WEARING THE MANTLE: SPIRITED BLACK MALE SERVANT LEADERS REFLECT ON THEIR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

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A Dissertation

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The purpose of this dissertation was to explore, understand, and profile the leadership experiences of Black male leaders residing in Northwest Ohio. The guiding question was “In what way do the racialized and spiritual experiences of Black men influence their leadership?” This study was an exploration of how these men navigated through personal and professional obstacles by relying heavily on spiritual relationships with others and/or a higher power as they lead through service.

Portraiture was the biographical method utilized in this study. Portraiture is a qualitative method that blends art, science, and social critique with intent of storying as well as learning from the lives of the Black men in this study. Leadership is the influential relationship among leaders and followers directed through the communication process toward the attainment of goals by influencing through vision, values, and relationships. In this study, these men illustrate their leadership by employing spirituality, servant hood, and their identity as Black men. I presented in depth portraits that expand and illustrate elements of the conceptual framework.

This study contributes to the understanding of leadership experiences from a Black male perspective. The overarching themes in this study were: (a) spirituality, (b) servant leadership, and (c) Black identity. The data illustrate these themes in addition to a reconfiguration and combination of the themes that produce what I have coined critical servant leadership. As critical servant leaders, these men merge spirituality, servant leadership, and Black identity into a visionary, empowering, prophetic soul force in an
effort to lead and benefit those in their communities whose voice is muted. Lastly, this dissertation provides a framework and serves as a catalyst for future studies on leadership.
I dedicate this project to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without Him I am nothing, with Him I can do all things.

To my daughter, Cassidy: my hope, my inspiration, and my joy. I am thankful to God that He trusts me to love and protect you.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I: SETTING THE CONTEXT

The Black community in the United States continues to be plagued by economic, political, and social disenfranchisement, despite the efforts of leaders during the Civil Rights movement (J. U. Gordon, 2000; Walters & Smith, 1999). The fact remains that a majority of Black Americans are paralyzed by social ills that permeate their communities, often referred to as urban areas in academic literature. Urban areas have higher rates of crime (Gibbs, 1988; E. T. Gordon, Gordon, & Nemhhard, 1994), have higher rates of drug use and solicitation (Foster, 1995; Gibbs, 1988; Oliver, 2003; Reese, 2001), and have an under-funded public education system (Black men and boys in the District of Columbia and their impact on the future of the black family, 2003; Foster, 1995; Gibbs, 1988; E. T. Gordon et al., 1994; Oliver, 2003). A search for the answer to such problems is often mitigated by criminalizing Black men as the cause of deterioration in urban areas through various forms of media (Black men and boys in the District of Columbia and their impact on the future of the black family, 2003; Foster, 1995; Gibbs, 1988; E. T. Gordon et al., 1994; Oliver, 2003; Reese, 2001), which often cite fragmented leadership within the Black community.

Leadership in Black Community

Americans are not the only ones who buy into the idea of fragmented leadership in the Black community. In 1982, Black Americans believed they had fewer national leaders whose charisma or plans stimulated them to challenge the extant social system (Davis, 2003; J. E. Williams, 1999). This is unfortunate because many Americans are not exposed to Black men as the role of worker, husband, or father (Hare & Hare, 1984), as an educator (Lynn, 2001), and as a community leader (Charleston, 2000). The leadership of Black men is critical to reviving the
Black community. Black leadership exists at all levels ranging from institutions such as the church and the local community, to fraternal organizations.

Unfortunately, the larger, national Black community is without a mass leader such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., but this does not mean that there are not Black leaders who are wearing the mantle to continue to fight for social justice while serving the needs of their community. This study defines wearing the mantle as embodying selfless work as ordained by a higher power in order to achieve greatness and prosperity for others. Wearing the mantle implies a leader’s usage of moral and ethical fiber to tilt the scales of justice towards equity, fairness, and truth for all individuals regardless of present circumstance. In his speech entitled “Facing the Challenge of a New Age,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated:

In this period of transition and growing social change, there is a dire need for leaders of all races who are calm and yet positive, leaders who avoid the extremes of “hotheadedness” and “Uncle Tomism.” The urgency of the hour calls for leaders of wise judgment and sound integrity—leaders not in love with money, but in love with justice; leaders not in love with publicity, but in love with humanity; leaders who can subject their particular egos to the greatness of the cause. (As cited in Dyson, 1996)

There may not be one ideal Black male leader espousing all of the characteristics mentioned by King, but a community of Black male leaders can further the fight for social justice all the same. Given the reality of the lack of Black male leaders, there is a paucity of research studies on Black male leadership. Much of what is known about Blacks, particularly Black men is rooted in the deficit model. The deficit model emerged in social science literature more than 30 years ago as an explanation for inferior intelligence, perceptual skills, cognitive
styles, family structure, and other negative factors associated with Blacks (Cochran, 1997; Johnson, 1988; White & Parham, 1990). Studies concerning Black men have a tendency to focus on them as an endangered species (Gibbs, 1988), as participants in the criminal justice system (Mauer, 1994; Reese, 2001; Wilkinson & Taylor, 1977), as having violent ambitions (Entman, 1990, 1992, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Finkenstaedt, 1994; Greenberg & Schneider, 1992), and as lacking the capacity to learn (Foster, 1995) which essentializes their experiences. Some studies grounded in the deficit model of research have focused on the role of Black men in the family, often citing the negative and positive attributes of Black male fatherhood (McAdoo & McAdoo, 1994; Mirande, 1991; Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990). Only a few studies have focused solely on the positive attributes of Black men as leaders in the community with regional and national influence (Charleston, 2000; J. E. Williams, 1999) and as educators with liberating pedagogy striving for social justice (Lynn, 2001).

Black men are often perceived as deviants of society. They are more likely to be shown as criminal suspects than actual crime statistics suggest (Entman, 1992; Oliver, 2003). Seminal studies by Entman (1990; 1992; 1994) suggested a positive relationship between black men and criminality. One study stated that news stories about Black Americans, especially Black men, are more likely to be associated with crime than are stories about Whites (1990). Another study found that 84% of all crime stories about Black suspects pertained to violent rather than non-violent crime (Entman), thus associating Black men with criminal acts. In this regard, as research findings suggest, Black men are more likely to be identified as violent criminals (Devine, 1989; Devine & Monteith, 1999; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Oliver & Fonash, 2002).
The literature has provided empirical evidence that Black men are often criminalized in American society. Although many studies are well intended, they tend to reinforce stereotypical images of Black men as deviants of society (Black men and boys in the District of Columbia and their impact on the future of the black family, 2003; Brunswick, 1980; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Gibbs, 1988; Greenberg & Schneider, 1992; Jackson, 1992; Mauer, 1994; Opportunity or chaos: A generation in peril - A preliminary report on the status of African-American males in California, 1992; R. Staples & Johnson, 1993). Therefore, further research is needed to deconstruct negative perceptions of Black men.

**Black Male Leadership**

A few studies have documented Black men as exceptional leaders regionally, nationally, and in the classroom (Charleston, 2000; Lynn, 2001; J. E. Williams, 1999). Williams’s study of five national Black male leaders documented their leadership experiences citing their familial relationships and encounters of racism that aided in their struggle to become successful leaders. The data support that while being aware of the negative perceptions of being a Black man in America, these five leaders maintained a followership that transcended race. Aquanette Charleston (2000) documented a common bond of the Black male leaders she interviewed. She cited the Black community and Black church as essential in building character and shaping the lives of these leaders. A passion for service and activism in the Black community to ensure equal treatment in the courts as well as equality in education and employment were key elements in framing Black male leadership.

Despite some research studies that describe and document a myriad of positive attributes of Black men, Americans are still bombarded with negative images of Black men. A 1995 nationwide study on the criminal justice system done in conjunction with *The Sentencing Project*...
estimated that one in three Black men were involved in the criminal justice system as inmates or parolees (Mauer & Huling, 1995). Although 33% of Black men are in criminal trouble, 67% of Black men are positive contributors to the Black community and society as a whole. Reports such as *The Sentencing Project, Black men and boys in the District of Columbia and their impact on the future of the black family, and Ohio Commission on Black Males* were widely disseminated throughout Congress, local, regional, and national television outlets and represent Black males as endangered species and social problems. Such reports also caused academics to react by researching the so-called problems of Black males. Often times, these research studies are completed in a vacuum that does not take into consideration institutional forms of racism that perpetuate some of the problems faced by Black men (Booker, 2000; Majors & Gordon, 1994).

In order to change this misperception about Black men, scholars must begin to move beyond the deficit model when conducting research. To acknowledge the deficit is necessary in order to understand the issues, problems, and dilemmas that face Black men residing in America. A commitment to transform the images of Black men in the literature must begin by researching the lives of successful Black male leaders.

**Purpose of Study**

In an effort to understand leadership experiences of Black men, this qualitative study, employing portraiture as a research technique sought to explore, understand, and profile leadership experiences of Black male leaders. This study created in depth portraits of these leaders in order to understand their challenges and successes in their leadership roles. While storying the lives of Black male leaders, I strengthen the positive aspects of their experiences. While looking at the positive, I am not negating the impact of obstacles or barriers to their success. However, the search for goodness as acknowledged by Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis
(1997), is to look for the good, try to figure out what is making it work, and focus on why is it working (Jones, 2003).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for various reasons. First, this study adds to the limited body of literature on today’s Black male leaders. There is a need to discuss and examine the complexity of leadership experiences of Black men. Second, the voices of Black men especially in leadership are yet to be heard (Charleston, 2000). Therefore, this study is important in understanding their journey as leaders and how they cope with obstacles that could sustain or thwart success. I document a detailed account of the experiences lived by Black male leaders to provide a means to understanding their voices, which have been marginalized in society. Most importantly, this study serves as an overarching catalyst for future research that will give credence to the leadership journey of Black men. It offers another perspective to view leadership by shedding light on the type of criteria that could illuminate the new Black leaders for the 21st century.

Although this study focuses on leadership experiences of Black men, I must mention that Black women are and continue to play a vital role in leadership and Black male leadership discourses. Dyson (1996) asserted that discourse about Black men should not take place in isolation of the plight of Black women. In this study, I do not focus on the contributions and struggle of Black women. However, I used my power and influence as a Black female leader to create discourses centered on Black men that deconstructed negative perceptions associated with their identity.
Research Questions

The broad guiding question for this study is in what way do the racialized and spiritual experiences of Black men influence their leadership? Interview protocols were developed from the three conceptual framework dimensions: spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual frame is an intersection of spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory. Spirituality is defined by Dantley (2001) as the component of our total selves and community through which we make meaning and understanding of our world. It is the foundation of values, principles, influences, and ethics we exhibit in our interactions with others (p. 5). Spirituality is intangible. It becomes the nexus of inspiration, motivation, and meaning-making in the lives of Black Americans (Dantley, 2003a).

Spirituality is the foundation of Black life. Another view of spirituality from a Black perspective comes from Stewart (1999), whose framework of spirituality identifies five characteristics that differentiate it from other models. The five characteristics are: (a) Spirituality is the creative, animative, integrative, and transformative center of the universe, (b) African-American spirituality is a socially functional process or praxis that creates an ethos and culture by which Black people encounter, interpret, adopt, adapt, integrate, transform, and transcend human experience through the creative appropriation of divine spirit for self-empowerment and survival, (c) African-American spirituality is a creative process and practice by which Black people interpret, respond to, shape, and live out their understandings of divine reality and culture in the context of racial, political, and social oppression and life in general, (d) Creativity, adaptations, ritualization, innovation, improvisation, transcendence, and
transformation are by-products of African-American spirituality and help create the survival mechanisms of Black culture and consciousness, and (e) African-American spirituality and African-American culture in dialogue create a matrix of practices and beliefs that informs, inspires, reforms, and transforms meaning, value, and purpose of African-American existence. Spirituality is a major force in the lives of Black Americans. Spirit is the divine entity that keeps Black Americans grounded, pressing toward success, social justice, and destined greatness.

Related to the topic of spirituality is servant leadership. To serve and lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions is the foundation of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Further, the notion of servant leadership encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment (Spears, 1995b). Servant leadership thrives on the theory of reciprocity. In doing so, the servant as leader rises to the occasion to build a community of practice that motivates members to create shared knowledge and shared ways of knowing (Drath & Palus, 1994)

The servant leader is willing to take risks to achieve a higher good. This leader is committed to serving others through a cause, a crusade, a movement, and a campaign with humanitarian, not materialistic goals (Williams, 1998). The servant leader is guided by an over-arching, prophetic, transforming vision that is carefully conceived and simply articulated (Williams). By precept and example, this leader guides others toward that vision, converting followers one by one through singular acts of bravery, courage, and determination. The servant leader is also attuned to inner qualities such as intuition, foresight, awareness, and perception, all which aid in decision-making (Williams). This form of leadership should facilitate interaction as well as personal and spiritual growth between the leader and those being served.
The third area of my conceptual frame is Critical Race Theory (CRT). Critical Race Theory originally generated in legal discourse by scholars of color who sought to inject the issues of racial oppression into the debate of law and society (Lynn, 1999; Solorzano, 1997, 1998; Tate, 1997). Key scholars of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Tate, 1997) argue that CRT is an analytic framework for addressing issues of social inequity. Critical race theorists created a framework where race is placed at the center and race is a unit of data analysis to create counterstories to the narrative. It is in the intersections of race, class, gender, and other isms that a different story is told. In addition, leadership is racialized and gendered. This racialized and gendered lens has created stories about White men and White women. A racialized approach would create stories about Black men, Black women, White men, White women, and so on.

According to Solorzano (1998), CRT in education is an interdisciplinary attempt to approach educational problems and questions from the perspectives of women and men of color. Critical race theory (a) recognizes the centrality of race and intransigence of racism in contemporary American society, (b) it seeks to eliminate racial oppression in the United States by linking it to other forms of oppression [such as sexism, classism], (c) it rejects West-European/Modernist claims of neutrality, objectivity, rationality, and universality, and (d) it historicizes analysis by relying heavily on the experiential, situated, and “subjugated” (Collins, 1991) knowledge of people of color (Matsuda et al., 1993; Solorzano, 1997; Tate, 1997)

Figure 1 details the intersection of spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory, which provides the conceptual framework for this study.
Figure 1. Black Male Leader Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework addresses the spirit of mankind and the reciprocity practiced in leadership, while critiquing the social and historical inferences in America that contribute to the negative depictions of Black men in the literature.

Definition of Terms

*Blacks* – United States, American citizens of and or belonging to an American ethnic group who are descendants of African descent and non-Hispanic origin.

*Leadership* – influential relationship among leaders and followers (Rost, 1993) directed through the communication process toward the attainment of goals (Tannenbaum, Weschler, & Massank, 1959) by influencing through vision, values, and relationships (Daft, 2001; Ferris, 1988).

*Servant Leadership* - To serve and lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions (Greenleaf, 1977).
Spirituality – the component of our total selves and community through which we make meaning and understanding of our world. It is the foundation of values, principles, influences, and ethics we exhibit in our interactions with others” (Dantley, 2001).

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of this study are the use of interviews and observations, subjective interpretations, and generalizability. I interviewed and observed only five Black male leaders to understand their leadership experiences. The findings of this study are subject to other interpretations because the work may interpolate meaning to a myriad of audiences. I add another dimension to the study by being a Black female leader studying Black male leaders. Although I am able to understand the issues of racism, I may not fully understand the concept of manhood, masculinity, gender, and other issues relative to their struggle as Black men. The process of understanding was negotiated with the participants of the study. Another delimitation of the study is assuming the experiences of the participants will help other Black men in their role as leaders. The final delimitation is the use of the term “Black” instead of “African-American” in reference to participants and me. African American is deemed a more politically correct term when referring to people in America from African descent. I am also aware that using “Black” may symbolize negative attributes of people of African descent. I choose to use the term “Black” because of the power and strength I feel the word possesses.

A limitation of this study is the purposive sampling methods because of the tendency to decrease generalizability of findings. The purposive sampling methods allowed me to be deliberate in identifying participants that can generate new knowledge based on their experience. Therefore, the generalizability of this study is compromised, yet enhanced due to the nature, complexity, and originality of the study.
Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background of the study. Chapter 2 presents a thorough literature review detailing the historical characterization of Black men in the United States, the foundation of Black male leadership, and the infusion of spirituality in their leadership. Chapter 3 defines the methodology and research design of this study, description of participants, and presents a pilot study. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 consist of portraits of the dissertation process, and three selected Black men. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 discuss the emerging themes guided by the conceptual frame. Chapter 11 is the discussion of those themes as they are intersected. Finally, Chapter 12 concludes the study with my learning’s and future directions for study.
CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study is to explore, understand, and profile leadership experiences of Black men. To achieve this purpose, I will review relevant literature pertaining to Black male leadership. The literature will be organized into the following areas:

- Socio-historical framework of the Black male in United States
- Leadership Theories
- Black Leadership
  - Spirituality
  - Servant Leadership
- Black Male Leadership
  - Manhood
  - Perception
  - Lessons from Influential Black Male Leaders

I will review the literature by illustrating the interconnected concepts of social history, traditional leadership theories, and the emergence of Black male leadership in often-turbulent times.

Beginning with the socio-historical context of Black men in the United States, using Critical Race Theory as the guiding principle, I will demonstrate how Black men are invisible in the scholarly discourse on leadership.

*Socio-Historical Framework of Black men*

Though we ordinarily speak of the Negro problem as though it were one unchanged question, students must recognize the obvious facts that this problem, like others, has a long historical development, has changed with the growth and evolution of the nation; moreover, that it is not one problem, but rather a plexus of social problems, some new,
some old, some simple, some complex; and these problems have their bond of unity in
the act that they group themselves about those Africans whom two centuries of slave-
trading brought into the land. (DuBois, 1898)

In contextualizing the voice of Black men, I would be negligent not to offer a historical
lens to view the plight of Black men in the United States. The Black male has had a multiplicity
of problems prevalent in the 1980’s and continues to manifest in different areas of society.
Although the Black male is a visible figure in the minds of many Americans, he is a member of
the least understood and studied of all sex-race groups in the United States (R. Staples, 1986).
He is husband and father, son and brother, lover and boyfriend, uncle and grandfather,
construction worker, minister and ghetto hustler, doctor and mineworker, and auto mechanic and
presidential candidate (Hare & Hare, 1984; Marable, 1984). Unfortunately, these roles are
distorted by various forms of media depicting him as a violent criminal (Entman, 1990, 1992,
1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000), as an endangered species (Gibbs, 1988), and as lacking the
capacity to learn (Foster, 1995). Black men are frequently labeled as shiftless, lazy, immoral,
mentally deficient, as well as being hypersexual athletes (Hare & Hare, 1984). The negative
images of Black men are salient in the minds of Americans. This dysfunctional image is how he
is perceived in public consciousness and how he comes to see and internalize his own role (Blake
& Darling, 1994).

The story of the Black male in America story reads as an epic tragedy (J. E. Williams,
1999). He has had moments of greatness, but also teeters on the edge of economic, political, and
social devastation. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), I will begin to historicize and connect
persistent problems that confront Black males. Critical race theory originally generated in legal
discourse by scholars of color who sought to inject the issues of racial oppression into the debate
of law and society (Lynn, 1999). CRT has since become an interdisciplinary and political movement aimed at eradicating racism in American society through scholarly writings and social change. Key scholars of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Solorzano, 1997, 1998; Tate, 1997) argue that CRT is an analytic framework for addressing issues of social inequity. Critical race theory (1) recognizes the centrality of race and intransigence of racism in contemporary American society, (2) it seeks to eliminate racial oppression in the United States by linking it to other forms of oppression [such as sexism, classism], (3) it rejects West-European/Modernist claims of neutrality, objectivity, rationality, and universality, and (4) it historicizes analysis by relying heavily on the experiential, situated, and “subjugated” (Collins, 1991) knowledge of people of color (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al.; Soloranzo.; Tate; Lynn). Therefore, employing CRT as a tool to intersect blatant historic injustices to the current status of Black males in America is a prerequisite when documenting the pervasiveness of racism in society. The historicizing process will examine and re-examine America’s historical record, replacing, and confronting the majoritarian interpretation of events with ones that square more accurately with the experience of the Black man.

Many of the problems associated with Black men stem from myths created about his identity, his sexuality, and his gender dating back to slavery (Booker, 2000). Interwoven in such myths and dysfunctional images is a distinct set of social and economic experiences. The male role in slavery was inextricably linked to a limited range of social roles that were able to support, coexist with, or survive the degradation (Booker). His role, cultural heritage surrounding familial relationships (Booker), and resistance to social condition exerted a powerful influence on black male culture. Controversies regarding the nature of resistance during a time when slave
revolts resulted from the perseverance of slavery and bondage contradicted the ideological thought of Black Americans or Africans at this time.

In Thomas Jefferson’s writings, his view of African bondage and that of the African male at the time created a rationale for Black bondage. Jefferson believed Blacks to be an emotional people whose gender relationships lacked the tenderness and involved almost pure lust in comparison to whites (Booker, 2000; Jefferson, 1903). He assured readers that Blacks are intellectually inferior in writing, that Blacks are “in memory they are equal to the white; in reason much inferior.” (Jefferson, 1903). Jefferson had a vested interest in slavery as a large slave holder, but he was not the only individual speaking damaging rhetoric about Black African/Americans. Influential leaders of the day, historian U. B. Phillips, John Saffin, John Quincy Adams, and John C. Calhoun all described Black Americans, especially Black men negatively. They described the Black male as childish, trivial, cowardly, cruel, deceitful, prone to revenge, and hateful (Frederickson, 1971; Tise, 1987). These terms, although used in comparison to Black men centuries ago, still resonate in the fibers of Americans as they currently view Black men. The criminalization of his image is intersected with the treatment he endured during slavery, the reconstruction era, WWI, the great depression, WWII, the civil rights movement, and so on. Over time the Black male has endured emotional, physical, and psychological castration. In a sense he has been torn down from every angle, but still continues to rise above the adversity.

The need for research on the Black male is closely tied to his past. Black men have suffered under systems of slavery and other forms of institutional racism. Historically they were restricted from leaving slave quarters without permission, they were the objects of “staining” (Booker, 2000) the white blood line by miscegenation, and they were the objects of fear as
whites viewed them as not being able to “hold him nor safely let him go” (Booker, 2000, p. 10).

Even though the formal institution of slavery is non-existent, various forms of these restrictions and fears have manifested into society by organizing social space by race (Wiegman, 1995). For example, requiring Black men to have a pass (Degler, 1959) to leave the borders of the plantation so that their whereabouts could be tracked can be equated to 21st century racial profiling or DWB (driving while Black). Social organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) continue to track instances of racial profiling which usually occur when a Black man is driving in a suburban area perceived to be populated by affluent non-Blacks.

In the 1640s, there was evidence of a status for Blacks akin to slavery, and therefore, something more than mere discrimination begins to appear in the sources (Degler, 1959). Black men who tried to escape the bondage of slavery received more severe punishments than their White male counterparts who were indentured servants. A case in 1640 citing three runaways, of whom two were White men and the third was Black; the White men received thirty lashes, having the terms owed their masters extended one year at the completion of which they were to work for three additional years (Degler, 1959). The Black man received the harshest treatment of them all. He received thirty lashes, a branded R on his cheek, a shackle placed on his leg for a year, and forced to serve his sentence for his natural life (Degler, 1959). Not only was his sentence more harsh, it was inhumane based on the mere fact that slavery and blackness were synonymous concepts (Wiegman, 1995). This circumstance can be equated to the disparities in the criminal justice system that manifest in public policy regarding crack and powder cocaine. Although crack cocaine cannot be made without powder cocaine, the sentence that users and sellers of the drugs face is vastly different. For powder cocaine, a conviction possession with
intent to distribute carries a five year sentence for quantities of 500 grams or more (Coyle, 2002).
But for crack cocaine, a conviction with intent to distribute carries a five year sentence for only 5 grams (Coyle, 2002). This is a 100 to 1 quantity ratio. Approximately two thirds of crack users are White or Hispanic, yet the majority of persons convicted of possession in federal courts in 1994 were Black men. The mandatory sentencing laws coupled with the disparity in distribution amounts continue to create widespread debate regarding the law.

In 1995, The Sentencing Project recommended equalizing the quantity ratio that triggered mandatory sentences. Congress rejected the recommendation, which marked the first time it had done so since the establishment of the Sentencing Commission (Coyle, 2002). Critics of the sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine have drawn other arguments. Failure to amend the disparities between the two drugs reflects a culture-wide set of misconceptions about crack – who uses it, who sells it, and what the consequences of its trade, such as violence, have been (Coyle, 2002; Mauer, 1994). Many have also admitted that the disparities illustrate something much more disturbing, namely, a deeply embedded racist and classist undertone to our society’s political, legal, and law enforcement structure (Coyle, 2002; Mauer, 1994; Reese, 2001) which began when Black men and women were treated and objectified as subhuman during the transatlantic slave trade. The irony in such a paradox is that the social construct of race has been ignored despite the impact of their identities (race, sexuality, and gender) were and continue to be used as commodities (Wiegman, 1995).

As Black males have emerged from the traumas of capture, the rupture of family and community ties, the Middle Passage, and the seasoning process, they found themselves victimized by a pernicious and pervasive image that became iconic in American culture (Booker, 2000). The spirited resistance of Black leaders such as Benjamin Banneker, Frederick Douglass,
Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and other unsung heroes would not allow surrender to the ills of man despite the grim future of Africans in the system of slavery. In every way, Black males, joined by Black females fought back to attempt to salvage meaning, a sense of purpose, and joy in their lives. In this form of resistance, they shaped and laid the foundation of progress for Black people living in America through various forms of leadership.

**Leadership Theories**

Researchers, over time have developed several definitions, theories, and paradigms in attempting to understand the qualities and traits of effective leadership (L. E. Williams, 1998). To a certain degree, leadership is said to be like beauty:” It’s hard to define, but you know it when you see it” (W. Bennis, 1989). Thus, leadership research reflects a variety of disciplinary approaches, methodologies, and varying interpretations of the definition and context of its meaning. Historically speaking, leadership has been researched and defined from a monolithic viewpoint (Parker, 2005; Rost, 1993), presented as race neutral and assumed generalizable to all people (Jones, 2003; Parker, 2005). Black leaders have made substantial contributions past and present, yet fail to be recognized and incorporated in the development of leadership theories.

In *Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership*, Bass (Bass, 1990) included an exhaustive view of the history and theory of leadership. He defined leadership in the following concepts:

1. a group process;
2. the leader’s personality and its effects;
3. the art of inducing compliance;
4. the exercise of influence;
5. an act or behavior;
6. a form of persuasion;
The mainstream literature has produced competing paradigms of leadership, based almost exclusively on studies of White men and women (Parker, 2005). The race neutral discourse on leadership reinforces the status quo which influences who gets included in studies about leadership and the kinds of questions that are asked about leadership. All of the seminal studies in Bass’s (1990) handbook used white male subjects which eventually molded leadership definitions by the standards of white male privilege. These seminal studies encompass a predominant vision of leadership that promotes an individualistic, goal-oriented, approach to leadership (W. Bennis, 1989; W. Bennis, Spreitzer, & Cummings, 2001; Parker, 2005; Rost, 1993).

Although many theorists have focused on the individualistic attributes of leaders and the leadership phenomenon, other theorists (Drath & Palus, 1994; Fairholm, 1997; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Morgan, 1998; Wheatley, 1999) provide an alternative view of leadership. Drath and Palus described leadership as a shared process and meaning making experience, a notion of “connecting people to one another and so to some social activity, work, or enterprise” (p. 13). Morgan used various lenses to view leadership as it takes place in organizations. He defined leadership as being a powerful metaphor that is often one-sided, biased, and creates distortions. Metaphor is defined, as “a primal force through which humans create meaning by using one element of experience to understand another” (p. 4). He recommended using metaphors to create
new ways of seeing and shaping organizational life by using the complexity and diversity of different views.

In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner formulated five practices of successful leaders: (1) challenge the process, (2) inspire a shared vision, (3) enable others to act, (4) model the way, and (5) encourage the heart. These five practices had their genesis in *Credibility*, another valued piece on leadership, which establishes credibility as the foundation of leadership. At the core of Kouzes and Posner’s leadership paradigm is connecting a leader’s voice with his/her actions. Further findings in their research state some of the most admired characteristics of a leader are honesty, forward-looking or visionary, and inspiring. Gilbert Fairholm’s (1997) take on leadership is recognizing the spiritual aspect of one’s life because leaders are bringing their whole selves to the workplace. He stated that spiritual knowledge is essential. Thus spiritual knowledge “guides our individual lives and conditions our relationships with others” (p. x). Spiritual knowledge, according to Fairholm, guides daily actions and interactions that illuminate conceptual knowledge of leadership theory.

Margaret Wheatley (1999) encouraged leaders not to search for predictability when seeking to understand the dynamics of leadership. She encourages staying flexible and letting nature form order. Wheatley focuses on the relational slant of leadership that exists simultaneously, is based on change, and embraces change. “Leaders are being encouraged to evoke followership, to empower others…Leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value” (p. 173). The new science view of leadership corroborates views of leadership that values relationship, learning communities, and spirituality so that the leader’s knowledge and context will grow based on exchanges of information that occurs in reciprocity.
Black Leadership

One would assume by browsing through Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership (Bass, 1990), that there were not studies conducted on Black leadership. However, there is a depth of information, books, and research studies on Black leadership dating back to the 1930’s (Bunche, 1939, 1973; Cox, 1965; Gosnell, 1935; Myrdal, 1944). These scholars researched Black leadership in the United States during the institution of slavery, during reconstruction era, during Black political movements at the local and national levels, and studied the polarization of Black community leadership in the North and South. Such studies that encompass the racial, social, and political problems faced by the Black community have been ignored in the mainstream discourse on leadership. Research on leadership proceeds in a vacuum, without historiography (Fiedler, 1967; Kerlinger, 1964), therefore, it lacks context and diverse perspectives.

Conceptualizing the definition and praxis of Black leadership requires an understanding as well as appreciation for the ways in which Blacks have gained power within the racially polarized American society (Walters & Smith, 1999). Black leadership has remained constant over decades of research and generations of lived experiences. Black leadership generally encompasses the following:

1. Black leadership contributes to the maintenance of community in a number of areas of social life, as well as taking responsibility for group advancement.

2. Black leadership involves interaction at the local, regional, and national levels.

3. Black leadership is devoted to an assessment of active and passive conflicts that have the capacity to influence the quality of Black life through more traditionally defined “political behaviors and decisions” (Walters & Smith, 1999).
Black leadership is sustained by grappling with issues of survival and development of Black community directed by rituals of spiritual celebrations that encompass practical aspects of life.

(J. U. Gordon, 2000; Walters & Smith, 1999; L. E. Williams, 1998)

**Spirituality.** Black leadership is closely aligned with Drath and Palus’ view of leadership as a shared process, “connecting people to another and to some social activity” (p. 13). Black leadership is also closely aligned with Greenleaf’s (1977) essay “Servant as Leader” wherein the highest priority of a leader is to first serve those who are being led. Black leadership is an amalgamation of servant leadership and a meaning-making process, but expands these borders of leadership by infusing spirituality as the major source of strength and perseverance in leadership praxis. The communal leadership of the Black community is developed from a sense of spirituality. Lea Williams (1998) spoke of leadership and stated:

Spiritual power has been the motivating force, the catalyst for action…the force sustaining energy. The “ mediums” for this spiritual power have been “the old folks” and what they taught about surviving this life…trying to develop a positive, quality of life. (p. 187)

Furthermore, according to Michael Dantley (2001): spirituality is that component of our total selves and community through which we make meaning and understanding of our world. It is our foundation of values, principles, influences, and ethics we exhibit in our interactions with others” (p. 5). The connection to spirit for many Black Americans helped make sense of their experience in a racially divided society, but also to transcend above the experience. Spirituality instills in Black Americans a will to survive. Carlyle Fielding Stewart (1999) discussed spirituality as:
a desire to confront and surmount all threats to their being and existence while concurrently creating idioms of life and culture which provide them with adaptive mechanisms that reinforce their sanity, affirm their wholeness, and establish their spiritual and ontological location in American society. (p. 3)

Spirituality literally becomes the nexus of inspiration, motivation, and meaning-making (Dantley, 2003a) in the lives of Black Americans. Spirituality establishes and prods our sense of justice and fairness, and it constructs notions of calling, mission, or purpose (Dantley, 2003a). Therefore, spirituality drives critique, while encompassing social justice by pressing the boundaries of exclusion that are prevalent in American society.

**Servant Leadership.** The commitment of Black leadership as a communal process and the infusion of spirituality create a new type of leader: a type of leader that is committed to serving others through a cause, crusade, movement, and a campaign of humanitarian, not materialistic goals (Greenleaf, 1977). Black leadership in the form of servant leadership is often unsure what the results will be because it is often difficult to predict the people will benefit and see the benefits (Greenleaf, 1977; L. E. Williams, 1998). The Black servant leader(s) knowingly or unknowingly use their intuitive sense and spiritual connection to make judgments when a leap of faith is required. Success is not measured by monetary gains, but by how much followers grow and evolve as persons as well as whether the least privileged in society have benefited from their leadership (Williams).

In her study of Black male leaders, Aquanette Charleston (2000) asked participants to define leadership. Their definitions of leadership coincide with tenets of servant leadership and spirituality. Definitions of leadership according to Marvus Rice, Jeremiah Wright, Jerry Blakemore, and Maulana Karenga, all participants in the Charleston study are detailed below.
Jeremiah Wright insisted that leadership encompass the following:

Such qualities as honesty, integrity, and humility are essential for leaders. We shouldn’t be in competition with others but companions with them….Each person has different gifts and talents that they bring to the able and it’s important to note being different does not mean deficient. A leader must recognize that. (p. 221)

Marvus Rice stated:

Honesty is needed for leaders. If a person is honest, people will trust him or her, and it goes both ways. Another attribute is integrity --- you got to keep your integrity. You might compromise on your pride, buy you don’t compromise on your integrity and your religious beliefs. And people in positions above or below me recognize that…There must be avenues of open communication. This is vital in order to lead. Finally, you don’t want to just send them there, you must also be committed to go there with them. (p. 223)

Jerry Blakemore detailed leadership as:

A leader must have respect for basic human values. So when one really looks at leadership in terms of basic human values, it is a respect for and of life. I think we all have a responsibility that we have to hold ourselves responsible for, and we must be able to define that and realize that the reason for success is not for success in and of itself. (p. 224)

Maulana Karenga defined leadership as:

Leadership is a commitment to serve. Without the people, the various people that make up humanity, leadership does not exist. I put a high importance on values and vision. Vision and values---I can’t see leadership without vision and values….And without an appropriate system of values to reach that vision and to fulfill it, that’s one of the most
problematic aspects for leadership of our time, and that is the lack of the capacity to
generate this vision that inspires what we do. A moral, material, meaningful
interpretation to life that not only gives us a fundamental way of approaching the world
but calls us to a correspondent practice—that’s very important to me…But then you have
this transformative, this engaging leadership in which you see your mission as people
empower and serve the people and transform them in such a way that they become self
conscious agents of their own life and liberation. (pp. 225-226)

These definitions correspond to the literature on spirituality, servant leadership as well as Black
leadership. More pointedly, the leaders discussed implications of race, racism, and “advancing
the race” as key intersection points of conflict. In understanding the complexity of racism in
America, they feel they are personally responsible and society may hold them responsible for the
transgressions of Black people in general. These leaders also ranked service, humanitarian
efforts, morality, and spirituality as key characteristics to successful leadership.

In essence, Black leadership intersects within a context of collective advancement,
spirituality, and servant leadership. Black leadership operates with giving voice to the
marginalized masses of society by building community through common bonds of trials,
tribulations, and domination and using spirituality as the sustaining force for liberating oppressed
people from the injustices of man.

Black Male Leadership

Manhood. The moral basis of Black leadership has been a source of political currency of
Black politics and a source of debate within Black leadership circles (Walters & Smith, 1999).
The notion of “pure leadership” in the Black community characterizes the need for Black male
leaders to embody character, respect, and be honorable men. On the death of Frederick
Douglass, Rev. F. J. Grimke called for the Black race to stand up for pure leadership; honor the men and the men only, whose character you can respect, and whose example you can recommend to your children (Walters & Smith, 1999). He then reiterated the words of Holland, the poet:

   Give us men, --Men whom the lust of office does not kill;

   Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;

   Men who have honor, men who will not lie;

   Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog,

   In public duty, and in private thinking. (Gregory, 1971)

The characteristics of Black male leaders have occasionally attracted commentary. Black men have longed struggled with their identity as men, particularly Black men in American society. Black men have different self-images and strategies of acquiring power in the patriarchal structures of White America and Black communities (West, 2001). Acquiring power in society, thus confines Black men to white “respectability” (West, p, 127). Nevertheless the wish for Black leadership as reiterated by Martin Luther King (Washington, 1992) is an example of requesting incorruptible character from Black male leaders. Martin Luther King, Jr. recast the above poem:

   God give us leaders! A time like this demand strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands;

   Leaders whom the lust of office does not kill;

   Leaders whom the spoils of life cannot buy;

   Leaders who possess opinions and a will;

   Leaders who have honor;
Leaders who will not lie;

Leaders who can stand before a demagogue and his treacherous flatteries without winking

Tall leaders, sun-crowned, who live above the fog in public duty and private thinking.

(Washington, 1992)

Black male leaders are in a Catch-22; they desire to liberate themselves from white control that imprisons them in racist myths or confines them to white “respectability” (West, 2001) while making their gendered and sexual identities as well as masculinity a taboo subject.

The social construction of Black manhood in mainstream American society is rooted in the Black man as beast (Booker, 2000; Boskin, 1986; Hunter & Davis, 1992; West, 2001). The early images of Black men provided rationalization for enslavement and served as a form of social, political, and economic control and protection of Whites. Black (Black, 1993; Wallace, 1995) in his study examined the meaning and evolution of manhood. He later found that from the end of slavery through today, the Black male’s concept of manhood became varied, ambiguous, and hard to define. Wallace (1995) sought to understand the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in Black man’s expression of culture. His research study theorized the critical silence about black maleness and explored the epistemological possibilities of Black male identity construction. The study revealed from the inception of the Black Freemasonry movement in 1775 to the present, Black manhood appears to be one of the severest anxieties of Black men.

*Perception.* As the institution of slavery became a fundamental component of American society, the “Sambo” persona emerged defining the Black male as eternal boy and servant (Boskin, 1986; Elkins, 1959), which operated in conjunction with the imagery of beast. Black
men had new perceptions to overcome in their quest for manhood. The dominant social image of Sambo was iconic in American life. These images were on magazines, newspapers, journals, novels, plays, advisements, comic strips, postage stamps, playing cards, cups, and place mats.

Boskin added:

Sambo was an extraordinary type of social control, extremely subtle, devious, and encompassing. To exercise a high degree of control means also to be able to manipulate the full range of humor, to create, ultimately an insidious type of buffoon. To make the Black male into an object of laughter, and conversely, to force him to devise laughter, was to strip him of masculinity, dignity, and self-possession. Sambo was, then, an illustration of humor as a device of oppression, and one of the most potent in American popular culture. The ultimate objective for Whites was to effect mastery: to render the Black male powerless as a potential warrior and economic adversary. (p. 13)

Similarly, various forms of media are accused of delivering similar messages in regards to Black men. Stigmas and stereotypes about Black men are diffused in American racial mythology by means of cultural indoctrination and socialization (Bryson, 1998) through fictional, news, and reality entertainment (Oliver, 2003) as well as through institutional and overt forms of racism (Bryson, 1998). Jewell Taylor Gibbs (1988) developed a classification system to describe how the media portray Black men. She stated that “Black males are portrayed by the mass media in limited number of roles, most of them deviant, dangerous, and dysfunctional” (p.2) She listed the “Five D’s” of description of Black men: (1) deviant, (2) disturbed, (3) delinquent, (4) disadvantaged, and (5) dumb. These images reinforce long held views that Black men are less human, not real men by American standards, and provide educators, business executives, and political leaders with justification to ignore Black male issues.
Defining and understanding the complexities of Black male gendered and masculine identities are an age-old dilemma. Black men often strive to obtain manhood in a system that denies that very fact. However, there is promising data that suggest that Black men obtain masculine and gendered identities within a multi-dimensional construct. For the men interviewed in a study by Andrea Hunter and James Earl Davis (1992), Black manhood is defined in multiple arenas and contexts both within and beyond the traditional notions of masculinity and male role. Manhood was defined in terms of the self (self-determinism and accountability, pride), family, the human community and existential ideology (spirituality and humanism). According to Hunter and Davis:

It is our view that issues of self-determinism and accountability (i.e. directedness, economic viability, free will, and perseverance) are at the core of the self and of manhood and form the foundation on which family role enactment, pride, and living through one’s existential philosophy (i.e. spirituality, Afrocentric, and humanistic) are based. (p. 475)

Their findings illustrate conceptual linkages between behavioral proscriptions and ideology representing a collective articulation of manhood as both social role and personal identity. Therefore, it is important note that concepts of Black manhood encompass race, class, gender that forge varied definitions and constructions of manhood that are not limited to hegemonic context of masculine identities or the politicized images of Black men.

Despite the challenges faced by the Black community via overt and covert forms of racism, Black men and women not only survived, but also endured. Characteristics of Black leadership are worthy of note. In comparison with other groups in society, Black communities produce inordinately large numbers of talented individuals and organized groups concerned with fundamental systemic change (Barnett, 1976). Talented individuals who arose out of the Black
experience are, but not limited to Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Ida B. Wells, W.E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, William Wells Brown, Richard Wright, Duke Ellington, Fannie Lou Hamer, Asa Philip Randolph. Marcus Garvey, Carter G. Woodson, and Mary Church Terrell were influential leaders who remained faithful to the struggles and issues of Black Americans. Secondly, the political thought of Black Americans has been largely problem-solving and action-oriented (Walters & Smith, 1999). Therefore, one finds much thought produced by “activists” rather than by relatively unengaged observers (Hamilton, 1973).

Lessons from Influential Black Male Leaders. Leadership characteristics vary widely depending on the context. Yet, many researchers agree that leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities can be acquired (Argyris, 1992; W. Bennis, 1989; W. Bennis et al., 2001; Daft, 2001; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; J. C. Maxwell, 1993). In that context, the following summarizes the most significant lessons to be learned from a particularly dynamic group of Black leaders. They offer constructive lessons for enriching organizations, transcending achievement levels, and promoting social change. Asa Philip Randolph, Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, Thurgood Marshall, Whitney M. Young, Jr, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. have left legacies that contribute much to the field of leadership, in particular Black male leadership. These aforementioned leaders, a brief description of their leadership style, and their lessons for leaders are detailed below:

1. Asa Philip Randolph, Dean of Black Civil Rights Leaders: A committed organizer of people and causes. His leadership style revealed unusual dimensions, a function of both atypical arenas in which he chose to exercise power and of his refusal to be dissuaded by the specter of failure, which frequently threatened to derail his efforts.
a. Finding the optimum leadership match is often serendipitous.
   i. After years of failed and short lived attempts to unionize Black workers, his commitment to radical and socialist causes made him a natural leader for organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

b. Despair and feeling of hopelessness precede victory.
   i. Randolph managed to envision beyond the moment and stay focused on his goal despite momentary setbacks and defeats.

c. Successful leadership is intermittent
   i. Nearly 40 year, peppered with modest achievements, elapsed between organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925 and the triumphant 1963 March on Washington. These two were monumental.

d. Principles outweigh political expectancy
   i. With support from his Black constituents, he weathered the criticism, condemnation, and reproach of the Pullman Company and of the White leadership of the American Federation of Labor. Randolph gained respect of his followers by standing firmly on beliefs and convictions.

(2) Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, Leading by precept and example: President of Tuskegee Institute for 18 years, expanded educational opportunities at the Phelps Stokes Fund – an organization assisting African, Black, and American Indian student to acquire college education for 17 years, and after retiring, founded the Moton Institute, a technical assistance agency for Black colleges and universities.

a. Learning on the job is acceptable
i. Dr. Patterson was never deterred from tackling a task because he did not possess in-depth knowledge and skills about a subject.

b. *Experience deepens understanding*

   i. Dr. Patterson came to understand complex issues in higher education through the leadership positions held. He improved fiscal and management skills as a result of having the opportunity to succeed, fail, and then to recover.

c. *Adapting ideas can lead to originality*

   i. He often used proven model and methods to create innovative solutions to complex problems. The United Negro College Fund is prime example.

d. *Single minded determination can overcome skepticism*

   i. In many instances, by working relentlessly and unflaggingly on a project, Dr. Patterson persuaded doubters to lay aside their opposition and work cooperatively toward a worthy goal.

(3) **Thurgood Marshall, A drum major for justice:** The most lasting imprint he leaves is his steadfast belief in the Constitution as the pillar of democratic and egalitarian principles and in law generally as the protector of the poor and powerless.

a. *Unshakable belief in a cause fuels determination*

   i. He litigated school desegregation cases over 20 years beginning with the Murray case in 1935 and concluding with the Brown decision in
1954. His confidence in the rightness of the cause and trust in an eventual outcome sustained Marshall through the years of litigation.

b. *Difficult battles requires steadfastness*

i. Case by case Marshall strategically challenged the separate but equal doctrine. He methodically built a fortress of irrefutable evidence that revealed the inherent fallacies in order to defeat segregation in public education.

c. *Leaders often challenge the entrenched order*

i. Marshall realized that school desegregation cases opened uncharted legal territory. Yet, he believed it was the right thing to do.

d. *Bold leaders shatter myths and establish new precedents*

i. Against great odds, Marshall established a legal team to wage a battle against public school segregation.

(4) *Whitney M. Young, Jr., Vanguard Leadership:* 1961 Executive Director of National Urban League, an organization addressing employment and job-training needs of Black Americans in urban areas. He knew the high art of how to get power from the powerful and share it with the powerless

a. Wise leaders seek advice from others.

i. Whether Young was choosing a graduate study course or deciding on a job offer, he reached out to valued mentors, colleagues, or friends for advice.

b. Doing your homework commands respect
i. Young’s skillful use of data to inform and persuade won the respect of professional colleagues. He positioned himself as a leader by becoming an expert on social justice issues and race relations.

c. Leaders must stay close to their constituents
   i. Young never had deep roots in the Black community at the grassroots level. This omission plagued his leadership and diminished his credibility and effectiveness.

d. Black leadership is a delicate balancing act
   i. Young mastered the art of navigating the dynamics of Black leadership in the corporate boardrooms, but was caught in the fiscal/philosophical/tactical dilemma of how to avoid being controlled and manipulated by these supporters.

(5) *Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Uses and abuses of charismatic power*: Groomed for succession to the pulpit of Abyssinian Baptist Church, Adam Clayton Powell Jr, in the tradition of Black preachers since Reconstruction, used the church as a political base to widen his sphere of influence. He was a political maverick and iconoclastic leader who left a complex, ambivalent legacy of leadership.

a. *Charismatic leaders transform and empower followers.*

   i. A tradition of service, a position of privilege, a talent for preaching, and a sense of entitlement all contributed to his charismatic power, often used in genuine service to others.

b. *Charismatic powers also encourage abuse*
i. Powell’s stand on certain issues seemed less principled than self-promoting. At times the demonstrations and rhetoric inflamed volatile situations for obviously partisan purposes and to exculpate unscrupulous behavior.

c. Trust is the foundation of credibility

i. Rumors of back room deals related to criminal indictments and duplicitous relationships with colleagues shadowed half of Powell’s tenure in public office and gradually eroded the trust of his constituents.

d. Leaders pay a high price for independence

i. Throughout his career in public office, Powell charted an independent course and challenged established political orthodoxy. Over time, his unpredictability, pushed to the extreme, became a liability.

(Williams, 1998, p191-197)

The successful achievements of Randolph, Patterson, Marshall, Young, and Powell did not occur by accident. Their leadership strategies and power were utilized in an effort to achieve more favorable public policy faced by individuals in the Black community. Each individual’s strategies were tailored to a specific objective in addressing the needs of their community. Therefore, Black leadership entails the community function and an emphasis on the group, its culture and the social well being of that cultural group as an absolute value (Walters and Smith, 1999). In that sense, Black leadership encompasses the experiences of community members in an effort to mobilize for social justice.
Summary

A socio-historical perspective of Black men reveals the roots of past injustices that haunt their current and future status in America. They have endured at the rudder of institutional racism, yet, they have been able to survive. Regardless of the problems faced by Black men, leadership has evolved with Black men and women at the helm. Black leadership is unique in that it was formed out of struggles dating back to slavery. The common bond between Black leadership of the past and Black leadership of the present is the constant connection of spirit, the desire and willingness to serve, and a common bond and struggle for basic human rights, as well equality in education, employment, and housing. This form of leadership has added to the depth of knowledge about Black leadership, but unfortunately many mainstream theorists have performed research in a vacuum that does not take into account the leadership experiences of Black men and women.

The blatant reluctance to disregard the experiences of Black leaders, particularly men provides gaps in the literature. Handbooks compiled of leadership studies (Bass, 1990) are not representative of the diverse voices of people in America. These studies have been critiqued for the absence of diverse perspective. Therefore, it is imperative to have studies that speak to and about Black male leadership experiences. The way Black male leaders define and explain racialized and spiritual experiences of leadership needs to be explored, examined, and added in order to fill the hole within the literature that ignores their experiences.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains in detail portraiture as my data collection strategy and expands on its use as my data collection method. In addition, I situate myself as the researcher and discuss data collection, analysis, and comment on the preliminary findings on the pilot study conducted on Wednesday, March 16, 2005.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research involves studying person’s lives, stories, behaviors, but also about organizational functioning social movements, and interactional relationships (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research requires theoretical and social sensitivity, construction of holistic depiction of phenomenon through observations, interviews, conversations, and the use of written documents, pictures, and other available materials (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; J. A. Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative research designs allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences which is best described through detailed examples of narratives and an attempt to understand human and social issues by making sense of personal stories (Glesne, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To this end, the critical race theory, servant leadership, and spirituality frames support these qualitative methodological moves by using portraiture as the data collection method. The theory out of which these methodological moves are made will facilitate the inquiry that fills the existing gap in the literature related to Black male leaders that I chose created and illustrated the story of Black male leaders that has yet to be told.
Portraiture

In an effort to bring life to this study, I employed “portraiture” as the research technique. The portraiture method was created by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a sociologist, ethnographer, and biographer. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) summarized the elements of portraiture in the following manner:

Portraiture is a method framed by the traditions and values of the phenomenological paradigm, sharing many of the techniques, standards, and goals of ethnography. But it pushes against the constraints in its explicit effort to combine empirical and aesthetic description, in its focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, in its goal to speak to broader audiences beyond the academy (thus linking inquiry to public discourse and social transformation) in its standard of authenticity rather than reliability and validity (the traditional standards of quantitative and qualitative inquiry), and its explicit recognition of the use of self as the primary research instrument for documenting and interpreting the perspective and experiences of the people and cultures being studied. (pp. 13-14)

I am interested in developing a narrative of the individuals being studied that is convincing and authentic (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis asserted, the “portaitist is interested in recording the subtle details of human experiences to capture specifics, the nuance, the detailed description of a thing, a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns” (p. 14). Portraiture is the tool I used to story the lives of Black male leaders. In doing so, it is through this line of inquiry that the leadership journey of these Black male leaders was explored. The challenges that are particular to the leadership journey these particular Black men face will influence the existing body of literature by
personalizing their story of how they deal with adversities, barriers, and obstacles that serve to impede or drive their success.

Because I am not concerned with generalizing my findings, I focused on accurately and authentically interpreting the stories of the experiences, emotions, and perspectives of Black male leaders. Generalizing qualitative findings is difficult because the findings are subject to varied interpretation. As the primary research instrument, I name myself throughout the process and offer insight that will hopefully inspire the reader not to judge but to be empathetic and understanding of the experiences lived by these Black male leaders. I recorded and interpreted the perspectives and experiences of the people studied, (in this case Black male leaders), documented their voices and their visions, their authority, knowledge, and wisdom (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). By attempting to present a picture of the whole individual, I documented the dreams, aspirations, fears, pains, and personal reflections of Black male leaders. In this study, I intentionally designed to give these male leaders an opportunity to document the racialized and spiritual experiences of Black male leaders as a contributing factor in negotiating their experiences as leaders in an organization. The power of this methodology rests in focusing on constructing relationships between portraitist and participant.

Portraiture seeks to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The portraits are designed to shape dialogue between the portraitist and participant, each one participating in drawing the image (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In concert, the portrait image is built on the authenticity between the portraitist and the participant. The participant is the co-researcher who serves as a co-constructor of the portrait and provides the guidance as to how his story will be told. Co-construction is not only seen in portraiture. Other
qualitative methodologies such as critical ethnography and transcendental phenomenology also use co-construction. It is in this detail that the power of portraiture differs from traditional social science qualitative methods. Portraiture with its emphasis to “capture the origins and expressions of goodness” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) is appropriate for my research with Black male leaders.

Participants

Five Black, (non-Hispanic, natural born United States citizens) male leaders were included in this study. They were selected based on purposeful criterion (Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990) sampling techniques. I was purposeful in selecting participants to highlight the variation in leadership styles, thus capturing the heterogeneity of the population (Creswell, 2002) and alternative views in leadership application and theory. Criterion sampling allowed me to be deliberate in accessing individuals for information that can not be collected well from homogeneous sources.

The five men selected for this study met the following criteria: they identify as a Black, non-Hispanic, are natural born American United States citizens, are male leaders in the state of Ohio, have at least 7 years leadership and/or supervisory experience, be at least 35 years old, and have 2 to 3 years experience in community or civic organizations. My definition of leadership is an amalgamation of various definitions defined in Chapter One used to explore the complexity and variation of experiences of Black men across different contexts of leadership roles.

Two local leaders in Peek, Ohio who meet the criteria, operate as a mentor to me. One is currently Director for Human Resources and Diversity at a Fortune 500 Company headquartered in Peek, Ohio. The other is the Principal at local elementary school in Peek, Ohio. Both were instrumental in recommending individuals for me to contact within their professional networks
as well as administrators at the Central Office for Peek Public School District. These men served as a guide in negotiating access to men who participated in this study. Although neither of these men participated in this dissertation study, they both were peer reviewers. The Black male educator was a participant of the pilot study.

**Role of Researcher**

I intentionally do not mention my work history or familial background as I define myself as the research instrument. I do not mention my work history or familial background because my graduate studies and inquisitiveness have led me to the topic of Black male leaders. I begin by reflecting upon a question posed by Roderick A. Ferguson, author of *Aberrations in Black*. In a lecture series, he posed many questions to graduate students pertaining to our research interests, but this particular one stood out for me: who is your (my) ideal audience? My ideal audience for my dissertation and future research agenda is the intellectual community of Black scholars who engage in critiquing leadership theories while intersecting issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As I delve into research on Black men, I run into a ten foot thick wall of cement: a polarized relationship of research agendas that fail to discuss issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality as they affect Black men and Black women. The paradox of the cement wall is that discourses on Black men and Black women are not researched and discussed in a collective or unified experience. Therefore, it is a goal of mine to develop discourse that defines, explores, and formulate ideas and concepts that advance Black men and Black women in positions of power, thus addressing the division in the academy when it comes to issues that affect Black men and Black women. To discuss issues that affect Black men without Black women, we silently accept our status as invisible. In doing so, we negate the totality of impact that race, gender, class, and sexuality-based discrimination have on our success.
What does this have to do with me as the research tool? I have an instinctive desire to bridge communities of color, in particular the Black community, beyond the binary relationship that exists between men and women. I disidentify with the politics of the political left and the tactics of the political right that exploit the fears of Americans. In this portraiture, Black men are often painted as criminals, uneducated, and lazy beings and Black women as the matriarchs who hate men, or who benefit from state support, who desire to bamboozle the social programs at the state and federal levels. By subconsciously creating discourses that exclude one another, we accept the identity that has been placed on us. As the research instrument, I identify with a movement that seeks to understand and critique the hegemonic regime in order to create change that will result in empowering Black people to chart a path of success that includes to all aspects of the Black community. Therefore, I as the researcher served as a critique of leadership theories and a catalyst for transformation that deconstructed the deficit model of research, thus replacing it with a continuum that respects and values the complexity of life experienced by marginalized groups.

_Anticipated Ethical Issues_

I received approval for this research from Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University on July 5, 2005, prior to proceeding with data collection. This approval assured the participants and the university that no harm would result from agreeing to participate in the study.

Portraits are constructed, shaped, and drawn through the development of relationships (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Therefore it is up to the portraitist to maintain balance so that my voice does not overshadow that of the participants. In doing so, my voice must be “premeditated, restrained, disciplined, and carefully controlled” (p. 85). In this action, I as the
portraitist remained true to the nature of the study and was genuine in building relationships with the co-researchers so that idiosyncrasies did not interfere with the development of the stories.

I maintained confidentiality of the participants by usage of pseudonyms. Each pseudonym chosen represents the leadership journey of the men as well as the spiritual strivings of the individuals. These men had options of choosing their pseudonym. As our conversations and relationships progressed, they felt it best if I chose the pseudonyms. In doing this, I was adamant about choosing a name that was authentic to the story they revealed to me. In this regard, here is a brief synopsis of the individuals along with the meanings of their names:

1. **Aaron** – Mountain of strength, going far beyond the call of duty, a staunch supporter of public education and upward mobility for minorities in the workplace.

2. **Barnabas** – Encourager, serving the total community by ministering to the total person, physically, socially, and spiritually.

3. **Jesse** – Offering a gift, challenging children to live, to hope, and pursue education, thus leading through change and adversity that plague urban education, while hoping change will come.

4. **Job** – He that is persecuted, leading through turbulent times personally and professionally but never wavering in his faith

5. **Joshua** – Deliverer, leading the university out of stoicism thus embracing humanity, dignity, and respect.

*Procedures for Collecting Data*

I used three different methods for collecting data: participant observations, interview protocols using open-ended line of questioning, and focus groups. In addition, I collected demographic data using a biographical questionnaire (Appendix C) that were given to
participants prior to our initial meeting. The biographical questionnaire is an information-
gathering tool regarding their line of work, their professional commitments, and copy of resume. Our initial meeting was a time to be acquainted with one another, set boundaries, organize dates for interview sessions, and a way for me to gain a sense of the temperament of the participants. The questionnaire was accompanied with informed consent forms (Appendix B), a projected timeline for interview sessions, and a deadline for the final focus group.

Participant Observation

I used participant observation in order to gain an understanding of the Black men as leaders in their educational and communal contexts. My conceptual frame of spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory guided the observations. Communal contexts for the purpose of this study included their experiences in community organizations, church meetings, professional networking events, seminars, staff meetings, and other areas where they exercise their role as leaders. In these contexts, I observed them in their daily routines speaking with staff, preparing notes to present at local education board meetings, or in our conversations in their offices. These observations gave me a glimpse into the intricacies of their leadership, how others responded to them in their communal settings, and provided evidence of elements of my conceptual frame.

Interview Conversations

In the interview conversations, I was guided by my research question: In what way do the racialized and spiritual experiences of Black men influence their leadership? I developed interview protocols from the three dimensions of my conceptual framework: spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory. I conducted three to four interviews per participant or until data saturation (Creswell 1998, 2003). In this sense, I focused on:
1. *Family heritage or life story interview:* an attempt to explore their early life experiences as well as educational background and experiences

2. *Leadership:* an attempt to understand past and present experiences in leadership, their perspective on leadership, and share personal stories

3. *Service to Community:* an attempt to gain perspective on commitment to community and or social justice issues, gain insight into thoughts on the communities surrounding their particular educational institution/organization

4. *Spirituality:* an attempt to understand the foundation, intersection with leadership and/or service

I audiotaped and transcribed the interview conversations. I kept descriptive field notes throughout the interview to record my thoughts as well as making a note of key ideas or concepts that arise in the discussion. In addition to the use of field notes, I kept a journal where I recorded perceptions, observations, and thoughts for clarification as I embarked on this research journey. The interviews contributed to the development of themes as I continued with data analysis, set guidelines for the focus group conversation as well as began formation of portraits. 

*Focus Group Conversation*

The culmination of this experience ended with a focus group that took place on Wednesday, February 1, 2006 at Login Rail Elementary School. Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua were all invited. However, due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, only Barnabas, Jesse, and Job attended the focus group. During the focus group, we discussed issues of race, spirituality, leadership, and the passing of Coretta Scott King as these themes related to their lived and leadership experiences. The focus group was audiotaped, videotaped and I took field notes. I provided Barnabas, Jesse, and Job transcripts for review, presented them tentative
themes, and dialogued with them (Jones, 2003). In addition, there was an icebreaker used to introduce the Barnabas, Jesse, and Job to each other. This conversation was interactive and provided the synthesis for illuminating emerging themes that arose throughout data collection and analysis.

Most importantly, this focus group was an experience for the men to encourage one another in their plight as Black male leaders. Although their leadership experiences span public education, politics, and faith based initiatives, their experiences were astoundingly similar. They enjoyed the experience and have forged new relationships with each other. To my knowledge, they continue to keep in touch. They exchanged contact information at closing, as they insisted for me to set up another meeting. We planned a tentative date for dinner so I could present them with bound copies of the final document.

Data from the interview conversations, participant observation, and focus group are stored in tabbed folders in a locked storage cabinet. Each participant’s folder is color-coded. Each individual folder includes handwritten notes, transcriptions, audio tapes, biographical questionnaire, as well as any other documents they may have given me. The compilation folder consisting of notes, transcripts, and audio tapes, and video tape of the focus group is also kept in the locked storage cabinet.

Data Analysis Procedures

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) recommended that data be coded on an ongoing basis and that synthesis must be flexible so that a researcher can “shift gears or change directions” when moving from fieldwork to analysis. In attempting to follow the author’s suggestion, it is recommended that transcripts be read at least four times in search of emergent themes.
In the first read, I read thoroughly, highlighting important aspects of their life story and elements of their leadership. The highlighting and writing of notes created an impressionistic record on each transcript that will address analytic themes, questions, or issues. The second read allowed me to fill in the gaps left out on my initial impressionistic record. This allowed me to look for repetitive phrases or metaphors. At this stage, I employed the use of open coding (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to categorize and unitize the data. This form of coding allowed me to look at the data through a deeper lens. Prior to the third read, I sent transcripts via postage and internet mail for participant review and verification. This allowed time for reflection so that I had a sense of direction for our next meeting. In most cases, I had a new set of questions that complimented the previous interview.

The third read allowed me to create a preliminary portrait by comparing data from observation and interview protocols. At this stage I began to organize my categories through axial coding (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), thus condensed the data from general to precise categories. Data from the observations and interviews were coded and numbered so they can be easily located within the interview transcripts and observation field notes.

In the fourth read, I verified the repetitive phrases and metaphors that were developed as a result of coding. I was guided by the five principles as suggested by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997):

1. Listening for repetitive refrains that appear amongst the participants and that suggest a communally held view.

2. Listening for resonant metaphors, cultural expressions, and symbolism that reveal the ways participants enlighten and live through their realities.
3. Listening for “themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals that seem important to organizational continuity and coherence” (p. 193).

4. Use different sources of data including conversations, observations, and documents.

5. Construct themes and reveal relationship among perspectives that are often experienced as divergent and cacophonous by the participants.

This process not only helped formulate emerging themes, it also aided in the process of validating my data. Joseph Maxwell (2002) gave an exhaustive checklist for validating data. I relied on prolonged engagement, respondent validation, rich data sources, effects of researcher on participants, and triangulation of data sources (p. 110-114). I was in the field collecting data from August 2005 to February 2006. This length of time allowed me the opportunity to observe, interview, and build relationships with the participants, which provided complete information about the specifics of the fieldwork. I asked for feedback about the conclusions of my data from the participants as I began creating portraits. This member checking often referred to as respondent validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a process that permitted participants with an opportunity to authenticate the researcher’s data and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking in this study is viewed as a mechanism that allowed ethical standards to be maintained because participants are involved in the iterative process of data analysis by reviewing their own transcripts (Jones, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; J. A. Maxwell, 1996, 2005).

The use of participant observations, interviews, focus groups, and peer reviews provided the sources of rich data. “Rich” data are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on (Becker, 1970). These sorts of data are also referred to as
“thick” description as coined by Gilbert Ryle (1949) and applied to ethnographic research by Geertz (1973). This type of data incorporates the intentions of the actors and the code they give their actions meaning.

**Narrative Structure**

I have 12 chapters as the final product of this study. The first three chapters lay the foundation for the study. Chapter Four represents a portrait of myself infused with the dissertation process that focused on my personal and professional growth throughout this process as well as focusing on the relationship built with the participants of the study. Each participant has a chapter dedicated to his story. The individual portraits of the Black male leaders are in Chapters Five through Seven. Chapters Eight, Nine, and Ten give a detailed account of spirituality, servant leadership, and Black identity as emerging themes as they relate to the participants as well as the conceptual framework that will follow the guidelines as posed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997, p. 263). An outline of chapter eight, nine, and ten follow this presentation:

Theme- Spirituality for example

a. Relevant Dimension 1 – “Way of Being”
   a. Evidence – quotes that illustrate relation to relevant dimension
   b. Evidence
   c. Evidence
   d. Dissonance – this would be a quote that shows they all may agree, but there are areas of divergence

b. Relevant Dimension 2 – “Manifested in Leadership Practices “
   a. Evidence
b. Evidence

c. Evidence

d. Dissonance

c. Relevant Dimension 3 (and so on…)

d. Conclusion

The last item of the outline calls for a brief retrospective holistic view that might be accomplished explicitly through the portraits reflection or implicitly through a story that seems integrative (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This outline allowed me the flexibility to assemble and organize the holistic view of the thematic areas. Chapter 12 is the final chapter that examines the implications and recommendations for future studies.

As the portraitist, I chose elements to include in the introduction to the research portrait in order to set the stage for what is to follow, by placing human experiences within a particular social, physical, historical, and cultural context (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In this regard, I was intentional about infusing the spiritual aspects in formulating the layout of the chapters.

By writing the individual as well as collective stories, I acknowledged the struggle that took place, described by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) as “the dual motivations guiding portraiture: to inform and inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and the heart” (p. 243). By recognizing the internal and external conflict that can occur in qualitative research, the process of documenting the stories of Black male leaders in an authentic voice further validates the complexity of qualitative research as an interactive process.
Preliminary Pilot Findings

I conducted a pilot study with a Black male educational leader who has been a principal at an urban elementary school in the Peek Public School District for 10 years. He met the criteria guidelines for selecting participants for the study. The pilot study took place on Wednesday, March 16, 2005 at the office of TK (pseudonym). This study was very productive in that it sought to test and confirm my conceptual framework consisting of spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory.

The conversation was very productive. The questions I asked were based on the three dimensions of my conceptual frame. The list of questions can be found in the appendices. It comes as no surprise that the answers coincide with key thematic areas broken down into: spirituality, leadership, service, and race. Although these are elements of my conceptual frame, the discussion around these thematic areas was exciting. Spirituality: TK acknowledged, “God is center to everything” he does. He further explained that his spirituality is grounded in his faith in God and he tries to “conduct himself based on the concept as what would Christ would want” him to do in his life. Even though I was looking for the spiritual piece to his leadership, I was taken back at the response. I was not prepared for the richness of the spirituality piece. Without mentioning spirituality further and after re-reading the transcripts, redemption and humanity were key topics in the discussion. He mentioned on several occasions how he looks for and instructs his teachers to look for the redemptive value in an individual, while acknowledging their humanity. Noting that all can serve, all can contribute, and all have good qualities. This notion of redemption is theistically based. Here he clearly infuses the spiritual piece of himself in how he views the world and those who reside in it, but how he uses redemption to acknowledge others.
The next thematic area is leadership. While reading the transcripts over and over, I wondered whether or not he was reading Kouzes and Posner (2002)? He mentioned on several occasions how he tries to lead by example or Modeling the Way and Inspiring a Shared Vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). He referred to his teachers as “foot soldiers” and how he understands the walk in “their shoes.” What is evident to me is that he identifies with their work, but distances himself enough to remain the leader. This is a skill that many leaders have a hard time with, but in the interview and observation with a teacher, I believe he does this very well. In “leading by example,” he explained how he would not ask his staff to do something he would not or has not done. TK also stated how he can not be a leader if he does not have any followers. What this said to me is that he is aware as a leader how he must create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, while maintaining a level of respect for him as the leader, but also for them as the followers.

Another thematic area is service. Here, redemption comes up again. He stated that all can serve despite their current situation. More importantly in this area is the notion of community. On many occasions, TK does not speak in first person. The conversation involved the use of “we”: as in we strive for or we can do. This reminded me of an Ethiopian proverb that states “it takes a whole village to raise a child.” TK referred to his school as a community, especially since it is named after a famed civil rights leader. He used that to drive the point home about service, how to serve, and what serving accomplishes for the server and the one being served. He seemed to focus on reciprocity, “I am because You are” which is a function of servant leadership. When asked in the interview, TK does identify himself as a servant leader. Looking back, I think the service component can be infused with the sense of community.

Service seems interrelated or interconnected with all of the areas. It seems to be a key factor that
is connected to his spirituality and his leadership. I had a hard time deciding whether to include it with leadership or keep it a separate category.

The final thematic area is race. What does race has to do with spirituality, leadership, and service? In TK’s own words, “being a Black man is the essence of everything I do.” TK further stated that his being Black is the reason why he stays in education, particularly the inner city. He hopes that by staying in education, he can “impact and make a difference” in the community, but to also be a positive role model for young Black youth. TK also stated that he feels the cultural knowledge he and others bring to education is not valued. It is in this that he strives to create an atmosphere at his school to combat the devaluing that sometimes happen in education. At his school, they try to focus on the “concept of Blackness, what it is, and what does it mean in terms of growing up in America”. TK is consciously addressing the deficit by building community and creating change through service to others. Not only is he addressing the deficit, but he is trying to prepare Black youth to have a strong sense of self, which can be minimized when the cultural knowledge is not valued.

This pilot data supported the use of my conceptual frame in several ways. First, spirituality was confirmed by TK using his spirituality by conducting himself on concept as the Golden Rule, treating others as you wish to be treated. Second, TK defined his leadership style as a servant. He referred to Kouzes and Posner on several occasions, often referring to his leadership team as a community. Service was integrated and a key factor in TK’s leadership style. TK also stated he felt as a Black man he serves as a role model not only for his leadership team, but also to students in his care. This pilot study supported that I am using a conceptual frame that will be beneficial to the dissertation study.
SECTION TWO: LISTENING FOR HIS STORY

CHAPTER IV: UNVEILING THE HEALING PROCESS

Introduction

I began this dissertation anxious, wondering what would come of the experiences of Black male leaders. As a collective, would their perception of how the world works be one and the same? The five men interviewed for this study are distinct and unique in their own right. Yet they are also similar. I title this portrait of the dissertation process, “leading through healing.” Leading through healing seemed appropriate because of the internal transformation that has taken place over the past six months of field research. I continue to be converted and healed from debilitating judgments about people, Black men specifically. These portraits will fill a gap in the existing literature by detailing the complexities of their leadership, rarely explored. These portraits recognize that their voice is ever present, sometimes angry, and often faint, due to the daily struggle of catching a breath of fresh air. This journey has been a tedious one, but one that I was compelled to endure as an initial step in setting my calling in motion. My healing is a never-ending process on a winding road as it intertwines with those of Barnabas, Jesse, and Job (pseudonyms for participants).

However, I am compelled to evaluate my stance in life by reflecting on what stops my leadership from being great, hence turning my fears into powerful motivators of liberation. I am motivated to liberate my mind of domination, domination of abusers that use media, popular culture, and academic literature to control the minds of unsuspecting adults. An esteemed colleague, Dr. Cynthia Tyson (personal communication, 2006) once told me that when one has a clear understanding of domination, he or she cannot be dominated. I am empowered by her
words and challenged to deconstruct hegemony and privilege. My deconstruction began with this dissertation of studying the experiences of Black male leadership.

I have begun the process of healing by freeing my mind of dominance, allowing myself to learn from the five Black men in this study, and allowing our collective search for wholeness to catapult the depths of our leadership. Through this process, I have learned that leadership is best served by those leaders who come to grips with their purpose in life or at least the purpose for their leadership. As I have stated in chapter three, I have an instinctive desire to bridge communities of color. I espouse to do this through healing, healing emotional wounds and scars caused by professional and personal domination, and inspiring under represented groups of people to take back their power through tenets of leadership. Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua expressed on many occasions that there is no “I” in TEAM and there needs to be a mass exodus to get back to our roots of serving one another. As Job says, “we need to stop looking for a role model and just be a role model.”

I plan to take his advice of being a role model by taking the risk to lead by example. The first risk I have taken is studying leadership from a Black male perspective. Second, I have a research agenda that uncovers abuses and misuses of data, often depicting people of color in pathological stages, using spirituality and social justice as my anchor. Finally, although I am not healed of all debilitating judgments, I am an active participant in my healing, hopefully challenging others to climb on board to liberate themselves of dominant forces that hurt their mind, body, and spirit. It is my challenge that they free their mind and enjoy the journey of the stories told by Barnabas, Jesse, and Job. The portraits end with a poem that reflects the journey they have experienced throughout life and leadership. With these men revealing their
weaknesses, insecurities, and strengths, they hope others are inspired to search inward, recognizing their weaknesses while celebrating their strengths.

**Leading through Healing**

- Hearing the echo of my cry, Caused me to
  - Evaluate my purpose, my life, and my leadership. Hence
  - Acting upon the assurances of my spirit to
  - Love myself and my people
  - In spite of setbacks and inner turmoil, I keep pressing on with a
  - New sense of self, a new sense of accomplishment, and an inner peace, forcing me to
  - Go the distance on this journey, taking the bumps and the bruises; healing with joy,
    knowing that I am a slave no more to doubt, disbelief, and procrastination. I am a liberator, a servant of the people and a servant of God

**Participants/Co-Researchers**

Out of the five Black male leaders interviewed in this study, I am storying the experiences of three men in portraits. By storying, as researcher, I am obliged to provide details of significant events in their lives that relate to spirituality, leadership, black identity, and educational experiences. Although I collected leadership experiences of five Black men, the three chosen for portraits resonate with astounding importance in relation to the purpose of the study. Therefore, the voices of all men are not in individual portraits, but will be heard in Chapter Eight as I consider and expand upon themes.

As mentioned earlier, this process of data collection has been one of self-discovery and connecting with Black men in an open, free, and non-threatening spiritual space. These men have told me intimate details of their lives. At times, I must admit that I was uncomfortable with
hearing the particulars of their life experiences. Their tragedies allowed them to persevere and gave credence to pain that brought them joy. Some of those details are excluded from the dissertation, as are interview and focus group transcripts. My participants exposed themselves to me entrusting me with sensitive information. I respectfully chose what to include in their portraits. In doing so, I align my choice with the words of Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot (1994) who stated:

As I listen to these extraordinary ...men tell their stories, I play many roles. I am a mirror that reflects back their pain, their fears, and their victories. I am also the inquirer who asks the sometimes difficult questions, who searches for evidence and patterns. I am the companion on the journey, bringing my own story to the encounter, making possible interpretive collaboration. I am the audience who listens, laughs, weeps, and applauds (p. 12).

I chose to utilize the words of my participants as a means to present an authentic rendering of their story. In this regard, one will find these portraits are primarily written in the language of Barnabas, Jesse, and Job. The portraits begin with an introduction of each participant, followed by written text that illustrates their journey as Black men, and then conclude with a poem written by me that describes their leadership.

Figure 2 shows the applicable demographics of my participants. Aaron and Joshua are experienced leaders with 25 years or more leadership experience in public education and non-profit organizations. In addition, these two men are distinguished in their careers as their bios exceed five to seven pages that exemplify their lifelong accomplishments. They both serve on local Boards of Directors for non-profit organizations in the Peek, Ohio area and are members of area Chambers of Commerce. Aaron and Joshua represent the vanguard of Black male
leadership to which Barnabas, Jesse, and Job aspire. Barnabas, Jesse, and Job are diversified in their leadership experiences. Each has a significant role in their institution. They are connected to each other through volunteering at local elementary schools and involvement in community organizations at the local level. The diversity of the leadership expertise of these Black men add credibility to the portraits as their experiences are varied and range from 10 to 30 years. The men ranged in ages from mid-30s to late 50s.

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Degrees</th>
<th># Yrs in Current Position</th>
<th># Yrs Leadership Experience</th>
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<td>Barnabas*</td>
<td>Sr. Pastor Restoration Church</td>
<td>BA:Comm, MA:Theology Enrolled D. Min program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job*</td>
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<td>BA: Business</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>President, Regional University</td>
<td>BA, MA, PhD: Interpersonal Comm.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Participant Demographics.

*Note: These demographics are accurate up to January 24, 2006. All participants’ names are pseudonyms.

*These participants have individual portraits represented in Chapters 5, 6, & 7.
Final Thought

These stories do not and cannot serve to detail the fullness of the Black male leadership experience. However, these portraits serve only to shed light on their lives as a way for us to experience and learn what it may feel like to walk a day in their shadow. Embrace, seek to understand, and be open to new perspectives on leadership.
CHAPTER V: BARNABAS’ TESTIMONY

Leading through Encouragement

Introduction

There is something different about him, a glow that shines through every picture on the Sunday morning bulletin, a glow that penetrates the souls of everyone who hears him speak, and a glow that blinds the naked eye as he takes three huge leaps of expectation in praise. Sunday morning fellowship at Restoration Church in Peek, Ohio is filled with laughter, joy, and passion as the choir sings *We Fall Down, Glorious, and Presence of Lord,*” gospel songs by Donny McClurkin and Martha Munizi. The congregation, including Barnabas, stand with their hands lifted in adoration, jump with elevation, and dance in thanksgiving as they are surrounded by a loving atmosphere of family and friends. The sanctuary walls are adorned with banners that replicate scripture and posters that convey empowerment, excellence, and stewardship. Barnabas has a smile from Ohio to Kenya as he looks out into the crowd from the podium and introduces the liturgical dancers. He is ecstatic, directing the congregation to stand and to give God praise because the dance team has good news to share. They have five new members, young ladies ranging in age from five years to 13 years old. He declares in a deep, affirming tone that the church should celebrate these young ladies because “it is the church’s job to appreciate and encourage them.”

During morning service, Pastor Barnabas has a thirty minute block of time dedicated to children and young adults which is called *Kids Zone,* where all the children of the church are called to center for fellowship with Pastor. At this point, Pastor Barnabas asks for school report cards, asks for upcoming events they would like for him to attend, and asks for good news they would like to report to the church. Although this is a time for affirmation, Pastor Barnabas also
discusses with them issues of respect for themselves, respect for others, the importance of being a leader, and the importance of education. Some of the children are apprehensive about Pastor Barnabas reading aloud their school reports. But he assures them that it is not his goal to disrespect or embarrass, but to get them to do their best work. When a grade is less than average, he says in an assertive tone, “Jody is working on that grade in social studies, and I believe she will come out on top. Give God some praise.”

He is charismatic, speaking with vigor as he asks the youth “can you afford hip hop?” In this conversation, he asks them can they afford not to speak grammatically correct English, can the young men afford to have their pants hanging below their buttocks, can the young ladies afford to have their undergarments showing, and can they afford to have tattoos on parts of the body noticeable to everyone? He continues to probe, asking them, can they afford these things in a job interview, in a classroom setting, and/or at dinner with a college recruit? He proceeds to tell them that if they are not currently the Donald Trumps, the Bill Gates, and the Oprah Winfrey’s of the world, sole proprietors, billionaires, and charting their own path of success, then they cannot afford hip hop. Pastor Barnabas notices that the youth are not buying what he is selling, so he says, “don’t look at me in that tone of voice” and reiterates that “it is my job to keep you on track and guarantee that each and everyone of you go to and graduate college.” In this regard, Pastor realizes that the youth are ready to go to their seats, so he tells them this in closing,

“Don’t let the game fool you into thinking that disrespect of your person and others is the way to go. Those who will lead you astray want nothing more but for you to fail. As your pastor, I know that each and every one of you have a gift and my job is to ensure that your gift is not abused and misused by those who seek your demise. I love y’all, be mad at me if you want, but I still love you. Now give me a group hug and go to your seats. Hug your parents too.”
At that moment, Barnabas the Pastor was also Barnabas the life coach, encouraging the youth to look beyond their present situation and foresee their future. Just as Barnabas imparted wisdom into the vulnerable spirits of the youth, I was receptive, envisioning the legacy of leadership that Barnabas was creating. Embrace, seek to understand, and be open to Barnabas’ testimony.

*The Past Revisited*

Barnabas grew up in a number of places. He was born in Dayton, Ohio, moved to Yonkers, New York; then to Wichita, Kansas; from Wichita to Durham, North Carolina; then to Indianapolis, Indiana; then to Atlanta, Georgia for college; and back to Wichita. Currently, Barnabas resides in Peek, Ohio, where he is Senior Pastor at Restoration Church. He is a preacher’s kid, so most of the moving was due to his father’s pastoral duties. Barnabas talked frankly about his childhood, constantly moving, and the separation caused by divorce that affected his family.

Growing up was wonderful. And I say “wonderful” not to gloss over. But when I look back, I see how each difficult situation helped to make me what I am becoming. It was my mother and father and my two brothers. We are still a very tight unit, even though there has been separation and, ultimately, divorce. My mother and father never became warring countries. I can say this: They are better as friends than they were as husband and wife. I learned to accept them for who they are and not what I wanted them to be or what society said that they should be. We never missed love at all, even in the midst of struggle, even in the midst of leaving my mother’s home. I left my mother’s home for good when I was fourteen. I’m the oldest, so my brothers left for good at nine and eight. So they were very young.

After reflecting on the separation of his familial unit, Barnabas mentioned in the interview the resilience his mother showed through this time. He also recognized she did not hate his father and that she did not allow personal turmoil to disrupt the relationships between sons and father. He said:
My mother would never let us be separated. She knew that my father could give me what I needed, not only as a man, but as a minister. And so she allowed us to leave and live with him. And I can safely say that my mother did for eight years for me and my brothers, with no support, with no child support. My mother never attacked my father, not because she didn’t need it [monetary support]. She was a teacher. She made it on a teacher’s aide salary, food stamps, and living in the Projects. And yet my mother never lacked pride. She always expressed training. And everything that was strong to us and what we are now, I would say is 80% because of my mother.

Because of her strength and selfless act, Barnabas stated on numerous occasions that his mother was the first leader he had ever met. According to Barnabas, his mother was a good example of leadership as she instilled in his spirit wisdom and strength that has facilitated his spiritual and mental growth. He credits a majority of his success, understanding of ministry, and the role of gender equality in ministry to his mother. He stated:

My mother helped me with the whole women-in-ministry piece. My father was traditional Baptist; my mother was Episcopalian. And so my mother was strong willed, and strong minded. My mother helped me with this: Is a person’s salvation experience less or more because it is led by a male or female? It’s not about the gender; it’s about the end result. So, theologically, my mother has been the person that has really pushed the envelope, even in a time when it wasn’t chic or politically correct.

Even though we’ve had women in ministry on our sides of my father’s family, they were never accepted because my father was traditional. He was like, “Uh, uh!” And so today, all of us are ministers. My brother is a minister. And what is strange is that my father is staunch traditional. My youngest brother, who pastors in Louisiana, he’s coming around to the women-in-ministry thing, but my middle brother and I, we’re like Hey, let’s go with it! So that’s what I mean when I say, really, that my mother is the first theologian. She’s given a lot of input into who we are theologically because of her strong relationship with God.

Barnabas recognized at an early age that he was blessed to have his mother in his life. He constantly referred to her as a gift by God. She passed on wisdom and knowledge that is priceless. Barnabas acknowledges his mothers’ presence and that of his family by passing on those values of character, integrity, and education onto those he comes into contact on a regular basis. Barnabas comes from a family of educators as they instilled the necessary tools to be successful in life. These tools, he commented, were valuing education, valuing personal identity,
and valuing ancestors who paved the way for him to succeed. Barnabas had this to say about his family, “I would not limit them to academic education, but I would say life educators, life coaches.” These life coaches, especially his mother, helped him understand the world and how the world operates. In this regard, he reflected on his family’s role in helping him to embrace his Blackness and what that means:

My mother always helped me to know who I was. And that, of course, included being a Black male. And she did instill in me and my brothers in the time that my brothers were under her roof, if you will, there were certain things. You had to be four times better. School was not an option. It was mandatory. There were certain character traits that we had as people—not just as a part of a family we were born in to, but as people of color. There were certain ways we carried ourselves. Our diction had to be correct. And that came down from my grandfather on my mother’s side who was a child-development director at Lincoln-Watts School in New York. He would never allow you to mispronounce words. And that helped shape who my mother was and, in turn, my mother helped shape us that way.

In relation, his Blackness and maleness is important to whom he is and the work he does. I asked Barnabas what does Blackness means to him. He deliberated, while adjusting his posture, and spoke in a stern tone as he discussed the meaning. He said:

Mandate. In one word, it would be “mandate.” And that mandate is to shape and to mold minds. Any mind that I come in contact with for in a positive way. It’s a must; it’s not an option. So for me to be a Black male is a badge of honor, a privilege, but it’s not one that I can misuse. Family helped me to know and appreciate, that being black was not a burden or a band of dishonor. It was something to be proud of because of those people, my ancestors who had done so much, for the race and for their families. I grew up appreciating and embracing being black. It wasn’t something I was trying to run from. You know like when you’re in high school, I went to a fairly mixed high school, so I got the chance to experience other cultures. My exposure didn’t cause me to want to be like them. I was exposed and I could still appreciate my own blackness. To me being black has pride.

This mandate to shape and mold minds, coupled with his mother’s philosophy about education and training continue to aid Barnabas in appreciating his identity as a Black male. He uses this mandate, this badge of honor to, challenge members of his church especially the youth, to look
beyond the present and envision the future. He takes this role seriously as he believes “young peoples lives are at stake.”

Barnabas’ early childhood educational experiences also shed light on how he came to appreciate and embrace his Blackness. Due to the mobility of his family throughout his childhood, Barnabas attended various types of schools including a Montessori school, a private school, and public integrated neighborhood schools. He candidly remembers his second grade teacher and fourth grade teacher. The experiences he had with these women stand out for various reasons. He recalls:

I still remember my fourth-grade teacher, my second-grade teacher, because they were more than teachers. The relationship that I had with my second-grade teacher was like that of an aunt and nephew. She was a member of my father’s church, so when my mother didn’t finish unbraiding or braiding my hair, my mom would call Sister Jerkins [pseudonym], and she would do it. And Francis Jerkins is one of the greatest people in the world that I know just because of the stamp she put on me. She would always tell me, “Sit up straight.” Number one: “Don’t cheat, and don’t let anybody cheat off of you.” And I’ll never forget, my best friend Telvin [pseudonym] was trying to cheat off my paper, and Sister Jerkins would call my name. I said, “Mrs. Jerkins, I’m not doing it.” And she said, “I don’t care if you’re not doing it. Don’t let it be done to you.” She was a strong, firm, and gentle woman.

I’ll never forget Mrs. Kish, in the same school. She was in Tyrell Elementary School. She had a conference with my parents because I was singing “Jesus Christ Superstar.” Remember that song? And she thought I was blaspheming or something. She thought I was doing something wrong. And so it became a big deal. I remember her not only for that, but one of her policies was she gave everybody C’s. Totally crazy. No matter what, she gave everybody C’s. My mother had a fit. My mother went to her and said, “Is this my son’s work?” She says, “Ma’am, my policy is to challenge them.” My mother said, “Listen. I don’t care what your policy is. If his work is not average, do not give him a C. And so that’s the kind of educational experiences that I had that helped me to see a lot of things. I never would have imagined why somebody would just do that as a policy and be able to get away with it.

The educational experiences in elementary school were bittersweet for Barnabas. The difference in treatment that varies between Mrs. Jerkins and Mrs. Kish caused him to evaluate and question the difference of attention he received in each classroom. Barnabas reiterated that Mrs. Jerkins
cared about education and cared about him as a person. He is reminded of Mrs. Jerkins as he walked into the door at Login Rail Elementary school for the focus group on Wednesday, February 1, 2006. He heard a teacher tell a student to “zip up that coat.” The tone of concern and sternness showed that she cared about the students well being. Barnabas said that Mrs. Jerkins would always remind him to “zip up that coat” as he would leave Tyrell Elementary School to walk home.

In contrast, Barnabas did not feel as if Mrs. Kish cared and was concerned about his well-being as reflected on the C policy. Barnabas, staring with a haze, explained that Mrs. Kish’s C policy “stifled creativity and made him feel less than.” His mother had a strong sense of self and so desired to pass that trait along to her children. Barnabas’ mom was determined not to allow such a policy to tear down what she was building. Once again, she was the driving force in setting a standard when it came to education. Therefore, Barnabas’ mom challenged Mrs. Kish on the C policy. Not only did Barnabas’ mom stress education and training to him and his younger brothers, but in his eyes, she was leading by example by demanding a change in the C policy in Mrs. Kish’s fourth grade class. Barnabas reflects on the incident with Mrs. Kish as his mother stood up for what he called injustice in the classroom.

I was, like, “Yes!” But it was good for me, not because my mom was defending me, but because my mom was standing up. A lot of my friends at that time liked my mom because she was just that kind of personality who would stand up. She was strong willed and strong minded. She wasn’t going to lay down for nothing. A lot of the other parents, they just kind of went along with the status quo, but when my mother stepped up, it kind of brought some of them out. Leadership. Till this day, leadership!

*The Present Exists*

Barnabas began preaching at 14 years old. His earliest leadership experiences were in his father’s church. He remembers being the youth choir director and the youth evangelism leader. In these positions, he was lead organizer of the evangelism team that used gospel and song to
witness to surrounding neighbors of the church about the power of faith and fellowship. He stated that he had a miserable childhood. I probed the statement further being that it contradicted an earlier statement of his life being wonderful.

Actually I lost the battle with God, and that’s not being super-spiritual. That’s the way I would clarify it. I wanted to be everything but a pastor. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to be in a vocation that I would be a leader, I wanted to be a teacher, I wanted to be some different things, I just didn’t want to be a pastor. I had a miserable childhood. I wrestled with this call, this obligation for 6 years starting at 8. I didn’t realize what was going on. When other kids were playing with GI Joes, I was writing sermons. I didn’t know what they were. Only to find out at as a boy at 4, I would preach on the fireplace in Deacon Ivan Vaughn’s house in Dayton, Ohio. I would have church. I would re-enact what we say at church and I would be the preacher. What I found out, is a lot of people in ministry had similar situations. And when I realized that ministry is my life calling, my life’s work, I had to give in. Honestly, when I accepted it, it was like somebody took a ton of bricks off my shoulder.

Recognizing that other clergy and friends in the ministry had similar experiences, Barnabas came to understand how he was called to lead and give to others. Barnabas clearly differentiates his calling from his vocation. He explained that ministry and leadership is his calling while pastoring is his vocation. Being that Barnabas is a third generation minister, I asked him how his parents felt about him becoming a pastor.

As a matter of fact, they discouraged me from ministry. My father never wanted to be guilty of what you see now as passing down the family business. My family never saw the church as a family business to be passed down or one that needed to stay in the family. You had to be called by God and not man. And the whole “calling” piece is really, really key to why I am doing what I am doing. I know that this is my life’s task.

Barnabas said on numerous occasions that his father and mother wanted to make sure he was making the right choice when it came to him becoming a pastor. He elaborated that their concerns were not because they did not believe in him. They wanted to protect him from the hardships and burdens associated with pastoring that affect mental, physical, and spiritual health. Barnabas asserts that by witnessing his parents’ relationship as friends, the lessons they taught and modeled regarding life, spiritual maturity and leadership continue to serve as a guide.
Their relationship helped me to handle some things later in my life because of the pattern and the mold that I saw from them. I had the best of it all. I took golf lessons as a kid. There’s not one car I haven’t ridden in. I’ve known tailor-made clothes all my life. I’ve ordered steak as a child. So while I’ve had privilege, I’ve also had poverty. If there were two words that are staples of my life, one would be “exposure” and the other would be “balance.” Those two words, I believe, are helping me to lead ‘til this day.

Barnabas’ examples of leadership came from family, in specific his mother and father. They served as anchors, making sure Barnabas was balanced in education, balanced in leadership, and balanced in spiritual growth. Being exposed to privileged social events and experiences impoverished situations informs Barnabas’ leadership. According to him, the exposure he received as a child and throughout his young adult years helps him to relate to and understand the diversity of people and their experiences. He makes it a point, not to misuse or abuse his position as pastor.

I think of leadership as being a major entrustment. Because whomever you’re leading does not belong to you by ownership, but it is loaned unto you to be a steward over. And so there are two obligations. The first is to those you are leading and the second obligation is to the one who placed you in that position.

Barnabas talked candidly about his view of leadership. He says he is responsible not only to his congregation, but also to God. In realizing this, Barnabas proclaims that there are checks and balances in place. He asserts that his is not perfect, but he strives for perfection, knowing that he is leading to the best of abilities. Barnabas acknowledged on many occasions that being a pastor is not easy. I asked him to give me a glimpse of what a typical work week demanded of his time.

A typical week for me is meditation, consultation, preparation, visitation inspiration, and impartation. Those are four words that dominate my week. Monday thru Wednesday I usually do consultation. Thursday and Friday belong to me as it relates to not having to come to the building so that by Wednesday I usually would have generated an outline of what I am to do for the weekend. It makes it challenging because I may have multiple services during the week and if I travel out of town to preach, things can get complicated. Thursday and Friday I try spend some time with my family. We don’t watch TV on Thursday. On Saturday, I allow time for impartation to become a part of me, in reference to what I am going to give on Sunday morning. There are times when I have notes; I am doing that Monday thru Wednesday. Saturday, I try not to do anything.
Usually on Wednesdays, visitation to hospitals and schools takes up most of my day. I have a project called the Eutychus project, taken from Acts chapter 20. And so this is...the members of our church, I know where there kids go to school. I drop in on the kid’s school day and see how they are doing. I go to the office, of course and get permission. I let the kids know that I am involved; I am interested, not just in their spiritual life, but their total life.

Barnabas’ work week is time consuming, in many ways exhaustive, and varies depending on speaking engagements and emergencies that arise within Restoration Church. Although this is the case, he does not bask in the insurmountable work he has to do. He clarifies that he gets a lot of satisfaction from being a pastor. He discusses that is most meaningful to him in his role as Senior Pastor at Restoration Church.

I enjoy helping people. Whether it is by spoken word or the lived word. The lived word being a term used now called spiritual formation. Which simply means allowing the gospel to transform you inwardly that you live better outwardly. That’s what I mean by living the gospel, living the gospel is doing what Jesus would do and it’s not confined to the church building. It’s saying thank you, it is helping someone in the store, and that’s to me what living the lived word is. And that’s the greatest satisfaction that I get is knowing that I am depended upon to help people see God.

Barnabas’ leadership builds off the momentum, knowing that he makes a difference in the lives of many. In his words,

Leadership originates in the heart. What you say to people and how you treat people comes from the heart. Leaders must recognize the power of words and the power of actions that affect those who look to you for direction.

The Future Forecasts

Barnabas’s Eutychus Project is an extension of his leadership at Restoration Church.

This project also serves as a way to build community within the church as well as collaborating with leaders at the local school district. Members of Restoration Church also serve as adult tutors as well as the church operating as a center for Ohio Graduation Test tutoring and Fourth Grade Proficiency Test tutoring. Barnabas is adamantly about the importance of education, and
being involved in children’s educational careers as his mother was immensely involved in his.

He often says during *Kids Zone* “if we don’t celebrate our children in here, then the world will be able to dictate their future.” Baranabas is determined to model the behavior he expects from his members and the youth of his church.

I am working on my doctorate in ministry. That part of my education is for me. It’s not pressured upon me to do it. And that’s why I am not really rushing it. It’s just really a self gratification thing. But I do want to be able to encourage other people and young people that even after a certain age, you can still achieve greatness. So they realize, you never stop learning, you never stop growing and so education to me is a life long pursuit and I hope I can pass that on to my children as well as the youth in my church.

Barnabas is clear and intentional about his future career choices. He mentions that he sees himself retiring from pastoring, but not from ministering. He sees education as a pathway to success that sustains the mind and spirit.

I wanted to be a teacher when I was a kid. What really was there all of my life was teaching. I want to be a teacher. And when I’m done with pastoring, I think I’m going to do it. My reason being is because you get to shape, you get to mold, you get to see what you can be. My mother taught us, you cannot be what you cannot see. And my mother always was teaching us something. My mother was always pouring into me. I understand why my mother was always teaching me something.

I would like to teach elementary school because at that age you can shape, you can mold. They can see a professional man or a man who’s like me. And they might not know all of what it means, but that image is indelibly planted in their—psyche and their spirit. I say this because when my mother and father separated, there were other men who stepped up into my life and helped me.

In thinking about the opportunity to shape and to mold, especially now, with African-American boys being at such a deficit in public education, right now, they cannot be what they cannot see. And I don’t think they see enough male, positive, African-American leadership.

The book of life has Barnabas’ journey outlined. Barnabas, leading through encouragement detailed his story as a Black male pastor. This poem synthesizes Barnabas’s past, present, and future.
Barnabas, Leading through Encouragement

Example to many, modeling the way

ReNewed in mind, body, and spirit all throughout the day

Called to serve and serve to lead

Overseeing the mantle with care, true indeed

Unique to leadership

Resilient you are

Adorned and observed from afar

Great is he that paves the road

Educating youth, tearing down mental strongholds
CHAPTER VI: JESSE’S TESTIMONY

Leading through Adversity

Introduction

Daily, Jesse the father passes moms and dads in frenzy every morning at 8:15 a.m. As he swipes his access card to enter the double locked doors at Peach Nursery School, a frantic mom steps on his foot in a rush to get to the sign in folder. As they fight with eye rolls and loud sighs, Jesse finally gets his turn to use the cheaply made black pen to sign in. From there, Jesse and his daughter walk down a long tan hallway, passing finger-painted pictures on the wall, wooden cubbies inscribed with children’s names as they stop so that Chelsea could put her right leg on the step stool for support to get a drink of water. He walks down the hallway looking stern, a puffed chest with an air of familiarity as if he knows what he is doing. Chelsea is now in her classroom as Jesse walks back down the long tan hallway, passing the water fountain, walking through the double locked doors as he passes more frantic moms and dads as he gets into his black sport utility vehicle so that he can mentally prepare for another day at Login Rail Elementary.

Daily, Jesse, the Assistant Principal at Login Rail Elementary, passes children frantically running up 20 to 30 stairs as they rush to their classroom before the late bell rings. Prior to reaching his office, which is up the 30 stairs, around the corner, and situated in the main office on your left, Jesse is faced with a dilemma. The dean of students, Mr. Jones is going to be out for the day due to a family emergency. At this moment, Jesse is now the Assistant Principal and the Dean of Students. There he is, in the gymnasium, bypassing his office to manage in school suspension. In the gymnasium, Jesse is seated at a wooden brown desk, located in the far west corner. For three hours, the time goes by without incident. Simultaneously, there is a pizza sale
going on in the cafeteria. Within 45 minutes, Jesse is being paged and notified that a group of students has eaten pizza without paying for it. An influx of 24 boys and girls enter the gym. Their classroom teachers escort some. Cafeteria staff accompanies others. A few walk in unattended with a pink instruction slip needing Jesse’s signature. Immediately, he forms a single filed line-stretching pass the half court line on the gymnasium floor. He began to ask the children one by one (1) what did you do, (2) why did you do that, and (3) do you know why you are here.

At that moment, Jesse made no reference to our morning collision at Peach Nursery School as I was one of the frantic moms he passed. Just as Jesse was dropping off Chelsea and was preoccupied with what he would be faced with at Login Rail, I was preoccupied as well with the interview I had coming up. Embrace, seek to understand, and be open to Jesse’s testimony. 

*The Past Revisited*

Jesse grew up in Peek, Ohio, actually two blocks from Login Rail Elementary School where he is now the Assistant Principal. Both parents have earned masters degrees in education and were influential in placing a mark on him pursuing his college education. Jesse’s mother was a school administrator and owned a nursery school while his father worked for the Peek Police Department. When asked who had the most influence on him when he was growing up, Jesse attributed his educational success to his parents by stating:

> The philosophy on working towards school was the most important thing they had pressed on my life. They took it very seriously. I was the first man on either side of my family to go to college directly right after high school, so that was a great deal of importance and college was something they preached to us.

Jesse has instilled the importance of education to his biological children, as well as his Login Rail Elementary children. He sets an example of his work ethic as “all” his children see his daily
pursuit of his superintendent license and as he discusses the possibility of furthering his
education by enrolling in a doctoral program.

Jesse is adamant about his role as Assistant Principal. He is very much aware that to
some of the children, he is modeling behavior that may not be congruent with what they receive
at home. Jesse expressed these sentiments:

I would be lying to myself if I would say that I don’t have a strong influence on a lot of
the people here and a lot of the students I deal with. I give them an opportunity to see a
Black man wear a suit and tie every day coming into work. For most of these kids, they
will never see that. I mean, let’s be real about it. That’s something that a lot of them will
not experience. So if nothing else, that (seeing me) gives them hope, hope to live.

Jesse viewed his position as an opportunity to show these children something more, a pathway to
success. Jesse acknowledged his role, not only one of positional power, but one that carries a
great deal of responsibility. He recollected memories of being a leader and how others showed
him various paths to success. He stated that was his way of giving back.

Many of Jesse’s pivotal moments in his life occurred because of or due to early
educational experiences. He recalled the first time he realized he was Black and came to
understand at a young age the social inferences that dominate and stratify integrated schools. It
is critical to Jesse that he is a visible model of “what someone can attain” because he realizes that
early experiences can shape future destinies.

Jesse attended a predominantly Black elementary school from kindergarten to sixth
grade. In Peek, Ohio, it can be argued that the schools are not intentionally designed that way,
but many know this does not occur by happenstance. Peek, Ohio is a blue-collar town located in
Northwest, Ohio. Race relations are not explosive in Peek, although the tension remains on the
surface. His academic abilities and skills were nurtured and cultivated by his college-educated
parents and his teachers, most of whom were Black. This seven-year elementary experience
gave him self-confidence, self-esteem, and he even identified himself as the brightest kid in the classroom. This self-image, however, instantaneously changed as he was bused to a predominantly White junior high school. It was during this process, that Jesse felt he was different from all of the other kids, and allowed himself to believe he was no longer the smartest kid.

I went to a predominantly White, upper middle class school, high school. I came from a black middle class elementary school. Once I got there with them [White students] and understood that they did things totally different than what I did. I think it was more of an awakening in a sense that I was a pretty talented, educated, and intelligent in my knowledge base...in elementary I was a smart kid. But when I got out there, I realized that I’m not the smartest one, these folks have things I haven’t even thought about. I think that was probably my first reality check.

I asked Jesse if he thought the curriculum in the junior high and high school was tougher and if that was part of the reason, he had difficulty adjusting. Jesse counteracted my questions when he emphasized:

   No, it wasn’t so much a difference in curriculum; it was a difference in the ability level of my adaptation, my adapting to what they [White students] were doing and their culture.

Jesse received adequate educational experience in terms of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but the cultural and social occurrences he experienced him to second-guess his abilities. He soon realized the adjustment required to succeed in an environment where he was ill-prepared to cope with the new social norms. He reiterated this unfairness to exposure when he stated:

   I think once the idea hit me that life ain’t fair. Some things they were able to do, different programs they were in and exposed to, and the level of their exposure. I wasn’t feeling quite the same. That was a wake up call. That kind of let me know, hey you are different. They were allowed to do some of the things I wasn’t allowed to do……some of the different social programs, some of the different social things because of where they lived. We all were bused to school out there, and they got to walk to school. When we got on the bus, they looked at us like we were crazy. That tells you something. Hey I’m different. Your daddy is driving a Honda Accord and hey we were getting on the bus. That’s a wake up call for us. And that tells you something.
During our conversations about his educational experiences, Jesse reflected on how it was very clear to the bused students not to cause any disturbances. When I probed to understand if it was a verbal or non-verbal encounter, Jesse simply stated, “I don’t want to talk about it.” Jesse raised his tone of voice as if he was talking to one of those detention students:

When I was there. It was made very clear to us don’t come out here and clown or you are not going to be here. I mean in no uncertain terms. So we didn’t have fights (laughs). It was a different atmosphere. But it was made very clear don’t come out here and clown. Jesse never clarified how the school atmosphere made clear not to clown or cause any disturbances. Through all of this, Jesse’s parents continued to preach that he was going to go to college. Jesse’s stern demeanor and far off gaze shifted to a more nurturing one as he switched from the discussion about his White classmates to memories of his parents speeches about college and higher education. He said, “College was not an option. It was mandatory. The question was which school are you going to?”

As our meetings progressed, I recognized the shift in not only Jesse’s view of education, but also his view of the upper middle class environment that he was exposed to in junior high and high school. He conceptualized the experience in this detail:

When I was in fifth grade, I pretty much knew what I wanted to do and what kind of lifestyle I wanted to live. When I was out at Grove Dale Junior High [pseudonym] I saw what middle class looked like. This is how middle class does this and that, and those were things that influenced me. I saw my teachers drive…and they did this and that, and that’s what I wanted. That was the driving force.

The Present Exists

I started Jesse’s portrait with him surrounded by children. I guarantee that every time I had a scheduled appointment with him, there were mounds of children sitting on his office floor in silence. Well they were supposed to be silent. I could hear the echoes of whispering and chit chatter as they wondered who I was. What stands out the most as I reviewed observation notes
and read interview transcripts is how Jesse always said one or all three of these statements to the children as I entered the room. In a deep, agitated voice, I would hear (1) *don’t embarrass me in front of company*, (2) *move, you all see I got company coming in, give her that chair*, or (3) *don’t you all say hi when a grown person come in the room*. Now he knew he just told them no more than five minutes before I walked into his office to be quiet. Didn’t he contradict himself by telling them to speak? When I called him on it, he repeated an adage often heard from Big Mama or Big Daddy “kids speak when spoken to” and “I told them to speak.” I chuckled. He later explained that these kids, including his biological children would know and learn respect. “If they don’t get it at home, they will get it here.”

Jesse has always been the oldest in terms of leadership. He was the oldest sibling of four and typically the oldest in his neighborhood circle of friends. He organized the sporting events, the Olympic Games they played, and most often was the quarterback when they played football. He was the one that his friends, brother, and sisters looked to for direction. He mentioned, “I was thrown into leadership positions because of my age, but I grew to accept these roles and made it happen.” His experiences with his siblings and neighborhood friends helped him not to buckle under pressure. In his role as Assistant Principal at Login Rail Elementary, Jesse faces a lot of difficult situations. He looks on his early leadership roles as a source of influence in not giving up.

In October 2005, Jesse had to lay off two classroom teachers. This change in mid school year caused Jesse to reorganize his plan similar to when he was a quarterback on the football team with his neighborhood friends. When asked how this sequence of events affected him and the climate at Login Rail, he posited:

*It affects me in a sense of now I have to go back and re-organize my plan. We have a set plan in terms of how we align students and what classes we put them in. And so with the*
loss of that, what that means is that we have to go back to the drawing board and re-establish those relationships in terms of parents, students, with the new folks [teachers] and hopefully make it to be the smoothest transition. It creates a problem in a sense in that we starting back at square one and here we are in the middle of October. Especially in an environment where our students aren’t used to change. Here we are going to shake them up again and shake parents up again. It makes it difficult.

On a daily basis, just like when he was thrown into a variety of positions, today Jesse plays a variety of roles. He admitted that his roles are ever-changing and at times it is hard to keep up. Listen to Jesse as he expounded on his many roles:

That’s why I’m here. Thirteen people had a chance to get this job, and all of them passed. They would rather take layoffs than take this job. Now well you know... I don’t blame them

Well you know part of it is that when you take two local formal schools and you combine them together then, granted the only place to go is up, but you’re starting down at the bottom. So that means... you are going to be working that much harder. Plus this year we are dealing with some social issues that we have never seen before. You know different things in terms of custody issues and sexuality issues. I mean all kinds of stuff that we have never seen before... kids bringing marijuana to school, shooting dice in the bathroom. Man, this is elementary school. Stuff we have never even thought about. That’s what I do everyday, I feel like a social worker most days coming in here

And I got little John [pseudonym] running around doing everything he wants to do, what do you do? That makes difficult issues for us... with the way special ed laws read, once a child gets ten days [suspension or disciplinary action] you have to do something else in terms of hearings. That just increases the paperwork. But if I’m a Special Ed kid and I’m classroom all day long and you tell me to shut up and be quiet. So when I get an opportunity to get on the bus with bus driver turning his back to me and no one is watching me, what do you think I’m going to do?

He stated on numerous occasions that “before I step foot in here, I got to pray.” His spiritual core is important to him and keeps him grounded.

Jesse also thought that because of his inability to be put in compromising positions that are contrary to what he believes, he assumes that is a major reason for him not being promoted to the position of principal. In his own words he said “I’m not going to be put in that position. I
think that’s why I’m still sitting here as an assistant. I’m not going to allow PPS (Peek Public Schools) control my life like that."

He further explained how he came to this conclusion.

I am over qualified. You have to understand that when you operate in a system where the politics….If you looked around the district with some of the names I have given you, you will start asking yourself why in a district this size and of this Blackness. There are only three Black male principals in the whole city. If that doesn’t blare out to you right away, there is a problem. You are missing something. Of the three, one is a retiree. So the question becomes WHY? Over 75% of the student population enrolled in your school is Black male. Why aren’t they [Black male educators] there? That ought to jump out like a beacon. And it makes you wonder why PPS hasn’t embraced it yet. Out the names I have given you, I have given you five guys who are assistants. That is because the way our district is run and the politics of our district, they [Black male educators] are going to play second fiddle.

Even though he has dealt with district politics, changes in the building, and unforeseen social issues, Jesse stays in education despite taking job offers that may chart his career in another direction. He said “I honestly believe while I am sitting at this desk right now is because I was given a gift and now it is my turn to give it back. And that idea means that I must take care of my brother.”

In giving back, he receives fulfillment that is not comparable to higher salaries and less work hours. At this moment, the experiences of being a leader in his formative years have culminated to the leadership of a man who desires to bless others with his gift.

The Future Forecasts

What does the future hold for Jesse? The meaning of Jesse means an act of oblation or offering a gift. When asked where you see yourself in five to seven years, Jesse suggested offered insight. In his own words, he contemplated his next steps:

I’m getting paaaaid! Look here, I’m going to finish up this itinerary [superintendent licensure]. I’m getting paid, going straight to the top. No, realistically, I don’t even know if I will take a principals job. I’m going to finish up my superintendent license and hopefully move on down the line in that area. What is my next option? What is my next
move? Put yourself in my shoes…nine to ten years experience in this district, what is my next move? The opportunity may come to me eventually, but it may be a situation that I don’t want. I have to look elsewhere. Because of my commitment [PPS cohort superintendent licensure], I’m bound until Christmas of this year (2005) and I am free to leave after that. My question is that if I am going to deal with some of the intrinsic things that happen in terms of politics and racism…at least compensate me. We as principals only make $58K. I am only 20 credits from a PhD. My motivation …what is it if I make less than someone making working at LEE (pseudonym for major auto industry employer). So what is my motivation? I am in class with a couple of guys that work in Renoa (pseudonym); they make 10K more than me in half the size building and half the work I do… I would be somebody’s token in a minute. It wouldn’t offend me none. That’s one of the good things I can say about my upbringing. I fit in as much situations that I can work, communicate and speak the language and work in a system if I were the only Black.

Jesse’s heart is with the children in Peek Public Schools, but he seriously negotiates and contemplates moving from an urban environment into a less urban, possibly rural environment where he is compensated more and works less. When pressed on the issue of moving into a rural area, also knowing the implications involved with having a multiracial family, he pushed back with the following sentiments:

A lot of those things you have to eliminate. People are going to hate you regardless. You deal with that, you understand it and you move on. I do make an impact here [Login Rail Elementary]. But I believe a good leader can make an impact no matter where he is. Here’s the question: Who’s to say that if I had to go out to Renoa, what kind of impact I would have on them. That they get to see an educated Black man come in their building, discuss issues, and work with them everyday in a shirt and tie. Think what kind of impact that might have on a child. Who’s to say that that impact is any greater than the impact on one of these children? Think if they actually had to see somebody in an authoritarian position, that was higher and above…that would blow their minds. But think of the impact that would have once they have that challenge faced in front of them that they had to work for a Black guy. The fact that it would break down those stereotypes. Honestly, so when you talk about impact, it’s a 2-way street. I mean, most people don’t think of it that way, but who or what is to say that that experience would be any less or any more important.

The future for Jesse is promising, but requires many decisions to be made that will challenge what he believes, what he desires, and what he needs to maintain balance in his personal and
professional life. He often reflected on where he would have been if he had taken a different route in terms of job offers and education. He reflected on past decisions that gave insight into his future:

There is a great need for Black male educators, but not in Northwest Ohio. If you look at Ohio, there is a surplus of teachers. We are one of the few states that lay off teachers. So now that we know that... you see some of the problems that we deal with. As a Black male, if you get in a system like Peek, based on seniority, you might have a job, but it may not be the job you want. You are basically out of luck. So that is one of the things that I looked at in undergrad. There are a lot of states that wanted Black males, but I wanted to stay in Ohio. I guess, I am scared to think of where I would be had I taken some of those offers. They were going to pay for grad school... man I turned down a job in Florida. They were going to pay me to move, pay me a stipend, and pay for me to go to grad school. And I turned all of that down. Man I would be a superintendent somewhere. That's probably where I would be at this point.

This reflection sheds light onto the winding road that has directed Jesse’s path of leadership. He briefly spoke of how he would feel if he left. He said:

I would miss it. Especially if I’m not getting the respect I should have. It would be nice to be respected for what I do and be noted for what we do. In the short time that you have been here, you’ve seen the dynamics of this job. My job extends way beyond typical school issues.

The next steps to Jesse’s path are unknown. Jesse, leading daily through adversity detailed his story as a Black male educator. The poem synthesizes Jesse’s past, present, and future.

**Jesse, Leading through Adversity**

Acknowledging that racism exists and that he needs to go higher in his calling

Deciding whether he should leave or should he stay

Valuing the lives, the futures of many children that hang in the balance

Evaluating the meaning of being a Black man in public education

Reciprocity, giving back to the community is what he does. Deciding the community is key

Spirituality is his core, which he takes seriously
Innocence of a Black male misunderstood

Trusting only in God, taking care of his brother and realizing this political system has a means to an end, without an ultimate good

Yearning for the remedy, when only God has a cure
CHAPTER VII: JOB’S TESTIMONY

Leading through Loss

Introduction

Prior to the Peek City girl’s basketball championship game in 2001, Job purchased five non-refundable airline tickets priced at $235 each for the seniors on the basketball team. In addition, he chartered a tour bus that would visit the Black Mecca of Atlanta colleges and universities. His premise for the trip was to show the girls that there is life after basketball and that a college education is the pathway to success. He wanted his daughters as he referred to them, to experience and see life beyond the walls of despair that they encountered daily as they rode the transit bus to Bullseye High School. Job wanted so much for his daughters to see the abundance of what life and education had to offer.

Unfortunately, the Deputy Superintendent of Peek Public Schools, Dr. Regina Green, informed Job that he failed to sign a consent form to waive reimbursement for the planned trip. Job had permissions slips from parents, had two parent chaperones, but was unaware of school policy that required non-faculty to waive requests for reimbursement. Two days prior to departure for Atlanta, Dr. Green telephoned Job, requesting a meeting regarding details of the trip. It was a Wednesday morning at 10:00am, when Dr. Green notified Job that he would not be able to take the senior girls to Atlanta because of failure to sign the consent form. According to Dr. Green, this form needed to be signed seven business days prior to the trip.

Job, caramel complexion, standing six feet five inches tall, weighing at least 245 pounds, emotions erupting inside as if a volcano were to erupt, maintained a calm appearance, trying to figure out how he can appeal to Dr. Aston to change her mind. Job, seated in a cushioned cherry wood stained office chair directly across from Dr. Aston’s cherry wood stained desk looking in
her eyes with no fear. Dr. Aston’s office, adorned with religious symbols, religious paraphernalia, a black King James Version bible on the bookshelf, and she is wearing a necklace with a Jesus hanging from the cross. Job is in disarray, he thought back two weeks when Dr. Aston and Job were at a Bullseye fundraising banquet. She complimented him on taking initiative in planning such a trip because the girls needed to see a glimpse of college life. Not to mention, prior to planning the trip, Dr. W. Rankin, Superintendent/CEO of Peek Public Schools gave Job a blessing on the trip. Job remembering all of this tried to appeal to Dr. Aston’s moral fiber, the comments she made about the trip, and to Dr. Rankin’s blessing.

Job began to recite the yearlong accomplishments in desperation citing the increase in grade point average of the team from 2.3 to 3.25, how they won the Peek City Championship: the first time for Bullseye High School in seven years, and this trip would solidify significance beyond measurement. Nevertheless, Dr. Aston was adamant about the uncompleted form. She was not budging despite the devastation this would have on the girls. Job left Dr. Aston’s office upset, angry, disappointed, and not to mention afraid to tell the girls that they would not be able travel to Atlanta, Georgia to visit nationally recognized Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Job and his daughters came so far to lose so much. Job wonders, even today, five years later, what kind of impact that trip would have had on his girls. He told them before every game that they can achieve if they believe and success begins in the heart. How can Job continue to believe when those in power failed to believe and failed to see the vision of hope he had for his daughters. Embrace, seek to understand, and be open to Job’s testimony.

The Past Revisited

Job grew up in a small liberal college town located forty miles west of Cleveland, Ohio. He lived in what he calls an upper middles family and upper middle class neighborhood. Job’s
father was head chemist at the local hospital and his mother was a nursing administrator as well as a daycare provider in the summer months of May through August. Both parents migrated north to escape the tumultuous past of the segregated South. Job’s father was all too familiar with the racist atmosphere that plagued the Southern states. His father was a top graduate from Meharry Medical College in Knoxville, Tennessee. Job’s father was the driving force in him pursuing education beyond college.

My father told us…You will go to college, you will work and you will work hard. My father was born and raised in Knoxville, TN in the south when there were turbulent times. So his philosophy was the only thing they [Whites] cannot take from you was your education. So he really pushed education.

Given that Job’s father experienced segregation, he was determined to make his children aware of the importance of education. Job reflected on the many “butt whippings” he received for not getting As and Bs. Job stated on many occasions that he understood the reason for the spanking, but could not put into words to his father what he was experiencing at school.

I was in 6th grade I can remember the teacher asking a question, it was a health class. All throughout the class, she was asking questions and I didn’t answer. She didn’t have a problem when I didn’t answer. She asked does anybody know why the male genital systems are outside the body. I knew the answer. The male testicles are out of the body because the scrotum has to be at a lower temperature than 98 degrees. I don’t know how I figured it out, I mean I think my dad may have told me. It was something I was like wow I know this one. So I was raising my hand. She never called on me in class. I noticed she had only called on the White kids and there were a couple of other black kids in class at the time that was pretty smart, but she never called on us. I remember asking her after class, why didn’t she call on me. She told me because she can.

I figured out why when kids in class would have their hand up and it would bend. I figured out why we did that. We would have our hands up for so long and never get called on. I stop raising my had and would blurt out the answer. I’d get in trouble. She didn’t acknowledge me and I said well I hand my hand up all class and you never called on me. I was not a bad or unruly kid. I knew it was a color thing. That was the first time I noticed it. And I always resented it. I got a D in her class and my attitude changed at that point. I wasn’t interested in the class anymore. I don’t even think I was interested in school anymore because I just thought it was unfair.
Job reflecting back mentioned this experience as the one that hurt him the most. He said he was still innocent about racism and the significance of what it means to be a Black male. His parents’ focus was education is the key to success. They constantly told him that education could help alleviate some of the effects of racism. However, that was not Job’s experience. Job said that he resented the dream about education. “I always knew I was fighting something in school and with friends. All along it was racism, I just couldn’t name it.” He further commented that he was not prepared to fight these exhaustive mental battles in his early years.

Despite fighting mental challenges of oppression, Job was popular as he went through junior high and high school. His stature aided in his giftedness to play basketball and football. He quickly became one of Smokey Town’s all-stars as well as the on the high school campus.

Reflecting, Job wonders if he achieved all of the stardom in sports to ward off some of those mental challenges. He said, “I was an athlete so I gained my respect.” He commented that respect was temporary. If the team won the game, they respected his athletic prowess. If the team lost, they blamed his weakness.

I was one of those people that really started noticing the racism in my high school. Why when Black kids got called on over the intercom, it was the recruiter for the Army or Navy. The guidance counselors didn’t really want to help. They would show you the Barron’s book, but you were pretty much on your own trying to figure out where do I start when I want to be something. Usually the answer was to show up when they called people down for the army. The Army treated you special. They made you feel important. The Army recruiters talked to you, but college recruiters didn’t. When it came down for me, what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a class clown. I was an athlete, that’s what I was. I got my respect because I could touch the rim, I could dribble. Grades weren’t important till I got home. They were important to my father, but not to me in school.

I will never forget my dad taking me back up to school, I was a freshman in high school, practically cussing out the guidance counselor because I came home with general education courses. The guidance counselor talked me into taking general courses. I had general English, general math, and she told me which would you rather have an A in general math or a C in college prep courses. Me being scared to death of bringing home bad grades to my dad, I said sign me up for all this general stuff. When my dad found
out, he went off. He made her switch all of my classes to college prep. I never forget that lesson. He told me: You strive to get an A in college prep, don’t let no body talk you into the easy way out.

Job found himself in what he called a “racial tug of war.” “Dad’s focus was education. It was very important to him.” However, Job experienced recognition from athletics not academics. Job reiterated that the White teachers, counselors valued his physical stature and appearance, but never cultivated or encouraged academic achievement. During that time, Job began to rely on the wisdom of his father’s advice.

My dad always wanted one of his children to go to an HBCU, a black college. He went to Knoxville College and then to Meharry Medical school. So my sister went to Spellman college and fell in love at 13 years old when I went for a visit. I wasn’t scared of anything at the time. I almost got recruited for the army. Nobody recruited me for college, my GPA wasn’t good enough. Stark College at the time was one of 2 colleges I got accepted at. The first was Union Town in Ohio and Stark in Atlanta. I was desperate to get out of Ohio, so I went to Atlanta. That school changed a LOT in me…everything. I went through an anger stage. I found out I was lied to about a lot of things like politics and religion. I found out how much I was held back in high school, that’s what I started learning. I was very resentful at some of those teachers I knew it was all about race. Therefore, I wasn’t the best person at my 10 year reunion.

The Present Exists

Leadership has always been present over the span of Job’s life. Through his early years of playing basketball and football, his leadership is a silhouette of how he came to view leadership and how he views himself as a leader. His physical appearance commands admiration while his education demands reverence, yet he is holistic in his approach to leadership.

When I think of leadership, I think of setting examples, example setting. It encompasses every facet of life, from your children, socially to friends, to your job, your creator. By creator, I mean God. Being a leader means living by example. You judge a tree by the fruit it bares. That is in all aspects of life. If you want to see how good the manager is, speak to his or her employees. If you want to see how good a parent is, look to the children. Leadership is about being a role model. We need to stop having role models and start becoming role models. I challenge people to be role models. I think I try to live by that in everything I do.
In living by example, Job sets a standard of excellence. By judging his fruit of success at the Commissioners Office and the Water Treatment Plant, Job is distinguished among his peers.

Upon visiting his office, located in downtown Peek, Ohio, I was told by one of his colleagues that she respects his sales skills and his ability to paint a picture of Peek that would make a billionaire desire to build residence. Job does not deny the fact that he is a leader. He said:

I see myself as a leader because the people who I answer to and the people who answer to me respect me. Particularly the ones that answer to me look up to me. I’ve found that effective leadership doesn’t mean that you have to like me, it’s not a popularity contest and that’s where I screwed up in the past. I tried to be popular versus being a leader. I now realize that leadership is about effective communication and getting from point A to point B.

Job prefers a collaborative style of leadership. He finds himself back in a “racial tug of war,” this time with a twist. He is the boss. Job encounters resistance from employees and superiors.

Once again, racism is ever-present flying beneath radar.

I can’t think of a job that I have had where there were more than one or two Blacks that have been in the same round table of making decisions as I. I am typically the only black and the only black man. My experience comes more from how people talk and communicate with me. My white counterparts and my white superiors, talk in a more condescending way, a humiliating tone of voice. I have a triple whammy, I am black, I am a man, and I am young. Oh, not to mention I am education. That’s a threat to a lot of people. The majority of the people I manage are white older men. I believe they have an issue with here this young person, telling me what to do, but on top of it, he is black. So my management experience, unfortunately, is more confrontational and having to dig my feet in the sand to get what I want versus a communicative management style that I prefer.

Being entrenched in the mental warfare that accompanies racism, Job says, God blessed him with the gift to “read body language, read non-verbal messages, and subconscious undertones that let me know how to deal with that person.” Although harsh to revisit, Job accredits those tough experiences in junior high and high school that now help him to deal with the subtly of racism that exist. He said, “had it not been for what I went through in school. I may not be able to
handle this opportunity for leadership.” Job calls on his spirituality as he talked about how his experiences in life inform his leadership. He used this parallel:

   It would be analogous to a boat in an ocean. The boat represents me and my spirituality. The waves that are crashing against the boat pushing it this way and that way are my experiences in life. So how does it affect me? As the boat finally rests in calmer seas one day in the future, it’s going to be the wave that put me in a certain situation and tests my strength. The boat will be tattered and torn. However, may that boat be stronger and more experienced in dealing with the waves of life. And I the sailor, the captain of that boat is more experienced at navigating through the waves of life. It is those rough and tough times, those experiences that hurt along the way help get me to my destination.

   Job’s spirituality according to him has been his buffer. “It has allows me insight, it allows me the opportunity to reflect, and it allows me that space between a split second to think and make a qualified decision while giving confidence about the decision made.” Job’s satisfaction comes from being able to impart wisdom to others who are willing to learn from his past mistakes and life experiences. He passes on his life story to those young men at professional training sessions, at economic development meetings, at local churches that invite him to be a guest speaker, and at the local metro park where he and his daughter participate in leisure activities. Job’s leadership does not stop at 5:00 p.m. when he leaves the office. He is a leader in all that he does.

   I’m a service person. In one of the organizations I belong, our motto is… service to all. That part always stuck with me…service to all. I believe that is what we should be. Speaking to spirituality, we are service. It doesn’t mean it is synonymous with slave. Service means I am here to help with anyone who needs it. I’ve always been there for people. I think that is my calling in life. I think that is all of ours to use who you are, the tools that God has given you to be able to uplift someone in one shape or form.

   The Future Forecasts

   Prior to working in the Office of Economic Development of the Peek City, Job was Branch Manager for Nations Bank. He loved working with people. Banking was changing from a service industry to sales atmosphere. There were many changes taking place. Job said he was
not comfortable with the changes because the people who had less money on deposit were
receiving a reduction of services. He recalled a situation that caused him to rethink his career in
the banking and finance.

I was more than a branch manager or bank officer, I was a helper. When customers
thought of Nations Bank [pseudonym] they didn’t think of the bank, they thought of Job.
I spent a lot of time with people becoming their financial friend and sometimes their
personal friend. I remember the day I made the decision I didn’t want to be in banking
anymore. I had a faithful customer, an old woman, about 80 years old. She didn’t have
much money, maybe a couple thousand in her account. She and her husband used to
come in and bank all of the time. Her husband died. Over a period of 4 months after her
husband died, she’d come in my office every Monday. Her checkbook was never
balanced. I knew she purposely didn’t balance her checkbook because she wanted to
come in, sit down and talk. I’d balanced it. We would talk….typical conversation…how
are things going, how are you doing …basic stuff. She did complaining about her
gutters, so I went and cleaned the leaves out her gutters after work. Every Monday she’d
come in. I’ll never forget the day. The regional manager came in and told me I had to
start charging her $5 to balance her checkbook because she noticed the woman was
coming in here consistently and she needed to be charged. She needed to get her act
together is what the regional manager said to me. I got into a little debate because if this
woman had $200,000 in the bank, we would balance it for free and kiss her behind.
Because she only has $2000 we have to charge her and that’s not fair. We were there to
provide a service. Service to the old lady was not about her checkbook, it was about
making her feel important, caring for her in her, and giving her relationship to replace
what she had lost. I started looking to switch jobs that day. I truly left because of that.

Speaking about this situation caused Job’s voice to deepen, yet filled with intensity. His posture
was that of an army private ready for battle. He still feels incensed that an industry that
blossoms because of people and their assets, failed to nurture the relationship of the person they
are there to serve. Although leaving this position because of incongruent personal and
organizational values, Job acknowledges that his departure was a blessing in disguise. The
Mayor of Peek City, Mayor John Smore approached Job two days after his resignation to come
on board for Economic Development. Job and Smore were not strangers; they met at fundraising
events, social galas, and community board meetings. Mayor Smore was familiar with Job’s
work at Nations Bank as well as his committee work in the community. In other words, Mayor
Smore observed Job’s progress at the bank and was impressed. From that moment, Job admired Smore.

I think the mayor is a genius, it’s a gift… He sees things in people that they don’t see yet in themselves. He saw more in me than I did in myself. He’s the person that looks at the coal and sees the diamond. He is also patient enough and mature enough help you through the stumbling period of identifying who you are. Whereas other people would smack you down and say you are not ready. The mayor even sees when you are ready to give up, he pulls you up and says, you just need a little bit more time, and little bit more exposure. In a world where you are judged by everything you do, here’s a man that allows you to go through the hiccups of life and still doesn’t take his eye off what he sees in you. I think that is phenomenal in being a leader. The ability of sight is underestimated.

Job desires so much the gift of sight. He acknowledged in a somber tone that gifts are spiritual. He affirms that his leadership is not where he desires. According to him, there is a disconnect. Job reiterates in a melancholy tone of voice that he did not know politics. From time to time, Job does not know whom to trust. When he decided to take the position, he did not know that this leadership role in Economic Development was a highly sought after position, one that only the Mayor can appoint.

I think that my life is conflict coming together, but it is conflict coming apart. I fight so many battles… I mean I just can’t win all of the battles…I guess when you slay dragons for a living, sometimes the dragon wins. I can understand why leaders become hermits.

In his current position, Job is not imparting knowledge and wisdom as mentors have done for him. As the current Mayoral election continues, Job constantly ponders the next step, the future direction for his leadership and career focus. He yearns for leadership that exemplifies the evolution and growth of his spiritual and professional self.

As a leader, I don’t want to be a leader. I think that after a certain stage in life you create leaders, sit back, and watch the fruits of their labor. I would like to see a day where other leaders are leading. I want to get old, pass the torch, and move on knowing that baton is picked up. Knowing that someone else has the energy and will take on the battle. I guess that why when people get older, they get more spiritual. It’s not about a physical or social struggle, its about getting your affairs in order, sitting back in a life well spent and looking back at what you’ve done… relishing in peace.
Job is at a fork in the road. He so desires leadership that provides him opportunity to impart knowledge he acquired through personal and professional experiences. This realization came during one of the biggest challenges of his life, the passing of his father. According to Job, he resented his father until he died. The wake and funeral service was a profound experience. At his father’s wake, through his loss, he began to get to know his father and the legacy he left for the family to cherish.

My dad was a regular hard working guy, a true disciplinarian. His wake was 2 days after my birthday. It January, freezing cold in the Cleveland area and it was a line wrapped down the street. People were standing in line for about an hour or so I was like sh*t, am I at the right funeral? I was impressed by the line of people to view his body. You would have thought he was a dignitary or something. We were sitting in front being consoled by visitors, friends, and family. A guy we never met introduces himself. He was a realtor and a mortgage broker. From what we could tell, he was real successful. He told us how he got started. My dad helped him get his first house for his family. My dad took his personal paycheck, gave the realtor his down payment his house. This man starts breaking down in tears. We never knew that my dad even touched people. It taught me that I should live life not for what I do today, but for the impact, I will have tomorrow.

Although this time was difficult for Job, he managed to find the lesson. He said that his father’s death taught him how to live. He understood that he would never be the same. From that moment on, he held on knowing that his personal and professional life would undertake a complete makeover. He reflects:

I used to live to impress people. I don’t live like that anymore. I stopped doing that a long time ago. I live life so that when I die, will people come to my funeral. The lives that I touch are the ones that I want to speak to how I lived as a person. That is my measuring stick and that is what I live for. So when you ask, what kind of leader do I want to be, I want to be somebody that has a whole bunch of people at his funeral. I want people jumping; I want falling out, rolling, carrying people, the whole nine yards.

According to Job, his legacy is to first “answer his calling.” In doing so, Job reflects on those actions that have held him back. In the interim, he asks, “God deliver me from my
stubbornness.” Our conversation ended, Job responded with a smile and said “it’s time for me to give back, I have to ask God, what do I have to give.”

The next step to Job’s path is unknown. According to him he does not have all of the answers, but his trust is in something much greater than he. Job, leading through loss and uncertainty, detailed his story as a Black political figure. The poem synthesizes Job’s past, present, and future.

*Job, Leading through Loss*

Looking and searching for wholeness, where does he find it?

Obstacles come, knock him down, but he continues to

Stand in the presence of the mirror that illuminates the answers to his questions.

Searching once again, when all he finds is that obedience is better than sacrifice.
SECTION THREE: THEMES EMERGE AND INTERSECT

CHAPTER VII: SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Black men’s lives are often relegated to historical accounts depicting their lives as stereotypical caricatures and exotic creatures. Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua are fully aware of those visual and auditory images while simultaneously debunking those myths as they lead by example. These five men tell their histories, reveal the challenges of their leadership, and open the window to their soul as they convey their sense of purpose in life. They recognize there is a higher power that is charting the next path of direction. Spirituality, servant leadership, and Blackness were evident in their discussions, illustrations, and example, they provided of their leadership and life experiences.

By listening for and to their story, I was able to extract themes from our conversations that represent the fullness of their life and leadership experiences. In Chapters Nine and Ten, I expound on the themes of servant leadership and Black identity by demonstrating how these men lead and live in the midst of adversity. In this chapter, I illustrate how Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua discuss spiritual leadership and demonstrate the interconnectivity of spirituality.

Spirituality as a Way of Being and Purpose for Life and Leadership

According to Dantley (2003a), spirituality is the nexus of inspiration, motivation, and meaning-making in the lives of Black Americans. Spirituality establishes and prods our sense of justice and fairness. It also constructs notions of calling, mission, or purpose. The following quotes illustrate how these Black male leaders use spirituality to explain the essence of their being.

Barnabas: Relationship with God is how I define my spirituality. God defined to me is heavily connected to the Judeo-Christian, God of the Bible, colorless, and yet not being
so far removed from us, but is heavily involved in our everyday lives,…There would be no leadership without my spirituality. Not effective, I don’t believe. I really feel like because of my spirituality I am able to provide a cutting edge leadership, provocative leadership, a challenging leadership, because I am constantly challenged by my spirituality, so therefore I transfer that to those who are around me and immediately impacting them

**Jesse:** When you say spirituality, I think of higher calling. The route that needs to be taken in terms of self-fulfillment. Something I take very seriously. Understanding that there is something higher and bigger than me that keeps me grounded and helps me to be a good leader. The best leaders are the ones that know how to follow.

**Job:** When I think of spirituality…I can’t use spirituality without using religion. I preface it by saying that religion is the methodology that you use, yet spirituality to me is the union between my creator. I specifically say creator because it crosses all the realms of denominations, whether it be Yahweh or God. Spirituality is the union between my creator and me and with me and mankind

**Joshua:** Spirituality to me is trying to understand the meaning of life, why we are hear, and what our purpose is. It is the central driving force of what I do.

These men’s backgrounds vary in terms of education, upbringing, and family life. However, they connect to each other by way of spirituality. They do not all mention a theistic God in their definitions of spirituality, but their description coincides with Dantley’s definition of spirituality. Dantley (2001) defined spirituality as the component of our total selves and community through which we make meaning and understanding of our world. It is the foundation of values, principles, influences, and ethics we exhibit in our interactions with others (p. 5). The very nature of their spirit and how they view others aligns with an ethical core of being grounded, the foundation of good leadership, their relationship with God, their creator or higher power. In these conversations, they signify the interconnectivity of spirituality and purpose by focusing on relationships with others. Their relationships with others are fueled by their spiritual connection, which ultimately guides their leadership.

Barnabas, with his occupation as a Pastor, clearly articulates his spirituality in terms of the Judeo-Christian God, similarly with Job who identifies his spirituality in connection with
religion as well. These two in conjunction with the other men rely heavily on communion with a higher power that speaks volumes to their purpose in life. These quotes also show the diversity involved when these leaders discuss spirituality. In this sense, spirituality spans the realms of religion and provides leadership that understands others, challenges others to be their best, and provides space where they and their followers are free to be their authentic selves. Individual’s concept of spirituality details the intricacies of how he they lead and how they manage to pull from spiritual core in relating to others. As the conversations unfold, spirituality becomes more specific in how leadership is defined, how their leadership is practiced, and how they lead and serve out of their spirituality. In this instance, spirituality is the compass that permeates how they view themselves, how they view others, and how they respond in dealing with others.

_Spirituality Manifested in Leadership_

Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua explained that spirituality is the core of their being. According to some, Black Americans typically explain their leadership and professional activities in moral, ethical, and spiritual sentiments (Dantley, 2003a, 2003b; Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000; Mattis, 2002). These men detail the interconnections of spirit and how they lead. In this instance, spirituality is the conductor for their leadership and how they handle their roles as leaders. These quotes illustrate this phenomenon:

**Barnabas:** Because of my relationship with God, I handle every situation as it relates is it going to please or displease God. Am I listening to God for direction? And I have found that I have days where I give Him opportunity to share with me and me to share with him. I think it [spirituality] is evident in how I handle meetings, how I handle conferences, and conversations that I have with people. Even though they may not be on the topic of spirituality, I always try to direct it towards to some level or degree of awareness. In handling those situations, I have to know that not every situation is the same. In many of those, they can’t help but color some of our new encounters. Sometime they fit right in and sometimes they don’t. Spirituality allows me to judge one situation from the next.
**Jesse:** I have been blessed with the ability to lead. Many different positions I held in college, in terms of my leadership...student council, I ran a youth program after graduate school. I have the ability to make decisions and deal with the consequences and deal with a length of things with reason. I don’t make any decisions without thinking from my spiritual perspective. I won’t let my job at Login Rail interfere with that. I’m not, if God doesn’t think its right, I’m not going to do it.

**Job:** Be ye always in prayer. I think is a perfect example of my spirituality, I don’t think it means I should consciously be on my knees with my eyes closed, but I am in communion with my creator. I’ve always been in organizations where before you impart in any important undertaking it is necessary to invoke the blessing of your creator. It informs everything I do. The things I’ve been through in life and the things I will continue to go through help mold me into who I am and who I will be in the future in terms of my leadership. My trials allow me to have more experience. More wisdom to impart with other people, and more experience begets more direction, more confidence in the decisions I make. It [spirituality] allows me insight that others don’t have...the ability to make effective decisions. My decisions are based on deep, very deep insight about a situation. It allows me the opportunity, that space between the slit second, to think, and make a qualified decision and it also gives me the confidence in that decision.

**Joshua:** Well there are certain things that I’ve come to believe that are fair or right, things like all human beings deserve respect. Any organization that I’m involved in, I would want our rules and our regulations our policies to emphasis and to recognize and support that human dignity and the respect of other individuals. Some organizations don’t really have that as a something of a value or a support. It’s the bottom line of success or profit at all cost. Well, because of what I believe out of the growth of my experiences, how people are treated and the work of the individual and human dignity are very important to me. So that’s how I would want and try to do...make everything in my work, my world and my environment to be seen in that way.

These quotes illustrate for Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua, spirituality gives them the ability to make decisions, the ability to discern situations, the ability of insight, and the ability to be respectful of the people they serve. Barnabas explained that in his leadership role he tries not to pigeon hole all situations as the same. Instead, he relies on his relationship with God to build relationship with those he is in direct fellowship. Joshua reiterates the same in his support for dignity and respect and the desire for those values to be permeate the atmosphere in which he leads. In comparison, Job’s constant communion with his creator allows him insight as well as the ability to make a decision with confidence. Jesse compliments the responses of Barnabas,
Job, and Joshua with realizing that he is blessed to lead. Jesse, in conjunction with all of the men, draws from life experiences to inform his leadership. It is evident in how each one of them is intentional when making leadership decisions using his spirituality.

*Spirituality and Servant Leadership*

These men feel whole in their leadership roles, whether in the community or at work. They are fulfilled and challenged by these roles all the same. They realize that at this moment in time, they are called to lead in their respective arenas, knowing that life may steer in another direction. For them spirituality is central to their leadership as well as serving the needs of others. Spirituality and servant leadership are inextricably linked for these men. This phenomenon is elucidated in the following quotes:

**Barnabas:** I really believe everyone is a leader, whether they lead at home or lead the basketball team. I think there are some components of leadership that are transferable, but then I think there are some types of leadership that are unique. If we could somehow drive home the importance of prepared, equipped leadership, I think the world would be better. I am not doing this for me, but for the betterment of the whole. If there were more of that in leadership, I think the organizations and people would be better leaders. The world ultimately be a much better place. Leadership is not about being served as much as it is about serving. Our society places too much value on material things. The financial reward may not be in my hand now and may not ever come. If it doesn’t, I want the blessing of my leadership and what I have done to be passed down to those around me…my wife, my children, and the rest of my family, friends, and whoever else I may have touched….I help people. That’s what I do. Whether it be by the spoken word or the lived word. The lived word being a term used now called spiritual formation: which simply defines allowing the gospel to transform you inwardly that you live better outwardly. That’s what I mean by living the gospel, living the gospel is doing what Jesus would do. It’s not confined to a church building. Its saying thank you. It is helping someone in the store, and that’s to me what living the lived word is all about. And that’s the greatest satisfaction that I get is knowing that I am depended upon to help people see God through my leadership.

**Jesse:** I have always been one, a person of a lot of service work in terms of the idea that I have been blessed with a gift so I have to give back. It’s internal. The internal ability to stay the course, to lead and serve when times get hard. I can handle the pressure. I have to stand in front of adversity and make the right decision. When you say leadership, it encompasses a lot of different things. Sometimes leadership is out there being in front, being a cheerleader, sometimes it is taking a back seat and letting things happen.
Leadership means a lot to me. I take it with a great deal of responsibility and a lot of pride. I have to be willing to stand there and stick your neck out for something that you know is right.

**Job:** I have had good and bad experiences in leadership. One of my best was coaching. I was able to see a change within myself and the girls I coached. I could see them begin to believe, not in me, but in themselves. Their GPA’s went up, they were happy and I was happy because they were happy. So you try to lead and live by example. That goes back to how I view leadership. A true leader is selfless, always asking how and in what way do I give back.

**Joshua:** I’d say everything from the vision that we’ve collectively built for the university. Look at the core values, the intellectual, and spiritual growth from those core values. That says part of what a college experience is supposed to do, to help students find meaning for their lives and it is done through more knowledge and more information about environment, your society and your culture. But it is also done by learning more about yourself and what’s really important in life. So, I’d say that all of our documents have to do with the vision and direction of the institution from the development of the intellect, and the development of the whole person. And to do be the guide for the university, I have to understand something about why I am hear and my purpose so that I can lead others to know about their present and future.

The interconnectedness of spirituality and servant leadership is about getting people to a higher level of self-fulfillment or self-actualization by leading people at a higher level. These men lead at higher levels. They fully recognize and understand that leading is not all about them.

Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1995a; 2002) and Williams (1998) define servant leadership as those called to lead by serving. These researchers further emphasized that the spirit of servant leadership is a spirit of moral authority and moral conviction. In addition to servant leadership being a moral imperative, servant leadership thrives on the concept of reciprocity. In this regard, these men demonstrate the interconnections of their moral code and a willingness to serve through their leadership roles.

In essence, Job demands that a true leader is not worried about himself, as do Joshua, Jesse, and Barnabas. They are leaders who give back in a variety of ways. Job coached high school girl’s basketball and had his best experience by seeing them grow and mature. Jesse
coaches the boy’s basketball team at Login Rail Elementary, where he uses basketball as a tool to impart practical wisdom about life and education. These men lead to serve out of their spirits not because they have to but because they want to. In leading to serve, they also learn more about themselves. By learning more about their purpose as leaders, they rely heavily on their spiritual connections to those they serve as well as life experiences that inform their spiritual awareness.

These Black men envision those they serve as the future leaders, those who will pick up the mantle of service and pass the torch on from one generation to the next. During the focus group conversation, Barnabas and Job asked, “who is going to pick up the mantle?” Each agreed that they are called to serve by leading and lead by serving. Barnabas stated, “we need the reach back and pull up ministry. There should always be someone for me to reach back to prepare for this role.” Job concurred with saying “Yes, someone that has the desire and the qualifications.” Joshua reiterates those sentiments in how he discussed the purpose of a college education and self-actualization in the lives of the future leaders. These men recognize that their roles are not guaranteed for life. They are adamant about preparing aspirants to take over when their time is up. In this regard, these men lead by spirit, by service, and by example. By incorporating spirit and servant leadership in their role as leaders, they understand the continuum of giving back and preparing forward.

**Summary of Spirituality**

By examining how these men define spirituality and leadership, it is evident through their language and the way they illustrate servant leadership a spiritual element represents their way of knowing, their way of being, and their way of leading. Fairholm (1997) stated, “It is the spiritual knowledge that is essential…It is what we are, who we are, and why we think we are here in life
that ultimately guides our individual lives and conditions our relationships with others” (p. x).

Spirituality is the driving force that sparks the passion in their leadership. It provides the moral conviction to make decisions that benefit the masses, and in the process, spirituality provides them confidence in their abilities as leaders. In this respect, these men embrace their spiritual knowledge, using it as a self-reflective tool while leading with soul. In the next chapter, I expound on the theme of servant leadership as these men convey their roles as stewards, community builders and those who empower.
CHAPTER IX: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Servant leadership is based on teamwork and community, it seeks to involve others in making decisions, it is strongly based in an ethical imperative and caring behavior, and it attempts to enhance personal growth of those being served as well as the overall quality of the institution in which the leaders serve (Greenleaf, 1977). As these men discussed spirituality and servant leadership in the previous chapter, they were intentional about incorporating the tenets of serving others as a way of achieving a collective goal.

Stewardship


Barnabas: Leadership is not just speaking. A large part of it is words and actions. Each is born out of the heart and that’s what leadership is. leadership originates in the heart.

Jesse: I think a leaders’ skills are born from the heart. I think there are certain people who are born and have a keen ability that separates them from other people as leaders. It’s not to say that not everyone can be a leader. I’m saying that good leaders connect with their heart, that thing that pushes them to excel, to be a good leader.

For these men, serving and leading with spirit is natural, it is a way of being, it is their way of creating positive change for those they serve. In doing this, they commit to serving the needs of others while being stewards over those they serve as well as the collective goal in which they so desire to achieve. Stewardship implies holding something in trust for another. The following quotes express views on stewardship:

Barnabas: I think of leadership as being a major entrustment. Because whoever you are leading does not belong to you by ownership. They are loaned unto you to be a steward over. And so there are two obligations you have. One is to those you are leading and the other obligation is to the one who placed you in that position.
Job: When I was coaching at Bullseye, it was an investment. Not in me, but in the kids. I spent every measly bit of my salary on them. I only was paid $4,000 a season. That averaged out to be $1 a day [laughs]. I was more than their coach, I was their dad. I was family. I was teaching them more than just rolling a ball and calling plays. I was teaching them to play ball to go to college, not go to college to play ball. I was teaching them respect, how to be ladies on and off of the court. That was the best time of my life. Those girls trusted me to teach them. They taught me more than they’ll ever know.

Barnabas also elaborated in this conversation by saying that “leadership is about serving.” Because of his occupation as a pastor, he is trusted by his congregation and gives credit to God for trusting him to mange the souls of those in his care. Job was thankful to the young women on the basketball team for teaching him more about himself. He connected with these girls by becoming a part of their lives through leading and meeting their needs beyond playing basketball. In these instances, being a steward is being a leader for the sake of others.

Empowerment

Empowerment in the eyes of these men was seen as building the inner core of those they lead as well as themselves. During the focus group conversation, Jesse discussed the stresses of being a servant leader. He posed the question

Jesse: It’s very hard to get up everyday, put on this shirt and tie, when I have two kids whose house burnt down and a police report with four kids name on it because they were talking about harming a teacher. That makes it difficult. I understand that a lot of people are depending on me. Believe me I get it. But the question becomes, how much junk do I have to take? How long do I hold on until I feel like I am valued?

The men attending the focus group conversation quickly responded with concern, care, and advice. Barnabas said:

If somebody doesn’t keep those kids from being thrown into the river, then we are in trouble. We have to reach them one at a time. Jesse, you are one of the martyrs. One day we’ll be gone and hopefully these kids will remember what you have done for them…that’s your pay. What’s that scripture, a prophet gets no reward in his own house. I know we all have goals, want to be rich and all of that. We are giving back while at the same time it is giving to us. That’s why is say there would be no leadership without my spirituality. We don’t get all we need from the people we serve, we cant share our successes or struggles, so the peace comes from our spirit. It allows us to wake up and
put my clothes on every day. There’s a price that goes with leadership my brother. It’s the lives we change, we are called to do this type of work and no it’s not always fair, but the challenge is for us to get better in it while not getting bitter in it.

Job said:

Our kids are in dire need for leadership, especially Black male leadership. Right now, those kids at your school have you. Don’t think that your accomplishments go unnoticed. But also know that in this, in serving the needs of our community, there are sacrificial lambs. Not that you’re going to die, but you are the sacrifice paving the way. You’re taking the risk. We may not save all of the kids, but the goal is try to get as many as you can.

Throughout this conversation, Barnabas and Job sensed that Jesse needed encouragement. They empowered Jesse with their words of encouragement while keeping perspective of the reality that comes with being a servant leader. Their spiritual connection in this conversation also aided in this uplifting of Jesse’s spirit. According to Stewart (1999), spirituality is the soul force, that dynamic impetus for change. Barnabas and Job exemplified the soul force by combining their effort to encourage Jesse not to lose sight of his role as a servant leader.

Greenleaf (1977) conceptualized servant leaders as those who are committed to the growth of people. As seen in the example mentioned above, Barnabas and Job were servant leaders as they were committed to meeting the needs of Jesse as he discussed the difficulties of leadership. Spears (2002) referred to servant leaders as those who are “deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual…to nurture the personal, professional, and spiritual growth” (p. 8). These quotes illustrate how these men express empowerment in their leadership:

**Barnabas:** I have passion for my people. To say this means I am in it for the long haul because the legacy and the impact is what matters. I live here in Peek, so since I live here, I am going to turn the light on as much as I can. I can’t do it by myself, I need my people to help with the vision. What I try to do with my platform is to empower the church. To get them to realize that this place is not just a Sunday thing. We have to learn to live for others. Its an empowerment zone. I have activities and classes for kids, young adults, and even senior citizens. We need to galvanize our efforts, to make a lot of noise in order for things to happen. Let’s face it, everybody is not well off. That’s why we need to work together to make things happen. But we have to be aware of what stops us.
Most often it’s ourselves: the inner man or woman that halts progress. That’s what I try to do, make them spiritually well so that they can physically help the next person in line. I believe I empower them to do just that.

**Jesse:** I change lives. I would be lying to myself if I would say that I don’t have a strong influence on a lot of the people here and a lot of the students I deal with. I give them an opportunity to see a black man wear a suit and tie every day coming into work. That’s something that a lot of them will not experience. So if nothing else, that seeing me gives them hope, hope to live. If they see me, they can say if he can do it, he’s from the same neighborhood I’m from, and then I can do it too. That’s the biggest thing I think, give them the opportunity to see something else. And hopefully they think it’s not so bad, I can do it too.

**Joshua:** What’s most meaningful is seeing the quality of the learning environment for students to improve socially and spiritually and seeing faculty and staff working for a common set of goals. To build a team, to work towards a common goal or a mission is the end result. To accomplish something together without bickering and fighting while encouraging and supporting people to do their best in pursuit of that mission.

These Black men illustrate how they embody servant leadership as a responsibility to empower others. Barnabas, Jesse, and Joshua demonstrate that a relationship exists between servant leadership, spirituality, and the ability to assess critically present behaviors and their effect on future ambitions. Incidentally, these men employ their cultural understandings of themselves to empower with spiritual intention. In doing so, these men recognize that empowering is not only teaching others to transgress. Job and Barnabas reiterate the power and intention of empowerment with following statements.

**Barnabas:** There is a greater calling for leadership. Not everyone can do what we do. We can’t be concerned with things out of control or beyond our calling. As a leader, I have to maximize my gifts, while teaching others to maximize theirs.

**Job:** Leadership is about setting examples, being an example of what a true leader is. It [leadership] encompasses every facet of life from your how you raise your children, how you act socially with friends, how you treat people on your job, relationship with your creator. God says live by example. You judge a tree by the fruit it bares. That’s in all aspects of life. If you want to see how good the manger is, go speak to his employees. See how good a parent is, look to the children. In other words, I am not a good leader if those who I lead are not improving in their skills. And that can be on or off the job.
Therefore, empowering is intuitive (Spears, 2002) and intentional. It is providing a blueprint, providing a model of leadership. Empowering is using intuition, spiritual strivings to live and lead a life of service.

*Building Community*

Servant leadership thrives on reciprocity. In being reciprocal, the servant as leader rises to build a community of practice through shared knowledge and shared ways of knowing (Drath & Palus, 1994). In doing this, the servant leader is accustomed to taking risks to achieve his goal. According to Williams (1998), servant leaders are guided by an overarching prophetic vision that is carefully conceived and simply articulated. In this regard, these Black men are committed to a cause and a crusade with humanitarian goals.

**Aaron:** Here at The Nation, we are bridge builders. Being a bridge builder you want all folk involved in your mission, in your vision to consider themselves bridge builders. You don’t want everybody to come from Peek, you don’t want everybody to come from River Hills[affluent suburb], you want some Peek and some from River Hills so folk can say, okay, we’re here together to help. What is the common denominator? The common denominator is we want to help the least in the community. That’s the common denominator. I need you to help with the that, I need you to help also, the both of you have to serve. It doesn’t matter where you come from because each one of you has something to give. And that’s why we’re bridge builders. We want everyone to feel a part of uplifting and getting our community better. So that’s why we consider ourselves bridge builders.

**Job:** When I think of myself as a leader, it’s not about my paycheck or my job title. It’s about lives I change by my actions, what I do to help. It’s about the small mom and pop business that I could help get a small business loan. Even when I see them out shopping or at the grocery store and they say thank you or tell me they couldn’t have made it if it wasn’t for my help. I’m just glad I’m in a position where I can be of service.

Greenleaf felt that the sense of community was lost when businesses and institutions began to grow, thus eliminating services that had existed for generations. The sense of community has not been lost in the Black American context. Although the Black community has its share of problems, there is an uprising of people as the men in this study that have committed themselves
to service and giving their time, energy, and dollars to revitalize the communities in which they reside. Aaron in his role at the Nation, an urban revitalization non-profit organization, has instituted a mandatory diversity plan. He values diversity of thought, education background, talent, as well as racial or ethnic make up. He uses the concept of bridge builder so that those intent on becoming a member or employee is aware that they are committed to service. He employs the concept of bridge builder in an effort to bring all types of people together towards a common goal of remedying some of the problems facing inner city/urban areas.

Job and Aaron, by the nature of their leadership positions employ the same concept and use similar resources. These two collaborate often on urban revitalization programs. Job’s clients often are serviced by The Nation or are referred by them. In concert, these men build community via their power as leaders while uplifting others spirits and creating commitment toward their common goal of urban revitalization.

Building community thrives on giving back to those you serve. In giving back, the servant leader is purposeful and mindful of those that admire the role of leader. These Black men acknowledge the pressure that comes with leadership. In their awareness, they are attuned not only to their personal and spiritual growth, but also to personal and spiritual growth of future servant leaders. The following quotes illustrate this occurrence:

**Barnabas:** Who’s going to pick up the mantle? There’s a song that says somebody’s watching me. I do feel as a Black man and a leader, somebody is always watching me. I am under a microscope. That’s why it is important that who we are on the inside is developed. Because who we are on the inside will eventually show up on the outside. You will always be revealed if the inner and outer self don’t match. We definitely have the pressure. So we have to be very careful, what we do, how we act because people are watching, not just haters, but those that want to be in our shoes. So we have to be aware that this is not just for me. How will my decisions affect my family and most importantly, how will it affect my community?

**Job:** As a Black male leader, you have an added weight on your shoulder for your community. There are a lot of little leaders in training running around who are constantly
watching you. I am realizing that what I do now matters ten years from now. I have to make sure the impact I leave and the impact I have is large enough for them to see because they are going to replace me one day.

As servant leaders, these men are aware that they are the precept and the example. They reiterate that integrity, character, and a moral core maintain the checks and balance that aid in them providing extra ordinary service via leadership. These men continue to draw from their spiritual self, showing the linkages of servant leadership and spirituality. After many hours of listening to audio tapes and reading transcripts, I began to see the interconnectedness and inseparability of servant leadership and spirituality. Spirituality is the water running through the river of servant leadership.

**Critical Servant Leadership**

Spirituality gives these men the strength to deal with the pressure of being a leader; it gives them wisdom to make decisions not only impacting themselves but those individuals around them known and unknown. Williams (1998) stated servant leaders take risks to achieve a common goal. Borrowing from Dantley’s (2003a) definition of critical spirituality, I infuse this concept into servant leadership as expressed and demonstrated by these Black men. Dantley coined “critical spirituality” as:

The element of critique and deconstruction of undemocratic power relations is blended with spiritual reflection grounded in African American sense of moralism, prophetic resistance, and hope in order to form the viscera of this hybrid theoretical construct called critical spirituality. (p. 5)

Spirituality infuses the lives and leadership of these Black men. They continue to ask the hard questions while demanding change through serving. Their spiritual foundation provides the moralism, prophetic resistance, and hope as defined by Dantley. However, these men take
critical spirituality a step further. They turn that energy around to brainstorm, galvanize their efforts, assess the risk, and plan for the next step of action. These quotes, taken from the focus group conversation, demonstrate how these Black men deconstruct institution as politics and education:

**Job:** With all of the changes in politics, a new mayor, me losing my job publicly to someone less qualified. Why? Because I served in a cabinet that is now voted out. You put my resume against the guy that took my job and its like night and day. The way I see it, the only group that can have any power in Peek is the clergy. No one is going to hit a pastor. Seriously, no one dictates their resources. The only reason is they will be heard. They [those in power] may not change anything, but they will listen. I used to see it, when the pastors wanted to talk to Mayor Smore, he was meeting with them as soon as possible. He knew they had more power on Sunday than anyone in the city. Like I said, the pastors need to speak up and then the emphasis and back up needs to come from support by the community. They’ll listen to a pastor. There needs to be a group behind the pastors that say if you don’t do what we ask, then we are going to be outside of your office with signs, city boycotts, people in your office, and the whole nine.

**Barnabas:** I just received assumed the role as Religious Affairs Coordinator of the Colored Peoples Group. I do know the need for connection between the spiritual and social. There are some things that I can say in a room spiritually that is received in a certain way. But there needs to be something said by a group after that, that won’t be printed in the daily paper, to remind them that we are watching. We as a community lack that and they [those in power] know we lack that. Now when some of us stand up, people get afraid. They get afraid they’re going to get fired, their pockets [money] will be hit, so people think only of themselves and don’t want to jeopardize their own for someone else. That’s not leadership, that’s not service. We need to be willing to sacrifice and take risk to accomplish a goal. There may have to be some sacrificial lambs in the process.

**Job:** We just had 26 sacrificial lambs, me included that were Black, laid off, because a White administration didn’t want us.

**Jesse:** We need to be creative. We not only need to hope that a change is going to come, but we need to partner with others that have something we don’t. We need to look beyond what we have always done. We don’t need one leader speaking for all of us. We need a group of leaders. We don’t all have to say the same thing, we just need to be saying something. Look at King he had a team, he wasn’t the only one. We had Malcolm too. He was speaking about the same injustices as King, but went about it in a different way…okay we had a Ritzwood elementary close last year. Now they pass three White schools before them come to me. This school was mostly Black like mine. Now I have 165 Severe Behavioral Handicap (SBH) kids on busses with no bus aids. There should have been an uproar from the community, the Colored People Group, and parents saying “hey, why does my kid pass these White schools, one a mile away from Ritzwood
to get to Login Rail” That did not happen. I can’t keep the kids after school for tutoring or even play in basketball. How are they going to get home? They have no transportation. Who made this decision. The superintendent and deputy superintendent of Peek Public Schools are both Black. Now I know they signed the paperwork for approval. The question becomes why?

Barnabas: Man…the youth is important. They cannot be what they cannot see. If we are not there, then they don’t have a chance. It goes back to the value system that is being taught and passed down. If they don’t see us, somebody that has integrity, character, and who has the ability to be a leader, they are in trouble. They need those of us to say sure, we’re going to take some shots, cry many a day, but we won’t stop. We need to find others like us to get this ball rolling like yesterday. The Civil Rights Movement didn’t start over night. It was years in the making. We need to take some risks and make some sacrifices. Recognizing the problem allows for adjustment. That’s where spirit comes in. We know everyone isn’t playing by the same rules. There are some Judas’ inside the camp and there’s somebody waiting to ambush. But because of my calling to leadership, I will risk that, knowing what I leave is greater.

As of January 1, 2006, Job was laid off by the City of Peek. He worked under the administration of Mayor Smore who lost his bid for re-election. Smore, who was Black, had a diverse administration in terms of racial and ethnic make up. To date, 27 employees laid off from Smore’s cabinet. Of those 27 employees, 26 of those employees laid off from Smore’s cabinet were Black. The new mayor vehemently denies race was a factor in the layoffs. Job seriously questioned his lay off by taking it public. He caused an uproar. He was interviewed by television as well as newspaper staff regarding his dismissal and demanded a review of the candidate who replaced him, citing race as an issue and the effect on the Black community. Job recognizes that now that he is no longer in that position, the amount of small business loans to minority business will decrease, thus affecting the livelihood of those living in minority neighborhoods.

Jesse also has qualms in discussing those in power. His school is almost filled to capacity because of the students being from bussed from Ritzwood Elementary. One of the schools passed on the way to Login Rail has only 126 students in the entire building. At Login
Jesse has approximately 650 kids in the entire school building. He is under pressure to service the needs of these children while dealing with behavioral and adjustment issues. Jesse also discussed discipline issues, suspension procedures, and how policies for unruly kids are used as tracking mechanisms for special education and severe behavioral handicap classrooms. He demonstrated angst in the conversation as he talked about the long-term effects on behavior and instructional time.

Barnabas is the buffer between the two. His position is one of freedom, where he has the ability to form coalitions without backlash from hierarchy or bureaucracy. In his words, he said:

The freedom is there for me. The power of a Black pastor, not connected to a system. It’s harder to mute me. That’s why King could say what he pleased. His base was the church and they [government] couldn’t kill all of them [congregation] so they had to silence the man. I accept the risk, knowing that if I lose my life for Christ I find it. What I say in the pulpit must be galvanized in the pew. There has been a disconnection between the African American community and the church because there are other things going on. But knowing that I am called to do this, we must find a way to reconnect.

In this conversation, all of these men, use their spirit to guide, critique, and strategize while trying to meet the needs of the community. That is critical servant leadership. It is instinctive, the ability to use spirituality to navigate the dimensions of hierarchy, to resist, to seize risk, while leading to benefit those in the community via their vocation or calling. Critical servant leadership infuses identity and spirituality as cohesive units. It embodies the praxis of their servant leadership with political intuitiveness. These men expressed the beginnings of critical servant leadership in their conversation.

**Summary of Servant Leadership**

These men illustrated how they demonstrate the servant leadership in their personal and professional lives. Their illustrations include spirituality as water giving life to their leadership as servants as well as their identity as Black men. These men take servant leadership into
another dimension: critical servant leadership. In this regard, they are spiritual, prophetic in envisioning change, critical in assessing the risk, and change agents in strategizing to benefit the people. As Black male leaders, their commitment to their calling and purpose makes them extraordinary, separating them from ordinary leaders.
CHAPTER X: BLACK IDENTITY

Introduction

Originally, discourse on Black identity development was relegated to notions of self-hatred as reflected in experiments on young Black children as seen with the Mariska dolls. Although this review of Black psychology continues, many scholars (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989; Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003; Thompson, 1994) continue to move beyond deficit thinking in terms of Black identity development and embrace a multidimensional approach. A majority of the research on Black identity development are codified and termed as nigrescence models (Cross, 1994). Nigrescence is a French term defined as the process of becoming Black. Typically, nigrescence models begin with a pre-counter stage and ending with a internalization/commitment stage (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001).

The pre-encounter stage follows the socialization process in childhood and adolescence that result in possible identity profiles as theorized by Cross, et.al. This is usually the period where identity profiles are formed, sometimes in absence of knowledge of experience because one is racialized in American society. The pre-encounter stage is followed by an encounter, an experience that “catches a person off guard” (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), causing the person to rethink their racial identity. Usually this encounter is negative, asserting strong emotions, often of anger, rage, and guilt. This experience as conceptualized by Cross and Vandiver (2001) as a rule motivates the individual to develop a different sense of self as a Black person. This leads to the stage of immersion-emersion, which explores variations of Black culture in an effort to understand self as Black/African individual. In this stage, individuals initially may hold a dichotomized view of the world as they ask questions about education in terms of Africanness
and Blackness. Examples of questions are “how could they do this to me?, how could I have failed to see what society was like before now? Why did I never learn about any of this until now? (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). During the re-education of ones identity as Black, the process of leveling off emerging from the intensity of the immersion experience begins. He or she begins a transition toward a realized Black identity. Following is the internalization phase, where one develops a deeper sense of one’s own ethnic identity, resulting in a high degree of involvement in cultural activities. The final stage is internalization-commitment. In this stage, identity connects with issues of Blackness and other forms of oppression. It is safe to say that these stages are not linear. Depending on socialization and environmental factors, one can revisit all or any of the stages during their lifespan. This stage, referred to as recycling, does not alter a person’s identity; rather it strengthens and gives greater meaning to that identity (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

Cross, a pioneer in nigrescence identity development models, advanced the field of psychology with growing theoretical and empirical studies signifying the importance of Black identity in the every day facets of Black American life. Complimenting Cross’ accomplishments are many scholars that expanded nigrescence models into life span development (Parham, 1989), African American communication (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003), Bailey Jackson with his innovative approaches of nigrescence to span minority identity developments (Asian, Latino, & Native American), and white racial identity (Hardiman, 1982). These developments also lead to strong multicultural emphasis in counseling as well as into leadership studies as seen in this dissertation study.

The literature on Black identity development is vast and complex in applying it to theoretical discourses and empirical findings. Cross and other nigrescence theorists focus on
models with an analysis on the identity to be changed (Cross & Strauss, 1998; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989). Other theorists focus on identity development as a socialization process while look at intersections of race and racial identification (Thompson, 1994), racial identity as a coping mechanism (Spencer et al., 2003), and identity used in communicating across cultures (Hecht et al., 2003). Regardless of theoretical positioning on identity development, whether philosophical debates or empirical findings, these studies yield over lapping data and similar results. In most cases, the theorists agree more than disagree. With that being the case, Black identity development theory is informative and important in conceptualizing and studying the lives of Black Americans. The stories of the Black men in this study suggest that Black men’s live with a variety of experiences of attitudes with respect to their identity.

Defining Moments – The Encounter

Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua, their defining moments when they first realized they were Black happened in their youth while attending interracial elementary, junior high, and high schools. These experiences sparked significant changes in their view of the world. According to Cross (1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001), when one encounters racism and/or discrimination, he responds with emotions of anger, frustration, and confusion. Barnabas, Jesse, Joshua, and Job experienced on variant levels some or all of those emotions. Due to the variances of experiences in age, the responses vary.

The following quotes revisit sentiments expressed as they encountered racism in education:

I’ll never forget Mrs. Kish, in Tyrell Elementary School. I remember…one of her policies was she gave everybody C’s. Totally crazy. No matter what, she gave everybody C’s. My mother had a fit. My mother went to her and said, “Is this my son’s work?” She says, “Ma’am, my policy is to challenge them.” My mother said, “Listen. I don’t care what your policy is. If his work is not average, do not give him a C. And so that’s the kind of educational experiences that I had that helped me to see a lot of things.
I never would have imagined why somebody would just do that as a policy and be able to get away with it.

Barnabas, being only in the fourth grade was ill prepared to fight the battle by himself. He enlisted the help of his mother, which is appropriate for that stage of development. Thompson (1994) supports this function as she stated that family provides mechanisms for socialization, thus reinforcing values, modeling the behavior to combat injustices, and ability to cope within their social context. In this case and stated in Barnabas’ portrait, his mother was a driving force in helping him to recognize and embrace his Blackness and his maleness. Barnabas reflected on another situation of racism that caused him to embrace his Blackness.

I can remember being chased by a group of White men and having to hide in the bushes. Where we lived in North Carolina was heavily wooded. I knew that if they found me, I might not get out. And so racism was very real. So I grew up knowing the differences between the two [Black and White races]. That was probably the most real because I was not surrounded by family or friends. I was alone. I was running for my life.

Running for his life definitely caused Barnabas to be very angry. He remembered talking to his mother about the situation. His mother told him the “rules” of the south. He said:

Growing up all over, helped me to pick up the nuances, the subtle nuances of racism and things that were unique to different cultures. One thing I can say for the south is you knew that they didn’t like you. But you didn’t let that keep you from doing what we had to do. There was no pretend. We accepted it and we went ahead with our goals. Whereas in other parts of the country, it was, I don’t want you playing with my kids or dating my daughter.

Barnabas’ conversation reiterated Thompson’s findings that parents are the major influences in racial identification, yet the transmittal sources and content exhibit subtle and obvious differences from different racial and ethnic groups (p. 176). Another example of southern rules as taught by Barnabas’ mother is illustrated below:

My mother taught us how not to lay money on the counter. Don’t let people lay your money on the counter. Make them give it to you in your hand because that had connection to the time when people thought they were better than you so they didn’t want to touch you. So when a white merchant would get change back to African American people he would put it on the counter and slide it not touch them. And so those are just
some of the things, I grew up knowing that if this man puts this money on the counter, I’m going to ask him to hand it to me. And things of that nature. I was very aware, I teach my children now, don’t put it down, hand it to me because they have no clue as to what that is from unless we teach it. Its experiences like that that helped me embrace my Blackness.

Barnabas embraces his Blackness by having a realization of being Black as identified by Cross and Vandiver (2001). He has a deeper sense of what it means to be Black. He appreciates and recognizes the contributions to family as they helped with embracing his Blackness. He stated:

There were always people of color around me. Family helped me to know and appreciate, that being Black, which was the appropriate term at that time, was not a burden or a band of dishonor, but it was something to be proud of because of those people that I had been taught who had done so much, not so much for the race, but for their families. I grew up appreciating and embracing being Black. It wasn’t something I was trying to run from. u know like when your in high school, I went to a fairly mixed high school, so I got the chance to experience other cultures. It didn’t to cause me to say, I want to be like them. I was exposed and I could still appreciate my own blackness. To me being Black has pride.

Barnabas’ socialization by family and friends supports Thompson (1994; 1999; 2001) reasoning that racial socialization messages from adult family members other than parents have a strong impact on racial identification. In this regard, his Black identity is strong and salient in that he has reinforcements other than his immediate circle. His nucleus was nurturing as well as informative about what it means to be Black in America. Because of his strong linkages to Black familial and kinship networks, Barnabas passes on those lessons onto his children so they are prepared to cope with their Blackness within a social context unfriendly to Black identity.

In summation, Barnabas espouses learning more about Black history and Black achievements as they related to African and American culture. He expressively reiterates a quote of Napoleon Bonaparte, while on an expedition in Egypt, which says: “if they [African/Blacks] do not know where they come from, they will forever search for their identity.” In essence,
Barnabas, although experienced racial incidents, has managed to maintain a Black identity strengthened by life experiences, giving his Blackness greater meaning.

Jesse

I think once the idea hit me that life ain’t fair. Some things they were able to do, different programs they were in and exposed to, and the level of their exposure. I wasn’t feeling quite the same. That was a wake up call. That kind of let me know, hey you are different. They were allowed to do some of the things I wasn’t allowed to do….some of the different social programs, some of the different social things because of where they lived. We all were bused to school out there, and they got to walk to school. When we got on the bus, they looked at us like we were crazy. That tells you something. Hey I’m different. Your daddy is driving a Honda accord and hey we were getting on the bus. That’s a wake up call for us.

Jesse noticed the difference between Blacks and Whites as he was bussed to an upper middle class junior high school. Prior to attending this junior high school, his identity was salient in that he had high self-recognition as being Black. He perceived himself to be of high intelligence, which later decreased as he attended school, immersed in White culture. He stated:

It was a difference in the ability level of my adaptation, my adapting to what they were doing and their culture. I think once the idea hit me that life aint fair, some things they were able to do and different programs they were in and exposed to and levels of their exposure and I wasn’t feeling quite the same.

Jesse suffered in silence. He rarely discussed his feelings or incidents with family or friends.

Education, in Jesse’s family was seen as the major pathway to success. In this regard, he wanted to take advantage of the opportunity of attending a “good” school. Instead of being angry, Jesse embraced what he terms “middle class values.” He said:

In order to be successful in this world is by playing the game. You have to learn the game, learn those middle class values and learn how to function, which means you have to know not only their social norms, social behaviors, you have to understand them and why they do what they do. That is something you cannot put a price tag on. I have to understand them, as they have to understand why I do what I do.

By “playing the game”, Jesse supports Cross and Straus (1998) as they expanded the range of functions to included code switching and individualism. The code switching function of Black
identity involves the capacity to suspend, in a calculated but highly effective fashion, the “open” and “natural” expression of those behaviors, verbal styles, attitudes, and other forms of presentation, which in the popular mainstream culture are labeled as “Black behavior” (p. 273). Code switching often stems from the fact that the Black person is trying to extract a service or fill a need professionally or personally. Code switching makes it possible for a Black person not to be seen as Black, but as just another customer, student, citizen, applicant, or employee. In this regard, Jesse is competent in the cultural norms of the dominant culture as well as the norms of Black culture. He said, “That is one of the good things I can say about my upbringing. I can fit in as many situations as possible. I can work, communicate and speak the language in a system where I was the Black.”

In our conversations, I asked Jesse to elaborate on his Black identity. I asked how important is being Black. He responded:

It is important in terms of how your relationship is with the population and your community. Good people are good people. Like my dean and my principal, both of them are good people. I don’t care if you are purple, yellow, or green, good people are just that. And people can see through that, but it helps in some respects. If nothing else, it is easier to talk to somebody who looks like you and can relate to who you are. That is always more helpful.

Jesse is aware of his Black identity while also embracing a multicultural perspective view of the world. In his mind, good people are good people regardless of race or ethnicity. According to Cross and Vandiver (2001), this standpoint concurs with the individualism function of Black identity. This is the identity function a Black person employs when feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that are not obviously connected to Black culture, reflecting instead the manifestations of the person’s distinctive personality dynamics (Cross & Strauss, 1998). From this perspective, it is easier to understand Jesse. He acknowledges his Black identity, the daily
micro-aggressions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) that accompany his existence, but takes a multicultural view of the world because he raises a multi-racial family.

In our one-on-one interviews, he rarely discussed the incidents he experienced as a child in detail. He surreally mentioned displays of verbal as well as non-verbal communication by administrators, teachers, and students such as a tone of voice, an attitude, and a feeling that caused him to realize his difference. In the focus group, with Barnabas and Job, Jesse opened up more about his feelings. He said as a leader, he knows there are “Black rules and White rules.” In this conversation, he discussed race from a systemic inference as well as from an individual occurrence. He provided examples of illustrations about his experience in job promotions or lack thereof, singled out to work in urban elementary schools and the lack of resources for Login Rail because of location and low test scores. According to Cross and Strauss (1998), it is possible for an individual to have divergent Black identity profiles. This entails a connectedness to being Black while employing other functions to cope with this identity. Therefore, some individual’s identity deviates from the linear stages of identity development. As seen in Jesse, his identity formed because of experiences caused by his Blackness. He copes by having global perspective, while bonding with other Blacks that he shares a connection as seen in the focus group. In congruence with Thompson (1999), Jesse supports the concept that people of color may differ in their identification of group identity, based on the salience of their racial identity coupled with experiences of racism. In this regard, identity is a development stage as well as a process of socialization.

Job

I was in 6th grade I can remember the teacher asking a question, it was a health class. All throughout the class, she was asking questions and I didn’t answer. She didn’t have a problem when I didn’t answer. She asked does anybody know why the male genital systems are outside the body. I knew the answer. The male testicles are out of the body
because the scrotum has to be at a lower temperature than 98 degrees. I don’t know how I figured it out, I mean I think my dad may have told me. It was something I was like wow I know this one. So I was raising my hand. She never called on me in class. I noticed she had only called on the White kids and there were a couple of other black kids in class at the time that was pretty smart, but she never called on us. I remember asking her after class, why didn’t she call on me. She told me because she can. I figured out why when kids in class would have their hand up and it would bend. I figured out why we did that. We would have our hands up for so long and never get called on. I stop raising my hand and would blurt out the answer. I’d get in trouble. She didn’t acknowledge me and I said well I hand my hand up all class and you never called on me. I was not a bad or unruly kid. I knew it was a color thing. That was the first time I noticed it. And I always resented it. I got a D in her class and my attitude changed at that point. I wasn’t interested in the class anymore. I don’t even think I was interested in school anymore because I just thought it was unfair.

Job expressed sentiments of anger and frustration as he blurted out the answer to the question which concurs with Cross’ (1995) theory on Black identity development. Growing up in an affluent area, Job’s lifestyle revealed the level of exposure he received. In this process, this encounter caught him off guard. Like Jesse, Job suffered in silence. He rarely spoke of these instances to his father, except on a few occasions, although he knew his father’s feeling on racism and education.

Being Black is very important to Job. He speaks of Blackness as authenticity and being true to you. He said:

My people, they try very hard not to be who they are and I am very proud of being Black even though it comes with problems. But there are barriers that have to be broken down and hurdles have to be jumped. I am very proud of my heritage and I almost despise people who aren’t. Many people I know don’t have a problem being Black around me. I understand that there are masks people have to wear, but I am evolving from that [wearing masks] and I am being me. I think that my White counterparts will respect me for my heritage versus me putting on a façade while I am around them. That piece was kind of written to point out that it is okay to be you. It is silly to try to be something we are not; it’s a slap in the face to our ancestors.

In this quote, Job emphasizes being true to self. This coincides with Cross (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1996; Cross & Vandiver, 2001) leveling of the immersion-emersion stages. He began the process of transitioning toward a realized Black identity beginning in high school then
experiencing more as he went to college. In this conversation, he reflected on two African Americans teachers that he had in high school. This quote illustrates the authenticity in which he refers which also coincides with him despising “wearing masks” instead of being true to self.

The most profound was Ms. Patrick, she was a teacher who went above and beyond. I was in high school. I remember goofing off in class and in the hallway and she snatched me up. I was acting up. By then I had gained a little popularity and she snatched me up in front of everybody and damn near whipped my behind. I’ll never forget her words. She told me that you are not going to disrespect our race by acting like a fool. It just stuck with me that she actually went above and beyond and cared enough to discipline me. Ms Patrick was one who actually cared at least about her Black community. I found out later when I grew up that she was pro-black. I mean she was somebody that was a strong Black woman.

Contrary to our Spanish teacher, Ms. Jones, we characterized as a sell out. I don’t know if the term sell out even applies…what’s a sell out. I think she was more embracing international, cant we all get a long value. What deemed her as a sell out was that she was one of those people who wore an afro when afros were popular, so from the looks she was very afro centric, but when she opened her mouth, she was European. I noticed as I got older, coming back to a couple of class reunions that depending on the crowd she was in, it determined how she acted. To me that was phony. Don’t talk or be Black when you’re in front of Black people, but when you’re in front of White people, you start enunciating your words more, not that enunciation is grammatical of European, but be who you are. That’s one of the things I appreciated about Ms. Patrick. She was herself. She was respected and that taught me a valuable lesson: being you, you are going to be more respected by your racial counterparts than being phony. I have always grown up with that in mind.

As seen in Barnabas, Job’s identity was also formed by relationships outside of his family nucleus. This example further illustrates Thompson (1994), theory that racial messages from individuals other than adults have a strong impact on racial identification. In addition, this stance taken by Job in discussing his experiences with these teachers support Vandiver’s (2001) conclusion that behavioral manifestations of these emotions in the individual are unforgiving to fellow Blacks they view as multiculturalists. In this regard, Job is unforgiving in his example of Ms. Jones who he views as being inauthentic. During his transition from a predominantly White environment to a predominantly Black environment, the internal change within him began
to take shape. Job said he became a Black man went he went to college at a Historically Black College in Atlanta, Georgia.

I went thru an anger stage because I found I was lied to…about a lot of things, politics, you find out how much you were held back in high school, that’s what I started learning. You know you’re right, my guidance counselor didn’t…I never filled out that form. I wasn’t the best person at my 10 year reunion. I was very resentful at some of those teachers. YOU [teachers] held me back. My chemistry teacher was bout 70 at the time of ten year reunion. I have a brother, who soccer, the White sports and had White friends. When I saw her at the reunion, she says oh, I thought you were Brian, my brother, and I said I thought you were dead and didn’t bat an eye. I could care less because I resented so much of what she had done and what my other teachers had done.

According to Cross, resentment is normal in the encounter stages leading into immersion. Cross also warns that the outward display of these emotions can be damaging if not channeled properly. In this case, Job felt at the time he was getting his teachers back for the mistreatment he received while under their care. Reflecting, he said he wish he had handled it differently.

These experiences mentioned by Job have had profound impact on the formation of his Black identity. In regards to his Black identity, I asked Job how important is being Black. He responded:

In one sense its really a blessing and a curse. My heritage is has done so much for mankind and I’m proud of it. Immensely proud, even though sometimes man has tried to make it seem that my heritage is nothing. They limit us to just being slaves and I know personally what we were before America. So for me it is very important, but on the other hand, I don’t dwell on it. Its kind of like being bald. You just live with it. I didn’t ask to be born this way, it is what it is. I accept it and deal with it. I’ve talked to a person who is blind. Some people look at that as a handicap. When you talk to a blind person and they tell you that there lack of sight opened up many other senses that it actually became a gift. On one hand to some it seems as a handicap, could be gift at the same time. I have learned in between our conversations that there is a similar story line between…I think with the exception of white male. Most people of color have the same hurdles from my perspective

Job’s current view of the importance of Blackness corresponds to the internalization-commitment stage (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). He connects to past and present issues of Blackness and what he deems Black culture. In addition, he attempts to make connections with
others via similar experiences of discrimination. This function of identity development refers to bridging (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Bridging is the ability to share parts of Black culture and identity with trusted members of the dominant culture. In this example, Job sees the differences and the similarities of experiences of people of color that presents itself as an opportunity for learning. Job experiences strengthen his identity as well as represent the complexity of identity development by way of racial socialization and life experiences.

**Dissonance**

**Joshua**

In elementary school; I went to a Catholic School and it was a predominately-White Catholic School. There were more through experiences of my sister. I was an athlete and I was always involved in extra-curricular activities. I was a lieutenant in the safety patrol and vice president of my class. I didn’t realize it as much, but some of the treatment towards my sister made me more aware of the race issue. I’m not saying I was accepted but because I had something to offer, something visible that they valued, like athletics I was treated differently.

The importance of a persons identity determines when and how he will use or access it (Thompson, 1999). According to Thompson, the societal and individual racialized experiences of the individual, family, and group affect identity salience and maintenance. In this case, the mistreatment Joshua witnessed on behalf of his sister made him aware of racism. As mentioned, he attended interracial school as did Barnabas, Jesse, and Job, but could not recollect distinct personal memories that affected his identity development. That is not to say there is none. Nevertheless, according to Joshua his major identity development occurred in relation to his sisters.

He said, “I would have probably been treated the same way except, I had something of value, I was star athlete.” His stardom in high school as a star athlete, agrees with Thompson as she concurred that an individuals identification or identity is based on the perceived receptivity
of the mainstream culture (p. 749). In high school, Joshua escaped some, not all of the hardships of being Black by participating in sports. In using Thompson’s social identification model, she identified four parameters of identity. They are physical, cultural, sociopolitical and psychological. Her parameters are not developmental as Cross (1995), but offer an alternative metric to conceptualize racial identification/racial identity. She theorizes that racial identity among Black is composed of varying aspects and multiple variables. Considerably, Thompson’s (1994; 1999; 2001) model best depicted the example as detailed by Joshua. Joshua briefly details his ideas about the meaning of Blackness. He said:

It seemed like as long as I can remember, we just knew. I just knew I was Black. I can’t think of anything specific. I thought everybody was Black. Because the way we were seemed to be the only folks that worked, I thought.

Once again, Joshua’s connection to a Black identity and Black culture support Thompson’s model of multiple layers of variables that form Black identity. Therefore, Joshua’s experience as described to me is dissonant in that he does not exhibit the traditional stages of identity development as espoused by Cross. Mainly, the encounter of racism was not a personal encounter, it was an encounter via a family member, which supports Thompson in her delivery of theory that recognizes family interactions and familial experiences of racism that affect the individual.

Dissonance

Aaron

I knew I was black in 1959, when my grand-daddy Willie Mickles was walking on the sidewalk in Seneca, South Carolina. We were going to Belts Temple and we had to get off the sidewalk because the White people were on the side walk and there wasn’t enough room. It was well known in the South that if you are going to walk on the side walk and White people were walking on the side walk that you had to get off the side walk and let the White people go by. So, grand-dad said son, let’s get off the sidewalk and let the White people go by and I said why? He told me why and I said okay. So we got off. Then when I went the store, there was the Colored only bathroom. There was the White
only and Colored only for the water fountain. We went to get some food in any of the restaurants, the Colored were served around the side or the back. Whites were served in the front and they had a sign that said Colored and an arrow for you to go around the side or back. And when I went to the theatre, Colored seating was in the peanut gallery [balcony] and I knew then, I was Black. When I walked the street, there was always some White guys coming around calling us Niggers and stuff like that. You knew, growing up in the South and of course Civil Rights Movement started; but I knew in 1959 with my grand daddy Willie Mickles, that’s when I first realized that not only was I black or colored or negro, but people wanted you to feel that there was something demeaning about being Colored, Black or Negro.

I knew I was black, but I couldn’t understand was why was I supposed to think that I was less than, for being Black. We were supposed to be a second-class citizen, that’s the part I never did accept. I would never try to understand this. I used to wonder what’s the difference in the Colored water and the White water. Was it better water, colder water? I thought maybe Kool-Aid come out of it [water fountain] or something. Those were the reminders.

Unlike his Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua, Aaron grew up in the segregated south. His experiences with racism were truly an everyday occurrence and embedded in the social structure of society at that time. He attended exclusive Black schools with exclusive Black teachers. His way of life does not mirror those of Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua.

In our conversations, he mentioned the kinship networks of his family and close friends of the family. There was always an outlet or a vehicle to discuss the segregated way of life. From my observations, his identity development is an amalgamation of nigrescence developmental theory (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1994, 1995) and social racial identification (Thompson, 1994, 1999, 2001). There was no encounter to “catch him off guard” because his social space was racialized and policed by the dominant culture. Therefore, feelings of anger and disdain were there, but not to the degree of being ill prepared to deal with racism. According to Aaron, he questioned the reasoning behind the second-class citizen status and compelled himself not to succumb to internalization of self-hatred and misfortune because of his skin color and group affiliation. Aaron described other circumstances of living in a segregated community.
The KKK was real when I young. Yea the Klu Klux Klan, I saw the KKK come to the Smith House. They went in the house and pulled Rozella out of their house and beat her. They said if they caught her being with a White man again, they would kill her. They beat her...like it was her fault for being with a White man. They burned a cross in her yard. That’s what I got to see that at a young age. There were Klan rallies in the South all the time; you saw that, we knew about them. We knew there were certain times at night that we were not supposed to walk on certain streets because Whites were well known for sometimes riding around and getting, liquored up, drunk and throwing things at you and trying to do things to you because you were walking by yourself. We walked a lot because we didn’t have a lot of transportation, my grandmother and grandfather, didn’t have a car, so we didn’t have any transportation. We had to be very careful in the neighborhoods you walked in, even walking home. You had to make sure you had somebody with you.

Aaron’s family and kinship networks combated the hidden messages of segregation by having detailed conversations about ancestry, history, and current events. Once again, his identity support the importance of family and adult relatives in the formation of racial identity (Thompson, 1999). He reflects on conversations similar to ones he had with family when he was a child:

I like to tell people up North history about the woman that ran the Underground Railroad. She never lost a package, and she carried a pistol with her. And the pistol was a six-shooter. She had bounty hunters, trappers and everybody after her, trying to kill this woman. She had a bounty on her head, one time I think $5,000. That was a whole lot of money back then. Come on, that’s like having 5 million now. They wanted her that bad, so she carried a pistol with her, on the Underground Railroad. I always ask people up North, who was the pistol for? Was it for the bounty hunters, trappers or was it for the slaves?

I always ask people that question up North to see how much they know about the history. Most people up North will say, bounty hunters. Some of them might say they have been planted by the master. It was for the slaves because the master would plant one of them to find out her location. So if they [slave] get scared and you want to go back. She would tell them to make a choice, Be free or die. See that’s the history I got from great-grandma, grandma and great-granddaddy. They’re in their 90’s giving me history, they were that close to it. I’m 53 now so when I was 10 year’s old, talking to my great grandma who’s 93 then.

I have history from a completely different perspective. I read news books and everything and do know history. People look at me, it’s his story, be careful who’s story you’re listening too. People twist history, to be what they want it to be. You want the real history, sit down and talk to some old Black people from the South, that’s where you get
the real history. Because the rest of it’s skewed. Remember now, they didn’t want us to know how to read. They didn’t want us to know, history. They wanted to have “their” history. So keep in mind, who’s giving you the history?

This illustration details the salience in Aarons Black identity as he connects to Black culture and Black history with tangible events and folklore as passed down from his great grandparents and grandparents. The richness of his story coincides with the complexity of identity development as seen in nigrescence (Cross, 1995; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1996) and other models of identity formation. He bonded with family while discussing prominent events in Black culture. This is one example in his life how his bonding aided in strengthening his identity as a Black man.

Another illustration of identity salience is his schooling experiences.

Black teachers taught me. I didn’t have a White teacher until I went to college. I was ready. Because I had Miss McQueen as my 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Tillman as my 6th grade, Ms Gray and Mr. Hammock as my 7th grade teacher, Ms. Olson, Miss Milan …I could name all of them. My English composition teacher was Miss John, who attended Harvard. We all had black teachers. I tell people I had the best teachers in the world. Because when I attended school it was not open and Black people could go to the White schools. Most of us had the brightest Black minds as teachers. Growing up your job options were to teach, preach and go to the military. Those were the option that were open for many of our brilliant black minds.

We knew how to present papers, compositions when were in eight and ninth grade. We had to type our papers. So, when I got to college, I was supposed to put together a paper, well I already knew how to do that. Now remember I didn’t go back to college until I was 28, so I figured I may not be ready. My composition teacher said that I was more ready then any of these kids coming right out of high school… I was nervous, I thought oh my God, I’m older than everybody else and I’m not going to get this. I’ll never forget the end of the year. I was exempt from the final exam because of my work. I looked around all of a sudden I as back like, I got an A and I’ve been out of school eight/nine years and I’m an A student. It boiled down to the wonderful teachers who would say, this paper is not acceptable. You are not going to give me this, start over.

Aaron was trained by the best and brightest minds of Black intellectual thought. His English teach went to Harvard, his biology and chemistry teachers went to MeHarry Medical, and the rest attended prestigious schools as Howard, Spellman, and Morehouse just to name a few. As stated previously, Aaron was accustomed with dealing with racism. Situated in a racially
charged environment, Aaron was prepared to deal with racism by his grandparents and teachers. Social and psychological factors shaped Aaron’s Black identity. His life experiences, now a rarity, propelled him into self actualization as a Black individual, often by-passing emotions of guilt and regret as he continues to succeed. His foundation and socialization from family, teachers, and loved ones prepared him for life as a Black American. His life story and experiences diverge from Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua as they experienced racism, yet converge as they identify as servant leaders. They are dissimilar in experience although they are similar in leadership and spiritual values.

**Black Identity and Servant Leadership Practices**

The majority of literature on Black identity development focus on theoretical discourse or empirical findings (Cross, 1995; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1996; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Parham, 1989; Thompson, 1994, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001). The literature is scant on the dynamics of identity and how identity is expressed via occupational and/or leadership roles. Therefore, in this section I connect these Black men’s leadership practices and the expression of their identity. The following quotes illustrate expression of Black identity intersecting with servant leadership practices:

**Aaron:** My granddaddy used to say I can put things, I cold put four poles, and put one cord around those poles and put that bell on the cow’s neck and put it on the pole; that cow isn’t going to move. That cow will stay right there. I can tell you right now, he won’t move, he will just stay right there. He could pop the cord and walk away, but he’ll never do it because he has been conditioned. The cow has been conditioned to stay within boundaries. Don’t never let them condition you my granddaddy would say. Change your might, never let them shape your mind. When you are conditioned, you have to stay in your place and they have decided where your place is. Your place is to think how far, and do as much as you can for your family members and everybody. Grandma would always tell me, you can do anything, don’t you dare let nobody every tell you otherwise. I tell people all the time, I didn’t even realize I was having a tough time in life and I was poor until I got to college. We didn’t know. I just find it very amazing, but they affirmed you. I’m a firm believer, in telling kids that their special, how much
you love them and how much you respect them. Keep doing it. It’s conditioning them for success.

**Barnabas:** My reason being is because you get to shape, you get to mold, you get to see what you can be. The whole idea of being a teacher is not that you’re limited to a classroom. In thinking about the opportunity, especially now, with African-American boys being at such a deficit, they cannot be what they cannot see. I don’t think they see enough male, positive, African-American leadership. I really think I would like to teach elementary school because at that age you can shape, you can mold. They can see a professional man or a man who’s me. And they might not know all of what it means, but that image is indelibly planted in their psyche or their spirit.

**Jesse:** I believe a good leader can make an impact no matter where he is. Here’s the question: Who’s to say that if I had to go out to Renoa [rural school district], what kind of impact I would have on them that they get to see an educated Black man come in their building and come and discuss and work with them everyday with a shirt and tie. Think what kind of impact that might have on that child. Who’s to say that that impact is any more greater than the impact on one of these children at Login Rail [urban]….I have always been one who of, a person of a lot of service work in terms of the idea that I have been blessed with a gift so I have to give back. I honestly believe while I am sitting at this desk right now because I was given a gift and now it is my turn to give it back. And that idea that I must take care of my brother

**Job:** As Black men, we are conditioned differently. Who is teaching me to be a Black man? Better yet, who is teaching little Black boys how to be Black men? All of the institutions that used to do that have sold out or are dwindling away. As a Black man and a leader, it’s like shooting a target that is always moving. My job is to hit it, but I can’t because t is moving. Now I have pressure to perform at work, pressure to family, and pressure to the community. When and how do I choose? What are my consequences? I take risk by existing. By being Black man. But I must take the risk.

These quotes illustrate the complexity and diversity of Black identity as well as how they express identity via leadership. Their racialized experiences inform their understanding of self in relation to serving others. Their identity is inseparable from their leadership as their leadership is inseparable from their spirituality. Their identities as Black men enable them to think critically about the communities they serve as well as the impact that service will have on them. Their identity is reciprocal in that the wisdom they impart from racialized experiences aid in helping others cope with racism, learn about their racial identity, and embrace Blackness also allows
these Black men to self heal from wounds caused by personal injustices. The reciprocity comes from giving to others in which they also receive something far greater than intentioned.

**Summary**

**Black Identity and Spirituality**

The Black men in this study conversed in detail the dilemmas they face in terms of their leadership. They analyze and deconstruct social structures in an effort to promote leadership that serves the needs of the community. Their identities and spirits merge not only cope with racism, but to offer solutions and galvanize efforts to support the Black community. In doing so, they are creative in their critique, searching for non-traditional ways to gain access to power. In this section, I connect identity development theory with African American spirituality.

Nigrescence is the ways in which a person thinks about, feel, and act in reference to their being Black. It is an attempt to explain what types of Black identities increase the probability that the person will join with other Blacks to (a) engage in struggle against the problems and challenges that beset Black people and (b) engage in the search, codification, dissemination, protection, and celebration of Black culture and history (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). According to Cross and Vandiver, the five functions of Black identity are buffering, code switching, bridging, bonding, and individualism. Buffering is a form of psychological protection. Spirituality performs this formative function as well (Stewart, 1999). Spirituality positively shapes the mind and spirit of Black people in America. Spirituality is the buffer that protects, resists, and overcomes persistent attempts by racial experiences to destroy Black peoples sense of worth in American society.

Spirituality allows an individual to navigate the boundaries of existence in a racialized society. The functional ability to code switch is apparent and a necessity while living in an
oppressive society. With that being the case, spirituality has provided Black Americans the inner strength to critically reflect upon rituals and forms of life in the United States that are often grounded in racism, classism, and sexism (Dantley, 2005). Spirituality creates a context for spiritual praxis, a stimulated reality of social freedom, while creating an ethos where community values are synergized under oppressive conditions (Stewart, 1999). Spirituality affords Black Americans the ability to bond with one another in a spiritual space to form constructive relationships built on affirmative understandings of Black identity, Black culture, and Black people (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Stewart, 1999).

Spirituality is a humanizing and radicalizing force. It enables Blacks to create personal stasis and harmony of the soul, yet resist complete subjugations by giving voice, power, and transcendence to their concerns. Spirituality provides a space of freedom that permits Black Americans to connect to each other via common experiences as well as connect to trusted members of the dominant culture and share experiences of Black culture and functions of Black identity. In this regard, spirituality is the nexus, the soul force that is a tool for connection and identity (Dantley, 2005). The interrelatedness of spirituality and identity are inseparable. Spirituality is the glue that holds identity together. Spirituality is the freedom to interpret, express, value, and construct existence that reinforces the positive norms for self and community (Stewart, 1999). In essence, spirituality instills the will to survive, as identity is the natural manifestation of that will to survival.
SECTION FOUR: FINAL RESONANCE

CHAPTER XI: SOULS OF MY BROTHERS

Introduction

Drawing from the rich conversations and interactions with the Black men in this study, I focus on the theoretical implications for this research by situating their leadership experiences within the context of how they lead. In the previous chapters, I presented themes relative to the leadership of these Black men. To that extent, spirituality, servant leadership, and Black identity are critical to their life experiences, their perspectives on society, and how they begin to transform the lives of the people they are serving. Those three elements of their leadership permeate the African American community, such as the spiritual nature of our lives, how we talk about our life experiences, and how we make meaning of our experiences. In turn, these Black men are strengthened by their experiences and interactions with each other to set goals, to see possibility for change, and to lead in spite of losses they have encountered along the way.

The temperament of Black men’s lives offers a context embedded within their spirited servant leadership, which is further analyzed by the various themes in this section. Along with the context of spirituality and servant leadership as detailed in chapter two, I reiterate how I attempt to make sense of their purpose, their sense of self, and understand the challenges and successes in their leadership. In consideration of the theories supporting this research, I revisit the themes outlined in chapters eight, nine, and ten through the path of spirituality, leadership, and racism. Initially the guiding conceptual framework for this study consisted of spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory. Spirituality and servant leadership theories consistently emerged during data collection. Critical race theory however was not consistent. Despite critical race theory not emerging from the themes, racism was and continued to be an
element of the theoretical frame guiding the study. As themes emerged, Black men experienced racism individual stance instead of from a systemic inference. Therefore, these Black men referred to racism and racialized experiences in reference to their identity as Black men. Consequently, I was obliged to incorporate Black identity as a replacement for critical race theory.

As I address each theme in this chapter, I introduce one or more theories to support each theme appropriately. For example, spirituality theory may be used in addressing one or all of the themes. In order to avoid redundancy, I may refer to one particular participant in each theme without repeating all five voices, although their experiences are similar. By incorporating theory, it facilitates understanding of how these men lead, and how they make meaning of their leadership experiences.

**Spirituality**

For the men in this study, the phenomenon of spirituality resonates when discussing their leadership, their way of knowing, their way of being, and their way of leading. The notion of spirituality comes clear when Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua define their spirituality as relationship, higher calling, purpose, and understanding the meaning of life. In addition, their definitions coincide with Dantley (2001), as he defines spirituality as the component of our total selves and community through which we make meaning and understanding of our world. Furthermore, these men use spirituality as a vehicle to make decisions, gift of discernment and insight, and facilitates respect those they serve. Additionally, these men operate, using spirituality as a catalyst to lead at higher levels. By doing so, these men are adamant about preparing the next generation of leaders.
Spirituality, interwoven within servant leadership and Black identity is also a theme that stands alone. For these men, spirituality serves as purpose for their leadership, source of leadership practices, and an inner force that sparks passion for the work they do as well as serves as a self-reflective tool. I discovered that spirituality is their moral compass in their reactions with others. Joshua’s emphasis on human dignity and respect allows him to build consensus within his organization. Barnabas reiterates the same sentiments in his discussion of spiritual formation; how he allows his spirituality to transform him inwardly so that his external actions are congruent with his believes. These illustrations support Dantley (2001) when he says, spirituality is the foundation of values, principles, influences, and ethics exhibited in interactions with others.

Spirituality enabled these men to embody servant leadership, because of their willingness to prepare others for leadership by giving back what they have learned. As mentioned in previous chapters, by incorporating their purpose, they rely heavily on their spiritual connections to those they serve as well as life experiences that inform their leadership.

Servant Leadership

In discussing servant leadership, these men were intentional about serving others as a way of achieving a common goal. In most instances, when they discussed service, they wholeheartedly attuned to the needs of each other’s as well as strategizing to meet the needs of the Black community. Barnabas and Jesse stated that leadership takes heart and courage which coincides with Blanchard (2002) when said leadership begins in the heart.

The titles these men hold in their prospective institutions means less than the actual work they do and inspire unto others. Servant leadership resonates with astounding significance when discussing leadership with the Black men in this study. They defined leadership as being a major
entrustment, encouraging others, and building community within and outside of the organization. These men also kept in mind that leadership was not about them. The manner in which they talked about serving others demonstrates what is important to them and indicates their leadership is not based on self-interest, but rather on the interest of others. Barnabas empowers his congregation by inspiring them to become spiritually whole so that they can physically help the next person in need. Jesse changes lives by giving his students hope to succeed. And Joshua builds teams working towards a common goal that improves the quality of students social and spiritual lives. Incidentally, these men embody servant leadership as defined by Spears (2002), when he said servant leaders are deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual…nurturing personal, professional, and spiritual growth (p. 8). The men in this study exemplify servant leadership, fused with spirituality that allows them to lead by empowering others and being good stewards over those they serve. In addition, their spirited servant leadership allows them to assess and ask the critical questions about change, the status of leadership and the Black community, and the future generation of leaders.

The critical assessment of educational, political, and social issues these men employ is what I term critical servant leadership. Borrowing from Dantley (2003a) as he conceptualized critical spirituality by Black Americans in positions of leadership that call for prophetic leadership. The men in this study continue to ask the hard questions and deconstruct social systems while demanding change while serving others. Williams (1998) stated servant leaders take risks to achieve a goal and are guided by an overarching prophetic vision that is carefully conceived and simply articulated. These men articulate, strategize, and assess the risk in serving the needs of the community, while infusing the deep-seated moralism, prophetic resistance, and hope as defined by Dantley. Critical spirituality is radical, yet tempered. It draws energy from
spiritual sources infused in service and identity. Critical servant leadership is instinctive, using spirituality as a navigator through obstacles, resisting economic, physical, and spiritual domination, while leading to benefit those in the community whose voice is muted.

**Black Identity**

As mentioned previously in this section, Black identity was not an initial element of the conceptual frame. However, I realized from conversing with the men in this study, that racism was real for them. We did discuss racism from the systemic perspective, but racial experiences were discussed as encounters and defining moments. In this regard, I was obligated to render their racialized stories from an individual perspective. I found that nigrescence and social racial identification models of identity development coincided with the experiences of the men in this study.

The Black men in this study live with experiences and attitudes derived from their identity because they are Black. Each and every one of these experiences shaped their way of being, their spiritual knowledge, as well as their leadership practices. From early ages, they were faced with racial implications because of their Blackness. These experiences, although harsh and damaging to self esteem, molded them into the men they are today. For example, Barnabas discussed embracing his Blackness. A situation with an elementary teacher caused him to question the definition of Blackness as well him being ill prepared to deal with someone in authority that caused the anguish. Needless to say, he had the support of family, especially his mother who came to his defense. This illustration validates Thompson’s (1994; 1999) argument that family provides the mechanisms for socialization, thus reinforcing values, modeling the behavior to combat injustices, and the ability to cope within their social context. Joshua similarly learned the rules of engagement in relations to racialization from his sister’s
experiences. These two men learned from family and other adults with supports Thompson’s thesis.

Jesse and Job had similar experiences in integrated education systems. However, they tended not to discuss the incidents with family and friends. In essence, their encounters followed along the lines of Cross (1971; 2001) nigrescence identity development by following encounter stages with feelings of anger, guilt, and rage. These encounters caused them to immerse themselves in Blackness, associate with Black culture in order to learn more about themselves, which coincides with Cross’s model.

Aaron’s racial experiences differ from the other men in the study in that he was raised in segregated South Carolina. He grew up being aware of racism and the social norms that dominated the south at that time. Racism was different in the sense that it openly consumed daily interactions between Blacks and Whites. Aaron learned from an early age what it meant to be Black. From our conversations, he also had the support of family and adult relatives to teach him the ways of the south. His experience supports the racialization thesis Thompson proposes. In addition, Aaron did not feel inferior from his experiences as the other men did. In turn, he, family, and friends turned Blackness into a positive. I found that although Aaron experienced a racial segregated childhood, he was secure in his identity as a Black man. On the other hand, the other men in the study had to go through a deprogramming process in order to appreciate and learn about their Blackness. I believe the major factor contributing to the difference is that Aaron experienced the realness of race while Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua grew up in areas that supposedly embraced diversity. The embracing of the ideology of diversity, integration, painted a picture of cohesion that was dismantled when their experiences said otherwise.
The past racial experiences as well as the present experiences define their leadership. Their coping strategies and current stances on their Blackness represent the complexity and diversity of identity development in the Black community. Although they all identify as Black men and support the needs of the Black community, they take varying stances on how to deal with racism, embracing or debunking a multicultural view, or embracing or debunking a nationalist view. Even though this diversity of strategies is present, it doesn’t stop them from coalescing to better the Black community. Their identities as Black men inspire their leadership as is embraced when discussing their spirituality. Many instances, it was hard to differentiate between their Blackness and their leadership, because the two are infused a great deal. Their spirituality is the buffer that equalizes their leadership and identity.

The literature is scant on identity development and expression of identity in leadership roles. As a result, when these men discussed their leadership, they reflected the realization of Blackness as an obligation to mold and shape others to succeed. This identity fosters critical thinking from a Black perspective while not negating the spiritual elements coupled with servant leadership. Through the circumstances of their leadership, their identities and spirits merge not only to cope with racism, but also offering solutions to help the Black community. In doing so, they are creative in their critique, becoming critical servant leaders, strategizing, taking risks, and serving others while gaining access to power.

Summary

For these men, spirituality is the glue that connects Black identity and servant leadership. Spirituality is the buffer, flame that sparks the passion of their leadership incorporated with their identities. Spirituality is the nexus of humanity and service. It is animative and creative. Servant leadership infuses spirit and reciprocity infused in Black culture and the lives of these
Black men. Black identity is spirit filled when coping with defining moment of racism and dealing with Blackness in non-friendly social space. With these entire combine as exemplified in these Black male leaders, critical servant leadership is formed. Critical servant leadership merges spirituality, Black identity, and servant hood to a higher level. It is visionary, addressing issues affecting the Black individual and the Black community such as education, politics, poverty, institutionalized racism just to name a few within a larger context. Critical servant leadership is spiritually driven, prophetic, changing the Black community one at a time, while advancing the Black community. Therefore, incongruence with the data in this study, there is a new framework for Black male leadership.
CRITICAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP = SP + SL + BI

Figure 3. Critical Servant Leadership Framework.
CHAPTER XII: OUR SPIRITUAL STRIVINGS

Overview of Study

In this study, I shared a portion of the lives of five Black male leaders who demonstrated that their leadership is much bigger than they are. As I have maintained throughout this study, the purpose was to examine and understand the obstacles, challenges, and successes in their leadership roles. Using portraiture as my methodological approach, I celebrated the lives and leadership experiences of Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua by highlighting their challenges and successes. Innate in this methodology is the inherent “search for goodness” by explicating the fullness of their experience and existence as Black male servant leaders. I defined leadership as an influential relationship among leaders and followers (Rost, 1993) directed through the communication process toward the attainment of goals (Tannenbaum et al., 1959) by influencing through vision, values, and relationships (Daft, 2001; Ferris, 1988). The presentation of three portraits best illustrated tenets of my conceptual frame as well as a representation of the relationships I forged with these men during my time in the field.

The significance of this study was multidimensional. This study contributes to the paucity of research on Black men in leadership literature, by giving a voice to their lives, their leadership, and their commitment to their communities. In addition, this study serves as a catalyst for future research on Black male leadership. Finally, this study offers an alternative to view leadership that will inspire, inform, and unite discourses of Black female and male leadership in an effort to create a unified framework for Black leadership. Furthermore, the stories of these Black men resonate with importance to experiences of Black women in leadership positions. Therefore, it is pertinent that political risk be taken to unify the spiritual experiences of each other in our fight for equity and social justice.
The guiding question for this study was: in what way do the racialized and spiritual experiences of Black men influence their leadership? The guiding conceptual framework consisted of spirituality, servant leadership, and critical race theory. My assumptions for the most part were correct. Spirituality and servant leadership are embedded in the experiences of Black men. However, according to these men, experienced and discussed racism from an individual standpoint, unlike that of critical race theory that analyzes the systemic injustices of racism. Therefore, the initial conceptual framework was confirmed with two elements, thus causing me to replace critical race theory with Black identity/nigrescence models.

The theoretical framework of literature consisted of four major branches of research: (a) socio-historical framework of Black men in the United States, (b) leadership theories, (c) Black leadership, (d) Black male leadership, intersecting with spirituality, servant leadership, gender, and perception. This frame of literature represented the richness of Black leadership literature, but also demonstrated the paucity of inclusion of this literature in mainstream discourses. This literature further illustrated the need to fill the gaps in mainstream literature by contributing to mainstream discourse on leadership via servant leadership and spirituality.

In chapter three of this dissertation, I explain my methodological moves for choosing portraiture as my biographical approach, detailed descriptions of my participants, research questions, narrative structure, participants, and findings from my pilot study. In addition, I situated myself as the researcher, defining my assumptions that affected this study. I also discussed in detail the importance of portraiture in this line of research, especially relating to the “search for goodness” in response to deficit models of research. I explained the professional mentee/mentor relationships I had with the peer debriefs of this study. I also describe the
The participants in this study were five Black men who hold positions of leadership in political, non-profit, higher education, elementary education, and faith based institutions. Their diverse backgrounds speak volumes to the complexity, yet similarity of their experiences. Of the five Black men, I presented portraits of three due to the flexibility of their schedules and the amount of time I spent getting to know and understand them. In addition, I chose my participants on community nomination. I spoke with my peer debriefs who recommended potential participants for the study. I found that leadership circles were close knit; I needed a trusted point of entry prior to sending letters of invitations. By providing the three portraits in addition to giving voice to all five participants, I intended to inform and inspire the reader to empathize, understand, and get to know these men as individuals and as leaders.

I used face-to-face interviews, participant observations, and a focus group to collect data for this study. Given time constraints and schedule conflicts, I spent more time with some participants than I did with others. Typically, I spent approximately one to two hours per interview with each participant. I was collecting data from September 2005 until February 2006. All of my observations took place at their perspective offices while I was waiting for our meetings, watching meetings with staff, and community organization meetings. The focus group was held on Wednesday, February 1, 2006 at Login Rail elementary school. Only three of the participants were able to make the focus group due to scheduling conflicts. At the focus group, I presented the participants with a list of probes containing excerpts from transcripts. The focus group started at 6 p.m. and ended at 9 p.m.
I audiotape recorded all interview conversations. My first interview conversation with Aaron lasted two hours. I lost track of time and realized the last forty minutes were not recorded. Initially, I hired a transcriber at ten dollars per hour, but was not pleased with the results. I transcribed the rest of the transcripts myself and attempted to transcribe after each interview. I gave myself a deadline of completing transcripts within one week of completing the interview. I video and audiotape recorded the focus group. The DVD from the focus group was very helpful in that it allowed me to see reactions and interactions among the participants. The DVD also allowed me to note changes in participants interactions with me and the difference when they are interacting within their peer and gender group. While watching the DVD, I read the transcript hoping that nuances and mental notes I had taken would come back to me as I analyzed the data. These thoughts I noted during the interviews and focus group were helpful in developing emerging themes.

When I would read the interview and focus group transcripts I would write first thoughts in the margins. I also used interview probe notes I had written during our meetings. I read the transcripts several times, often in conjunction with the audio being played. As I would begin writing the portraits, I started a ritual of going to sleep with the audio tapes playing so I could subliminally get to know the participants. Surprisingly, I found this worked. After portraits were written, I would re-read the transcripts in concert organizing themes and drawing the sketches of the individual chapters. After themes were clear and individual chapters were written, I instituted the help of a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University in Communication Studies to read the transcripts, portraits, and thematic chapters to ensure clarity and specificity of the leadership experiences of Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua.
The portraits are a precursor to the thematic chapters. I organized the portraits with an introduction of the participant and sub headings (a) the past revisited, (b) the current exits, (c) the future forecasts, and (d) poem of their leadership. I used pseudonyms of Biblical characters to signify the spiritual importance of their leadership. As I continued to write and re-read transcripts, it became clear that the guiding conceptual frame directed the emerging themes. The men exhibited that they are guided by their spirituality and their identity in their leadership. The emergence of identity was important in reconceptualizing Black male leadership. From the finding, I suggest that spirituality, servant leadership, and Black identity are all interrelated when discussing the leadership of these men. The themes can be discussed as separate elements, but the unification of all three created a holistic view of their leadership. Therefore, with the three elements, I propose critical servant leadership as a descriptor for these men’s leadership because of the radical, prophetic vision, and the resisting to seize to risk via their servant leadership. In summation, critical servant leadership describes the men in this study, naming their leadership, describing their identities, and their beliefs as they lead to serve.

Lessons Learned

I noted in Chapter Four that this process has been one of healing for me. I have been challenged by the men in this study to continue my work along the line of building community between Black men and women. In the beginning, I wondered if I could relate to the experiences of Black men, not knowing that we are more alike than different. Our pigmentation gives us collective experiences that span gender, although there are distinct gender differences. Nevertheless, this experience broke walls of silence as we connected spiritually in our conversations about race and political struggle.
The leadership of these men embodies hope, empowerment, and a prophetic resistance that becomes a soul force in their everyday affairs as servant leaders. This prophetic leadership plays a critical role in their lives as does mine. They held no inhibitions as they discussed the radical underpinnings of changing their surrounding communities as they took pride in assessing and willing to take the risk. I am reminded by an essay by W. E. DuBois “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” where he prophetically illustrated the context for Blacks to relate to the dominate group while trying to retain the traditions and rituals of their own culture. DuBois defines double consciousness in this essay, stating that the Negro has two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals on one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Dubois, 1903/1994). I wish to add along the lines of Garner (2004) that there is a triple consciousness; (a) encompassing identity as an American, (b) a Black American of African descent, and (c) a gendered colored man (in my case a woman). The soul force holding together this triple consciousness is the spirit that connects the natural and spiritual worlds. Stewart (1999) affirms this when he said, African American spirituality has an important influence in promoting psychological, spiritual, and physical well being. Without spirituality, Blacks could not attain human wholeness. In the lives of these men, spirituality has created the balance for self that has been at war with racial self in American society and the gendered self in the Black community. Therefore, spirituality enables these men to practice libratory freedom through their leadership.

Throughout this study, I have learned about my identity as a Black woman in relation to Black men. Although this study was a success, I wondered had I been a man, would they have talked more freely? At times I felt, one participant in particular was telling me what he wanted me to hear. Feeling uncertain about this notion, I asked one of the peer reviewers and he said
candidly, that is the way it is. He later elaborated and said that Black men typically do not get intimate with each other in public settings. Those conversations, I learned were sacred. It was not until the focus group where I had a defining moment. There I learned more about the participant in the focus group than I had in the interview conversations. This continued to bother me. I thought I did all in my power to establish rapport and trust, but surface answers are what I received. After the focus group, I asked this participant about my conceptions. He opened up by telling me that as a Black man it was uncomfortable to show vulnerability. From that moment, I realized that although we are raced, our gender experiences interfere with our ability to communicate with one another. At that moment, I realized I was looking at the important men in my life that kept their feelings dear to their heart in an effort to protect me from their pain. As racialized and gendered persons, there is a mandate to break down barriers to communication that inevitably hurts the Black community. Because of my boldness, I feel this dissertation is the first step in tacking issues that are taboo when we come together under the umbrella of servant leadership, spirituality, spirited leadership or critical servant leadership. In order to transgress, we need to assess the inner me as Barnabas said. Assess the inner me that stops the progress that spirit desires to make.

I also learned that reciprocity is an amazing concept. The focus group was awesome; they talked, connected, and conversed in a freeing spiritual space that allowed them to be vulnerable to each other. In response, I kept quiet most of the time, listening as they tried to bring me into the conversation. Barnabas was such an inspiration spiritually and intellectually that he challenged each and everyone of us to corporate responsibility for the Black community. In this regard, after the focus group, Job called me. Job and I had plenty of conversations that were spiritually draining. I was aware of his “church” issues. He asked if I would suggest him
going to Barnabas’ church for a visit. Giving the distance he had during our meetings, I was impressed and amazed that he would entrust me with a significant decision. The relationship with Job took a 180-degree turn. In essence, I learned from him as he learned from me. Had I given up on him as a participant, we would have never learned from each other. This process validates servant leadership, as we are all leaders. We give and get something in return, often unexpected. That is the beauty of it all. The unexpected return blessed my spirit. In that moment, I knew this study achieved one of my goals of fostering communication and building community with Black men and Black women.

_Future Directions_

In many ways, I was an “outsider-insider” within this study which caused me to pause and ask questions about gender, race, and leadership. I recommend that this study be completed using the same conceptual frame with a Black male researcher to clarify if the trust issues are gender related or not. In addition, I suggest this study be done with Black men and women in order to transform Black communities on a unified platform. In shifting this paradigm, it requires individuals to carry a sense of responsibility to one another in order to correct inter-group conflict.

I challenge future Black intellectuals to connect and reconnect with Black culture by undertaking issues that primarily affect us in their research. It is our responsibility to promote our spiritual strivings for justice, equity and fairness across all realms. Take from this dissertation the importance of taking risk that will benefit others. This dissertation is a political project, one that has connected me to the plight of Black men in this country, while not undermining the plight of Black women. The Black community is at a cross roads facing the same challenges as W. E. B. DuBois prophetically discussed in the early twentieth century.
as Black intellectuals have a responsibility to our foremothers and forefathers who have paved the way. The next step is for us to step out on faith, courage, and hope, knowing that no weapon formed against us shall prosper. I urge you to pick up the mantle, carry the torch, lead and live with purpose.

I challenge all leaders, regardless of race, class, and/or gender to learn from Aaron, Barnabas, Jesse, Job, and Joshua. Learn to live with intent; learn to be true to yourself; and most importantly, learn to make a difference in life as many people are waiting and depending on you to take necessary risks.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Pilot Study

1. In your own words, please define spirituality.

2. What role does spirituality play in your leadership?

3. What is your definition of leadership?

4. How does your definition differ from Rost definition? How is it similar?

5. Would you describe yourself as a servant leader?

6. How has your identity as Black man have an effect on your leadership?

7. What culture capital (culture specific knowledge) do you bring to leadership that is not valued?
APPENDIX B

Research Letter of Invitation

Bowling Green State University
School of Leadership and Policy Studies

Principal Investigator: Patrice McClellan
Office (419) 372-7357
514 Education Building Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
E-mail: pmcclel@bgnet.bgsu.edu

Research Title: Portraits of Black Male Leaders

Date:

Dear:

My name is Patrice McClellan and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Administration & Supervision/Leadership Studies program at Bowling Green State University. The function of this letter is to invite you to participate in a research project that I am conducting as part of my dissertation requirements. The purpose of my study is to explore, understand, and profile leadership experiences of Black men. As you may know, the present literature does not adequately represent the Black male leader’s experience, nor does the literature represent Black male experiences positively. My studies have brought me to the conclusion that very little is known about Black men in leadership roles. Instead, much of what I have found has explored the Black male experience as a social problem. As an alternative, I would like to show how Black men manage to thrive as leaders in spite of all of the challenges they face, and contribute to the understanding of leadership from a Black male perspective. By taking part in this study, you will assist in correcting the inequity and misrepresentation that exists, benefiting you and other Black male leaders, as well as Black male aspirants. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I would like to provide you with more information about how I will conduct this study. Your participation will involve:

1. Completing a biographical questionnaire
2. Three (3) conversations
3. Two (2) days of observing you in your daily work activities
4. A two (2) to three-hour (3) focus group
5. You can share with me any materials that would help me in understanding your leadership experiences such as photographs, news, articles, books, journal entries, poems, songs, etc.

These activities will take place from August 2005 to December 2005.

[Approved - BGSU HS RB]
EFFECTIVE 07/05
EXPIRES 03/06
**Biographical questionnaire:** The biographical questionnaire is enclosed with this letter and consent form. It will provide us with a beginning point of our first conversation and should take about 20-30 minutes to complete. There are a series of open-ended statements for you to reflect on and answer. This questionnaire and the consent form are to be returned together in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by **INSERT DATE**.

**Conversations:** There will be three (3) conversations, each conversation will last 1-2 hours in length, and each dialogue will be an opportunity for you to respond to a series of questions about your lived experiences. With your permission these sessions will be audio taped. These recordings will be transcribed and a written transcript will be created. You will be asked to review each transcription to verify an accurate reflection of your experiences. Should you decide that you do not want the conversation audio taped, yet wish to continue in the research project, I will make notes of our conversation. With your permission, excerpts from conversation transcriptions will be included in my dissertation. All tapes, data, and information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office, no one besides the researcher will have access to the data, and the information will be retained for seven (7) years.

**Participant observation:** I would like to observe you in your daily work activities for at least two (2) days. My role will be strictly in the capacity as an observer. You may decide the most appropriate time to conduct these observations. You may choose to participate in this study without observations. During this time I will make notes of my observations. I will type my observations and ask you to review each transcription to verify an accurate reflection of your experiences. These typed notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office, no one besides the researcher will have access to these notes, and the information will be retained for seven (7) years.

**Summit focus group:** The final phase of your participation will involve a three (3) hour focus group with all participants of this research project. You will be asked to hold the focus discussions confidential. With your permission this session will be audio and video taped. The audio tapes will be transcribed and the video tapes will be analyzed to assist me in capturing all the comments that were made and by whom those comments were made. With your permission, excerpts from this summit focus group will be included in my dissertation. All audio and video tapes, data, and information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office, no one besides the researcher will have access to the data, and the information will be retained for seven (7) years. You may choose to participate in the study without participating in the focus group summit.

You will have the opportunity to view the transcripts and my interpretations of those conversations before submission of the final draft of my dissertation. This review will allow you an opportunity to confirm my descriptions, as well as confirm the use of direct quotations or summarized statements used in the final dissertation product. This dissertation will be ready by four (4) members of my dissertation committee and will be available to the public in its final form. Segments of this research project will also be used in educational publications and presentations.
At the end of each conversation we have, during the times when I observe you at your daily tasks, as well as at the focus group, I will ask you if you want to share any additional material that you feel applicable, as a way to further understand who you are. You may choose to participate in the study without contributing any additional material.

Measures of confidentiality will be maintained throughout the course of study. Instead of your name, the name of your organization, or other individuals’ names mentioned during your interview, pseudonyms will be used. If you choose, you may select your pseudonym, which will be used in all phases of the research, in any and all record, and in all drafts of this dissertation. Your identity will not be revealed in any published results unless you specifically request identification.

The anticipated risks of this study are minimal and are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

The chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Judy Alston, will be serving as my advisor on this project. Dr. Alston will have access to interview transcripts and observation notes only after identifying information has been removed. An additional faculty member will serve as a peer reviewer for this study. This faculty member will have access to interview transcripts and observation notes only after identifying information has been removed.

Again, your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw your consent to the research or discontinue participation at any time without any penalty. Should you decide not to continue, please notify me as soon as possible by phone, letter, or e-mail.

If you have any other questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me, Patrice A. McClellan at (419) 372-7357 (office). My e-mail is pmcclel@bgnet.bgsu.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor on this project, Dr. Judy Alston at (419) 372-7313 or at jalston@bgnet.bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University, (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu), if you have any questions regarding the conduct of this study or about your rights as a research participant.

If you do agree to participate, I am asking that you sign this consent form and complete the attached biographical questionnaire. After signing the consent form and completing the questionnaire, please return it in the prepaid postage envelope by INSERT DATE.

I hope that you will take part in this exciting project. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Patrice A. McClellan
APPENDIX C

Participation Consent Form

Bowling Green State University
School of Leadership and Policy Studies
Division of Educational Administration
and Leadership Studies
510 Education Building
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0250
(419) 372-7377
Fax: (419) 372-8448
www.bgsu.edu/colleges/edhd/LPS

Principal Investigator: Patrice A. McClellan
Office: (419) 372-7357
514 Education Building
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
E-mail: pmcclel@bgnet.bgsu.edu

Research Title: Portraits of Black Male Leaders

I have been informed about the procedures for participation in this study detailed in the cover letter/consent form.

YES__________ (Please Initial)

I am willing to participate in the research study entitled: Portraits of Black Male Leaders

YES__________ NO ________________ (Please initial appropriate response)

I am willing to be audiotaped during the interview conversations

YES__________ NO ________________ (Please initial appropriate response)

I am willing to be videotaped during the focus group conversation

YES__________ NO ________________ (Please initial appropriate response)

I choose to be quoted in the final dissertation by MY REAL NAME __________ or PSUEDONYMN ____________ (Please initial appropriate response)

Participant’s Name (Please Print) __________________________________________

Participant’s Signature ____________________________________________________

Date _____________________________
PLEASE SIGN AND DATE BOTH COPIES OF THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM.
RETURN ONE COPY WITH YOUR BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE.
RETAIN ONE COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Patrice A. McClellan
Bowling Green State University
514 Education Building
Education Administration & Supervision and Leadership Studies
Office Phone: (419) 372-7357
E-mail: pmcclel@bgsu.edu
APPENDIX D

Biographical Questionnaire

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514 Education Building Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
E-mail: pmcclel@bgnet.bgsu.edu

Research Title: Portraits of Black Male Leaders

Purpose: The reason that I am asking you to fill in this questionnaire is to give us a context to begin our dialogue about your life and experiences. Please include a resume with this questionnaire. If the resume contains the information requested below, please state “see resume” after the appropriate question.

1. What is your full name? (If you are published in any other names, please list those names)
2. What is your current title? What does this position entail? What year did you begin this position?
3. List previous positions you have held in your current organization.
4. List previous positions you have held in other organizations.
5. What was your first administrative position? What did the position entail?
6. List your professional and educational background including professional, community, and civic membership/affiliations (if not included in your attached resume).
7. Describe your experiences as a mentor and/or mentee, or lack thereof.
APPENDIX E

Conversation One Protocol

Conversation One Prompt Sheet

In this discussion, I am interested in your lived experiences, of which your childhood and early life experiences are applicable. I will be asking you to reflect and comment on your family, the area in which you lived, as well as your educational experiences. I will ask you to share personal stories to help me vicariously experience and understand your unique journey.

Conversation One

Childhood and early life experiences

Family

Area in which you grew up

Educational experiences
Conversation One Probes

**Family**

Where did you grow up?

Describe your family

What was your role within the family unit?

Who had the most influence on you growing up and why?

What were caregiver’s philosophies about employment and working?

When did you first come to know that you were Black?

When did you first come to know that you were Black male?

**School Experiences**

Tell me about what types of schools you went to.

Tell me about your teachers.

Who had the most impact on your education? How did she/he/they impact you?

At what point in your educational career did you begin to think a lot about your future?

What were you taught to aspire to (and by whom)?

What important lessons did you learn about who you were, about your relationship to learning, and about your relationship to the educational profession?

**Other**

How do you feel about our conversations?

Is there anything that we discussed that you would like to reflect on further?

Is there anything else you would like to say?
APPENDIX F

Conversation Two Protocol

Conversation Two Prompt Sheet

In this discussion, I am interested in your lived experiences pertaining to your professional life and leadership. I will be asking you to reflect and comment on your work life, past, and present, as well as your thoughts on leadership. I will ask you to share personal stories to help me vicariously experience and understand your unique journey.
Conversation Two Probes

**Professional Life and Leadership**

When you think of the word leadership what does that mean to you? (STYLE)

What is the earliest recollection of a visible example of when you remember being a leader?

When you think of the work leader what does that mean to you?

Do you see yourself as a leader? Why or why not?

**Professional Experience Probes**

How and why did you choose your current profession?

Tell me about key events that stick out in your mind in the positions you have held.

What is most meaningful for you in your job? What gives you a sense of purpose?

What does a typical work week look like for you?

Where do you seek your career going? What is the next step?

Is there anything else you would like to say?
APPENDIX G

Conversation Three Protocol

Conversation Three Prompt Sheet

In this discussion, I am interested in your lived experiences pertaining to the concept of spirituality. I will ask you to share personal stories to help me vicariously experience and understand your unique journey.
Conversation Three Probes

When you think of the word spirituality, what does this mean to you?

Does spirituality influence the work that you do? How?

Is spirituality visible in your workplace? How

Do your life experiences inform your spirituality? Leadership? How?

How does your spirituality inform your leadership?

How do you make meaning or make sense of your spiritual self in your workplace?

Anything else to offer?