, and interrupt" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 12). "The postmodern era has made it possible for critical theories to emerge and take hold in academic inquiry and to open up the possible range of research strategies" (Wall, 2006, p. 2).
2. *Critical social science*: reality and knowledge are both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society, and "one reality is privileged" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 12).
3. *Social constructionism*: "reality is constructed through social interaction" (Saunders, 2009, p. 130).

4. *Interpretivism*: reality needs to be interpreted through discovering the underlying meaning of events and activities (Crotty, 1998).

The storytelling of this project comes from a place focused on breaking down the status quo and questioning the impact (either positive or negative) of multiple identity formation on the social interaction of a Black Lesbian Leader through the interpretation of life events. This epistemological perspective aligns with others engaged in this research method historically. "The method is firmly rooted in a constructivist epistemology, retaining a strong commitment to critical social science" (Dumitrica, 2010, p.19). Work in this area draws from feminist epistemologies (Collins, 1990), postcolonial theories (Huddart, 2008), and in the context of symbolic interaction (Ellis, 2004).

## So, What is the Research Method?

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*Searching for a voice in a world that felt secluded and distant, I turned to journaling in my sophomore year of high school. Each day, I would find time to write out my hormonal teenage angst. Writing in the pages of each journal became a therapeutic release as I fought to fit in, to stand out, to find my own identity. Stacks of journals, some filled, some opened and forgotten, filled a large cardboard box in the recesses of my closet. Those thoughts were my own – private, rude, contradictory to my Southern upbringing – but mine. Their purpose was to help me release all of the thoughts and emotions I was taught to hold inside. They were about culture, identity, hopes, dreams, and overwhelmingly, disappointments. My journals played out the dialogues I would never have with the star of the football team or softball team. They held the words I knew I could not say to my mother or brother, or anyone. When I would sit and reread what I had written, I got lost in a completely different dimension. But, in that dimension, I learned something about who I truly was, and who I wanted to be. My journals became a unique study of me.*

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**Auto + Ethno + Graphy**

"Qualitative research falls roughly along a continuum ranging from an orientation akin to positivist science to one similar to art and literature" (Ellis, 2004, p. 27). Autoethnography lies between these two opposites. The practice of autoethnography provides specific knowledge about lives, experiences, and relationships rather than the general information seen in ethnographic studies. This method grew out of the fear of colonialism and a need to realize differences among individuals in similar cultures by acknowledging the politics of identity (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015). Culture, because of its depth and breadth, cannot be understood empirically. Autoethnography "privileges evocative stories that illustrate the human experience and the meaning individuals make of them" (Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012, p. 703). It seeks to uncover emotions that "are important to understanding and theorizing the relationship among self, power and culture (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 767).

Autoethnography's history as an academic method of research spans back to the 1990s with the work of Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner (Dumitrica, 2010), however Ellis (2004) writes "anthropologist Karl Heider used *autoethnography* in1975 to refer to the Dani's own account of what people do" (p. 38). Dating back further to 1934 Reed-Danahay (2010) identifies "Reichard, a student of Elsie Clews Parson and Franz Boas" (p. 423) as the first to write an autoethnography: *Spider woman*. Autoethnography is a qualitative approach combining narrative research and ethnography that "overlaps science and art" (Ellis, 2004, p. 31). Other's definitions of autoethnography include:

- Reed-Danahay (1997): "Autoethnography is a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context" (p. 6)

- Chang (2008): Combining "cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details" (p. 46) through "systematically collecting data, 'field texts,'. . . "analyzing and interpreting them, and producing scholarly reports" (p. 48).
- McIlveen (2008): provides a definition of *autoethnography* as a "reflexive means by which the researcher-practitioner consciously embeds himself or herself amidst theory and practice" (p. 13).
- Denzin (2014): "Autoethnographies and biographies are conventionalized, narrative expressions of life experiences" (p. 7)
- Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015): "Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytical demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience.

Each definition lands on the three key components of an autoethnographic study:

1. Auto = self
2. Ethno = culture
3. Graphy = writing

"Autoethnography opens up a space of resistance between the individual (*auto-)* and the collective *(ethno)* where the writing *(graphy)* of singularity cannot be foreclosed" (Denshire, 2013, p. 3).

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*I am a Social Worker*[1]*. My life, for the past seventeen years, has been dedicated to educating and fully immersing myself into all things social work from a child welfare perspective. There is no other profession I would ever choose. My work as a Social Worker is my avocation. I never want to be away from it, no matter what degree I obtain or what my professional title may be.*

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[1] The use of Social Worker as a proper pronoun is purposeful.

**Auto.** Chang (2008) gives careful attention to the definition of self in Autoethnography as Method. "From the individual's point of view, self is the starting point for cultural acquisition and transmission" (p. 23). Throughout time, the meaning of *self* has shifted from the negative connotation equated with selfishness, towards understanding self as having the "ability to reason – in our beliefs, opinions, and conscious intentions" (Chang, 2008, p. 24). *Self* is also a concept that holds separate meanings across cultures. In some cultures across the United States, *self* tends to be a singular being focused on their own wants and desires. Other cultures see *self* in the collective of community and connection to others. For autoethnography to be successful, "cultural self-analysis rests on understanding the self as part of a cultural community" (Chang, 2008, p. 26).

In the fields of organization development (OD) and social work, the use of self as a tool is foundational to consultant and social work practice. Key proponents of the use of self in OD "see the use of self as (a) prime asset in achieving the helping relationship" (Cheung-Judge, 2012, p. 44). Use of self means "devoting time and energy to learning about who we are, and how issues of family, history, gender, race, and sexuality affect self-perception" (Cheung-Judge, 2012, p. 44). "Social Work has a long and significant history in the use of the self" (Barnard, 2012, p. 101). To achieve social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being, the "social worker does not need to be a strongly bonded individual with a sense of self apart from others but. . . someone who values and connects with others" (Barnard, 2012, p. 103).

This project pulls together personal stories and experiences within the context of identity formation across three discrete models: Cass' (1979) homosexual identity model, Jones and McEwen's (2000) MMDI, Cross' (1991) nigrescence model, and Posner and Kouzes' (1988)

leadership practices inventory – with the purpose of better understanding how the formation of these identities' inform leadership practices. The idea of self, continues to be discussed throughout the field in the context of understanding the collective self and the individual self. Autoethnography pulls these two selves together through the study of culture.

**Ethno.** Culture is what shapes individuals to be who they are and to see the world from a specific lens. Individual culture "refers to individual versions of group cultures that are formed, shared, retained, altered, and sometimes shed through human interactions" (Chang, 2008, p. 17). Culture is the realization that "different kinds of people possess different assumptions about the world. . .(which) stem from race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, class, education, or religion" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 2).

**Graphy**. "Stemming from the field of anthropology, autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation" (Chang, 2008, p. 43). It takes the concepts of autobiography and ethnography and melds them into a unique approach of study. Autoethnographers use narrative and storytelling to acknowledge the meaning of identity, relationship, and experiences while creating "relationships between past and present" (Chang, 2008, p. 43). By taking into consideration the epistemic and aesthetic features of autoethnographic texts, autoethnography becomes art.

Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) state a significant factor in the success of an autoethnographic project is for the researcher to know why she has chosen this approach. It is clearly impossible to identify all the reasons any autoethnographer sets out on the path of autoethnography, however, the authors suggest there are four fundamental reasons:

1. To critique, make contributions to, or extend existing research and theory;

2. To embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and improve social life;
3. To disrupt taboos, break silences, and reclaim lost and disregarded voices; and
4. To make research accessible to multiple audiences. (p. 36).

A key feature of the autoethnographic method is its "break away from long-held beliefs about the legitimacy of what" (Wall, 2006, p. 6) is known by the researcher-practitioner. Typically, this method is presented in first person voice as "short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, scripts, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose" (Ellis, 2004, p. 38); hence the shift between storytelling and critical analysis throughout this project. Even, as the researcher-practitioner, the use of the word "I" or the first person is still difficult. "For many, especially women being educated as researchers, voice is an acknowledgment that they have something to say" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 423). That *voice* is still seeking recognition.

Anderson (2006) draws distinction between two types of autoethnography: evocative and analytic. Evocative autoethnography is a descriptive, free form style focused on using emotions to connect with the audience. In this style, projects center on topics such as death, victimization, and illnesses. Scholars well known for this style of autoethnography, excel in "considerable narrative and expressive skills" while rejecting traditional ethnographic epistemological approaches. On the other hand, analytic autoethnography is described as connecting self-experience to existing research and theory moving from the emotional response to a critical analysis (Cook, 2014).

This project is rooted in both evocative and analytic autoethnography. Stories emerged that pull at the heartstrings, while also weaving in a critical analysis of how life experiences illustrate various theoretical perspectives. In an effort to be recognized as a piece of work

accepted in the field of analytic autoethnography, this project sought to fulfill Spry's (2001) three distinctions for good autoethnography. First, "the writing must be well crafted and capable of being respected by critics of literature as well as by social scientists" (p. 713). Second, a good autoethnography is emotionally engaging and self-reflexive. Finally, "good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory" (p. 713). When these distinctions are put in place as researchers create their final design of an autoethnographic study, it lends to the viability of the method. Evaluations of the method become congruent and based in clear understanding what should be expected from an autoethnographic project.

"Autoethnographic research has not yet enjoyed the popularity and respect of its ethnographic predecessors" (Margot, 2004, p. 28). However, through its 40 year history, autoethnography has gained momentum as an accepted form of qualitative research. "By explicitly bringing the researcher's own experiences and emotions into the ethnographic process it points to the sociocultural embeddedness of all human and social research, helping to show that researchers do not live outside of social reality" (Polczyk, 2012, p. 178). This idea coupled with the critical analysis of analytic autoethnography, lays the groundwork of a method that is accepted among social scientists.

Scholars in the field of autoethnography recognize the significant concern for the legitimacy and credibility of autoethnography as scholarly work (Holt, 2003, Muncey, 2005, Sparkes, 2000, Ellis, 2004). However, these scholars also understand the value of autoethnography to the field. Academic research, oftentimes, is inaccessible to individuals who may benefit from its results. Articles are written utilizing nomenclature that is not a part of day to day conversations. In today's age of instant messaging, blogs, and newsfeed notifications,

research that is academically written is lost. The method of sharing personal experiences through storytelling draws in audiences and captures their attention (Adams & Manning, 2015).

Autoethnography as a qualitative research method stands alone while adding to the overarching field of research. In addition to acknowledging the critiques of the method and understanding how it puts research in the hands of individuals who may not have previously had interest in social scientific research, analytic autoethnography adds to the overarching field of ethnography through five key features. First, when the researcher is either born into a group or has joined a group solely for the purpose of research, "complete member researcher status" (Anderson, 2006, p. 378) occurs. The experience and research outcomes "help to form and reform" (Anderson, 2006, p. 379) the constructs studied. Second, "the purpose of analytic ethnography is not simply to document personal experience" . . . but to "gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena" (Anderson, 2006, p. 387). Third, Anderson (2006) states "autoethnographers should expect to be involved in the construction of meaning and values in the social worlds they investigate" (p. 384) and as such, should ensure they are visible and active in the stories being told. Fourth, Rosaldo (1997) suggests "present-day reflexivity is the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally different Other" (p. 7). Therefore, it is necessary to reach beyond self-experience and understand the experience of others. Finally, analytic reflexivity provides for the researcher's self to be captured in the midst of creating "mutual informativity" (Anderson, 2006, p. 383). The idea of reflexivity is to "seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilize subjective experience as an intrinsic part of research" (Davies, 1999, p. 5).

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*OL621B: Qualitative Research Methods*

Module 1 Discussion Prompt

*5/10/2016*

*How do you think your background and life experiences (family history, national culture, educational influences, political understandings, generational context, gender, sexual orientation) influence how you interpret the world around you?*

*Reflect on how you believe your views and values are related to yourself as researcher.*

Module 1 Discussion Response

*There is no doubt in my mind that my life experiences and my personal identity impact how I see the world. I tend to look at the world from the eyes of "what is the oppression that is being experienced?" and "what can I do to address it?" Being considered by the majority as a triple minority, I have been faced with oppression and microaggressions so these tend to be in the forefront of my mind constantly. I interact with others from a defensive stance until I fully understand their position through our interactions. As I add a layer of spiritual belief to my Black Lesbian Democratic Social Worker view, I have begun to see the world from a different perspective of "what happened here" versus "what did you do wrong?"*

*As we have discussed throughout this program and as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) discuss, we must be aware of our biases when embarking on research. Therefore, I know I must take a step back and review the entirety of a situation before assuming some injustice is being done. As a researcher, I am guided by the desire to differentiate between what is an oppression and what is simply the way of things. Through research, I am forced to push aside my biases and reflect on what is clearly in front of me in a non-defensive way.*

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Guba and Lincoln (2008) defined *reflexivity* as "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (p. 278) and bringing our full selves to the research process. As a Social Worker, research means gathering information to develop a plan or provide a diagnosis and therefore meant leaving self out of the process. However, in qualitative research, it means

bringing the skills of social work—gathering information in a nonjudgmental but succinct way—while also allowing space to "create the self in the field" (Guba & Lincoln, 2008, p. 278). Although Social work suggests interviewing for data collection is a process done with a child, youth, or family, qualitative research is the process of not only questioning research participants, but questioning what the researcher brings to the process of research and the interpretation of information (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). Reflexivity means understanding personal biases and how those biases will impact the way in which a research problem, and purpose are designed, and how data is collected. In some areas, this bias is identified as inherent to the researcher and can impact the collection and analysis of data.

**Autoethnography Critiques**

"Autoethnography has been criticized for being nonanalytic, self-indulgent, irreverent, sentimental, and romantic" (Denzin, 2014, p. 69). It is often seen as "highly subjective" and unable to be "empirically falsifiable" (Dumitrica, 2010, p. 23). The forms of autoethnography "come into conflict with some of the most entrenched values of academic work" (Dumitrica, 2010, p. 25). The cases against autoethnography as a legitimate method for qualitative research are numerous. Criticisms of the method are built upon the foundation of expert knowledge as "socially sanctioned in a way that commonsense or personal knowledge is not" (Wall, 2006, p. 154). They flow easily from out of the quantitative (and in some instances qualitative) box of methodology. These criticisms are largely against two of the three roots of the word *autoethnography*—the use of the subjective self and the use of creative narrative to express the research.

Klenke (2008) suggests "the use of self as the only data source in autoethnography has been questioned by numerous qualitative researchers" (p. 201). Others believe that in order for

the researcher to be seen as a scholar, one must distance themselves from personal beliefs. Autoethnography, from this perspective, focuses too heavily on the researcher's personal beliefs and views (Dumitrica, 2010). Ellis (2009) faces critics head on in her work "Fighting Back or Moving On." Here, she highlights the major criticisms of autoethnography as not being "sufficiently realist or scientific" from one perspective and "too realist and linear" from another (p. 371). Her critics also suggest "autoethnography isn't sufficiently aesthetic and literary and it is too concerned with being science" (p. 372.) Many reviewers expect "adherence to traditional scientific tenets" (Wall, 2006, p. 155) that speak to systematic and methodological rigor. Questions of credibility continue to arise. "Methodological critics claim autoethnographies lack reliability, generalizability, and validity" (Wilkin, 2014, p. 14). However, because of the personal nature of autoethnography, it is important to recognize "autoethnographies (along with all qualitative methods) cannot be judged fairly by the criteria of conventional research" (Witkin, 2014, p. 14).

**Doing Autoethnography**

So, then how do autoethnographers respond to these critiques? Autoethnography takes full investment in the work. This method is in its infancy in comparison to other qualitative research methods. This means autoethnographers must remain diligent in "the creation of insight and knowledge and the engagement of compelling aesthetic practices" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 25). It also means being just as committed to responsible and ethical work that accounts for personal, relational, and institutional risks and responsibilities of doing autoethnography" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 25). Finally, it means ensuring quality work from both a qualitative research perspective as well as from the perspective of accepted guidelines within autoethnography.

Primary focus on quality within autoethnographic projects comes from the criteria for excellence within the broader perspective of qualitative research. These criteria seek an end goal of a project that demonstrates a worthy topic with rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, and resonance with a significant, ethical and meaningful contribution to the realm of research (Tracy, 2010). This project presents a topic that is relevant toward the goal of creating leadership development programs for Black lesbian women. It is couched in theoretical constructs, samples, and analysis to demonstrate rigor. Through the use of self-reflexivity and triangulation, this project demonstrates sincerity and credibility. Personal narratives focused on lived experience and epiphanies work to affect readers and provide a contribution to the field of leadership development. Ethically, the project focused on ensuring informed consent as expected from any study within qualitative research. Specifically, this informed consent was provided to individuals being interviewed as part of this project. Finally, due to multiple reviews this project is "what it purports to be about" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840).

Autoethnographers who have engaged in this research method since its inception have detailed core ideals of this method. Some outline these ideals or guidelines under three subheadings: consent, consultation, and vulnerability (Tolich, 2010). Consent in autoethnography focuses on the ability of others to consent to sharing of narratives about the past that may impact the present. Scholars urge against retrospective informed consent in which the autoethnographer asks for consent once a project has been published. It is necessary to ensure the expectations of working with human subjects are met in order to remain ethical in the pursuit of completion. Consultation focuses on connecting with others to identify ethical issues and ensure autoethnographic texts can be shared with those who are mentioned. Finally, "putting the very notion of a self at risk opens up places of vulnerability that can also be opportunities for

radical reworking of categories of thought and action" (Denshire, 2013, p. 7). Tolich (2010) makes the suggestion to "treat any autoethnography as an inked tattoo by anticipating the author's future vulnerability" and to "assume all people mentioned in the text will read it one day" (p.1608).

## Sources, Design, Analysis, and Interpretation

Sources of information within the method of autoethnography come from the traditional perspective of ethnography: "participant observation field notes, document and artifact analysis, and research diaries" (Wall, 2008, p. 44). The difference, between ethnography and autoethnography lies in the definition of participant, as previously discussed. The participant in ethnography is *other*, whereas the participant in autoethnography is *self.* Other is specifically observing the culture and behaviors of a subject or group in which the ethnographer does not necessarily belong. The autoethnographer, however, is intimately a part of the culture and behaviors being examined. On one hand, the stories of the autoethnographer become the source of data and research. On the other hand, the narrative nature of autoethnography means that this method does not exist in isolation but in relation to the narratives of others (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008).

Various sources act as data points, pulled together to form lived experiences that are written. "Generally, the expectation persists that 'hard' data be available from which to generate interpretations and make claims" (Wall, 2008. p. 4). Theorists in the field support this focus on observations that are "factual descriptions based on realist ideology" (Wall, 2008, p. 45). Muncey (2005) suggests snapshots and artifacts are "important if memory and its distortions appear to be critical features of the process" (p. 1). Duncan (2004) expects the "use of multiple sources of evidence to support personal opinion, suggesting the need for 'hard' evidence to

support ‘soft’ impressions” (Wall, 2008, p. 45). However, Wall (2008) suggests the more critical stance of ethnography, and thereby autoethnography makes it appropriate to move away from traditional data collection and the expectation of evidence.

The idea of the use of headnotes—“individual consciousness that made it possible. . .to perceive and record aspects of lived experience” (Wall, 2008, p. 45)—has been positioned as more reliable than field notes as they speak to what made the ethnographer feel in the moment. Fields notes cannot always capture the subconscious sights, sounds, smells, and emotions of a moment.

Creswell (2007) asserts that, although there are several kinds of data, all qualitative data falls into four basic categories, “observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials” (p. 129). Through social work education and practice, the concepts of motivational interviewing, solution-focused interviewing, and use of self in interviewing were reinforced through Creswell’s (2013), Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016), and Schein’s (1999) discussion of data collection through interviewing. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define interviewing as a “systematic activity” (p. 107) that allows the researcher the opportunity to “observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions” (p. 108) through entering “into the other person’s perspective” (p. 107). A good interview is made up of a variety of questions that guide an engaged conversation focused on the purpose of the research. Through the use of asking varied questions (i.e. open ended, experience and behavior, feeling, and sensory questions) the researcher is able to collect a wide range of data. Specifically, Schein (1999) discusses the use of active inquiry which can be used to define a good interview. The use of the active inquiry process provides the researcher the opportunity to “build up the [interviewee’s] status and confidence,” “gather as much information as possible about a situation,” and “involve the [interviewee] in the process” (p. 43).

Also pulling from the social sciences, is the idea of solution focused interviewing in which specific types of questions are asked to elicit more detail (Berg & DeJong, 2002). Although this approach is typically used in brief therapeutic treatment, use of ethnographic questions can also get to a place of engaging the interviewee in open-ended questions that align with the four major categories of questions presented in Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Not only are the interview questions important to a research interview, but the interviewer's ability to connect with the respondent and understand the importance of their interaction is also key.

Qualitative researchers "collect people's life stories in order to study various aspects of the human experience and the primary way we gather stories is by interviewing people" (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 1). Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest "asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first" (p. 645). However, with a clear purpose and approach, conducting interviews is an effective way to ensure credibility and trustworthiness in autoethnography. Chang (2008) suggests that, although data in autoethnography comes primarily from self, "data from external sources. . .provide additional perspectives and contextual information" (p. 101) to help investigate and examine subjectivity. Interviewing can occur via direct or indirect interviews. Direct interviews follow the structure and design of a question and answer session with face-to-face exchanges. The caution is that this type of interview may discourage participants from "delving into private, too sensitive, or uncomfortable topics" (Chang, 2008, p. 105). Indirect interviews take place via phone calls, emails, letters, or questionnaires. Interviews typically begin conversationally and progress to specific questions. It is imperative to note, the purpose of interviews is to collect data or gather information that is not readily available from observation as with ethnographic projects.

Qualitative research aims "to explore complex human issues" (Marshall, 1996, p. 524) with an inductive and humanistic philosophical foundation through an iterative and flexible study plan (Marshall, 1996). Three theoretical perspectives—critical theory, queer theory, and racialized discourses—guided the analysis of data collected through this autoethnography. Critical theory seeks to empower individuals beyond the confines of race, class, and gender by bringing attention to the experiences of oppression and exclusion. Queer theory specifically brings attention to the experiences of oppression and exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals (Creswell, 2014). Racialized discourses "raise important questions about the control and production of knowledge" for people and communities of color" (Creswell, 2014, p. 65). These theories were utilized to map the self-narrative presented throughout the project to models that have been developed from these theories. Cross' (1991) nigrescence model, Cass' (1979) gay and lesbian identity development model, and a compilation of psychosocial models related to gender identity development guided this process.

The interviews in this project were designed to corroborate events, and understanding of those events from multiple perspectives. Due to the fact that these events may not have been privy to all individuals interviewed, the interview protocol was customized to each participant. However, the overarching introduction to the study remained the same. Appendix B and Appendix C contain the participant informed consent document and the interview protocol for this project.

**Participant Characteristics and Recruitment**

Although this research project is an autoethnography, which by design focuses on the researcher as the main informant, additional participants were recruited to support data collection and analysis. The inclusion of participants through the use of personal interviews also enhanced the quality of the project to ensure triangulation. This technique "assumes that if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected, or researchers converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more credible" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843).

Due to the fact that this autoethnographic project speaks to specific life events of the researcher, individuals who were invited to participate in this project know the researcher personally as well as professionally. From the personal perspective, individuals are members of the researcher's family who were present at the time of specific events in an effort to obtain a perspective beyond that of the researcher. From the professional perspective, the criterion for participants is professional connection with the researcher (e.g. previous or current coworker, previous or current supervisor).

The personal and professional connection to the researcher allowed for an initially informal recruitment process. First, recruitment occurred through direct requests from the researcher to be interviewed for this project. More formally, participants were provided with introductory information to the scope and purpose of the project along with the opportunity to ask questions within a conversation focused on informed consent. Ideally, two to three individuals would have been recruited within the researcher's professional contacts, however only two agreed to participate. No additional professional contacts were identified due to there being a limited number of individuals informed about specific life events of the subject. Personally, the researcher intended to conduct interviews with her mother, brother, and maternal

aunt. Unfortunately, due to life circumstances, the researcher only interviewed her mother, which is further addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Mitigating risks.** "Social research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study" (Babbie, 1979, p. 61). This does not solely refer to physical harm, but any action that may be detrimental to a subject's livelihood, psychological well-being, or relationships. Although autoethnography is a self-narrative method of research, "other people are always present in self-narratives, either as active participants in the story or as associates in the background" (Chang, 2008, p. 68). Depending on their role in the narrative, this could leave individuals open to having vulnerable information shared about them or their experiences. To mitigate this risk, Chang (2008), Ellis (2003), and Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) suggest incorporating the use of confidentiality by using a *nom de plume* (Morse, 2000) (for both the autoethnographers and others). If this is not comfortable, or the researcher feels this takes away from the narrative, it is the researcher's responsibility to obtain informed consent from those whose identity may be revealed through the process. Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) suggest the use of process consent which "happens when researchers check in with participants during each stage of a project . . . to ensure participant's continued willingness to take part in a study" "(p. 57).

A second risk to participants within an autoethnographic research study are the "ethics of consequence – that is, accounting for the positive and negative reasons for participating in a study and acknowledging and working to minimize the power differentials and varying goals that inevitably exist" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 58). More specifically, current autoethnographers suggest self-narratives can lead to strained relationships when the story being told by the researcher and the story being heard by the participant are not aligned. Mitigation of

this relational aspect of autoethnography occurs through relational ethics. These ethics "recognize and value mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 60). An approach researchers utilize to enact relational ethics is *friendship as method*. This method asks researchers "to approach their relationships with participants as they would a friendship" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 61). This can mean: "sharing recollections, field notes, presentation and performance texts . . .so that [participants] may read and comment on them . . . creating representations that allow for distancing . . . or conducting research and writing representations collaboratively with other researchers and/or participants" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 62). "A number of authors have begun to recognize the value of studying individuals with whom there is a close, existing relationship (Bochner & Ellis, 1992, Tillman-Healey, 2001, 2003)" (Papathomas & Lavallee, 2006, 150). It has also been suggested that "many of the principles instrumental in effective qualitative inquiry are synonymous with those of friendship" (Papathomas & Lavallee, 2006, p. 149). The attributes of trust, honesty, respect, commitment, mutuality, understanding and acceptance align with "the values of relationality, mutuality, and empathy identified as guiding life history research" (Papathomas & Lavallee, 2006, p. 150). Although individuals outside of the research were not studied for this project, this friendship as method (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015) approach mitigated risks to those involved because of the existing relationships, personal or professional, and the level of trust and respect that had already been created.

Exposure of the researcher's honest feelings and thoughts may evoke unpleasant feelings. Conversely, the researcher's exposure to the unknown information or honest feelings of those interviewed may evoke feelings of hurt or anger. Bochner and Ellis (1996) suggest this is a true concern for autoethnography because the readers' connection to the narrative cannot be

predicted. To mitigate these factors, the researcher reiterated with each participant their ability to opt out of any further participation in the event of experiencing feelings that are difficult to manage. The researcher also shared the ability to take a moment from the conversation to process feelings of anger or frustration.

**Data analysis**. Through layered accounts, the narratives presented in this project were utilized to assess personal experiences and responded to the presented research questions.

Central question: How does the development of multiple minority identities inform the leadership practices of a Black Lesbian Leader?

1. How does the racial identity of being Black inform lesbian identity development and leadership development?
2. How does the sexual orientation identity of being a lesbian inform leadership practices?
3. How do these identities, as a whole, inform leadership style?

"Layered accounts reflect and refract the relationship between personal/cultural experience and interpretation/analysis" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis 2015). Without a clear structure, data collected appears to be insignificant and unorganized, "data analysis and interpretation are the processes through which data become a cogent account of observed phenomena" (Chang, 2008, p. 126). Within the context of qualitative research, and specifically autoethnography, there is a distinction between data analysis and data interpretation. Data analysis is "the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). Conversely, data interpretation "focuses on finding cultural meanings beyond the data" (Chang, 2008, p. 137) and is focused on sense-making of the data collected. This sense-making is not easily accessible and occurs as the researcher "articulates the relationship between meanings and

texts" (Hodder, 2003, p. 156). Data interpretation involves the researcher/subject, familiar with the "context of the data and the context of autoethnographic interpretation," (Chang, 2008, p. 128) finding meanings and identifying the similarities and differences between the two.

Although the multiple vignettes that reflect the researcher and subject's experiences were utilized, "not all bits and pieces of data appear in their entirety" (Chang, 2008, p 126). The goal was to present information that provided a structured cultural analysis and interpretation of self. Ellis (2004) suggested data analysis of these vignettes or narratives can take three forms. First, "narrative analysis assumes that a good story itself is theoretical" (Ellis, 2004, p.195). Narrative analysis is typically presented as case studies, life histories, biographies, or autoethnographies and focus on an experience of the researcher or subject (Ellis, 2004). When the researcher adds an additional level of analysis and begins to analyze themes and structures, the two additional forms of analysis arise – thematic analysis and structural analysis. "Thematic analysis refers to treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content" (Ellis, 2004, p. 196). Structural analysis involves narrative strategies in which "researchers start with stories and then analyze them in terms of their structures" (Ellis, 2004, p. 197).

For this project, a structural analysis of the data collected occurred by combining thematic and structural analysis of narrative by "thinking about a story" (Ellis, 2004, p. 197) in which the story became content that was then analyzed in an effort to find themes and patterns that informed the leadership development of Black Lesbian women across multiple minority identities (Ellis, 2004). Ellis (2004) suggested this approach allows the researcher or subject to "focus on telling your story, then frame it with an analysis of the literature, and concentrate on raising questions about that literature or about accepted theoretical notions, or on generating new ideas" (Ellis, 2004, p. 198). Janesick (2002) referred to this process stating "the qualitative

researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data. The categories that emerge from field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection" (p. 389).

Chang (2008) presents ten strategies for analysis and interpretation in autoethnography. These steps combine analysis and interpretation to create suggestions to "apply more focused efforts of data analysis and interpretation" (Chang, 2008, p. 131) to an autoethnographic project. Chang (2008) urges that these ten steps are solely "helpful suggestions not (to be used) as a complete tool kit of data analysis and interview. It is the researcher or subject's goal to incorporate these ten steps into the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in an effort to respond to the above mentioned research questions. The ability to align with these ten strategies is dependent upon the data collected through journals and interviews.

Chang's (2009) ten strategies for analysis and interpretation are:

1. Search for recurring topics, themes, and patterns;
2. Look for cultural themes;
3. Identify exceptional occurrences;
4. Analyze inclusion and omission;
5. Connect the present with the past;
6. Analyze relationships between self and others;
7. Compare yourself with other people's cases;
8. Contextualize broadly;
9. Compare with social science constructs and ideas; and
10. Frame with theories.

From this analysis, the findings developed into both recommendations for future research and foundational principles to support the creation of a leadership development program for Black Lesbian Leaders.

**And So. . .**

Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) highlight "autoethnographers must take seriously the *epistemic* (claims to knowledge) and the *aesthetic* (practices of imaginative, creative, and artistic craft) characteristics of autoethnographic texts" (p. 23). In short, autoethnography is art. As previously discussed, theory acts as a source of information within qualitative research rather than the gauge of data collection. The design of this project is to capture clear claims to knowledge while remaining true to the creativity of this method. As the primary source of information and organization, Chang (2008) introduces the use of a culture-gram. This tool is used "to help people visualize their social selves . . . in terms of social roles . . . people groups . . . diversity criteria . . . and primary cultural identities" (p. 97). The ultimate goal of the culture-gram is to identify the three most important self-identities. This project utilized the Cass (1979) model of sexual orientation identity formation as an outline to weave narrative and theory to create a study on how multiple identity formation (Jones & McEwen, 2000) informs the leadership development (Day et al., 2001) and leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 1988) of a Black lesbian woman. Inevitably, the theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), Black feminist thought (Collins, 1990), and queer theory (Tierney, 1997; Gamson, 2000) acted as additional sources of information, evaluation, and understanding.

As Carolyn Ellis so eloquently put it in *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015),

> Autoethnography fulfill(s) me as it combine(s) my interests in ethnography, social psychology of the self and role-taking, subjectivity and emotionality, face-to-face communication and interaction, writing as inquiry and evocation, storytelling, and my social work orientation toward social justice and giving back to the community (p. 3).

This is my contribution to the field of autoethnography.

# Chapter 4: Findings

## Introduction

Coming into the full realization of one's multifaceted identity is a freeing and terrifying process. Sharing that process with others is liberating and unnerving. Life, it seems, is full of paradoxes. On the one hand, I want to share the story of my existence and how I came to be this woman who loves women and her Blackness, and who strives every day to lead others with a servant's heart. On the other, I do not want to open my life up to academic or ignorant scrutiny. However, if my purpose is to be a voice for those who feel voiceless, and to fully shine a bright light on multiple minority identities, pulling each out of the shadows, the closet, and from under the ignorance that forced shame upon them, then the following is my attempt to fulfill my purpose. Research studies over the last few decades have largely ignored the existence of Black Lesbian Leaders. Our experiences have been lumped together with those facing fewer complicating factors both personally and professionally. Women, Black people, and lesbians have been blocked from attaining positions of leadership because of our multiple minority identities. Rarely, have these multiple minority identities positioned us as uniquely developed individuals who should be sought out to lead.

All too often, I have been forced to choose one of my multiple minority identities to openly embrace based on the current space or situation. However, "constantly being encouraged to pluck out some aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing and denying the other parts of the self" (Lorde, 1982, p. 120) is of no interest to me because I more than just one aspect or identity. Through sharing the following narratives I will attempt to unweave the fabric of self of which each thread represents my identity as a Black woman, a lesbian, and a leader. I am using this doctoral journey as my opportunity to embrace all four

aspects of who I am and celebrate my leadership identity at those intersections. "Critical learning about who we are and the various ways in which our identities are constructed can contribute to a rich sense of personal fulfillment" (Taranth, n.d., para. 1). Beyond this, sharing our experiences creates connection between our own lived experiences and the experiences of others, giving them significance. In preparing to write this autoethnography, I have read and appreciated the works of others who came to this methodology before me. These scholars were Black women, lesbian, Black men, and held other minority identities.

This narrative contributes to a body of literature that has so often forgotten the Black Lesbian Woman. The accounts presented here will provide insight to the shared experience of individuals living at the intersection of multiple identities. This study of the negotiation of multiple minority identities at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation from the perspective of a Black Lesbian Leader will provide the foundation for future social scholars to question and investigate the experiences of other women of color. Reading my story will allow for others to see themselves and support a better understanding of how the barriers Black women overcome prepares them for positions as executive officers. Through sharing my story I intend to answer the following questions:

Central question: How does the development of multiple minority identities inform the leadership practices of a Black Lesbian Leader?

1. How does the racial identity of being Black inform lesbian identity development and leadership development?
2. How does the sexual orientation identity of being a lesbian inform leadership practices?
3. How do these identities, as a whole, inform leadership style?

## Data Collection

Over the course of my life, I have kept journals, letters, written prose, and poetry; in this narrative you will see direct quotes from some of these entries as well as reference to their existence and, in some cases, content. In preparation to write the narratives of this chapter, I opened my time capsule which dates back to the seventh grade (circa 1992) when I was enrolled in the Alternative Learning Program for Gifted Students (ALPS). This kind of written data was also collected from class assignments completed during the course of my doctoral studies with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology which began in the Fall of 2015.

Although the initial approach to data collection was to conduct structured interviews using the questions outlined in Appendix C, unstructured interviews akin to those described by Chang (2008) as general, descriptive, open-ended casual conversations developed. Interview sessions began with the outlined questions, but evolved into conversations that provided the opportunity for an emotive experience. I have included these types of conversations with the person who knows the history of my life better than anyone, my mother. Our conversations date back to a time when specific events occurred and to the present when she agreed to sit down to chat with me about events in my life. Although she will not be mentioned by name, she has agreed that her identity does not need to remain confidential. An important note here is the tenderness of my relationship with my mother as it relates to my identity as a lesbian. Conversations about my sexual orientation are focused on her concern for my eternal soul and my relationship with Christ, as she knows him. Discussions rarely focus on my personal feat of accepting the fullness of my multiple minority identities because I want to maintain respectful discourses with my mother and honor her as my elder.

For historical reference and connection, I spent time researching Jim Crow laws (as a means of exploring institutionalized racism), and thumbing through my personal collection of womanist texts, Black history texts, and the Bible. For more recent experiences, I also engaged in casual conversation with two coworkers to obtain their perspectives on life events they have witnessed and to act to corroborate experiences with our shared employer.

The accounts presented here are snapshots that document the development of my identity as a Black Lesbian Leader. Each narrative emphasizes my identity development through multiple minority identities as defined in Chapter 2. They are presented across the developmental frameworks of Black identity, lesbian identity, and development as a leader. Although gender identity is not explicitly labeled within the study's research questions, it is discussed here as part of capturing the experience of the whole as illustrated in Figure 4.1

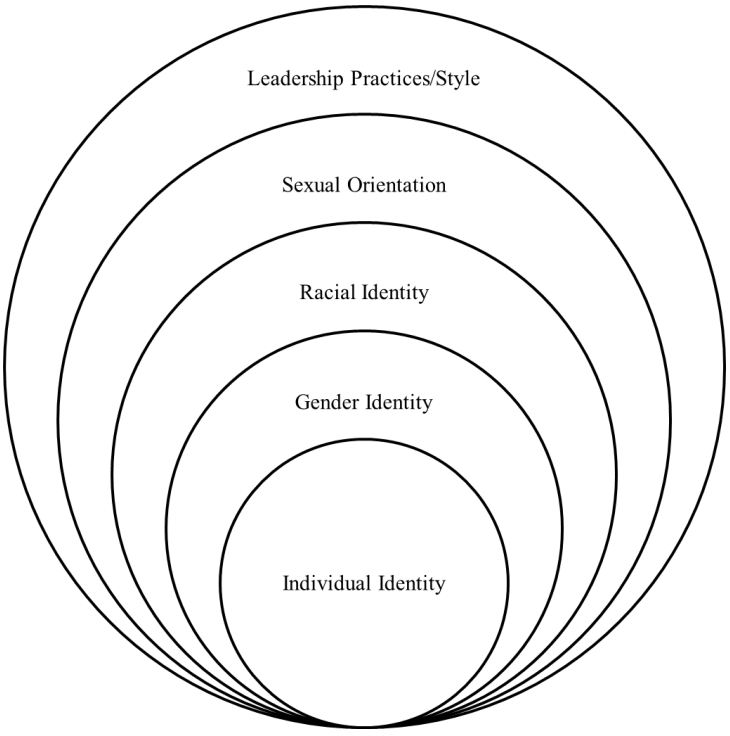


*Figure 5*: Adaptation of the internal dimension of the dimensions of diversity wheel. (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003)

## Data Analysis and Presentation

Recognizing that autoethnography is a fairly new methodology in comparison to other qualitative approaches to research, as outlined in Chapter 3, the reader will find more information in this findings chapter than what may be typical in academic writing. The results of the main study presented here will first focus on the themes identified through data collection and analysis. This will be followed by a detailed outline of how the research questions for this project were answered.

Once the above data was collected and organized, I critically analyzed the information gathered to begin the work of thematic analysis - the process of collecting "many stories (to) inductively create conceptual groupings from the data" (Riessman, 2005, p. 2). Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford (2008) suggested "people tend to remember unusual, unexpected life events that had important consequences and were emotionally evocative" (p. 315). Although multiple stories, journal entries, and public information were collected for this project, those that were emotionally evocative and important to my development as a Black Lesbian Leader are presented here. Utilizing Chang's (2008) first of ten strategies for analysis and interpretation in autoethnography, the recurring topics, themes, and patterns are provided in Appendix D. These themes are meant to organize the information and observations and "function as a way to categorize a set of data . . .or conceptual topics developed by the researcher during a review of the data" (Saldaña, 2010, p.139). The narratives presented are the result of applying Chang's (2008) additional nine strategies by looking for cultural themes; identifying exceptional occurrences; analyzing inclusion and omission; connecting the present with the past; analyzing relationships between self and others; comparing the self with other people's cases; contextualizing broadly; comparing with social science constructs and ideas; and framing with

theories. As an additional level of analysis, I shared the narratives of this chapter and Appendix D with four researchers in the fields of social work, organizational leadership, educational leadership, and community psychology for the addition of interpretations to the information presented. The themes I personally identified through data analysis were redacted in all documents shared with these reviewers. This was done in an effort to support the relevance and credibility of this project. Two of these researchers declined to provide a thematic analysis due to the LGBT subject matter of this project, which is addressed in Chapter 5.

"Scholars agree that narrative analysis is a powerful tool to explore the complexity of social realities and its social agents" (Mura and Sharif, 2017, p. 195), but that "coding is not a precise science; it's primarily an interpretive act" (Saldaña, 2010, p. 4). Herman (2009) suggested narratives act as a "way of making sense of experience" (p.ix). The results of the main study as presented here are my way of making sense of my experiences while allowing others to feel empowered to share their voice and supporting continued research to fill the gap in current literature.

## Results of the Main Study

### Development of a Female Identity

My childhood memories before the age of nine or ten are nonexistent. What I know of my life from birth to approximately the age of five is made up of the stories of those who experienced life at that time with me and the pictures saved from the 2000 flood that left more than three feet of water inside of our home. There's a story of me eating a bug as I crawled across the kitchen floor and my father only finding a leg hanging out of my mouth when he tried to stop me. Stories of my father end in 1988 when he moved out of Texas 6 years after my parents' divorce and started a new family. There is the story of me taking a bite out of a

jalapeño, crying and rubbing my tongue with the palm of my hand. Based on pictures and Ebony Magazine archives, my mother and I were in a photo shoot for the magazine in August 1982. My mother was featured on the front page of an article titled "Sisters-in-Arms: Marching into Their Brothers Territory" (Ebony, 1982). She was recognized for being one of the 25% of Black women in the military in the 1980s. The article begins:

> No longer content to function exclusively as military's men's *fragile little helpmates,* an increasing number of women in the U.S. Armed Forces are demanding and receiving assignments to duties previously performed only by men. (Ebony, 1982, p.91)

Within the article are two pictures of my mother leading drills and fixing the salute of a basic trainee. In 1982, my mother was a training instructor for the United States Air Force. As she thinks back on this moment in her history, my mother shared with me how her commanding officer called her into his office for a meeting and told her he needed her to do this *thing* in a quite nonchalant manner. That thing ended up being this feature spot for Ebony magazine. It was never presented as a big deal, and even during our conversation it seemed as though it was just a part of following orders. I have always admired my mother's humility. One of the pictures taken at that shoot, but not used in the article, is of Mommy holding me while we looked into the microwave. That is my most favorite picture of the two of us in our lives together. It wasn't a memory that I held in my mind, but I had proof of that moment to hold in my hand. It was lost in the flood seventeen years later and is now embedded in my soul's memory.

Before I learned anything about being Black or lesbian, I learned what it means to be female from my single mother. For as long as I can remember, my mother has been my closest friend and confidant. Even when we did not see eye-to-eye on things such as religion, politics, and sexual orientation, our relationship remained intact, even when I felt distance. Through her

modeling, I have learned what it means to have a spirit of grace, courtesy, and to work outside of the confines of gender roles and expectations. Being raised by one parent meant receiving all knowledge of what it meant to be a woman from closely watching her every move and wanting to emulate her as my heroine. Her presence in the military for twenty-one years, her station as a leader in the community, and her everlasting effort to ensure her small family of three were never a statistic made me proud to be female.

Other lessons on being female came from television shows like *The Cosby Show, Sesame Street, Growing Pains, Saved by the Bell*, and the one sitcom I had to sneak to watch between the ages of 14 and 15, *Murphy Brown.* From these shows I learned being female was about being a wife, a mother, a caregiver, and that life could be lived happily with close friends, and business associates. However, being successful, having close friends, and business associates meant having an education, long flowing hair, and an ability to solve problems within the timespan of thirty minutes. To this point in my life, being female, according to my experiences was an identity worth celebrating, especially if I could look, speak, and act like the women I looked up to—on and off the screen.

I first learned being female was not always seen as positive when eavesdropping on a conversation my mother was having with her closest friend. It seemed there was an issue with her sitting or standing in the pulpit at our new church because she was a woman. My mother had been preaching in San Antonio, Texas for most of my childhood. She was an intercessory prayer leader who led regular prayer meetings at the church and stood in the pulpit when giving the Sunday morning sermon. An intercessory prayer leader, in our church, was the individual who church members would come to for their prayer requests. My mother would lead prayer with and for individuals, not because they could not pray for themselves, but because of something we

refer to in the church as *standing in the gap,* and our belief in the scripture "for where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20, New International Version). I was protected as a child from hearing the negative statements and comments about my mother, the woman preacher, but as I got older, I could hear what was being said. Until that point, having a mother who was a preacher was not something out of the ordinary. My mother, her sisters, and close friends were all ministers within the church. Each had their place in prayer groups, Sunday school meetings, and Sunday sermons. That shifted when we moved to a small town in west Texas.

Moving to Abilene, Texas not only opened my eyes to gender discrimination within the church, but to the double jeopardy of being a Black female in a predominantly white neighborhood attending a predominantly white school. I was one of few individuals in my third grade class who had not attended church nursery and day care with her classmates. I did not look like the other girls in my class and learned early that this would be an issue. As we continued our maturation and went on to middle school and high school, I realized how much I just did not and could not fit in. During my high school years, my identity as a female hinged upon the unwritten expectation of having a high school sweetheart who I would ultimately marry immediately following high school graduation. If I did not have a high school sweetheart, the only purpose for going to college was to obtain the title of *Mrs.*—not a bachelor's degree. However, being Black, and later being told "I wasn't down then, but I am down with the swirl now" almost 20 years after graduation, made me realize my identity as a female, at that point in my life, was influenced by the color of my skin. A letter I wrote to myself, which is something I often did to get away from the growing depression I was feeling, sums up my feelings of rejection and wondering if I would ever experience what I felt I, as a female, should experience.

---

*Dear Brandy –*

*I don't know any more I just don't know. I can't keep living like this, wondering if I feel like living today or do I feel like ending it all. Isn't I funny how "rejection" is simply a part of my everyday life? Every time I walk in the halls I feel rejected. I've been rejected by, oh, say, about 15 to 20 guys and I'm only in my first year of high school! Life sure is funny that way. What the hell is going on in my head, in my life, in my studies, in my sleep, in my everyday walk?. . . I can't believe I haven't got anyone who gives a flip about me, well except maybe my mother, but by the world's standards, she "has to care." Maybe this is all in my head, maybe I'm crazy, maybe I'm insane, yeah right, I could only hope so. Brandy, if you're reading this two or three years from now I hope your life got better, this feeling is one I wouldn't wish on our worst enemy. Always remember that somewhere deep down in your hear I love you. If this is the first or even the last time you hear it always remember I'll always love you.*

*Love, Brandy* (March 9, 1995)

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This letter is dedicated to the 15–20 guys mentioned earlier with a note: "thank you for teaching me about me." Looking back today, I cannot say with certainty why I needed to list out each name or what exactly I learned. It is one of several letters I wrote to myself between 1995 and 1998.

What I learned of my female identity is that I could be independent and proud. I could challenge patriarchal limitations and take up space in male dominated spaces. I could raise a family on my own. But, even in learning the power of being a female, I learned that I did not have the power to separate being female from being Black.

**Development of a Black identity**. Living out my formative years in Abilene, Texas meant my identity as a Black person was constantly on the back burner. I wanted, save needed, to fit in. Fitting in though was a greater challenge than I imagined. So, I turned to fitting in intellectually rather than aesthetically. I chose to read every day in an effort to show that even though I could not meet the standard of beauty, I was smart. The joke in my family has been that no one knows who taught me how to read, just that I started reading one day. I made a conscious effort to use proper grammar and English. I found myself judging others for not speaking the language we were being graded to learn each day. Eventually, I needed to have the long flowing hair, blue eyes, and beauty based on the measuring stick of the majority being represented. I found myself in great turmoil because I did not look like my classmates. For the entirety of my high school education I was referred to as an *Oreo* because I had successfully assimilated to the majority. But it was not until years, if not decades, later that I realized I was never quite Black enough for the Black kids and never quite white enough for the white kids. Growing up as one of three Black families within a two mile radius of my home and only listening to secular music on the local radio stations, and my affinity for television shows like *Saved by the Bell, Boy Meets World,* and *Clarissa Explains It All*, meant missing out on Black culture—at least, the Black culture of my peers. My Black peers were tuning into K104, a hip hop and R&B radio station out of Dallas, Texas (TX). Their television sets were allowed to be tuned to *In Living Color, Martin, BET's Comic View* and *Rap City*. To the Black kids, I was not hip to the culture and lingo which left me outside of their loop. To my white peers, although I loved Brooks and Dunn and Nickelodeon, my hair was not blonde enough, my lips were too full, and the melanin in my skin visibly set me apart. My unhappiness with my station in life—not being with my high school sweetheart, or having children by the time I finished college—was less about me and

more about the idea that I was not the ideal because of my racial identity, and later sexual orientation. I wish I knew then what I know now, because I could have saved myself from much heartache. There are volumes of journal entries and pages upon pages of love notes to and about boys who I knew deep down I would never engage in any kind of relationship with. I just had the desire to fit in.

The place I found others like me was in the church. Here, I was seemingly a part of the majority. I learned about Black History every weekend and specifically in February. At church, my hair was *good hair* because of perms and pressing combs. At church, I felt respected because I was the preacher's daughter. In this space, until later in life, I found refuge, because I felt loved. In the church I learned that the wellspring of wisdom, our elders, is to be respected. From a young age, it was insisted that I referred to any adult as *ma'am* or *sir*. When an elder entered the room, we were taught to give up our seat if necessary. Respect for our elders meant listening to them, obeying them, and being patient in the midst of their telling you a story which they may have shared multiple times before. Women were taught to be submissive and serve their husbands and future husbands. These were lessons I carried with me through all of my future relationships, with elders, with men and with women. However, interestingly I did not identify going to church with being Black as much as I connected my attendance to a personal relationship with God. So, even in the midst of the weekly refuge, I still wanted acceptance from my white peers.

It was not until I reached my late twenties and found myself at The University of Alabama that I began to realize the fullness of my Black identity. Not only did the history and location of the University of Alabama open my eyes to the power within my Black identity, but I also met a group of Black women and a Black woman professor who introduced me to the

realness of being Black, while matriculating toward a Master of Social Work degree. Through these women, I learned the other side of Black history. In the church I attended in Abilene, TX there was constant revelry regarding Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Sojourner Truth. Rarely did the names of Malcom X (a Muslim), the Ku Klux Klan (a hate group), Bayard Rustin, or James Baldwin (both gay men) arise. As I look back on my experience in the Black church, one thing is clear: the Black church has been historically used as a vehicle of indoctrination. Though Black Christians may have agreed with ideologies of individuals involved in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, they put the bulk of their support behind people or organizations that were Christian based and shared the same religious beliefs. More specifically, the Black church was not willing to be associated with the more controversial leaders of the civil rights movement who were homosexual (Battle & LeMelle, 2002) or Muslim (Gilkes, 1998), or deemed to teach hatred instead of love (Schmitz, 2016; Warnock, 2018). Learning that peaceful protests and stalking in the night to save a fellow slave were not the only ways to seek justice helped to justify the rising level of frustration I felt about seemingly passive means to an end.

This frustration grew even stronger upon reading *Black Theology and Black Power* (Cone, 1970). The Black Power movement and its ideologies, activities, and purpose were also left out of Sunday morning sermons. After writing the profound statement "Blackness is the primary datum of human experience which must be reckoned with, for it is the *reason* for our oppression and the only *tool* for our liberation" (Cone, 1970, p. 209), Cone (1970) went on to connect Black power and Black theology stating "Black theology is the theological arm of Black power and Black power is the political arm of Black theology." (p. 209). Ultimately, this meant the religious equivalent of the Black Power movements was the Black church. Reading this text as a graduate student, a text that was written during my mother's experience of a Jim Crow South

and updated and expanded in my junior year of high school, made me feel like I had been lied to through the omission of stories about the Black Power movement within the Black church. Recently, during his eulogy for Dr. Cone, Dr. Warnock (2018) reviewed the highlights of Dr. Cone's career, particularly this connection of Black theology and Black Power. He stated that, although "others said it was a betrayal of Dr. King's vision of the beloved community Cone made bold to say Black Power is not the anti-Christ but Christ's central message to 20th century America."

Learning about these others paths to resistance and having the opportunity to stand in the same place where Vivian Malone and James Hood fought to be the first Black students to enroll at The University of Alabama and to see the slave quarters that still stand behind the president's house awakened something in me. I buried myself in Black history and began to see the world as Black and white with white no longer begin the ideal. You see, having been raised in a middle-class Black family among predominantly educated people meant not being faced with overt racism. I was well into my late 20s the first time a racial slur was hurled at me. But, standing and seeing and feeling the earth on which Black history was made created a desire in me to face social injustice head-on. This was also around the time that I first considered calculating my mother's birthdate and the time of the Jim Crow South. The realization that my mother was once referred to as *colored* and discriminated against because of her skin and that she was among the first to integrate her high school awakened something in me. From that point forward, I was a fist pumping, social injustice fighting advocate.

In one of our many conversations, I asked my mother about her experience in the Jim Crow South. This is when I heard of her firsthand experience of drinking out of *colored* water fountains, and riding in the back of a Greyhound bus to help her aunt serve and clean up after

white people in Birmingham, Alabama. During this conversation, I was also reminded that most of the women of the maternal side of my family made a living through domestic service. During my grandmother's funeral in February 2000, a letter of condolence from Robert "Bob" Wilson, a state legislator whose children my grandmother helped raise was read. The younger Bob Wilson would go on to win a seat as a state senator in 1990. In uncovering this family history and coming to terms with my mother's experience in a segregated South, I could not help but to wonder out loud why my mother never shared her experiences with me in the past. Without missing a beat, she responded "because I wanted you to have your own opinion about people and not base your interactions with others on my experience, you needed to make up your own mind" (W. Brooks, personal communication, 2018).

As I began to focus on events like the speech Malcolm X gave on May 5, 1962 during the funeral service of Ronald Stokes in which he stated "the most disrespected woman in America, is the black woman. The most un-protected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America, is the black woman" (X, 1962), my fervor for social justice grew. I immersed myself into the works of bell hooks, Patricia Hill-Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw Williams, Audre Lorde, Zora Neale Hurston, and Toni Morrison. I surrounded myself with Black women who engaged me in conversations about Blackness, womanhood, and the intersection of the two. I never found myself angry at an entire race of people for injustice, but I did find myself angry at privilege and questioning the fairness of it all. It felt as though something in me broke and I no longer had shields over my eyes. I understand now why my mother did not share her trauma with me, yet I still feel the heat of anger as I consider the five generations of women in my family who faced the discriminated South.

Today, I make a conscious effort to walk side by side with any individual who is open and willing to seeing the color of my skin and recognizing my Blackness. From the lens of my own experiences, Blackness means the history I have faced and the history of the generations of my family before me. I do not enter into any space without their strength, courage, and tenacity because their life lessons were passed down to me through their one self-narratives and my observation. Those who lived before me have shown me what it means to maintain class in the midst of struggle, while supporting others who are also facing similar struggles. Through our shared experiences, other Black women and I are able to come together to support one another in the midst of our individual and collective goal attainment. Being able to see beyond my own culture and recognize allies from other cultures creates the opportunity to create a sense of collective effort, or community, to face challenges.

**Development of a lesbian identity**. As I stand at the front of the room facing an audience of 30 individuals who I work with every day, I feel my heart begin to race and my palms get a bit sweaty. For the past three hours we have been engaged in a conversation about working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) Youth involved in the foster care system. I have taken the participants through the curriculum that carefully defines the terms associated with LGBTQ individuals. I have listened to their bigoted and ignorant remarks - ignorant in the sense of not wanting to do better when they know better, ignorant in the sense of precluding and concluding their bigoted statements with "this is how I was raised," and ignorant in the sense of just not knowing because they have never been faced with having to engage with an LGBTQ individual. We are now at the point in the curriculum in which I work to reinforce the concepts of Cass' (1979) six stages of LGBT identity development. I have told this story more than twenty times, but each time I find myself as nervous as the first.

"I am now going to tell you a story. As I share this story, please jot down your thoughts of when you hear one of Cass' stages of development. This is the story of a girl who around the age of eight years began to notice something different about herself. She was raised by a single mother. A mother who was heavily involved in the church, was in the military, and politically leaned republican. In the third grade, she began to notice how the boys in her class would chase the girls and pull their hair, or always tag them as *it* during recess. She saw how during Valentine's Day little girls would fill the little boys' boxes with mini cards and candy. She wanted the girls to fill her box. She wanted to give all her cards and candy to one girl in particular. But, she knew she shouldn't.

"Fast forward to about the age of twelve. This girl is now in school in a whole new town, with new people. She is still having confusing feelings about girls, but buries these feelings. She feigns infatuation with boys she knows will never be interested in her and pours her feelings into the pages of her diary. Her mother has now elevated to preacher in the church. She was there whenever the doors of the church were open. Sitting in the seats and later the pews of her church often led to her hearing stories of Sodom and Gomorrah. She knew her feelings for girls would surely lead to fire and brimstone. Still, this girl could not name what she was feeling because she never heard it explained outside of the context of the biblical story in Genesis 19. She has no real understanding of what she has been feeling. Until one particular Christmas. . .

"Her family's tradition was to come together the day after Christmas in Alabama. The cousins made up the *church* choir that would prepare renditions of 'O Come All Ye Faithful,' 'Silent Night,' and 'Go Tell It on the Mountain.' Her uncle, the reverend, would prepare a brief scripture to read and someone would lead the family in prayer. This year in particular, prior to partaking in an exchange of gifts, the girl's aunt arrives to celebration in clothes that are typically

reserved for men. During the prayer, the adult who was leading began to pray about harmful spirits and how men should only lay with women. Although it was a fervent prayer, it was also terrifying for the girl. She did not ever want to be the reason a prayer like that was prayed over her, stopping the festivities. She later found out from her cousins that her aunt was a *lesbian.*

"Now, the girl is a teenager, between the ages of 13 and 15. She has found herself full force into the teen years of boy craziness and finding her identity. Her journals, love notes, and even school assignments are riddled with prose about boys in her various classes. Boys, who she knows she is not truly interested in, but she wants to be normal and fit in. She continuously tries to force herself to like these boys, but continues to find herself thinking about the girls with whom she plays basketball. She is faced with rejection as the new student to her school, she falls into a deep depression because she has grown tired of hiding her feelings and trying to force boy-girl relationships. She 'went out with' or dated a boy for a week, to later find out he was into boys and using her as a cover up. At one point, her mother fervently prayed over her because of her defiance and disobedience.

"By the age of sixteen, the girl began to spiral out of control—at least what was control for her. One morning, as she stood in front of her bathroom mirror getting dressed for school, she stared at herself and said 'you are a lesbian, deal with it.' Her way of dealing with it became a time in her life which she later referred to as 'Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll.' Although the hardest drug she turned to was marijuana, she constantly and consistently sought attention from any male that would give it to her. Based on her journal entries, love notes, and classroom passed messages to a friend who acted as a go-between there was no limit to what she would do to obtain attention. It did not matter from whom, when, or where. She did not feel she could tell anyone about how she was feeling because she did not want her mother to disown her. Her

mother was the only adult who could help her pay for college, and she knew college was the only way out of her small town. So she hid her feelings in school, work, and after parties with the college football team. This was her life from sixteen as a sophomore in high school and through her college years.

"In her final year of college, the girl sought out counseling. At this point she was involved in a purely sexual relationship with a football player who treated her as less than a dog and she was faced with hard life decisions. Her therapist asked her at one of her lowest points, 'What would be so difficult in being who you are?' In her mind the girl raced through the thoughts of losing her mother's love, disappointing her family, and being in the world alone. But, upon graduation and moving to Alabama for graduate school, the girl made a decision to be who she was. Her life became focused on facing oppression, supporting young girls involved in the juvenile justice system who identified as lesbian, and being out to her small circle of friends.

"She inundated herself in her lesbian identity. There was rarely a time she would be in a space with non-LGBT people as she had the desire to immerse herself 'in the life' as much as her previous desire to fit in. If a volunteer opportunity was not specific to the LGBT community, she was not interested. Finally, during Thanksgiving 2004, the young woman built up her courage to come out to a family member, her father. As you may recall, so far there has been no mention of the girl's father. He had not been a part of her life outside of Christmas holidays and truthfully she had no real concern for how he would respond to her emerging identity. Her opportunity to come out to a relative came when her father invited her to Thanksgiving dinner. There is when she shared her love for women. Her father's response was simply *if you like it I love it.* Fast forward to Father's Day the following year. The young woman receives a phone call from her mother.

‘Hi Mommy!’

‘Hello, dear. I just got off the phone with your father and he’s told me something.’

‘I have no idea what it could be,’ says the young woman with a twinge in her gut and an immediate wave of heat overcoming her.

‘Well, I’m not going to say it, you will have to.’

‘Umm, could it be that I am a lesbian?’

‘That is not what you are. . .’

“This statement was followed by a long diatribe regarding biblical teachings and what the mother wanted for her daughter, and being a lesbian was not a part of those teachings. For the next year or more, the relationship between the young woman and her mother was strained and limited to only necessary discussions as it related to the extended family, as family means everything to her mother.

“In the midst of adjusting to her new career after obtaining her master’s degree and moving, the young girl connected with a mentor and the LGBTQ community. She started working for the government by supporting children and youth involved in the system and found her calling in supporting LGBTQ youth. She went on to realize her dreams of being a social worker, a wife, and teaching this class. . .”

Immediately following my story I get a sense of relief that it is out in the atmosphere and a surge of pure fear as to how the remaining three hours of the session will go. As with any other session, people raise their hands to ask questions about the current status of the relationship between my mother and me. I share that we are on the upward slope, but my recent wedding gave me a small scare because she was not in attendance. Although my mother is rarely open to speaking to me directly about my identity as a lesbian, she has remained consistent in her

messaging about her fear for my soul and my relationship with Jesus. Even as recently as April 2018, my mother reminded me that she loves me but she knows of a Higher Power that condemns my relationship and does not see my governmentally legal marriage as legal in the eyes of a *greater law*. Many people do not understand the current relationship between my mother and me. Both individuals who I specifically held conversations with for this project expressed their confusion with the level of respect I give my mother despite what they see as her rejecting me because of my sexual orientation. However, as a means of self-preservation, I choose not to directly question my mother about her ideals or feelings around my sexual orientation. Her continual reassurance of how proud she is of my accomplishments is fully overshadowed by her verbal disdain of my sexual orientation and that disdain's root in her Christian beliefs. I hold an understanding that my mother has to go through her stages of coming out just as I have. I have been able to compartmentalize her feelings and words to a place of calm understanding. Additionally, going back to my roots in the church, my mother is my elder and confrontation could be deemed as disrespect. This disrespect coupled with pushing for her to fully accept my identity as a lesbian would undoubtedly lead to a complete breakdown in our relationship thereby removing a significant source of emotional support and causing more harm than good. This is evident in our past conversations and the fact that I have never heard my mother say the word *lesbian.* Her responses to my sexual identity are rooted in her connection to Christianity and therefore work to symbolize the responses of the larger community of those who also turn to Christianity as the definitive law. Although there may be progress towards greater acceptance of me by my mother and of LGBTQ individuals by the larger community, there still has not been a full integration of sexual minority identification and acceptance within

mainstream experiences. Just as I would lose my emotional support system by forcing conversations, others may feel this loss as a possibility as well.

When I tell my coming out story in training sessions, I tend to leave out the emotional drudgery that occurred as I struggled with my lesbian identity up to the edge of death. Not even my own family knows how many times or how close I've come to attempting suicide. There were times the only thing that kept me from swallowing or cutting deeper was the fact that my fear of Hell after death was greater than the hell I was experiencing in life. I was able to move more healthily in my depression by focusing on my future and planning for more to happen. The most important saving grace, was the feeling of being able to be authentically who I am in any situation because the most important person in my life was now aware of who I fully saw myself to be. As I think back on this time in my life, I know my ultimate determination to stay alive so that I could support other LGBTQ youth stay alive comes from the experience of moving through the stages of my lesbian identity development.

**Development of a leadership identity**. In the sixth and seventh grades, I was enrolled in a gifted and talented education program. One of the assignments located in my time capsule is titled "Characteristics of the Gifted I See in Myself." I checked the following:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Observant | Good memory | Curious |
| Concentrates well | Creative | Persistent |
| Friendly | High Standards for Self and Others | Sensitive |
| Sense of Humor | Self-aware | Idealistic |
| Strong Sense of Justice | Deep and Strong Emotions | Impatient with Detail |
| Empathetic | High Energy | |

I finished this worksheet by completing the statement "these characteristics have affected my life in the following ways. . ." with "I have become a very caring and loving person who will be a leader one day. I think I've found myself . . ." Obviously, I had a clear sense of what I wanted to be.

For as long as I can remember, I have been surrounded by leaders. There was never truly a question of me being a leader. The question was more in the kind of leader I wanted to be. Leadership has been a term that has followed me since my formative years. It was often suggested I focus on my leadership skills and abilities because I was a natural leader. Never did I realize what leadership truly meant other than being able to have an influence on people in such a way that change occurred and I would be instrumental in that change. With this mindset, I found myself taking an authoritarian approach to management and focusing more on getting the work done than on conveying a mission and vision. Although I felt I was being successful in my role as manager, I discovered in the most difficult way possible how much disdain those who I was responsible for leading held for me.

My first experience with leadership came while I was in college obtaining degrees in social work and psychology. I worked for a store which consisted of video rentals, music and book selections. I quickly moved up the chain of command from being an associate to being a frontline manager responsible for the day to day operations of the cashiers. The title of *manager* gave me a sense of power and control which I embraced and ran with. Unfortunately, I fell into being the manager no one wanted to work with; it became difficult to cover shifts, and to get the work done. Finally, there was a drastic change in the number of hours I was scheduled to work over several pay periods. When I got the courage to discuss this cut in hours with my supervisor I was informed it was because of my management style. He explained that the cashiers were

fearful of me because of my tone of voice; they were not willing to work with me because they felt I did not care about them as employees and ultimately were not willing to work the shift with me. This was an absolute blow to me and a surprise that my coworkers felt this way. In that moment, the experience of my supervisor's leadership and the realization of how disliked I was as a manager changed my perspective. This supervisor did not take it upon himself to inform me of the issues but went directly to consequences, which left me feeling completing blindsided and confused as to why he would not share these issues with me before impacting my livelihood. Additionally, from the experience I began to learn the importance of "leadership as relational" (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 95). Cunliffe (2009) suggested "it is important for leaders to consider how they relate to others; what assumptions they hold about people; to understand how others may view the world; and create opportunities for open dialogue" (p.96). By taking an authoritarian, and dare I say, know-it-all stance, both I and my supervisor missed the importance of building relationship and allowing for open dialogue.

As I continued my studies in Social Work, I was regularly introduced to concepts and techniques for building relationships, taking a strengths-based and solution-focused angle towards practice and ultimately honing my own view of leadership. My studies brought me to another experience with leadership. My first job directly out of graduate school was working for the Alabama Department of Human Resources as a social worker responsible for the investigation of child abuse and neglect. At this time, the state did not have a formal training process. All of the information I learned about how to complete an investigation and the policies and procedures for this investigation process were handed to me in a three inch, three ring binder I still own today. I was told I would receive my first investigations in a matter of weeks. Thankfully, my supervisor truly focused on guiding me through this process with concrete

examples and undivided attention and support when I needed them. Her focus was on ensuring I understood the mission and vision of the agency, while continually pointing me in the direction of where to find answers to questions that may have arisen throughout my investigative work. Her support came in the form of building a relationship, understanding my learning style, and truly allowing me to be a leader when it came to working with families. My education and training around remaining focused on the strengths of the families and finding solutions at every turn helped me to develop a style of leadership I did not have five years earlier. I began to move away from feeling a sense of authority and began to embrace a sense of being an educator for the families, as being in partnership with them to achieve their goals. Bennis and Thomas (2002) discussed essential leadership skills, in their article *Crucibles of Leadership* as "the ability to engage others in shared meaning," "a distinctive and compelling voice," "sense of integrity (and a strong set of values)," and "adaptive capacity" (p. 45). Although, I did not necessarily have an exact understanding of the importance of these skills while at this first professional job, I could easily see each skill in my supervisor. Further, I knew this was a skillset I wanted to carry on into future working relationships and leadership roles.

A final leadership experience which has influenced my personal leadership style was in my last role as a Supervisory Social Worker. I was made responsible for the development and implementation of a unit of Social Workers solely responsible for the support and care of teenage mothers in the foster care system. My approach as the supervisor of this unit was to turn to the Social Workers I supervised for their input and guidance on what they felt was most important for these young mothers. We began this process by developing a mission and vision statement for the unit and what could and should be expected from the mothers and what the mothers could and should expect from the Social Workers. Here is where I experienced a "crucible" defined by

Bennis and Thomas (2002) as "a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or altered sense of identity" (p. 40). After developing this unit and putting all the various pieces in place, there was a change in my supervisor. The person, who became my supervisor, was previously my colleague and friend. When she was given the promotion, we briefly discussed there would be a slight change in our relationship, however when the time came the change was drastic. This change was to the point I no longer felt a part of the team, or that my input on various aspects of case management was valued. Ultimately, the unit was taken from me and I was asked to move into a different position which left me without a supervisory role. Being taken away from working within my passion of supporting teenage mothers and their children was indeed devastating. In this transition, I had to make a decision of either letting this define me as a failure or finding my "adaptive capacity" defined as "an almost magical ability to transcend adversity . . .and emerge stronger than before" (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p. 45). Through this adversity I was able to hone my skills and focus on not losing hope and moving into a position of being able to lead without the title of supervisor or manager—titles which were so very important to me only a decade earlier, even when I had little understanding of the true meaning of them. Today, because of my commitment to focusing on my leadership skills and through my experience with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology's Organizational Leadership PhD program, I have again stepped into leadership roles both professionally and personally.

My first class in the Organizational Leadership PhD program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology in 2015 focused on theories of leadership. This first class served as an epiphany as so many things in my life had fallen into place for me to be in that moment and to have the multiple situations in my life inform the development of my personal leadership

philosophy. There is no greater way for me to share my leadership philosophy today than through sharing my leadership philosophy paper from December 7, 2015.

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*Final Philosophy of Leadership: A Reflective Paper*
*December 7, 2015*

*OL556: Emerging Theories of Leadership*
*The Chicago School of Professional Psychology*

*Introduction*

> *"If we know who to be, then what to do falls into place – forms a basis for discussion about how we understand our world, how to be in the world, how we bring who we are to what we do, and how we can act in ethical ways" (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 94).*

*This description of the philosopher leader captures my idea of leadership and how I intend to approach leadership practice. While the original focus is on the philosopher leader, there are elements of mindful inquiry, collaborative, relational, emotional, transformational, ethical, and paradoxical leadership. Each of these leadership styles meld together to guide my personal practice of leadership. Over the past four months, my understanding of my own style of leadership has shifted and expanded to encompass more than a transformational style. Based on the work of Bentz and Shapiro (1998), Allen, Bordas, Hickman, Matusak, Sorenson, and Whitmire (1998), Uhl-Bien (2006), Ashkanasy and Daus (2002), Humphrey (2002), Brown and Trevino (2012), Heifetz (2008), and Smith and Lewis (2012), this initial perspective of my own leadership style and philosophy has shifted to the leadership philosophy presented here.*

*Theory*

*While Bentz and Shapiro's (1998) focus in Mindful Inquiry in Social Research is on conducting research, their explanation of mindful inquiry as a philosophical approach to*

*research with the "synthesis of four intellectual traditions: phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical social science, and Buddhism" (p. 6) is in line with my own view of leadership. Leadership is being conscious, understanding "texts in their contexts" (p. 6), knowing the impact of "domination and oppression" (p.6) on those being lead, and being "more aware" (p. 6). Leadership is collaborative and focused on "promoting a collective leadership process. . .structuring a learning environment. . . supporting relationships and interconnectedness. . .foster shared power. . . practicing stewardship and service. . . valuing diversity and inclusiveness. . . (and) committing to self-development" (Allen, Bordas, Hickman, Matusak, Sorenson, & Whitmire, 1998, p. 249-250). "Leadership is 'a shared experience, a voyage through time' and the leader is not a sole voyager" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 657). Leadership is about "the leader's perception of his or her self relative to followers and how they in turn perceive the leader" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 657).*

*Leadership is being a leader who is "skilled at perceiving the emotional climate of their organizations, both on the individual and collective levels (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002, p. 80). Leadership is being a leader with "strong emotional self-management. . .under difficult circumstances. . .by scanning the environment, grasping the key elements, and developing a plan. . .that they transmit to their followers. Leadership is about being a task leader who relies on "routine reward and procedure to motivate followers" (Humphrey, 2002, p. 497). Leadership is about being ethical and understanding the importance of "employee attitudes and outcomes including trust in supervisor, interactional fairness, supervisor effectiveness, (and) satisfaction with supervisors" (Brown &Trevino, 2012, p. 588). Finally, leadership is about drawing on the skills of "cognitive complexity, confidence, conflict management, and communication" (Smith & Lewis, 2012, p. 229) to effectively manage paradox.*

*Attitude:*

*With these theories in mind, I will approach leadership with an attitude of constant self-awareness and adjustment. My thoughts will focus on the idea that "no one person has the solutions to the multifaceted problems that a group or organization must address" (Allen et al., 1998, p. 249). My words will try to encourage a "supportive and open environment that encourage(s) initiation, facilitate(s) the sharing of information and value(s) each person's*

*contribution" (p. 249). My thoughts will focus on "we are always selves-in-relation to others," and that my leadership is a moral activity "tied in with who (I am) in relation to others, (my) values, beliefs and 'the will and capacity to empathize with others" (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 97). My thoughts will be focused on my own cognitive moral development in an effort to support the cognitive moral development of my followers (Brown & Trevino, 2012). My thoughts will involve self-talk to increase my confidence and communication through conflict management and purposefully supporting relationships between myself and others and the relationships between those I lead. Finally, my thoughts will remain focused on continually assessing "the emotional challenges inherent in a job or environment" in order to be best prepared to make adjustments as warranted.*

*Principles*

*Leadership is about learning. Focusing on these theories of leadership and understanding my own attitudes of leadership builds the principles of my personal leadership style. It is my intention to lead by continually learning and creating space for those I lead to learn. Being a leader is about preparing others to lead. This is done through building relationships. I will lead by focusing on the importance of building relationships and reflecting on "a two-way influence and social exchange relationship" between myself and those I lead. I will lead through emotional support and creating "a positive and friendly emotional climate through modeling" (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002, p. 82). I will lead through motivating followers individually to build collectively (Uhl-Bien, 2006).*

*My leadership will be couched in identifying and addressing oppressive behaviors from the external environment and supporting those I lead to work beyond those oppressions. I will lead with empathy, understanding, patience, and I will work to inspire others.*

*Behaviors*

*Given these theories, attitudes, and principles I expect to "create a positive and friendly emotional climate through modeling. . . encourage a positive emotional climate through rewards and compensation. . . train employees in emotional intelligence skills and healthy emotional*

*expression" (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002, p. 83) and impact cultural change whenever necessary to meet these ends. Further, I expect to enhance my moral compass through "honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, caring about people, openness to input, respect, and principled decision-making" (Brown & Trevino, 2012, p. 587). In situations that seem repetitive with the same challenges arising, I expect to demand experimentation without knowing what will happen next and identify what needs to remain in order to best meet the intended outcomes. I expect to shift responsibility from myself to those involved in the work to "foster shared power' (Allen et al., 1998, p. 250), encourage buy-in, and to encourage others to lead towards a resolution. (Heifetz, 2008).*

*In situations where there is a need to be innovative and seek responses to issues in a new way, I will "actively (elicit) tensions and (use) such information to seek creative solutions" (Smith & Lewis, 2012, p. 229). I expect to structure a learning environment that values diversity, builds confidence, opens communication, and maintains relationships. Finally, I commit to continually engage in my own self-development to manage conflict because I am aware conflict management and resolution is uncomfortable for me but is a key aspect of effective leadership (Heifetz, 2008).*

*Conclusion*

*Many parts of this philosophy of leadership underline who I am as a person. The study of various leadership models has provided me with the guidance to know what to do with who I am – my beliefs and values. Being able to operationalize my values and beliefs and line them up with the leadership theories highlighted in this philosophy has provided me with the opportunity to hone my leadership skills and provides a goal to attain.*

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In the same month of the above class, I enter into a different classroom at my job ready to enhance my leadership skills through the application of adaptive leadership (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). My transition from supervisor to trainer had just begun and I was identified as the trainer to become the subject matter expert in support of the agency's new leadership

development program by participating in this adaptive leadership training program. The classroom is sterile with its white walls and tables but bright red chairs. I along with five other individuals, each with leadership roles in the agency, sit attentively as the trainers work through their curriculum. At the conclusion of the first day of training, we are each asked to bring back a list of 10 to 15 individuals who can provide feedback regarding our leadership styles. To this point, I had only been in the training department for approximately six months and had been away from my previous team this same amount of time. However, I trusted the relationship I worked diligently to build with both teams and submitted their names the following day. A major part of a 360-degree leadership assessment is the self-assessment tool. For this class the chosen tool was the LPI (Posner & Kouzes, 1988). I carefully responded to the 30-item self-assessment attempting to remove all judgments and to be as transparent as possible. I asked my raters to do the same on their portion in an effort to ensure an accurate account of my practices as a leader.

Prior to reviewing our assessment results, the six participants and two trainers completed a mini retreat which introduced us to the five practices outlined in the LPI. These practices are model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Posner & Kouzes, 1988). From my training notes dated December 15, 2015:

1. *MODEL THE WAY:*
    - *clarify values by finding your voice*
    - *affirm shared values*
    - *set the example with your actions*
2. *INSPIRE A SHARED VISION:*
    - *envision the future by imaging possibilities*

- *appeal to shared aspirations*

3. *CHALLENGE THE PROCESS*
    - *look outward for innovative ways to improve*
    - *search and seize opportunities*
    - *experiment*
    - *take risks*
    - *generate small wins*
4. *ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT*
    - *collaborate through trust and relationships*
    - *strengthen others by developing competence*
    - *increase self-determination*
5. *ENCOURAGE THE HEART*
    - *show appreciation*
    - *celebrate victories and values*
    - *create community*

Having sat through the adaptive leadership training, I tricked myself into believing I already knew my strongest leadership practices. Leadership was a newer topic I found interest in when being thrusted into a supervisory role.

Thinking back to 2010, it was my first time holding the responsibility of supervising an entire unit of social workers. Our unit of six was responsible for ensuring older youth involved with the foster care system received the support and services they needed to successfully transition out of the system. This meant ensuring these youth had at least a high school education from a failing school system. If they were not able to complete high school, we were responsible

for ensuring they were working toward a certificate in a trade in which they could earn money. The challenge for me was in the fact that I had not ever worked with a caseload of youth who would stay with me for months, or years. My previous 7 years of experience was in the completion of 30 to 60 day child abuse and neglect investigations. I was trained to assess a family's situation, determine if abuse or neglect was occurring and then transfer the case as necessary. Interactions with family were limited. I proved myself to be a solid investigator, who was then promoted to a supervisor.

The transition from investigator to supervisor did not include training on leading teams or team dynamics. Training was solely focused on ensuring my team of five social workers met the benchmarks. Therefore, I took the time to seek out information on leadership and leadership styles. To my surprise, I found a wealth of information focused on leadership within the child welfare system and immediately dedicated myself to emulating what was in the text. I was so committed to the topic that in 2014, I presented a workshop titled: *From Case Manager to Social Worker: Understanding the Impact of Leadership Styles in Child Welfare* at the National Association of Social Workers conference. The session was an interactive review of the current literature focused on the impact of leadership style on meeting benchmarks, job satisfaction, and positive outcomes for child welfare clients. Through the session I also introduced an innovative way to get to positive practice change and continued professional development through the integration of two styles of leadership within the child welfare arena—transactional and transformational. I was determined to share all that I learned from reading and observing others. Hence, sitting in this session, 5 years after becoming a supervisor, I was confident that I knew my order of leadership practices:

1. Encourage the heart

2. Enable others to act
3. Inspire a shared vision
4. Model the way
5. Challenge the process

Imagine my surprise when the assessment of others listed my leadership practices as:

1. Challenge the process
2. Model the way
3. Enable others to act
4. Encourage the heart
5. Inspire a vision

How could I have gotten it so wrong? I committed myself daily to encouraging others to act based on their understanding of shared community vision. I just knew I modeled how to get work done and challenged processes only when necessary. I am certain the shock and frustration was written all over my face as the facilitator began to walk us through the next activity, "LPI observations and reflections." Here is where I justified the differences, listing "personal experience with me" and "personal opinion of me" as two ways to explain any inconsistencies in the feedback. Truth is, I was somewhere between frustration and devastation that others could not see what I saw and strived for as a leader. I needed to refocus my energy and find balance between the two lists.

So, I set out with these results and reverted back to my way of blending in and learning, I read. The books I sought out focused on leadership development (Anderson, 2012; Davis & Chaney, 2012; Sinek, 2014), emotional intelligence (Harvard Business Review, 2015), social intelligence (Goleman, 2007), supervision in social work (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), Black

leadership (Marable, 1998), and facilitative leadership specific to social work practice (Breshears & Volker, 2012). Even enrolling in a PhD program focused on organizational leadership was a part of my strategy to become a better leader. With this additional knowledge, I put skills into practice and found myself in a leadership role within two years of being removed from one. Through yet another 360-degree assessment, the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2003) my current leadership strengths and challenges were outlined from my own perspective and that of my raters—peers, superiors, and subordinates. This time, the two perspectives of my leadership, my own and my raters, were more closely aligned. What a difference 3 years could make. In the penultimate assignment of the Leadership Self-Development course offered by The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, I provided the following outline for the final paper.

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*Module 3: Survey Assessment Process: Step 5*
*April 21, 2018*

*OL700: Leadership Self-Development*
*The Chicago School of Professional Psychology*

***INTRODUCTION***

1. *Importance of Self-Assessment and 360 Degree Feedback*
2. *Assessment Tools Completed*
    a. *ESCI*
    b. *Multifactor Leadership*
3. *Description of Raters (to include how many were asked and how many responded)*
4. *Initial reaction to raters' responses versus self responses*

***STRENGTHS***

1. *Achievement Orientation*
2. *Adaptability*
3. *Organizational Awareness*
4. *Inspirational Leadership*
5. *Teamwork*
6. *Systems Thinking*
7. *Coaches and Develops People*
    a. *Treats others as individuals rather than just as members of the group*
    b. *Helps others to develop their strengths*
8. *Builds Trust*
    a. *Acts in ways that build others' respect for me*
    b. *Instills pride in others for being associated with me*
    c. *Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group*
9. *Acts with Integrity*
    a. *Consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions*
    b. *Specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose*
    c. *Emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission*
10. *Encourages Innovative Thinking*
    a. *Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate*

***CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS***

1. *Emotional Self-Control*
    a. *Solution: Increasing EI*
2. *Coaching and Developing Others*
    a. *Considers each individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others*
        i. *Solution: Purposefully identify/recognize individual strengths/goals*
    b. *Spends time teaching and coaching*

        i. *Solution: Create balance between teaching/coaching and taking on new assignments*

3. *Acts with Integrity*
    a. *Talks about values and beliefs*
        i. *Solution: Increase discussions focused on values and beliefs*
4. *Encourages Innovative Thinking*
    a. *Seek differing perspectives when solving problems*
        i. *Solution: Increase the use of appreciative inquiry when problem solving*
    b. *Get others to look at problems from many different angles*
        i. *Solution: Appreciative inquiry*
    c. *Suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments*
        i. *Solution: Appreciative Inquiry*

***CONCLUSION***

1. *Discrepancies between the two assessments*
    a. *Coaching and mentoring others*
2. *Lessons Learned*
3. *Accountability (Who will hold me accountable beyond myself)*

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My current leadership identity is one that is focused on teamwork, systems thinking (Senge, 2010), developing others, building trust, and inspiring individuals towards achievement. It is no longer about being an authoritative figure or walking into leadership roles with blind optimism. I still struggle with the fine line between emotional self-control and communicating my passion. Although I may be innovative in my thinking, I need to be open to allowing others to share their perspectives and support them to see various ways of addressing an issue. I choose to be gentle with myself when it comes to addressing my leadership challenges as development, in every sense of the word presented here, is a continual process lasting in perpetuity.

**Findings**

The goal of this chapter was to present the findings associated with the examination of my multiple minority identity formation as a Black lesbian and the formation of my leadership style by exploring development across three theoretical frameworks. Here is a synopsis of what has been shared across this chapter as a presentation of these findings to answer the central research and subquestions. As a reminder, these questions are:

Central research question: How does the development of multiple minority identities inform the leadership practices of a Black Lesbian Leader?

1. How does the racial identity of being Black inform lesbian identity development and leadership development?
2. How does the sexual orientation identity of being a lesbian inform leadership practices?
3. How do these identities, as a whole, inform leadership style?

Coming to terms with my lesbian identity led to a phase in my life full of psychological struggle and turmoil. The indoctrination of homosexuality as an abomination by the church, the seat of my Black identity, forced me into an identity crisis rooted in self-hatred. At times, embracing my lesbian identity moved me further away from the Black community as *other* sexual orientation had been presented as a white issue. This time in my life spent wanting to be fully included by a heterosexist, and even homophobic, Black community while being able to be my full authentic self, thwarted the full embrace of my lesbian identity. Further, the reaction of my mother to my coming out and the reaction of my extended family to my aunt's perceived sexual orientation left me in a constant state of confusion as I struggled to come to terms with my sexual orientation. Identifying as a lesbian and immersing myself into the lesbian, gay, bisexual,

transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community moved me further away from the Black community. This remained the case until I met other Black lesbian women through a predominantly Black LGBT Greek letter organization, Kappa Xi Omega Sorority, Incorporated, which allowed me to continue my development in the stage of identity pride. A sign of my identity synthesis from a sexual orientation identity perspective (Cass, 1979) and internalization (Cross, 1978) from a racial identity perspective was my membership into Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, a Greek letter organization founded on Christian principles. Membership in these two organizations continues to act as the manifestation of both stages of synthesis and internalization in my development.

The development of my Black identity ingrained in me characteristics of a leader who knows and understands the impact of oppression either by personal experience or the documented experiences of others. Through this knowing, I am able to *encourage the heart* by creating a community that understands the individual struggles each person faces. As I moved through experiences of reconciling my faith with my sexual orientation, embracing this additional aspect of my identity, and sharing my truth with others, I began to develop characteristics of a leader. As presented through 360-degree feedback, I learned to *challenge the process* by experimenting and taking risks. For each challenge or rejection I faced, I purposefully sought out small wins (e.g. recognizing the impact of supporting just one LGBTQ youth through their personal identity struggles). Even with this same example, I *model the way* by setting an example for others with not only my words, but with my actions. Likewise, through integrating my Black identity with my lesbian identity, I have found my voice and located it within the limited discussion of Black Lesbian Leaders, another key aspect of a leader who works to *model the way.* Building relationships and a support system with my graduate

studies mentors, with my counselor as I struggled with my lesbian identity, and restoring the relationship with my mother, I have learned to build trust and was supported to a place of self-determination, lessons that I use as a leader to *enable others to act.* Finally, even in seeing the narrative of my life laid out for all to read, and recognizing the words presented here cannot capture the full scope of my negative experiences, I still focus on future possibilities and aspirations. Having this focus for myself, allows me to support others to envision future possibilities thus supporting my leadership role to *inspire a shared vision.*

**Themes**. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) provided a clear definition of *theme* in qualitative research as "an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent patterned experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole" (p. 362). Throughout my data analysis, three themes continued to emerge. These were rejection, to some extent, by peers and family, the experience and use of double consciousness as a protective factor, and an insatiable desire to figure things out and transcend adversity. The themes surfaced through my experiences of identity formation, identity acceptance, and the process of social acculturation as a Black lesbian woman in an effort to rise to positions of leadership. Understanding these themes and being able to identify the growth that came with addressing the negativity of my life experiences helped me to develop as a leader in spite of the complicating factors of gendered racism (Monnat, 2010, Miville & Ferguson, 2014), the stereotyping of Black Women (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008, & Monnat, 2010), the concept of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903), and antigay prejudice (Herek, 2009, Lehavot & Lambert, 2007).

***Rejection***. Woven throughout the narrative are examples of my experiences of rejection. The first experience of rejection was the departure of my father when I was eight years old. This

rejection left me in the care of my mother who assured my attendance at church. Being raised by her and attending church provided the foundation of my identity as female and Black. The second form of rejection came from my peers and was rooted in my racial identity. Although there were no overt instances of racism, the hegemonic Eurocentric beauty standards I could never represent as a young Black girl in small town Texas lead to experiences of rejection. During my process of self-identifying, both internally and externally as a lesbian woman, rejection came from strangers who told me I would never be accepted and from family members whose personal beliefs stood as a barrier to acceptance. The most hurtful of these being the rejection I felt from my mother—even with her continued verbal and tangible expressions of love and pride. Future experiences of rejection were the result of poor leadership and management—my own and that of others. These various experiences of rejection occurred throughout the early years of my life. This was a time in which I longed to feel a connection with individuals who were unable to cultivate that connection due to their own personal biases, shortcomings, or struggles. The continued experience of rejection almost left me in a place of making permanent decisions on temporary emotions. However, because of an ability to consciously identify my existence within and without the expectations of others I was able to move forward in my development.

***Double consciousness***. Defined as a complicating factor in Chapter 1, *double* consciousness is what DuBois (1903) defined as a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (p. 3). Within my experience, seeing me through the eyes of others meant seeing myself as not attractive, unwanted, and rejected. These messages came later in my development as I sought out romantic and professional relationships. Being able to identify and embrace my *two-ness* (DuBois, 1903), I was able to also recognize the stereotypical thinking and

assumptions that I allowed to become my personal narrative. This identification also led to my development of innovative strategies, self-awareness, and an ability to address the rejection, pain and despair of my multiple minority identities. I began to identify specific connections and bonds and take heed to their lessons and the knowledge provided in various texts to fit in with those who did not identify as Black, lesbian, or as women. Although "a lot of time and energy is spent negotiating and enduring the conflicts between who one is as a person and how one struggles to live with the misrepresentations of the outside world," (Black, 2007, p. 394) I found the energy used to vacillate between identities, or to codeswitch, provided me with opportunities to continue my development from an informed standpoint. Double consciousness, although initially presented as a negatively challenging experience, afforded me the capacity to see beyond the pain of rejection and integrate negative experiences into my identity and leadership development.

***Transcending adversity***. In an effort to transcend adversity as described by Bennis and Thomas (2002), I was purposeful in finding ways to continue my personal and professional growth. This came in the form of reading texts on Black identity development, leadership development, and seeking out role models who could support the healthy development of my lesbian identity. My approach to development shifted from being unstructured and based on what happened to and around me to being purposeful with guidance from identity development and leadership texts. As an emerging leader who took the lessons of her early and later years to inform her leadership style, I began to face reality, recognize my emotional needs for love and belonging, and partner with others towards an intentional and purposeful leadership identity. Transcending adversity in this way directed me to a place of developing self-awareness, leadership acuity, and facing oppression personally and as a leader.

***Mothers and daughters***. Interestingly, as I reviewed and analyzed the collected data, an additional theme, or finding surfaced: the influence of the relationship between mothers and daughters. My mother's presence and influence are expectedly recognized during the narratives of my formative years—ages 0–8, and again during my process of coming out. My socialization, through attendance at church, family gatherings, and ultimately my decision to attain higher education, was influenced by my mother, a Black woman raising two children on her own. According to Hill (2015), "one important aspect of the socialization process for Black parents is racial socialization - defined as parents' attempt to prepare their children for the realities of being Black in America" (p. 141). One of these realities is the absence of a father figure due to divorce. This put my mother in the position to socialize me to "assume heavy responsibility for paid work, family, and community" (Hill, 2015, p. 141). Hill (2015) reiterated this has "led to definitions of womanhood among Blacks that include achievement, work, and independence" and "it is commonly held that African American daughters, from an early age, are taught to assume strong family roles and to be strong, self-reliant, and independent" ( p. 141). Scott (2003) stated, "Black daughters are socialized to be independent and assertive as well as family-centered and nurturing … to be as authoritative, individualistic and confident as African America sons are, and as economically self-sufficient and personally autonomous as sons are" (p. 523). These characteristics, strong, self-reliant, independent, nurturing, authoritative, individualistic, autonomous, and confident have been identified as characteristics of a leader (Antonakis & Day, 2017). My mother was able to impart an Afrocentric cultural view that stressed community, spirituality, affect, and similarities (Kellerhals, Ferreira, & Perrenoud, 2002) without compromising the value of lived experience by shielding me from her personal experiences of racism and segregation. Again, instilling in me, at a young age, characteristics of a future leader.

Our relationship and my upbringing served as means to instill in me the foundational principles of leadership on which I would build my leadership identity and practices.

Two of the four researchers who agreed to review this chapter for thematic analysis identified similar and additional themes. These themes included:

Reviewer 1: Social Work

- Role Modeling
- Socialization via the media and the church
- Rejection
- Oppression through both silence and overt messages
- Normalization of sexism
- Strategic or Intentional development

Reviewer 2: Educational Leadership

- Impact of mother-daughter relationship
- Rejection and abandonment
- Transcendence through education and learning
- Identity as separate and apart rather than integrated
- Focus on self (awareness, expression, love)

The themes identified by these two outside reviews align with the themes initially addressed during data analysis. Rejection is cited by both reviewers as well as educational or intentional development. Although double consciousness is not specifically named by the reviewers, this concept is alluded to as socialization via the media and identity assimilation and acculturation, or *separate and apart* rather than *integrated*.

## Conclusion

Through the above snippets of my life's story, journal entries from my younger years, and semistructured conversations with key individuals in my life, I have outlined my development across four domains: gender identity, racial identity, sexual orientation, and leadership identity. These vignettes highlight events in my life which I believe informed my development across the life span and how that development informs my leadership practices. The presentation of raw data, in this chapter answered the four research questions posed throughout this project. Chapter 5 will revisit the findings discussed here while connecting them to the literature and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter 2, and underscore limitations. Additionally, implications for practice and future research will be presented.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

## Introduction

Autoethnography creates the opportunity for lived experiences to be expressed and analyzed through the lenses of varied theoretical approaches and models of development. This contributes to the field of academic research on the leadership development of Black Lesbian Leaders by enhancing the "cultural understanding of self and others . . . and transform[ing] self and others toward cross-cultural coalition building" (Chang, 2015, p. 213). These benefits of autoethnography outlined by Chang (2015) address what Chin (2010) inferred about the literature on leadership generally not incorporating issues of a "commitment to diversity in our nation's institutions and communities" (p. 150). This project focused on the theoretical frameworks of gender identity development (Katz, 1979), racial identity development (Cross, 1971, 1995), sexual identity development (Cass, 1979), and leadership development and practices (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 1988). The following discussion highlights these theoretical frameworks collectively as multiple minority identity development, intersectionality, and leadership development. A discussion of the themes that emerged within each of these theories is included. The focus then shifts to a discussion of the study's relevance, limitations, research implications, and recommendations for future research.

## Discussion

**Multiple minority identity development.** The work of Reynolds and Pope (1991) and their multidimensional identity model introduced four ways by which individuals who have multiple minority identities choose to identify. These are accepting identities placed on the individual by others, personally identifying as only one identity, identifying with multiple

identities based on context, and identifying with multiple aspects of identity in synthesis in any given context (Reynolds and Pope, 1991). The conceptual model for multiple dimensions of identity is an "illustration of one person's identity construction at a particular time" that elevates the final piece of the quadrant and depicts the "possibility of living comfortably with multiple identities, rather than simply describing multiple dimensions of identity" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 408). The narrative presented in this project supports the work of Reynolds and Pope (1991) and Jones and McEwen (2000) in regards to both racial identity development and sexual orientation identity development. As the subject of this study developed her identity as a Black person in Abilene, TX and as a lesbian within her family, she figuratively navigated through these multiple minority identities and their expression. First, she allowed others to label her, then through identifying with only one aspect of her minority identity and avoiding being labeled identities of which she was fearful or based on the context (e.g. church or school), and finally living a life in which she identifies with all aspects of her identity. Further, this final step is also aligned with the work of Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) who further developed the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) model which provides a depiction of relationships among socially constructed identity dimensions "recognizing that each dimension cannot be understood in isolation" (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007, p. 3).

The findings related to multiple minority identity development are important because of the support they provide to previous research. In regards to her Black identity, the subject moved through the four stages of nigrescence theory by the direct and indirect experiences of racism, and through "the developmental process of becoming Black - an explanation of the Black identity and consciousness process for Black Americans" (Ritchey, 2014, p. 101). As laid out in the presented narrative the subject moved through each of the four stages of Cross' (1991) theory

from preencounter to encounter to immersion–emersion, and finally to internalization commitment. The same is seen with Cass' (1979) six stages of lesbian identity development as the subject moved from a place of confusion about what being a lesbian and what that means to a place of living in synthesis by which being a lesbian is not the greatest aspect of her whole identity.

Further, Black lesbian women who may feel isolated in their experiences of identification across the multidimensional identity model (Reynolds & Pope, 1991) now have the opportunity to embrace a sense of normalcy by seeing the ways in which each quadrant manifests. This allows for "self-knowledge, self-clarification, self-presentation, and self-expression" (Shamir and Eilam, 2005), p. 413)—all characteristics identified as those of authentic leaders (Yukl, 2013). These findings also support the application of an intersectional analysis of the narrative presented.

**Intersectionality**. Intersectionality has been described as the interaction of multiple identities and how these identities work together to shape some aspect of an individual's experiences. The connection between autoethnography and intersectional research is the "shared goal of social change through the creation of evocative stories" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 744). This approach is "meant to invite the reader into the story in such a way as to promote a more just society" (Jones, 2009, p. 290). In the presented autoethnographic study, there was an attempt to isolate the identities of gender, race, and sexual orientation. However, as the narrative is shared it becomes apparent that the separation of identities is nearly impossible. The experiences of gender identity development and the development of a synthesized lesbian identity were impacted by the racial identity of Black. As highlighted in the opening chapter of

this project, identifying as Black and woman negatively impacts leadership opportunities, especially when mentors are not available.

Sharing stories throughout time has served to bring others into the experiences of people different from themselves so as to create a space of understanding for the lived experiences of others. This underlines the importance of this project to those in the position to elevate Black Lesbian women to positions of leadership. Being exposed to the experiences and unique development of Black Lesbian women creates understanding of leadership abilities and identity. As noted by hooks (1981) "no other group in America has had their identity socialized out of existence as have Black women" (p. 7). For Black lesbian women, the narrative presented here reinforces the experience of intersectionality and provides an example for Black Lesbian women to begin a type of resocialization into existence through their narratives.

**Leadership development.** Analyzing the life narrative of a Black Lesbian Leader has allowed for the clear identification of ways in which her experiences have informed her leader development and her leadership development, practices, and philosophy. Recall Day, Harrison, and Halpin's (2009) definition of leader development as "the acquisition or development of within-individual attributes such as knowledge, knowledge structures, skills, abilities, and competencies" (p. 159). The narrative of this project speaks to the knowledge, abilities, and competencies developed across multiple minority identities which helped the subject to develop characteristics of a leader. Leadership development "focuses on a process of development that inherently involves multiple individuals" (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2013, p. 64) and "is thought to occur mainly as a function of between-individual processes" (Day et al., 2009, p. 159).

The subject of this case study has been able to continue the process of leadership development through interaction with those who were interviewed for this project and through consultation with individuals who are leaders in their respective fields. This continued development occurred as the result of compiling nearly three decades of narratives and conducting thoughtful analysis regarding each narratives application to her current leadership identity and practices. According to Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford (2008), "outstanding leaders rely on past experiences in sense making activities," (p. 329) and "experiencing events that emphasize positive views of others as well as empathetic understanding of their strife is strongly related to outstanding performance" (p. 330) as a leader. Although the narrative of Chapter 3 does not highlight overt instability and uncertainty, the covert emotional turmoil experienced while developing across the various development models established a sense of empathy for others because of personal experiences that inform leadership styles and practices.

Making sense of childhood, teenage, and adult experiences of minority identity development underscored the effect of complicating factors as described in Chapter 1 while also turning these negative experiences into a means for growth as a leader. Day et al. (2009) suggest leader development is focused on intrapersonal and individual self-awareness with a commitment to diversity, openness to others, and loyalty. Engaging in this project allowed for the continued leader and leadership development of the subject as she became self-aware and open to sharing her personal experiences with others. This continued, yet slow, process of growth for the subject of this study embeds the importance of this study in the subject's development and supports the assertion that the sharing of life narratives is relevant to leader development.

**Emerging themes**. Within each of the theoretical frameworks analyzed above, a specific theme emerged. No one theme is more prominent than the other as each theme from rejection to transcending adversity builds on the lessons and experiences of theme before it. From the development of multiple minority identity development came an experience of rejection. Through the application of an intersectional approach to development emerged the use of double consciousness as a protective factor. Finally, by understanding rejection through the lens of double consciousness, the subject of this case study transcending diversity to become the leader she is today. Following, is how these themes arise in current research, further supporting their presence in the case study of this project.

***Rejection***. Part of moving through the various stages of minority identity development was the subject of the case study's experience of rejection. Her initial identity development was rooted in identity confusion and struggle, a loss of connection that resulted in alienation and a need for belonging and acceptance which emanated pain and despair. As noted, this rejection came from both peers and family. Multiple research studies (Cochran, Stuart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Craig, Austin, Alessi, McInroy, & Keane, 2017; Feinstein, Goldfried, & Davila, 2012; McNair, 2017; Sterzing, Gartner, Woodford, & Fisher, 2017) cite family and community rejection and rejection sensitivity as common challenges for LGBT individuals, specifically ethnic minorities (Richter, Lindhal, & Malik, 2017), for coming out. This rejection comes in the form of being forced out of the home, facing bullying, stigmatization and mental health challenges (Feinstein, Goldfried, & Davila, 2012). Similar to this theme of rejection, Craig et al. (2017) found "being shunned by family and culture was illustrated through real or perceived transgressions of gender expectations and roles, violating religious doctrine, and exclusion and taunting by family members" (p. 622). Two of three of these examples were a part of this case

study's findings. "Rejection sensitivity, as it applies to sexual minorities, refers to the tendency to anxiously expect to be rejected because of one's sexual orientation" (Feinstein et al., 2012, p. 918). This sensitivity was specifically revealed through the presented self-narrative as the subject struggled with disclosing her sexual orientation to her mother. However, the subject moved through her development and began to recognize the turmoil associated with rooting her identity into an ideal she could not achieve. She was able to see the world around her from a diunital perspective. According to Easterling (2015), Dixon (1977) suggested African logic is diunital which means "something can be a thing and something else at the same time (and in the same way) without contradicting itself (para. 1). In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois coined this double consciousness.

***Double consciousness***. Within the complicating factors introduced in Chapter 1, double consciousness is discussed as a burden. Within this section and theming the data, double consciousness emerges as a gift or what DuBois (1903) calls a gifted second sight. For the subject of this case study, the use of double consciousness or a diunital perspective acted as a protective factor that guided her from rejection by others to an acceptance of self. As previously defined, WEB DuBois (1903) introduced the concept of double consciousness as being "dependent upon the unfolding relationships and the dialogue or interaction between minority and majority subjectivities; as two separate but entwined forms of consciousness" (Meer, 2018, p. 5). Dovidio, Gaertner, Pearson, and Riek (2005) highlighted the seemingly debilitating nature of double consciousness. However, through his writing, DuBois (1903) also states Black people are "born with a veil, and gifted a second-sight in this American world" (p. 10). This second sight sees the self from the perspective of one's own culture and from the perspective of others while "longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer

self" (DuBois, 1903, p. 11). Current research (Dovidio et al., 2005; Luke, 2017; Meer, 2018) recognizes double consciousness as "adaptive and constructive" (Dovidio et al., 2005, p. 242) and as "a source of epistemic power and privilege (Luke, 017, p. 6). It is a means of "refusal to choose between opposed identities" (Meer, 2018, p. 304). McNair (2017) connected the identity of sexual minorities to this concept stating "integrating sexual minority identity into . . .other identities is a key resilience strategy" (p. 448). Through integrating identities, and being able to switch between her identities as a Black woman, a Black woman within a white community, and as a lesbian within the Black community, the subject of this case study personified this DuBoisian duality. In an effort to construct a sense of self that is "continually subject to implicit power relations" (Meer, 2018, p. 7), but does not lend itself to choosing one identity over another the subject:

> would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa, . . . would not bleach [her] Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for [she]knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. [She] simply wishes to make it possible to be both a Negro and an American. . . .without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in [her] face." (DuBois, 1903, p. 5)

The work of moving between identities is painstaking but "aims at once to restore the past, to work through it, and to move beyond it in the interest of someday living differently," (Cooppan, 2005, p. 309). For the subject of this case study, living differently meant transcending adversity.

***Transcending adversity.*** According to Bennis and Thomas (2002) transcending adversity occurs in the presence of "two primary qualities: the ability to grasp context and

hardiness" (p 45). This first quality comes with being able to "put a situation in perspective" (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p.45). In this project, this perspective occurs when the subject rises above experiences of rejection by purposefully looking at experiences from an *other* perspective and learning ways to apply new learning to a situation. The second quality of hardiness, "the perseverance and toughness that enable people to emerge from devastating circumstances without losing hope" (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p. 45), surfaced as the subject of the case study drew on the strength that was instilled in her from a strong mother figure, religious foundation, and her own individual identity/personality.

Craig et al. (2017) studied the intersections of resilience for ethnoracial sexual minority girls (ESMG) and capture the essence of transcending diversity by defining resilience as "the ability to adapt constructively to risk exposure understanding out of actual and perceived threats to well-being" (p. 615). Further, the scholars tie this idea of resilience to adaptive coping. "Factors shown to contribute to adaptive coping among women and adolescents include internal factors, social support, as well as catalyzing events" (Craig et al., 2017, p. 616). The internal factors identified include self-regulation, self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-understanding (Craig et al., 2017). All of these factors are evident in this project as the internal dimension of identity of the subject is explored. Finally, scholars (Craig et al., 2017; McNair, 2017) have suggested "that identifying as an ethnoracial minority and sexual minority individual may be protective" (Craig et al., 2017, p. 616). This coupled with intentional development and a deep openness to learning lead to the subject of this case study emerging as leader from within the margins. Learning about leadership development and recognizing the lessons in the perspectives of others, and utilizing negative experiences to inform her own leadership pulled together the themes of

rejection and the adaptive approach of double consciousness to solidify a leadership identity beyond the experience of adversity.

The above discussion of multiple minority identity development, intersectionality, leadership development, and their identified themes, emphasizes the purpose of this study: to identify the ways in which these concepts are interrelated. Figure 6 illustrates the findings of this study, the interrelated nature of multiple minority identities and leadership development, and the emerging themes. According to Gardenswartz and Rowe's (2003) Dimensions of Diversity Wheel the largest aspect of the internal dimension is personality. According to the American Psychological Association (2018) "personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving" (para. 1). For the purpose of this project, individual identity represents the subject of this case study's personality domain within the internal dimension. It can be surmised, from the narrative presented and the themes which emerged through data analysis that this central individual identity serves as the prominent component of the internal dimension of identity. The subject's response to rejection across development, her use of double consciousness for self-protection, and her ability to dig deep to figure things out and embrace diversity are aspects of her personality that acted as the foundation of her identity and were informed by her development across identities. The arrows represent the flow of influence from one identity to another through a continual cycle.

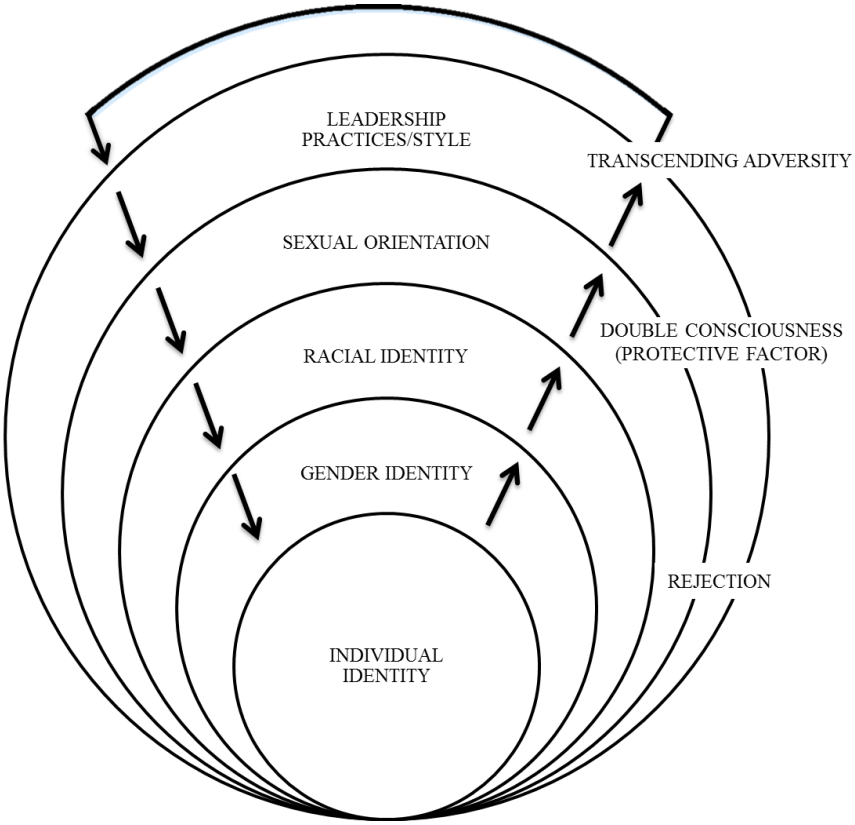


*Figure 6*. Readaptation of the internal dimension of the dimensions of diversity wheel with flow of influence and emerging themes (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003)

Finally, throughout the narrative presented in Chapter 4, there are undertones of how oppressive behaviors and mindsets are ingrained in the ways individuals who identify as white, heterosexual, and male understand and relate to those living beyond these identities. This assumption is rooted in critical race theory in which theorists "assert that racism is a normal, not aberrational, aspect of contemporary society" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 439). Oppression is not always revealed in direct verbal or nonverbal insults (Solorzano, 2000). Oppressive behaviors also occur through the microaggressions of not allowing women who are ordained ministers sit in the pulpit, or being a high school male who will not date a Black girl because of what his parents might say, or not attending your child's wedding because of personal beliefs against her lesbian identity.

**Philosophical stance and research findings.** This autoethnographic case study is situated squarely in the crux of the intersection between critical race theory, queer theory, and intersectional theory. The central research question and focus of this project was to identify ways in which my development across multiple minority identities informed my leadership practices as a Black Lesbian Leader. The above data collection and analysis reveals that this project corroborates the major underlying assumptions of these theories.

Critical race theory suggests the voice of racial and ethnic minorities is "systematically excluded from the elite discourse on power [and] if society is to become more just and equal, these voices must be included in leadership as opposed to servant roles (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 440). This study's direct focus on the leadership development of an ethnic and racial minority squarely situates an often excluded voice into the discussion of leadership development. Queer theory focuses on breaking down the binary categories of homo/hetero and deconstructing sexual categorization. Finally, intersectional theory suggests "people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structured power" (Richardson & Loubier, 2008, p. 143). In an attempt to pull the three minority identities of the subject of this case study, it was found to be nearly impossible to look at each identity separate and apart from the others.

**Relevance to Others**

The ultimate goal of this critical autoethnographic case study was to act as a catalyst to give voice to Black Lesbian Leaders who have not had a voice within the discourse on leadership development. Secondary to this goal was the increase of empirical support for the study of the intersections of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation while seeking ways to encourage higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy among this audience. These two goals are the seat of the

relevance of this study for Black Lesbian Leaders. Even though Black Lesbian Leaders have held a fundamental role in feminist movements (Mehrotra, 2010) and the theoretical evolution of feminism around the world and with examples of the crucial contributions of Black Lesbian women in social justice movements even up to the creation of Black Lives Matter (Garza, 2014), "Black writing has to carry [the] burden of other people's desires . . . it's always perceived as working out somebody else's agenda" (Brown, 1995, p. 455).

With that, there is new learning that can then be applied to the work of those who intend to be leaders and for those who intend to support leaders thus giving it relevance to those outside of the Black Lesbian Leader experience. These lessons or areas of relevance are the application of social identity theory and its use to enhance intergroup relationships (Dovidio, Gaetner, Perason & Riek, 2005) and the application of critical theory to "center the margins" (Sterzing et al., 2017).

**Social identity theory**. Dovidio et al. (2005) focused a chapter in the text *Social Identification in Groups* on the theories of social identity and social categorization. Revisiting Tajfel and Turner (1979) from Chapter 2, social identity theory is built on the foundational principle of a person's ability to self-identify as either a unique individual or as a member of a social collective. Social categorization theory suggests intergroup relations are positively enhanced when the idea of other is removed from the categorization processes of individuals. It enables individuals to quickly characterize others as ingroup or outgroup members (Dovidio et al., 2005). Positive "intergroup relations begin when people in different groups think about themselves as group members rather than as distinct individuals" (Dovidio et al., 2005, p. 233). Both social identity theory and social categorization highlight "identification as a member of a social group is sufficient to shape how people respond to others and influence how people

perceive themselves" (Dovidio et al., 2005, p. 236). By narrating the lived experience of a Black Lesbian Leader and recognizing the identified themes across multiple experiences, individuals are better able to see similarities between their own self narratives and those of Black Lesbian Leaders. This juxtaposition can serve to begin the process of destabilizing heteronormativity and hegemonic ideals. An ingroup identity is realized by highlighting existing common memberships and common goals or fate. The common goal highlighted in this project is understanding the ways in which leadership development is influenced. Ultimately, shifting an individual's perception of Black, lesbian, and woman identities as *other* identities creates cross categorizations which "have been proven to be effective at reducing biases toward members of other groups. . . across a broad range of situations" (Dovidio et al., 2005, p. 237).

**Centering the margins**. Sterzing et al. (2017) suggested centering the margins and prioritizing "theories and empirical evidence that best address the experiences of people with intersecting marginalized identities" (p. 89). Centering the margins is "conceived as a practical way in which formerly marginalized groups may redefine their struggle by viewing themselves at the center of their cultural universe" (Coates, 2007, p. 587). In order for centering to be effective, members of nonmarginalized groups must reinforce this centering. This occurs through obtaining knowledge about and applying the tenets of critical race theory, intersectional theory, feminist theory, and queer theory. All of which are addressed in this critical autoethnographic case study. Coates (2007) suggested the process of centering the margins is a "structural shift in the social system itself" (p. 587) and creates the opportunity for a "perspective that recognizes not one but multiple overlapping cultural centers" (p. 587). This creates a "dynamic mosaic where all centers are equally viable, vibrant, and accepted" (Coates, 2007, p. 587). This centering can only occur through a both/and approach of Black Lesbian Leaders

sharing their experiences and individuals who do not identify as Black Lesbian Leaders being open to addressing ways in which these negative experiences can be diminished. As stated by Lorde (1984) "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house (p. 113).

The base of relevance for those who are outside of the experiences of being Black, lesbian, or woman is in the ways in which the information provided throughout this project informs how these individuals interact with and engage Black Lesbian Leaders and in how they allow marginalized experiences to move to the center of discussions. Recognizing ingroup identity and the overlap of cultural centers provides a means to move race, gender, and sexual orientation from a "source of division, difference, and discrimination. . . .[to a] redemptive site of memory, connection, and affiliation across the globe" (Cooppan, 2005, p.315).

## Limitations

This autoethnographic case study is limited due to the inherent weaknesses of the methodology. These include the use of only one subject of research and ethical questions that arise due to this limited sample. However, this does not take away from the creation of knowledge centered on the lived experiences of Black Lesbian Leaders. Additionally, as presented in Chapter 1, the limitation of relational ethics arose. Relational ethics "recognize and value mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between research and researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). Specifically, because of the delicate nature of the researcher's relationship with her mother related to the researcher's sexual orientation and the researcher's desire to maintain respect and connectedness, interviews, structured or unstructured, with her mother did not center on her sexual orientation identity. At the point of which the subject was outed to her mother, she has continued to hear messages from her about the abomination of her sexual orientation and its consequences. As cited in Craig et al.

(2017) “many ethnoracial sexual minority girls engaged in coping and self-advocacy that had the additional aim of maintaining family connections through respectful dialogue . . . [and] often assumed the role of family peacemaker even under precarious circumstances” (p. 627). Questioning or forcing the mother to discuss the subject’s sexual orientation would lend to a breakdown in the family connection. Respect for her mother’s belief and the need for self-protection kept the subject from directly interviewing her mother for this project. Nevertheless, the use of journals and public information also acted as a means to enhance credibility and trustworthiness.

Although the narrative presented purports to answer the research questions with focus on the impact of multiple identity formation, an additional theme was identified that supports the subject’s relationship with her mother impacting her leadership development just as much as, if not more than, the development of her female, Black, and lesbian identities. Future research could explore the importance and influence of the mother-daughter relationship on leader identity and development. Finally, as the autoethnographic methodology is a personal narrative, there is greater opportunity for personal bias in data selection and presentation to surface. Yet, multiple minority identity development and leadership development are deeply personal experiences rooted in ideas, experiences, and concepts of the subject. One’s personal worldview will inevitably inform qualitative research, making it meaningful and realistic for most readers. However, personal bias concerns for this project were addressed through the use of external reviewers to support thematic analysis. A secondary limitation in the attempted use of external reviewers was the refusal of two reviewers to provide feedback due to the LGBTQ content of this study. Their refusal further highlights the need for more conversations about LGBTQ identities to normalize their existence and remove the necessity for research solely focused on

this singular aspect of identity. In instances where the narrative related to particularly difficult experiences, the researcher and subject pushed through the emotional upset to ensure complete stories were presented. Additionally, all narratives considered for this project are presented in Appendix D with those most relevant to the purpose of this case study being presented along with the themes identified through data analysis. Recognizing these limitations provides the opportunity to caution the reader to check personal bias and assumptions while experiencing this project.

## Research Implications

This critical autoethnographic case study holds clinical, professional, and academic implications for those interested in the study of leadership and leadership development from multiple minority identity and intersectional perspectives. The methodology of critical autoethnography also presents implications for future autoethnographic studies. Boylorn and Orbe (2014) describe critical autoethnography as integrating three aspects of critical theory: "to understand the lived experiences of real people in context, to examine social conditions and uncover oppressive power arrangements, and to fuse theory and action to challenge processes of domination" (p. 20). The clinical implications of this project are for those individuals faced with the "cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions" (Pierce, 1995, p. 281) and the clinical professionals that seek to support them. Professional implications are directed towards the audience of Black Lesbian women who aspire to be leaders, Black Lesbian Leaders, and those who seek to understand the complexity of the lifespan development of Black Lesbian Leaders. Academic implications are aimed at institutions of higher learning focused on uncovering and addressing inequality, and those with a desire to support the leadership development of Black Lesbian women through specific programming, mentoring, or other educational supports.

This project informs the clinical process of addressing the theoretical contribution of microaggressive behavior toward "diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence" (Pierce, 1995, p. 281). Successful leaders are those who are able to integrate their life experiences and learn from them. For some, this integration, especially of the continued experience of oppression, can best take place in a clinical setting (e.g. individual or group counseling). Surfacing and systematically addressing microaggressive experiences support the development of a leader identity that incorporates intrapersonal and individual self-awareness with a commitment to diversity and openness to others—key aspects of a leader. This process, for some, may require the support of a clinical practitioner who can guide the process of writing one's own autoethnography and informs professional development.

When we learn about the complexity of the lived experiences and challenges of others, we tend towards a better understanding of their personality (Alea & Bluck, 2003; Barclay, 1995; Keller, 2003; Taranth, n.d.) and ultimately the parts of their personality that inform their leadership traits. This exposure also allows individuals to consider their own lives and begin their own process of reflection and self-assessment. This project acts as an outline for future scholars to share their life narratives as a means of gaining more insight into the processes of their development. Through creating their own life narratives Black Lesbian Leaders and those working to hone their leadership skills can identify life situations that informed their current style of leadership, or the ways by which they interact with people throughout the course of their lives. This creates a foundation for self-reflection and self-assessment which has been touted across leadership literature as the starting point of leadership development.

For the external audience or those reading the future autoethnographies of Black Lesbian Leaders, the unveiling of power struggles and social conditions that support those power

struggles will likely occur thus providing opportunity for reflection on how to address these microaggressions. Within academic settings, this project presents an activity that can be incorporated into leadership development lessons to begin the systematic process of identifying those experiences which inform leadership practices. Building on the foundation of leadership theory, management theory, and organizational development, the creation of an autoethnography by leadership students can support a parallel process of understanding development for individuals and organizations. Specifically, the idea of how lived experiences inform future behaviors. Ligon, et al. (2008) noted "given the impact of life narratives on formation of prescriptive mental models, it is plausible that life narratives represent a key underlying mechanism by which life experiences are related to differential development of and actions taken by outstanding leaders" (p. 314). Thus, it can be surmised that the act of scribing one's life narrative will bring awareness to prescriptive mental models that enhance or diminish leadership development and actions.

The overarching implication presented by the methodological approach of autoethnography is the need for future research endeavors that further explicate minority identity development. The sharing of one story cannot be the end of the discussion about the development experiences of Black Lesbian Leaders. However, this study can be the starting point that begins to open the discourse and that inspires other Black Lesbian Leaders to share their life narratives as a place of self-development and understanding for others. This gives voice and visibility to other Black Lesbian women and leaders who have searched the annals of scholarly literature seeking a study specifically for and by someone who carries similar identities.

## Recommendations for Future Research

As addressed in the Limitations section, this autoethnographic project exclusively consisted of one Black Lesbian Leader's experience of development across multiple minority identities. Answers to the question of, "how the development of multiple minority identities informs the leadership practices of a Black Lesbian Leader" were presented for one subject. The first recommendation for future research, as noted in other autoethnographic projects, is the use of life narratives and autoethnography by others to seek answers to similar central research questions. Although one autoethnography may only initiate the discovery process, future autoethnographies focused on similar research questions will elevate the subject matter further. This will also create a smaller gap in current research regarding the leadership development of Black Lesbian Leaders. Secondly, this project set out to provide a preview to the process of completing an autoethnography as part of a leadership development program specific to the intersectional experiences of Black Lesbian women; future research can apply this practice and identify ways in which the process of autoethnography enhanced leadership development.

Third, future research should utilize collected autoethnographic projects of Black Lesbian Leaders to inform cultural awareness programs for executive leaders. Reading the specific experiences of others, rather than fictitious anecdotes provides the foundation for a connection between theory and practice. Fourth, the term *double consciousness* has overwhelmingly had a negative connotation suggesting a level of turmoil in reconciling one's identity as a Black American. Future research on the use of double consciousness as a protective factor would add to the dialogue regarding this concept and its use as a positive element of Black identity development. Finally, future research directed towards the experiences of Black Lesbian

Leaders should also focus on the impact of social interactions and personal relationships and how these inform leadership development, practices and style.

## Conclusion

Chang (2015) surmised doing autoethnography has helped to "connect our individual past with our individual and collective present, understand culturally rooted reasons for our comfort with others of similarity, discomfort with others of difference, and aversion with others of opposition, and expand this understanding into culturally unfamiliar territories" (p.218). This autoethnographic project set out to create this connection, understanding, and expansion while sharing the life narrative of a Black Lesbian Leader through the exploration of how her multiple minority identity development informed her leadership practices and style. The data collected and the analysis of that data revealed, that for the subject of this case study, her development across the minority identities of female, Black, and lesbian informed the ways in which she practices leadership. In addition to responding to the research question, this project also achieved the goals of closing a gap in current research focused on the leadership development and practices of Black Lesbian women, while also providing an examination of identity formation and leadership development as a unit through the application of an intersectional analysis. Finally, it is the researcher's hope that this project has acted as a catalyst for other Black Lesbian Leaders to share their life narratives giving us visibility and a place in the academic discourse on leadership development.

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Appendix A: Non-HS Determination Letter


**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**
**Non-human Subjects Research Determination**

04-Jan-2018

IRB # : IRB-17-12-0026

Study Title: The Intersection of Multiple Identity Formation and Leadership Development as a Black Lesbian Leader: A Critical Autoethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigator: Brooks, Brandynicole

Study Team:

RE: IRB Review of **"The Intersection of Multiple Identity Formation and Leadership Development as a Black Lesbian Leader: A Critical Autoethnographic Case Study"**

Dear Investigator,

Research activities that involve human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the TCS IRB prior to implementation. Research is defined as:

"A systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute generalizable knowledge." 45 CFR 46.102(d)

Human subjects is defined as:

"A living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) Identifiable private information." 45 CFR 46.102(f)

In order for a project to require IRB review it must meet both the definition of research and the definition of a human subject. As your project does not meet the definition of research IRB review is not required.

Appendix B: Informed Consent


**Investigator:** Brandynicole Brooks, LICSW

**Study Title:** The Intersection of Multiple Identity Formation and Leadership Development as a Black Lesbian Leader

I am a student at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. This study is being conducted as a part of my dissertation requirement for Organizational Leadership.

I am asking you to participate in a research study focused on my experience of multiple identity formation. You have been chosen for this study because you are a family member, close friend, or coworker who may have a unique perspective on specific events in my life that I believe helped to shape my identity as a Black lesbian leader. Please take your time to read the information below and feel free to ask any questions before signing this document.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to explore the development of multiple identities (e. g. Black, woman, lesbian) and how the development of these identities informs leadership development and practices. I will be the subject of this research project. Your involvement in this project is to support me in telling my personal story from varied perspectives.

**Procedures:** In a face to face or phone interview, I will ask questions about your perspective on specific events that happened in my life. Ultimately, our perspectives will come together to create a more dimensional understanding of the impact of these specific events on my identity. There is no right or wrong way to answer any of the questions. This should take approximately 30 minutes to an hour depending on how the conversation flows. The interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed and you will be provided an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy, as well as make any changes.

**Risks to Participation:** There are no foreseen physical risks to participating in this project. While several measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality, there may be some life events discussed hat will inadvertently identify you because of our shared experience. This could lead to vulnerable information being shared about you or your experiences. To manage this risk, I will share the final write-up of your portion of this project prior to sharing with others outside of my dissertation committee. I will also share the entire final project with you at its completion. If at any time you feel the risk is too great, I will either remove your portion of the narrative or purposefully secure your identity. Secondly, the sharing of personal experiences can lead to strained relationships when the stories being told do not align. It is my hope, through our current relationship, that we will be able to work through any potential strain with honesty and respect.

**Benefits to Participants:** You will not directly benefit from this study. However, I hope the information learned from this study may benefit society in our understanding of how leaders with multiple minority identities can be supported and understood in their leadership roles.

**Alternatives to Participation:** Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from study participation at any time without any penalty.

**Confidentiality:** During this study, information will be collected about you for the purpose of this research. This includes name, email address and telephone number for the purpose of our communication.

In an effort to guard your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses and personal information, I will not use or publish your name, email address or telephone number. Your responses will be provided as part of a grouping of family, friend, or coworker. During the course of our interview, I will record our time together either in writing or via audio recording, these research materials will be kept for a minimum of five years after publication per APA guidelines.

A potential limit to confidentiality will occur if a specific experience was unique to you and me. In this situation, you will still not be identified by name or specific relation but as family, friend, or coworker.

Your research records may be reviewed by federal agencies whose responsibility is to protect human subjects participating in research, including the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and by representatives from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees research.

**Questions/Concerns**: If you have questions related to the procedures described in this document please contact:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Brandynicole Brooks, LICSW<br>Researcher<br>bxb9197@ego.thechicagoschool.edu<br>205.482.4241 | or | Linda Klonsky, PhD<br>Dissertation Committee Chair<br>lklonsky@thechicagoschool.edu |

If you have questions concerning your rights in this research study you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is concerned with the protection of subjects in research project. You may reach the IRB office Monday-Friday by calling 312.467.2343 or writing: Institutional Review Board, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 325 N. Wells, Chicago, Illinois, 60654.

**Consent to Participate in Research**

**Participant:**

I have read the above information and have received satisfactory answers to my questions. I understand the research project and the procedures involved have been explained to me. I agree to participate in this study. My participation is voluntary and I do not have to sign this form if I do not want to be part of this research project. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

_____

**Name of Participant (print)**

_____

**Signature of Participant**

**Date: _____**

_____

**Name of the Person Obtaining Consent (print)**

_____

**Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent**

**Date: _____**

# Appendix C: Interview Protocol

This project focuses on my personal experience of identity formation as a Black lesbian leader. Therefore, individuals interviewed for this project know me personally as well as professionally. The use of directed interviews in autoethnography is not a typical form of data collection as interviews help to create subjectivity. This interview protocol seeks to identify specific life events and utilize the interview to provide a perspective outside of my own.
For this project, I interviewed my mother, members of my chosen[2] family, coworkers, and a previous supervisor. Prior to the interview, I informed each person of the event/incident of which we were to discuss in order to provide the opportunity for some self-reflection and preparation.

| | |
|---|---|
| Time of Interview: | |
| Date of Interview: | |
| Location of Interview: | |
| Interviewee: | |
| Interviewer: | |

***Introduction to the Study:***

"Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to discuss my dissertation. The goal for our time is to understand your perspective on specific events that happened in my life. I know what perspective I have of some critical events or incidents, and I want to know more about your perspective. I will share my perspective with you after you have shared yours with me. This helps in two ways, first it is to ensure your perspective is solely your own and not based in any part on mine and second, I want you to hear my perspective prior to reading it so that we can process any feelings that may arise together. Ultimately, our perspectives will come together to create a more dimensional understanding of the impact of these specific events on my identity. There is no right or wrong way to answer any of the questions. This should take approximately 30 minutes to an hour depending on how the conversation flows. While I have specific questions identified here, I may ask some follow up questions for clarification.

Before we begin, I want to review the informed consent you signed and to be clear about how our conversation will be shared. I will create a story that will weave this discussion into the story of the event or events we discuss. Please remember that you are able to stop our conversation at any time and no longer participate in this study without penalty. Are you okay with me recording our interview and/or taking notes so that I can ensure accuracy? Do you have any questions for me?"

[2] For the purpose of this project, chosen family is defined as individuals who hold a place in my life as closer than friends.

***Interview Questions***

1. First, I believe in the power of being in the moment, so before we start, can we just take a moment to breathe and center to this space?
2. For the purpose of documentation, please state your name and the date.
3. How do we know each other?
4. Now, I would like to discuss (insert the event or incident based on interviewee). Tell me what you remember of this event/incident.
5. What are some of the feelings and emotions that arise as you think about this moment?
6. In what ways do you feel this event/incident impacted your life?
7. In what ways do you feel this event/incident impacted my life?
8. Is there anything specific that stands out in your mind about this event/incident?
9. Now that I have asked all my questions, how are you feeling? Can we take another moment to breathe and center?

***Debrief***

"Thank you for being so open with me today. My perspective of this event is . . .
One of the key pieces of doing this work is respecting confidentiality when possible, and when not possible ensuring you understand any foreseen risks to sharing your story. This was outlined for you in the informed consent document you signed. However, if you feel any part of your interview will cause a future risk to you, please let me know and I will work to either strike it from my final report or ensure your identity is purposefully secured. If you prefer, I will also share the final write-up of your portion of this project prior to sharing with others outside of my dissertation committee. I will also share the entire final project with you at its completion. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D: Recurring Topics and Themes

The following is a list of the data collected throughout this autoethnographic project (left column) and themes that emerged through data analysis (right column).