Leading by Example: An Examination of Mary Mcleod Bethune’s Leadership as a College President

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This dissertation titled
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ABSTRACT

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African American female college presidents represent a unique population within the leadership of higher education; however, their leadership, management styles and their contributions to higher education are understudied. A study of this population is particularly important for several reasons. First, it provides a framework for understanding the leadership potential and management style of African Americans in higher education. Second, it contributes to the limited knowledge base of African American women leaders in higher education from the early 19th and 20th centuries. Third, this research provides insight into an understudied aspect of Mary McLeod Bethune’s life: her presidency of Bethune Cookman University.

This study is a historical analysis of Mary McLeod Bethune’s leadership as a college president. It tests Jones’ (1991) finding that African American female presidents exhibit the characteristics of transformational leadership. Jones’ findings related to African American women presidents in early twentieth century society. The study explored Bethune’s leadership in three major areas of her presidency: academic/curriculum, financial, and personnel management. The researcher sought to determine whether Bethune’s leadership style reflected transformational or transactional leadership as defined by James MacGregor Burns, Bernard Bass, and Bruce Avolio.
Avolio and Yammarino’s four “I’s,” and three factors of transactional leadership were used as the primary analytical framework for the interpretations of transformational or transactional leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

“Mine has not been an easy road. Very few of my generation found life easy or wanted it that way. Your road may be somewhat less rugged because of the struggles we have made.” (Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, from Catherine Peare’s biography Mary McLeod Bethune)

This quote captures Mary McLeod Bethune’s personal sentiment about her struggle to overcome an overwhelming number of obstacles in her path to earning a prominent place in American history. Bethune overcame poverty in rural South Carolina, discrimination, personal losses, relocation to the deep south, intimidation from the Ku Klux Klan, and administrative issues as leader of her own school. She was one of the nation’s first African American college presidents, and Mary McLeod Bethune’s legacy is powerful. Her home in Washington, D.C. has been declared a national monument, and Bethune Cookman University provides undergraduate and graduate education to over 3,000 students today (www.cookman.edu/about_BCU/fast_facts/inst_profile.html).

More than fifty years have passed since her death, and Mary McLeod Bethune is recognized as a foremother of Black women college presidents and a legendary leader in African American history. She was a catalyst in moving those who were thinkers into action, and the examination of Bethune as an educational leader proves her influence in changing the landscape of higher education in this country. Bethune was one of the first African American women to successfully start her own institution, and she had the ability, along with her staff, to keep her college operating during turbulent times. Her
vision motivated her strong leadership. These accomplishments were remarkable, but the majority of the research on Bethune does not document them. It highlights her civic and political contributions. Bethune’s style and influence as a college leader are less documented.

Statement of problem

Over the last two decades there has been a steady increase in the research of Black women college presidents. The majority of the research, however, focuses on contemporary members of this population. There is very little research on the forerunners, the trailblazers of the cohort, such as Lucy Laney, Nannie Burroughs, Anna Julia Cooper, and the focus of this study, Mary McLeod Bethune. As stated earlier, there is a substantial amount of information on Bethune’s accomplishments in political, civic and educational arenas in general. Currently there is no specific focus on her work as president of her beloved institution, which stands as perhaps her greatest memorial, Bethune Cookman University. This study is an attempt to augment the body of research on Black women college presidents in general and of Mary McLeod Bethune’s accomplishments in particular.

Purpose of the study

This study was an attempt to identify the personal and experiential factors that influenced the leadership of Mary McLeod Bethune as president of Bethune Cookman University, and to characterize the styles of that leadership. M. Colleen Jones’ (1991) study of Black women college presidents and the factors that contribute to their leadership style provided the overall framework for understanding the factors that shaped Bethune’s approach as a
leader, and her potential characteristics as a transformational and/or a transactional leader. James McGregor Burns’ and Bernard Bass’ and other leadership scholars’ definitions of transformational and transactional leadership were used to determine Bethune’s leadership tendencies in three major areas of her presidential tenure.

**Methodology of the study**

This was a historical research study of the leadership style and approach of Mary McLeod Bethune as a college president. According to philosopher and historian Robin Collingwood, a “historical experience shapes and molds the identity of people in important ways” (as cited in Gilderhus, 2003, p. 8-9). Mark Gilderhus explained, “History also provides a way to study the identity of people, both individually and collectively” (Gilderhus, 2003, p. 6). Both points underscore the importance of researching historical figures such as Mary McLeod Bethune. Bethune’s tenure as a college president provides information about the experiences of women of color in higher education, their impact on societal issues, and their challenges and styles as leaders.

**Defining Historical research**

Gall, Gall and Borg (1996) defined historical research in an educational context as “a process of systematically searching for data to answer questions about a phenomenon for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of present institutions, practices and trends and issues in education” (p. 644). They listed four similarities between historical research in education and other kinds of qualitative research methodologies: (1) emphasis on the study of context; (2) the study of behavior in natural rather than in contrived or
theoretical settings; (3) appreciation for the wholeness of experience, and (4) the centrality of interpretation in the research process (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005).

This study emphasizes Bethune’s approach to issues she encountered as president. The material validates the formation about the context and societal factors of the era of Bethune’s leadership, and provides contextual depth about the variables that affected the development and style of Bethune’s leadership.

Historical research analysis

Historical research is considered a form of qualitative inquiry because it centers on the how and why of events. It seeks to illustrate issues and transform social surroundings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004). Qualitative research is often described as natural, varied in method, and complex. Creswell (1999) wrote, “It takes the reader in to the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity” (p. 15). Patton (2005) stated, “Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail” (p. 112). Qualitative research offers a naturalistic approach to gaining insight about the subject, and the role of the researcher is more involved in the interpretation of the data collected.

Biography as a form of historical research

This history was a biographical study. According to Creswell (1998), a biographical study is “the study of an individual and her or his experiences as told to the researcher or found in documents and archival material” (p. 47). Denzin (1989) described the biographical method as “the study of the use and collection of life documents that describe turning point moments in an individual’s life.
The research of Bethune’s biography as president of Bethune Cookman College was complex. Qualitative inquiry provided the best approach to gain insight about her presidential term, the experiences and the issues she encountered throughout this time, and the style that characterized her as a leader. Many of those experiences are included in this study because they provide insight into her thoughts and decision-making regarding a variety of important issues during this period.

*Protecting the quality of qualitative research within a historical framework*

There are several points that should be considered in conducting historical analysis. The first point is the trustworthiness of the data. Multiple sources must be employed to check and add to the description. In this study of Bethune’s leadership style as a college president, some of these resources included personal journals, articles written by Bethune, interviews she gave, and interviews of those who worked with her during her presidency. A second point concerned the contemporization of analysis. Contemporizing is the process of applying a modern perspective to the historical experiences of the subject. This affects the interpretation of the subjects’ experiences. In this study, my experiences as a Black woman have occurred during a time when sexism and racism are less overt than in Bethune’s life. Thus, I believe contemporary laws were designed to combat such discrimination. In order to avoid contemporization, I had to understand the context of sexism and racism that existed during Bethune’s presidential tenure.

While the use of multiple sources assists in the development of trustworthy data, the data are also affected by the reliability of third party sources. External and internal criticism must be made of those sources. External criticism “is the process of determining
whether the apparent or claimed origin of a historical document (author, place, date, and circumstances of publication) corresponds to its actual origin” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005, p. 541). Internal criticism is “evaluating the accuracy and worth of the statements contained in a historical document” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, p. 542).

Sources used in the study

Both primary and secondary resources were used in this research. Primary sources are accounts of information that were created by persons who witnessed or participated in the events that are relevant to this study. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2005), there are three main types of primary sources: documents, relics, and records. This study primarily relied on documents and records. Secondary sources were also used. Secondary sources are documents and recorded materials that are used in research that do not come directly from the subject and are an interpretation of a third party.

Data on Bethune’s presidency were found on microfiche at two main locations: The Mary McLeod Bethune Collection at Bethune Cookman University and the Mary McLeod Bethune House in Washington, DC. Many of Bethune’s first-person perspectives regarding issues and decisions made during her presidency were documented in her weekly articles in publications such as the Chicago Defender and Ebony Magazine.

Archival records such as enrollment reports, files that detail her budget notes, and Bethune’s reports to the Board of Trustees were also available. These documents provided background about her rationale for decisions regarding budgets, recruitment, and campus policies.
Personal rationale for studying Mary McLeod Bethune

Several authors have written about Black women’s experiences in higher education. In recent years there has been an increase in the examination of the issues and challenges that modern leaders face. However, I believed that historical analysis was needed as well, because it might provide support systems for the advancement and placement of this population into presidential posts. Studies on pioneering women such as Lucy Laney, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mary McLeod Bethune provided a historical grounding on how and why systems of discrimination impact the progress of this population, and how they interpret their roles as leaders.

My personal desire to pursue this research has a simple explanation. I grew up hearing about “the great Mary McLeod Bethune,” but prior to initiating research for my study, I only knew very general information about her. I knew she was an educator, a political and civic activist, and an honorary member of my sorority, but I wanted to learn about the complex person who served in these roles. I wanted to understand how she began her institution. Did any of her roles overlap? How did she develop her leadership skills as a Black woman in the early twentieth century? Who were her influences? These are just some of many questions that led me to choose Mary McLeod Bethune as the focus of this historical case study. I wanted to gain a better understanding of how her leadership and vision provided a foundation for an institution that would grow from a normal school for girls with less than 100 students to a university that has over 3,000 students today.
Framework

Transformational and transactional leadership

Many leadership models are appropriate to a study of Bethune’s leadership style. After some initial research, I chose to examine her leadership styles through the transformational and transactional frameworks. My first research indicated that Bethune exhibited both transformational and transactional tendencies, so it became important to explore the research about those forms of leadership for a study of Bethune as president.

There are several definitions of transformational and transactional leadership. James MacGregor Burns, Bernard Bass, and Bruce Avolio are well known leadership scholars who have written about these theories, and their interpretations, along with those of other scholars are provided next, in order to give a holistic presentation of both types of leadership models.

James MacGregor Burns (1978) is credited with originating the theory of transformational leadership, and other researchers have explored and expanded the theory. They include Wren (1995), Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991), and Bass and Riggio (2001). Bass conducted research on transformational leadership theory as well as transactional and charismatic leadership. Bass’ text is extensive in examining the major components of transformational leadership, its role in organizations, and the differences in approaches used by women and men. Bass and Riggio also provide an important comparison of transformational and transactional leadership.

Burns (1978) distinguished transformational leadership from transactional leadership. Burns described transformational leadership as “one or more persons
engaging with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 101). Peter Northouse (2007) concurred: “it is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards and long term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs and treating them as full human beings” (Northouse 2007, p. 101). In contrast, transactional leadership occurs “when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things” (p. 101). Wren (1995) stated that “transactional leaders substitute one thing for another, to give or take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another,” whereas transformational leaders “define public values that embrace the supreme and enduring principles of a people” (Wren, 1995, p. 24).

Bruce Avolio (et al., 1991) identified four interpersonal or “I” traits of transformational leaders and three factors of transactional leadership. Avoilo offered the following: 1) Idealized influence-these leaders are admired and respected and followers want to emulate them, 2) Inspirational motivation-these leaders inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge, 3) Intellectual stimulation-creativity is encouraged, and questioning assumptions and challenging new thinking is encouraged, and 4) Individual consideration-special attention is given to each follower’s needs in order to cultivate growth.

Leaders who exhibit idealized influence have the ability to encourage followers to accept radical change. A charismatic quality is also associated with these persons. These individuals usually have strong moral and ethical conduct and high standards. Nelson
Mandela is such a leader, because “his charismatic qualities and the people’s response to them transformed an entire nation” (Northouse, 2007, p. 183).

Leaders can inspire followers to reach new heights. John Antonakis and Robert House (in Avolio & Yammarino, 2002) described inspirational leaders as persons “who inspire and motivate followers to reach ambitious goals that may have previously seemed unreachable, by raising followers’ expectations and communicating confidence that followers can achieve ambitious goals, thus creating self fulfilling prophecy” (p. 9-10).

Intellectual stimulation occurs moves followers to innovation and creativity, based on self-reflection. Northouse (2007) stated that intellectual leadership supports followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues. (p. 183)

Individual consideration occurs through the leader’s analysis of her or his followers. It includes the ability to diagnose followers’ needs, values and abilities. Antonakis and House stated “Leaders who provide customized socio-economic support to followers, while developing and empowering them. This outcome is achieved by coaching and counseling followers maintaining frequent contact with them and helping them to self actualize” (in Avolio & Yammarino, 2002, p. 9-10).

Bass and Avolio’s 1990 article, “The implications of transactional and transformational leadership for individual, team and organizational development”, contained three descriptors of transactional leadership. They consisted of contingent reward, active management by exzception, and passive management by exception. Contingent reward is an exchange between the leader and follower for specific rewards.
These exchanges may include economic and emotional exchanges. Active management by-exception has negative connotations. It is “similar to contingent reward in terms of focusing on outcomes; however in this case the leader actively watches for, and acts on, mistakes or errors” (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002, p. 10). Passive management by-exception is similar, but in this case leaders wait for “deviations to occur, and then act.” (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002, p. 10)

Research questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study of Bethune’s leadership style during her tenure as president, which spanned the years from 1923-1942 and 1946-1947.

1. What was her experience leading up to the founding and presidency of Bethune Cookman?
2. What happened during her presidency?
3. What characterized her leadership style during her presidency?
4. How do these leadership characteristics compare to Jones’ description of the characteristics of African American female presidents?

Limitations of the study

This study focused on Mary McLeod Bethune’s pioneering work as president and founder of an institution of higher education. The limitations include the following:

- Important first person accounts, personal documents, and official records related to her administration were unattainable due to the construction of her house
throughout time of the research. The house is the main conservatory of her papers.

- Third person reports and interpretations of Bethune’s leadership are subject to bias and may misdirect subsequent research.
- Researcher bias is a potential hindrance because of the shared race and gender of the researcher and subject.
- The study only utilized transformational and transactional leadership models. These models are not the only models that could be used to analyze Bethune’s leadership style.

Delimitations of the study

The research was delimited to Bethune’s work as president and founder of an institution of higher education. Specifically, the study focused on Mary McLeod Bethune’s leadership of Bethune-Cookman University during her years as president.

Significance of the study

Black women leaders are underrepresented in studies of higher education as well as in leadership positions in general (Parker, 2005). By providing more research on the nature and characteristics of this leadership demographic, more programming and support can be developed to increase the number and success of Black women leaders.

Bethune’s presidential leadership has never been described. There are various autobiographical works that provide overviews of her life, but this study is the first in-depth analysis of her presidential leadership style. Finally, this study is an attempt to compare the leadership style of a historically prominent Black woman to the styles of
contemporary ones. If the styles are similar, then a connection is revealed between the past and present, which might inform the Black women as educational leaders.

Organization of the chapters

This introduction has contained an outline of the methodological approach of the study, information about the theoretical framework, a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and a statement about the significance of the study. Chapters One and Two answer two questions: 1) Who was Mary McLeod Bethune?, and 2) How have Bethune, Black women college presidents, and transformational leadership been studied? Chapter One contains a biographical sketch of Bethune’s life in order to provide context about the major experiences and people that contributed to her leadership style. Chapter Two is a review of the current literature on Black women presidents, relevant studies and texts on Bethune, and relevant literature on transformational and transactional leadership theories. Chapters Three through Five concern key areas of Bethune’s presidential leadership: academic, financial, and personnel management. These areas emerged from the data and the text on Bethune’s presidency. Chapter Three focuses on curriculum development. Bethune’s approach to curriculum development and her educational philosophies are discussed, and the chapter includes information about the major factors that impacted her approach as a leader in this area. Chapter Four is about her leadership approach related to the theme of finances. Bethune’s work as fundraiser and her relationship to white philanthropists are examined. The major factors that impacted Bethune’s approach in this area are analyzed to gain an understanding of how she managed the fiscal affairs of
Bethune Cookman. Chapter Five is concerned with the last of the three major themes of Bethune’s presidency: personnel matters. The chapter is about her hiring practices and her style as a manager. The chapter ends with an examination of what attributes influenced her approach as a manager. Chapter Six presents conclusions of the study, implications for African American women’s leadership, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER ONE: WHO WAS MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE?

It is well known that Mary McLeod Bethune was an accomplished leader but the path to those accomplishments must be discussed to provide context about her presidency. This chapter contains information about the evolution of the educational philosophy of a person who has been described as “a commanding and revered figure in American History, (McCluskey & Thomas, 2001, p. 3) a distinguished educator, and a humanitarian and churchwoman (Martin, 1958 p. 1). The path to this acclaim spanned several decades, before Bethune started as a college president.

Mary Jane McLeod was born in the small town of Mayesville, South Carolina, on July 10, 1875. She was the fifteenth of seventeen children born during the Reconstruction era to former slaves Patsy and Samuel McLeod.

There was widespread illiteracy among Blacks in the South, despite the efforts of the Freedman’s Bureau and missionary associations to improve educational opportunities. Bethune stated, “In those days it was impossible for a Negro child, especially in the South, to get an education. There were hundreds of square miles, sometimes entire states without a single Negro school, and colored children were not allowed in public schools with White children. Mr. Lincoln had told our race we were free, but mentally we were still enslaved” (as cited in Lerner, 1972, p. 136). Statistics confirm Bethune’s sentiments. In 1870, Sumter County, where the town of Mayesville was located, had 25,268 residents. Forty percent of the population over ten years of age could not read. About 57 percent of the 17,805 African American residents could not read or write, and only 65 African American children attended school (Hanson, 2003).
The focus of many African American families at that time was not on education. It was on survival, and the McLeod family was no different than others. Patsy and Samuel McLeod were former slaves who made their living as sharecroppers. Mary and the other children at home worked with their parents in farming. For the McLeod family, this way of life represented an important aspect of freedom. It was a chance to develop independence and financial stability.

Strong religious convictions were at the core of the McLeod family values. Like many other African American families during the Reconstruction era, the McLeod family relied on faith to weather racism and the harsh economic conditions they faced. Mary McLeod Bethune took these convictions into her adult life. Martin (1957) wrote, “Jesus was her ideal. His life and his teachings became for her the dynamic center toward which she endeavored to direct her social concern. This belief would be carried throughout her career as a leader and would largely impact her view of the world and the motivation for her work.

Mary’s distinct demeanor stood out from the rest of her siblings. She was the “different acting, and different looking child” (McCluskey & Thomas, 2001, p. 4). Reflecting on her childhood, Bethune commented:

My mother said when I was born I was entirely different from the rest – I was the most homely child, I was just different. In the ordinary things the children engaged in I wouldn’t. I had the type of leadership like my mother. She said I was just different from the others. My taste for food was different. I would just look at it and not eat it. I had my own ideas about even that. I had just a different
setting in my acceptance of things from the rest of the children, and she very early detected that I was just a little different. My older sisters wanted to get married early. I had no inclinations that way. I had more of a missionary spirit – the spirit of doing things for others.

Any one sick in the community, I would tantalize my mother to make them some soup. If any child had no shoes, I always wanted to share my shoes. She had to watch me to keep me from giving away things that were mine. I was particular about things, but they accepted my leadership from those days to this moment and looked to me as the one in the family that might go places and they were willing to concede to my ideas because I was always striving to set up something that was going in the opposite direction from the general mass of things and doing… And, of course, after I got just a little mental training I had a very definite creative mind that I would put into operation such things as would inspire and help them. (as cited in Johnson, 1940 interview, Florida Archives)

Mary exhibited a distinct interest in learning despite the limited opportunities for African Americans to receive an education during that time:

I could see little white boys and girls going to school every day, learning to read and write; living in comfortable homes with all types of opportunities for growth and service and to be surrounded as I was with no opportunity for school life, no chance to grow – I found myself very often yearning all along for the things that were being provided for the white children with whom I had to chop cotton every
day, or pick corn, or whatever my task happened to be. (as cited in Johnson, 1940 interview, Florida Archives)

Mary took the opportunity to use the books from the plantation house near her family’s farm. She recalled an incident during this time:

Very often I was taken along after I was old enough, and on one of these occasions I remember my mother went over to do some special work for this family of Wilsons, and I was with her. I went out into what they called their play house in the yard where they did their studying. They had pencils, slates, magazines and books. I picked up one of the books . . . . and one of the girls said to me – “You can’t read that – put that down. I will show you some pictures over here,” and when she said to me “You can’t read that– put that down” it just did something to my pride and to my heart that made me feel that some day I would read just as she was reading.

I did put it down, and followed her lead and looked at the picture book that she had. But I went away from there determined to learn how to read and that some day I would master for myself just what they were getting and it was that aim that I followed.(as cited in Johnson, 1940 interview, Florida Archives)

In 1882, the Presbyterian Mission Board sent Emma Wilson, an African American teacher, to Mayesville to open a school for the children in the community. Wilson went door to door to inform parents about the school and encourage them to send their children. Recognizing her desire and talent for learning, Mary’s parents enrolled
her in the school. This started a new chapter in her life. Years later, Bethune described the impact of Wilson’s visit on her:

A knock on our door changed my life over night. There stood a young woman, a colored missionary sent by the Northern Presbyterian Church to start a school near by. She asked my parents to send me. Every morning, I picked up a little pail of milk and bread, and walked five miles to school, every afternoon five miles home. But I always walked on winged feet. (Lerner, 1972, p. 136)

Bethune’s early educational experience: The beginnings of an educator

Mary’s early exposure at the Mayesville Institute helped form her educational philosophy, and it increased her desire to learn more about the world. Mary became the “teacher” in her family with her new ability to read. During her five years at the Mayesville Institute, she used her new knowledge to strengthen her family’s religious bond by reading daily from the Bible, and sharing the lessons she learned each day during dinner. Her education also allowed her to serve as a leader in her community despite her youth. She assisted her father and others with their work by computing the costs of their crops. Mary acknowledged that this commitment to improving the conditions of those around her would become a critical component of her educational philosophy:

From the first, I made my learning, what little it was, useful every way I could. Not until I had completed my schooling and had learned how to count and could study my father’s bills and myself deal with the merchants to whom he was indebted, we are able to finally pay the life of the mortgage (as cited in Peare, 1951, p. 43).
In 1889, Mary graduated from the Mayesville Institute. She was twelve and had no opportunity in her area for further formal education. She returned home to her family’s farm, but Mary was disturbed by the prospect of not being able to continue her education. She prayed, “Lord deliver me, Lord help me to go to school, the way you did last time” (Martin 1958, p. 30).

Mary’s prayers were answered when Mary Chrissman, a Quaker teacher and seamstress, gave Mary a scholarship through the recommendation of Emma Wilson. Chrissman used her life’s savings to scholarships to send African American girls to school, and this scholarship allowed Mary to attend Scotia Seminary, a boarding school for African American girls in North Carolina. Scotia Seminary had been founded in 1867 by the Presbyterian Church. Its mission was to “educate colored girls in religion, and in the Arts and Sciences usually taught in seminaries of a high order; and in those domestic duties which belong to the highest type of wife and mother and teacher (Flemming, 1995, p. 10).

Scotia provided two critical opportunities that further shaped Mary’s educational philosophy, and solidified her desire to lead through education. She was able to be a leader and she witnessed integration for the first time. First, she developed her leadership skills. Mary organized the other girls for various events and causes, as well as interceded for them with administrators, seeking out the senior official when she had issues or questions. As she noted in an interview with Charles Johnson in 1940 that was available at the Florida State Archives, “Homesick girls would always find me. Girls with their problems, difficulties, and disappointments
always would come to me, for advice. The girls always called me “Dick” McLeod in school. I never knew why—but that was the pet name for me” (Johnson 1940). This nickname, though unknown to Mary for its reason, may have come from her seemingly fearless ability to lead and voice her concerns, which was an unusual characteristic for women during that era.

Mary’s education at Scotia also gave her the opportunity to see White and Black educators work together in an integrated setting. She witnessed equality for the first time in her life, and she was able to cleanse herself of the inferiority complex that racism fostered. Her treatment at Scotia was not solely based on race. Mary was able to be engaged with Whites who gave her an opportunity and wanted her to succeed despite the color of her skin. This experience stayed with her. It became an important factor in her future dealings with Whites as she progressed in her career as an educator.

After leaving Scotia, Mary applied to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, which she entered in 1894. She was intrigued by the absence of racism at Moody and was once again reminded of the fact that segregation did not have to be the way of life for every “Negro” during that time. She remarked, “There were no race feelings at Moody. There we learned to look upon a man as a man, not as a Caucasian or a Negro” (Martin 1958, p. 32).

This was rare given the times. Her admission to Scotia occurred on the eve of the legendary Supreme Court Case ruling of *Plessy v Ferguson*(1896). The South was already ruled by Jim Crow laws, and the ruling of this case justified segregation that was allegedly “equal” The *Plessy* ruling legitimized Jim Crow legislation at all social levels
of southern American society. These included transportation, education, and public facilities. Legalized segregation became an effective method of maintaining and justifying race and class inequities.

Mary hoped to become a missionary in Africa upon completing her work at Moody. She felt an obligation to uplift her race through education. Though her application for missionary work was declined, fate would intervene on her behalf. In 1896, Bethune was offered a teaching position with a woman who would become her long time friend, and set her on the path to becoming a leader in education. Lucy Laney was one of several Black women who were taking a lead in educating the nation’s Black population at the turn of the century.

Laney was a member of the first graduating class of Atlanta College, and she founded the Haines Institute after working for twelve years in public schools. Laney built a reputation by traveling across the United States in order to share her story about the Haines Institute. Her determination impressed many, so much so that she would become a “vital member to the Board of Mission for Freedman, and helped build what became an important co-educational institution.” (Holt, 1964, p. 47).

Mary’s leadership skills were advanced during an apprenticeship at Haines. She learned a great deal about the fundamentals of administration through working with Laney. She watched Laney increase the population of students, strategize and seek out financial support, and recruit teachers.

Mary organized a mission school while working with Laney. The mission school’s curriculum was based on Mary’s educational work from Scotia and Moody,
much of which was focused on science and civic involvement. Mary sought young students who were greatly underprivileged, because they needed an education the most. She was armed with determination and energy from her time in Moody, and as Holt stated, she “set forth upon a project of rounding up these unreached urchins and inviting them to Sunday school. (Holt, 1964, p. 47). Mary’s persistence and focus paid off with attendance reaching nearly 1,000.

Mary internalized Laney’s passionate dedication to promoting women’s leadership. She saw Laney push her female students to learn vocational trades because their skills would help them to improve the social conditions around them. Mary shared Laney’s philosophy that African American women would “assume the burden to uplift their families by providing moral, Christian leadership at home and in their communities” (McCluskey & Thomas 2001, p. 5). She credited Laney with giving her a new vision. Although Bethune was disappointed initially that she was not selected to go to Africa, she realized that her life’s work would be in her own country. (Hanson, 2003, p. 48).

Christie Farnham stated in *Women of American South: A multicultural reader*, that Bethune would “later advance a more politically tinged message of female activism and empowerment than Laney. Bethune’s school, however, was initially like Haines—a site for the reclamation and inculcation of social and cultural values meant to earn blacks middle class-status.” (Farnham, 1997, p. 196).

Bethune espoused the ideals and skills-based educational philosophy of Booker T. Washington, because it would gain financial support from White philanthropists. This was Laney’s tactic. Later on, when she was a college president, she aligned the
curriculum with W.E.B DuBois’ more liberal educational philosophy. Still, she claimed later in life that her experience with Laney confirmed her need to dedicate her life to educating and improving social conditions for African American children. This mission guided her career as an educational leader.

Mary returned to South Carolina in 1897, after completing her work with Laney. There she met a young man in choir practice, her future husband, Albertus Bethune. The relationship would blossom quickly with activities such as teaching Mary to ride a bicycle and taking long sentimental trips to the countryside (Holt, 1964, p. 50). They married in 1898.

One year later, their son, Albert, was born. The Bethunes moved back to Georgia in 1899, and spent a short time teaching and working in the community. However, Mary grew restless and believed that her destiny was to open her own school. Her husband did not support her vision. They separated before Albert turned three.

Now a single mother, Mary moved to Palatka, Florida in 1903. She stayed there a few months and eventually settled in eastern Florida at Daytona Beach. She decided to move to Daytona Beach when she learned that there was a growing community of railroaders and day laborers in the area. She was convinced that she made the right choice after she arrived. Bethune stated, “I found there dense ignorance and meager educational facilities, racial prejudice of the most violent type-crime and violence” (cited in Martin, 1958, p. 36). Armed with the knowledge and energy she gained from her years as a student and teacher, Mary was ready to face the educational needs of African Americans in the Daytona area.
The founding of Daytona Institute

The beginning.

As a young wife and new mother, Bethune was encouraged by a minister to go to Daytona Beach to start her school. She had accumulated a variety of experience at a Mission school in South Carolina, the Haines Institute in Georgia. As Flemming (1995) describes, “so she knew what it took to establish an institution, some of which she did not have. But she had her deep abiding faith in God, her experience, and a strong desire to make a significant contribution to female education in America”(Flemming, 1995, p. 23). Her work was a struggle, however because of Jim Crow laws, which promoted segregation, racism, and sexism. African Americans such as Bethune were faced with lawful challenges to their status as leaders and educators in their quest to uplift their race. Bethune was not deterred.

When Bethune arrived in Daytona Beach, she found a town segregated by race and class. Daytona Beach was incorporated in 1876, and two of the incorporating fathers were Black men, Thaddeus Goodwin and John Tolliver. Blacks were attracted to Daytona Beach to pursue work on the railroad. By 1904, 52 percent of the city’s population was Black. Faced with limited occupational opportunities, the increasing Black population of the city recognized their growing need for education, and Bethune seized this opportunity to make her dream a reality. On October 4, 1904, she opened the doors to the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls (DLIS).

The property for the DLIS was purchased with a down payment of $1.50. It was a small one room cottage on Oak Street. Five girls enrolled: Lena, Lucille, and Ruth
Warren; Anna Geiger, and Celeste Jackson (Fleming, 1995, p. 23). Their ages ranged from eight to twelve, and their parents paid Bethune fifty cents per week in tuition.

The first years of the DLIS were consumed with conflict and tireless struggle. Bethune encountered two opinions about her work: some opposed her because of her perceived confrontational methods, while others embraced her effort to educate the children of the area. Both opinions were representative of the Jim Crow laws and constant racial intimidation that Blacks feared.

**Opposing philosophies**

Some who opposed Bethune viewed her as an outsider who supported the industrial education philosophy of Booker T. Washington. She consulted Washington when she was looking to open her school. She had long admired Washington’s accomplishments in educating southern Blacks.

Washington was one of the most visible Black leaders in the Progressive Era. He was born a slave, in 1856, and spent the majority of his early life working on a small plantation. After his emancipation in 1865, Washington enrolled in the Hampton Institute, and eventually taught at his alma mater. In 1881, he founded Tuskegee Institute, one of the first successful institutions for the education of African Americans in the U.S. Bethune visited and corresponded with Washington frequently. As noted earlier, she followed his strategy of utilizing wealthy white philanthropists’ support to fund his school’s operations.

However, Washington often faced criticism in the African American community because he believed that practical education would make Blacks a useful and productive
part of America’s social and economic system. He stressed self-help and accommodation, so his philosophy could be criticized for its apparent “acceptance of the racist, social, economic, and political hierarchy of the reconstructed South” (Perkins 1988, p. 31).

W.E.B. DuBois was a critic of Washington. He opposed these non-confrontational approaches. He was born in 1868 in Massachusetts, and graduated in 1888 from Fisk University. In 1895, DuBois became the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He became a widely recognized scholar producing works such as *The Souls of Black Folk*. He taught at a number of universities, including Wilberforce and the University of Pennsylvania. He founded the sociology department at Atlanta Institute, now known as Clark Atlanta University, and became a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

DuBois believed in the Talented Tenth, an elite core that would advance Blacks’ position in society, the “tenth of this group” who became influential in the world (of education, civic engagement and politics). DuBois rejected assimilation and acceptance to work “within the system.”

*Bethune’s curriculum and reactions to it.*

Bethune utilized aspects of both philosophies in the development of her curriculum at the Daytona Institute. She incorporated Washington’s pragmatic approach in an industrial arts curriculum that included skills such as cooking and sewing. Her justification was that Black women needed skills in the fields open to them: “vocation is the *sine qua non*, a fundamental without which most other enterprises would fail”
Bethune also believed, as did DuBois, that the finest minds of the Black community should be identified and helped to develop. They would become leaders who would act as liaisons for their community, guiding others toward overcoming the restraints of segregation. Thus, the liberal arts were promoted in the Daytona curriculum. As the school expanded, both vocational preparation and liberal education programs expanded with it.

Bethune endured some of the same criticism as Washington, because some believed her industrial education program stagnated Blacks and left them in subservient status to Whites. A pastor at a local church said, “Bethune wanted to teach her students to be servants and obedient to white masters” (Holt, 1964, p.75). This charge about the promotion of “subservient attitudes” to Whites lasted throughout her leadership at the school. Bethune, however, remained unscathed by such opposition. She had an intuitive ability to know when to publicly challenge others and when to move forward quietly.

Local community members, such as Dr. Texas Adams and his wife Ladosia, embraced her work, Both Adams sat on the first board of trustees of the Daytona Institute. They introduced her to local men who helped build tables and chairs. Local women served as teachers and sponsored food drives to help raise operating funds. Despite her difficulty in obtaining consistent funding for the school, Bethune’s determination inspired many in the community. They believed in her dream, and therefore worked to support her.
Bethune spent much of the early years working in the community to raise the profile of her school. She worked diligently, appealing to community members for support to aid her goals of expansion. As she noted:

I hung on contractors’ coattails, begging for loads of sand and secondhand bricks.
I went to all the carpenters, mechanics, and plasters in town, pleading with them to contribute a few hours’ work in the evenings in exchange for sandwiches and tuition for their children and themselves. (Peare, 1951, p. 98)

Support from White philanthropists.

Bethune diligently solicited resources from White philanthropists, and many of them were vital, early supporters of her school. They included James Gamble, president of Proctor and Gamble of Cincinnati, John Rockefeller, business mogul from New York, and Thomas White, president of White Sewing Machine Company.

According to William Watkins, these wealthy White philanthropists engaged in “race philanthropy.” It emerged in the 1880’s as a means of social engineering and a component of policy making. Many Whites gave to Black education in order to influence a segment of the population that could help move their corporate agendas forward. John Rockefeller, Jr. was one such a philanthropist, and he proved to be very beneficial to Bethune. Rockefeller had a long history of giving money to Black education, including funding for such institutions as Hampton University, Fisk University, and Tuskegee. Rockefeller also founded the General Education Board, and later he gave his name and funds towards the establishment of the United Negro Fund.
Rockefeller had missionary roots and his ancestors had founded Spelman College. Black education was his means of “establishing the Negro’s place in the new social order. We of the White race owe a debt of gratitude to our fellow citizens of the Negro race for having conceived and brought in to being the idea of educational chest, the value of which is so generally recognized.” (Watkins, 2001, p. 121).

James Gamble was another philanthropist whose funds helped with daily expenses, teachers’ salaries, equipment, and construction (Hanson, 2003). In 1915, Bethune wrote Gamble, and then visited him at his home. She shared her objectives for her school, but she did not solicit financial support. She asked Gamble to be a trustee, and when he inquired about this “vision” and his role as a trustee, she stated that he would be “a trustee of a vision” (Flemming, 1995, p. 24). In the succeeding years, Gamble was not only a benefactor to the Institute, but he also helped to establish the McLeod Hospital, and he became one of Bethune’s confidants and mentors.

A third key supporter was Thomas White. Bethune also appointed him as trustee, and he initially donated $20,000 to the school. White continued to observe Bethune and work with her, and he provided funds for Bethune’s home, another school building, and utilities for the school. White bequeathed $79,000 to the school.

Bethune’s demonstrated her charismatic leadership quality through herd success in persuading well known wealthy businessmen to believe and invest in a little known school. This was not merely a transactional exchange, because Bethune had nothing to give them back. She just gave her word that money would be used for the betterment of Blacks in Daytona.
The fruit of Bethune’s labor was evident by 1907, as the school’s population increased to 250 students. However, the rapid growth of the school destabilized the institute’s finances, and Bethune was faced with the need for more space. She continued to pursue the assistance of business people to fulfill her dream, and a major accomplishment was the well documented account about her acquisition of property known as Hell Hole.

Hell Hole was a Daytona garbage dump that had no buildings and was filled with discarded city material. Bethune convinced the owner of the property to accept five dollars as a down payment. She told him she would give him the balance in two years if he would let his junk yard became part of her school’s campus. Later, Bethune admitted that she never had the down payment, but she had the ability to persuade others to join her cause. Faith Hall was constructed on the new property, and this was the first building in what would later become Bethune Cookman College.

As the school continued to grow, Bethune’s leadership became more defined as administrator and fundraiser. More volunteers and teachers were recruited to serve increased student enrollments Many were women, in keeping with Bethune’s belief: “I need strong women to help me realize this vision” (Holt, 1964, p. 103). She hired Francis Reynolds Keyser to lead the development of an upgraded academic curriculum. Keyser was recruited from New York, where she ran a school for delinquent Negro girls. The two became acquainted through their work with the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Keyser stated, “[I] would have taken thirty cents a month to be a part of Bethune’s mission” (Flemming, 1995, p. 28). Thus, Keyser reaffirmed Bethune’s
ability to empower others and to make them believe in her vision. This ability would aid in the continued growth and expansion of the school.

Towards a new chapter

By 1915 Bethune’s school, now known as the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute (DNII), was gaining in community recognition. She wanted to capitalize on it. Bethune invited community officials to the campus, and she began to plan the long-term growth of the school in both size and reputation. By 1920, with enrollment at its highest, Bethune contemplated the school’s expansion into a junior college.

Expansion into a junior college would offer more access to funding, and would allow Bethune to extend her appeal and outreach beyond the regional Daytona area. The faculty had already developed a curriculum that was considered one of the strongest in the state of Florida for Black technical education, and Bethune had many allies, but she also faced opponents in her effort to educate Blacks in the Daytona community.

Bethune’s opponents went to extreme measures, for example, in November, 1920: “While Bethune worked late in her office, she noticed that all street lights had gone out on Second Avenue. From the direction of Beach Street, she heard car horns and horse hooves, then she saw a procession of people masked in white sheets following a burning cross. Ku Klux Klan intimidation was never far removed from her life, her struggles, nor her efforts. At the time her school was an all black girl school, many of whom boarded on campus. The terrifying sight dredged up the images of the brutality and violence perpetuated against blacks since the times of slavery. Brave Mary Bethune ordered the lights turned off on
campus and all outdoor floodlights turned on. The Klan was left standing in a pool of light, and watched by the terrified students, as Mary rallied her girls to sing spirituals. The Klan soon dispersed and scattered into the night. That night was a turning point; the Klan failed to intimidate a 45-year-old black woman and a group of girls.” (http://volusiahistory.com/mary.htm)

Unnerved by intimidation factors, Bethune forged forward to expand her school. The hymns included “Be not dismayed whate’er betide, God will take care of you.” (Holt, 1964, p. 122).

Bethune appealed to several religious boards for support, including the local boards of Presbyterian and Catholic churches, but all of them wanted her to relinquish control of the school in order to receive funding. Finally, assistance came from the Methodist church, which had earned a solid reputation of supporting Black education in the South. Immediately following the Civil War, the Methodist church worked with the federal government to establish the Freedmen’s Bureau, and in 1866 the Freedmen’s Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded. Its leaders felt that a church initiative “would give [them] a more direct, and hence a greater interest in the education of Freedmen.” (Flemming, 1995, p. 35). The Freedmen’s Aid Society established the Cookman Institute in 1872.

Cookman was the first institution for the higher education of Blacks in the state of Florida (Flemming 1995). It named for an English Methodist preacher, Rev. Alfred Cookman. After a trip to America in 1825, he returned to England, but he was so moved by the treatment of Blacks that he decided to become a missionary to Blacks and
returned to America. In 1860, he settled in Jacksonville, Florida, where he built a small Methodist congregation. The members of the congregation went out in the local community to fight for the education of Blacks. Upon his death in 1871, friends of Cookman gave donations to start a school that was named after him. It became Cookman Institute.

After Cookman’s death, an acquaintance of Cookman, Samuel Darnell, took up the charge to lead the school. He, like Cookman, believed education was important in improving the lives of Blacks. Darnell served as the leader of Cookman for over ten years and helped to secure its foundation. By the late 1870’s, the institution was at its peak. Through its large teaching staff and consistent enrollment, Cookman became an important institution for higher learning in Florida. However, in 1894, Darnell became ill, and in 1894, he resigned as president. Cookman Institute never regained the stability it had under him. Finances began to decline because the Institute’s leadership was inconsistent. By 1919, after several principals the enrollment had dropped from 800 in the late 1890’s to 250.

Two members of the Methodists Board and Daytona Boards, Dr. Rutter and Mr. Gamble, suggested that Bethune merge her institute with Cookman, even though it was located in Jacksonville. The Methodist Board believed it would preserve Cookman, and at the same time elevate the Institute among respective institutions. in Daytona. Discussion of the merger began at a meeting in March of 1923. The Institute Board met again in April, and agreed to thirteen terms for the merger of the two institutions. The terms covered a variety of issues including the deeds exchange, funding, and name of the
newly merged institutions. The merger became official in late 1925, after two years of lengthy debate. talks,

Bethune’s voice did not go unheard during this lengthy discussion. At the final meeting she shared some of her thoughts:

I found it difficult to get support sufficient to have it grow and develop and because we made Jesus Christ the foundation stone upon which we built in a mysterious way this organization came on the scene and offered itself to stand back of us. I want to bring it all this morning to a cheerfully place in on the altar..with the confidence that you will never fail me. I would not put my signature to that deed.. I would go back on everything I have promised if I felt that you would not permit this child of mine to grow and unfold and become her best. To this I commit-take it use it-develop it and may the thousands yet unborn have their full chances of development use it as a institution that stands for all that is great and noble in manhood and woman hood. (Flemming, 1995, p. 43,44)

Bethune was now charged with leading an institution that educated both women and men, and that presented new opportunities and dilemmas. How would both live together? How would the curriculum change to reflect the needs of this new population of students? Would her focus shift with the introduction of male students? How could she increase financial support to acquire the resources needed to support a larger population? These were the questions that Bethune would be faced with as a result of the merger of the two institutions, and her answers led the way into a new phase of her leadership.

Bethune’s personal prominence post merger-
Bethune Cookman College saw a great deal of change in the years immediately following the merger. The newly merged school’s enrollment went up to 600 students, and it received junior college accreditation. Thus, new funds were needed to sustain the College.

At the same time that her college was growing, Bethune’s personal prominence was rising through her work on the civic front. She founded the Southeastern Federation of Colored Women, became its president, and she went on to become national president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). In 1935, and feeling that her work was too locally oriented, she created a new organization, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and served as its president for over thirteen years.

Bethune received the Springarn Award of the NAACP in 1935. This was one of many awards she received during her lifetime. Other honors included the Frances Drexel Award for Distinguished Service in 1937, and the Thomas Jefferson Award for leadership in 1942. She received an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Rollins College in 1949, the first African-American to receive an honorary degree from a white southern college. Bethune also received the Medal of Honor and Merit from the Republic of Haiti in 1949, and the Star of Africa from the Republic of Liberia in 1952. (http://www.usca.edu/aasc/bethune.htm).

Bethune’s accomplishments moved to the national stage. She was appointed to lead the National Youth Administration (NYA) by the Roosevelt administration. This agency was established to help young people find work during the Great Depression, and she was the first Black woman to lead a federal agency. After World War II, Bethune was
one of three African-American consultants to the U.S. delegation involved in developing the United Nations charter. Bethune served as the personal representative of President Truman at the inauguration ceremonies in Liberia in 1952. (http://www.usca.edu/aasc/bethune.htm).

Her work in the government was instrumental in helping the College secure grants and programs that provided aid to the students, but her growing work outside the College meant that Bethune faced the inevitable choice of having to retire as president of the College. She appointed an interim president but would later return, feeling the pull of the commitment and the need to maintain her vision of the College despite failing health and increasing national commitments in other areas.

**The final years: 1942-1955**

Ill health forced Bethune to hand over the reigns of her beloved institution to James Colston in 1942. Colston was a young academic with Bethune Cookman ties and outside experiences. His tenure as president will be discussed later, but it proved to be successful and tumultuous. Colston achieved significant accomplishments such as increasing enrollment and soliciting new revenues, but Bethune’s desire to stay connected led to his eventual resignation from the College.

Colston’s successor, Richard Moore, assumed the helm in 1947. That year, Bethune retired from her outside duties and returned to her home in Daytona Beach. She finally seemed comfortable as President emeritus, working as Moore’s advisor, making special appearances, and doing occasional international work. In 1953, she deeded her home to the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation to “promote research,

Shortly before her death, Bethune wrote, “My Last Will and Testament” for Ebony Magazine. This reflective piece laid out the principles of her life. It also provided advice and hope to her readers to pursue education, to work for equal rights and respect for others, and to have faith in God. Bethune passed away on May 18, 1955. Not long before her death she said:

Sometimes as I sit communing in my study I feel death is not that far off.
I am full aware it will take me before the greatest of my dreams- full equality for the Negro in our time is realized. Yet, I face that reality without tears or regrets. I am resigned to death as all humans must be at the proper time. Death neither alarms nor frightens one who has had a long career or fruitful toil. The knowledge that my work has been helpful to many fills me with joy and great satisfaction.” (Martin, 1958, p58).

Bethune’s life has been celebrated since her death. Many reminders mark Bethune’s legacy at what is now Bethune Cookman University, including her grave in the front yard of her home. A statue commemorating her leadership was dedicated in Washington, DC, on July 10, 1974, ninety years after her birth. Her home in Washington has been designated a historical landmark. It is now a library and conservatory of some of her work in the educational, civic, and political arenas. In 1985, Bethune was honored with her own postage stamp, and a portrait of her hangs in the state capitol of South Carolina.
CHAPTER TWO: RELEVANT RESEARCH ABOUT BETHUNE, BLACK WOMEN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

“I am interested in women, and I believe in their possibilities.”

-Mary McLeod Bethune, speech to the NACW

Prior to my study of Bethune, I researched studies that analyzed Black women presidents’ leadership styles. I decided to analyze if any of the attributes that M. Colleen Jones’ (1991) found in a study of Black women presidents were influential factors for the contemporary cohort of Black women presidents were applicable to a foremother such as Bethune.

How Jones’s study was utilized in analyzing Bethune’s leadership

In 1991, M. Colleen Jones conducted a study of Black women presidents, and her findings were published in two texts: Lois Benjamin’s *Black Women in the Academy* (1991) and Lynne Brodie Welch’s *Perspective of Minority Women in Higher Education* (1992). Jones highlighted the major purpose of her study and findings in both publications. Her central focus was to “determine the antecedent factors that cultivated the skills, talents and abilities they bring to and utilize in their daily activities” (Jones, 1992, p. 61). Jones wanted to take the analysis of Black women college presidents’ leadership one step further than the majority of studies on this population. She sought to understand how their life experiences impacted their leadership development. The two major findings of her study were: 1) Black women presidents were perceived by their staff and peers as being more transformational than transactional leaders, and 2) Black
women presidents see their leadership style as conscious decision-making combined with purposeful objectives. Those findings were tested in this study of a historical leader.

In addition, this study was an analysis of a rarely examined world of Bethune’s leadership as president. While Jones (1991) asserted that the prevalent mode for African American women presidents is transformational leadership, this research explored if that assertion fit Bethune. To do so required a thorough examination of studies about Mary McLeod Bethune’s life.

Studies of Mary McLeod Bethune’s life

A majority of the literature on Bethune can be categorized in three areas: anecdotal, popular, and scholarly. Most of it relies on varied anecdotal recollections of instances and events that affected Bethune’s life. To illustrate, Emma Sternes (1957) published a biography shortly after Bethune’s death in 1955. Sternes used a considerable number of secondary sources, such as articles and previously published interviews, so her book offers few original insights into the many accomplishments of Bethune. The content of the research was centered on Mary McLeod’s leadership in general, and sometimes in education, but without an organized emphasis on her presidency. For example, Earl (1957) looked at Bethune’s leadership in general. He utilized primary and secondary sources for research that concluded that Bethune was a “forerunner-a prototype-of the kind of militant Negro leadership which we are currently witnessing in America” (Martin, 1957, p. 12). Martin concluded that Bethune influenced many other leaders in various facets of society.
Studies of Bethune’s educational leadership

Bethune’s educational leadership was usually discussed among other areas. For example, Nancy Long’s (2004) work relied on anecdotal testimony from one of two staff members from Bethune Cookman. It contained insight on the major themes of Bethune’s life, including her work as an educational leader, political consultant and civic leader.

The most important and helpful component of Long’s text for this study was her testimonials from members of Bethune’s family, former students and former colleagues. These testimonials offered important insight into Bethune’s leadership style, her approach and her personal interactions.

Audrey Thomas McCluskey offered two analyses of Bethune’s role as a leader. In her article *Multiple Consciousness in the Leadership of Mary McLeod Bethune*, McCluskey (1994) focused on the assumption that Black women in Bethune’s era viewed their roles and efforts through multiple awareness of race and gender. Her article provided a biographical sketch of Bethune’s life and the various experiences that impacted her work as a leader, and it is important in providing detail of major experiences of Bethune’s life and how they influenced her perspective and role as a Black woman leader.

McCluskey’s (1989) article *Mary McLeod Bethune and the Education of Black girls* provided specific insights about Bethune’s educational philosophy, including her perspective on the importance of both Booker T. Washington’s and W.E.B. DuBois’ distinctly different approaches to Black education. McCluskey analyzed how Bethune utilized several methods of working with White philanthropists and how the philosophies
of both Washington and DuBois merged in Bethune’s pragmatic curriculum focusing on elevating the status of Black girls.

Carol Perkins (1988) examined Bethune’s educational endeavors and concluded that her goals and values in education centered on pragmatic idealism. Like McCluskey, Perkins explored the roots of Bethune’s philosophy in both the industrial education approach of Booker T. Washington and the intellectual approach of W.E.B DuBois. She explained the reasons behind Bethune’s move from Washington’s approach to DuBois approach, arguing that Bethune perfected a merger of the two that was greatly beneficial to the success of her school.

Thomas and Smith (2001) studied Bethune’s educational leadership “within the paradigm of race uplift ideology as practiced by Black women of early twentieth century” (Thomas & Smith, 2001, p. 13). This work focused on the way that Bethune used education to integrate Blacks into mainstream society. Thomas and Smith’s text was an anthology of articles containing first and second person testimonies about various components of Bethune’s vast public life. It provides critical insight to several issues, some of which include Bethune’s thoughts on the role of education, the role of African Americans in the political system of America, and the importance of women’s rights.

Shelia Flemming is a faculty member and alumna of Bethune Cookman. Her 1995 text was the only reference to Bethune’s life that focused on Bethune Cookman. It provides a chronological reference from Bethune’s beginnings as the founder of the Normal school to the legacy she left for her successors. Flemming explored how her leadership practices and beliefs shaped Bethune Cookman in the present day.
All of these studies contributed to the literature on Bethune and her role as an influential figure in African American history. They illuminated her influence in multiple facets of society including politics, education, and civic work. At best they offered insight about her leadership as president and founder of Bethune Cookman University, but none of them—including Bethune’s own autobiography—specifically examined Bethune’s leadership style while she served as president of Bethune-Cookman University. This research helps fill that gap in the literature. It is an exploration of two important issues related to Bethune’s tenure as president 1) what impacted her style, and 2) whether her leadership can be described as transformational or transactional.

*Studies of Black women presidents in higher education*

*Early presidents: The foremothers*

Current African American women college presidents stand on the shoulders of those who paved the way for them. This group included Anna Julia Cooper, Lucy Laney, and Mary McLeod Bethune. Prior research on these pioneering African American women college leaders allows one to gain an understanding of the attributes that helped all of these women succeed in the face of a variety of adverse social conditions.

The body of research on early Black women leadership is small. Two studies on this population are Gloria Williams-Way’s (1998) examination of the leadership of Lucy Laney and Leona Collins’ (1999) work on Anna J. Cooper. Each of these studies provide valuable insight into how the societal circumstances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries impacted Black women leaders in higher education. Their research
also provides a means for understanding the shared leadership traits of early African American women leaders in higher education.

Laney’s primary interest was the education of young African American women. She sought financial support from various sources, including the Presbyterian Church. Laney’s educational philosophy was grounded in the nineteenth century idea of separate spheres for men and women. As stated in the previous chapter, Laney served as an important role model for Mary McLeod Bethune, and Bethune’s work and approach to leadership clearly demonstrated Laney’s influence. (Hanson, 2003, p. 47).

Leona Collins (1999) examined various dimensions of Anna J. Cooper's life during the Progressive Era and how these experiences shaped her leadership role in higher education. Collins provided information about: the social conditions and ideologies of the Progressive Era; the influence of other African American leaders, such as Mary Church Terrell, Fanny Coppin, and Bethune on Cooper; and the impact of the social issues of the African American community on Cooper's leadership (Collins, 1999, p. 5).

Collins concluded that Cooper's leadership was shaped by three internal factors: her commitment to her own values; her philosophy of education for service, and her belief in racial uplift through education. Collins added that male leaders of the Progressive Era such as W.E.B DuBois and Booker T. Washington were external influences on Cooper's leadership.

Both Williams-Way and Collins showed how the societal issues of race and gender impacted the work of early African American women leaders, and thus, these
authors provided contextual information for examining Bethune’s work. That information is important because historical study is a study of facts in a particular context in order to understand the antecedents reasons and the impact of those facts.

Black women presidents today

Mary McLeod Bethune was one of a small group of pioneers whose belief in education and dedication to the improvement of Black women bravely endured assaults of racism and sexism. Bethune’s story as president might be a blueprint for understanding the complexities faced by the current cohort of Black women presidents.

The current population of higher educational leaders faces some similar challenges as their predecessors. The first is their numbers. According to a 2002 survey by the American Council of Education, the number of female college and university presidents has doubled since the mid-1980’s, from a figure of 9.5 percent to 21.1 percent. African American women constituted 6.6 percent of non-White presidents. Although African American women accounted for the highest percentage of all non-White college presidents, this figure represented only 25 presidential posts in the 4,000 institutions of higher education in the country.

The importance of researching these presidents is affirmed by a small but steady increase in the number of research studies that examine African American women presidents in higher education. Chase (1987) is one of the first researchers who specifically focused on modern Black women presidents. The purpose of her study was to learn how Black women presidents viewed themselves as leaders and how they believed others perceived their leadership style. This study was important because it was one the
earliest studies to examine the issues, and perspectives of this minority population of collegiate leadership.

M. Colleen Jones’s (1991) study came from what she believed was a lack of concrete research on Black women presidents. She stated that leadership is the most understudied and least understood topic in the behavioral sciences, and “the presence of an emerging cohort (a new population) of high profiles on gender and racial dimensions symbolizes an unexplored research reservoir to be tapped” (Jones, 1991, p. 208).

Freeman (1993), like Jones, was motivated by what she perceived was a void in the literature. She believed that African American women had earned greater study due to their active participation in higher education for centuries, but recognized that the lack of research might be due to the relatively low number of Black women at the top of the executive ladder in higher education.

Edwards-Wilson (1998) focused on the leadership styles of African American women presidents. She believed African American women leaders in higher education face more racism and sexism and have fewer role models than their counterparts. Thus she wanted to understand how the numbers of this executive cohort cope, lead, and make decisions under such conditions. Similar to Jones, Edwards-Wilson wanted to understand the day- to- day functions of Black women presidents’. She sought to learn how specifically race and gender impacted Black women’s presidents decision making.

Finally, Bowles (1999) used mixed methods in a study of African American women who become chief campus administrators. She wanted to identify common factors that affected their early socialization.
These scholars used different methods but they had the same motivation, to increase awareness of the specific issues facing this population of higher educational leaders. These scholars believed that there are essential experiences that impact the leadership of African American women presidents in higher education, primarily relating to the twin forces of racism and sexism that they face.
CHAPTER THREE: BETHUNE AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

“This is a new kind of school. I’m going to teach my girls crafts and homemaking, I’m going to teach them to earn a living. They will be trained in the head, hand and heart. Their heads to think, their hands to work and their hearts to have faith.”

-Mary McLeod Bethune (McCluskey 1994, p. 73)

This quote provides a glimpse into Mary McLeod Bethune’s educational philosophy. Bethune had a vision for educating Black girls. She had a firm philosophical belief in what would elevate their status. Her dream began with little money, one small building, and five students. It was maintained as a lifelong commitment to the social uplift of Black women. Bethune served as an advocate for this population when little was given to them by the rest of society, especially in the area of education.

White preferences determined what educational opportunities Blacks would receive during the early part of the twentieth century. They were focused on the goal of working in industrial specialties which might support White-owned businesses. This provided a means for survival but little educational and social advancement.

As noted in the first chapter, Bethune worked with Whites to obtain funding to build her school. She also transcended both sides within her own community. She used a pragmatic philosophy in developing her curriculum which had elements of both Washington’s and DuBois educational philosophies. These points are expanded in this discussion of the BCC curriculum.

The chapter is an examination of how Bethune formulated her academic curriculum. It includes examples of her approach to and implementation of academic
decisions. The chapter ends with a primary examination of Bethune’s curricular activities 
in relationship to Jones’ study.

_In the beginning_

Mary McLeod Bethune’s early years at Scotia significantly influenced her 
educational philosophy. As a student at the seminary she witnessed, as stated in 
McCluskey (1989), how a disciplined community of teachers and students could work ng 
together for the common good, and how an institution could merge academic, vocational, 
and activist education. The heart, hand, and head motto that would epitomize her 
educational beliefs came from the Seminary.

Bethune’s educational philosophy was inseparable from other aspects of her life. 
As a female entrepreneur in the Jim Crow South, Bethune encountered countless 
examples of racism as well as sexism. These encounters were motivating forces in her 
school and her curriculum. Such was the case when one of her students became ill. 
Bethune went to the local all-White hospital and begged staff to admit the girl. She was 
ordered to take the girl to the back, and Bethune later stated, “I thrust her aside and found 
my little girl segregated in a corner of the porch behind the kitchen. Even my toes 
clenched in rage” (McCluskey 1989 p.122). This encounter drove Bethune’s effort to 
raise funds for hospital at the Daytona Institute, which became a training resource for 
nurses.

_Transformative education-academics at BCC_

Bethune’s fame grew, and so did the fame of her institution.
Visitors, both Black and White, took notice of the self sufficiency of the school. In less than ten years it had grown from a one-building school that enrolled five students to a 15 acre campus with buildings worth $30,000 (McCluskey 1989).

To appease the wealthy White philanthropists who supported the school, Bethune created a curriculum based on an educational philosophy that McCluskey called “rational pragmatism:” “She believed early in her career that it was important to publicly advocate for such educational components of morality and vocational work in order to raise funds among wealthy northern Whites” (McCluskey, 1997, p.196).

Bethune had to forge a curriculum that supported the ideals of what Blacks were capable with the education that would meet their immediate needs and sustain White support. She mimicked the leadership of White women like Harriett Beecher and Jane Addams, but Bethune infused it with her own vision – a vision informed by harsh realities, sexual oppression and a belief in the capabilities of Black women to change the world (McCluskey 1989).

By the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, Bethune’s curriculum had moved closer to DuBois’ philosophy of liberal education. This shift reflected Bethune’s belief that education should not be contained if it was to be a catalyst for upliftand equality. Ultimately, this belief became a mainstay of the curriculum. It is reflected also central to transformational leadership: empowerment. Bethune’s leadership and Bethune Cookman’s curriculum were forces of empowerment for those who wanted to be educated. Bethune’s students would leave the school ready to become leaders in their communities who would empower others.
As noted by Burns, transformational leaders allow others to “take on greater responsibilities and themselves become leaders” (Burns, 1978, p.3). Specifically, Bethune’s liberal education curriculum offered a broad perspective of ideas that were limited for many Blacks during that period in American higher education.

Many students trained to become teachers after graduation, and they, as well as Bethune Cookman faculty, were urged to empower others through their efforts. Professor Marion Speight called Bethune “quite a performer” and recalled faculty meetings in which Bethune mesmerized her colleagues with impassioned exhortations about their noble purpose as educators” (McCluskey 1994, p. 73) Dr. Moore, her eventual successor as president, recalled Bethune’s ability as a leader to make people feel included and inspire them. He stated, “Her ability to make many sensitive people feel that they were close to her and that they had received her blessing was often the inspiration to set some woman leaders out to do larger work” (Martin, 1958, p. 85).

Bethune Cookman’s curriculum received national recognition from leaders such as A Phillip Randolph. He would later help organize the 1963 March on Washington. This recognition, as well as Bethune’s charisma, led to offers for Bethune to reach beyond the college boundaries. She expanded her civic involvement with women’s clubs and in the political arena, working for President Franklin Roosevelt.

As these outside responsibilities increased, it became apparent that Bethune needed to delegate the duties of the College to others. The reins of her precious institution would be held by Dr. Abram L. Simpson, whom Bethune hired to advance the school’s academic
base. However, Dr. Simpson stayed in the post for only two years. His undoing was questioning a major component of Bethune’s leadership vision, the academics of BCC.

In 1938, an interviewer came to campus from the General Education Board to assess the school’s funding needs. Simpson told the interviewer that he believed that the school put too much of an emphasis on college prep classes, and it needed classes in the industrial arts. In addition, Simpson stated he wanted to build an activities building instead of a new library.

Simpson made two critical errors in this interview. The first was outwardly questioning the vision of Bethune, who had made it clear that she did not tolerate public displays of disunity. The second was questioning the academic priorities of the institution. The reputation of the College was Bethune’s primary interest. Therefore airing “dirty laundry” was not just an issue about her, but potentially negative for the academic reputation of the school.

Bethune wrote to Simpson:

Your coming to Bethune Cookman College was my own dream and request, and certainly no-one would be more eager for your success than I. I have given careful study to your administrative ability as it has been reflected in the Institution to your business ability as you have followed through the business program of the school. I have found, through unbiased study, that your administrative ability, your business follow up and your ability to check on the details of the school’s operation, do not fit into the pattern of this Institution. They do not indicate that you are person we are seeking here (Hanson 2003, p. 85).
Her stance and role in Simpson’s brief administration could be viewed as intrusive and controlling. Bethune did not tolerate those who disagreed with her mission of the College. Therefore, in this instance, (and later seen with James Colston), Bethune stepped in to protect what she believed was the College’s reputation and long term livelihood. Bethune clearly was still in control of the vision and direction of the academic elements of the institution.

Simpson was released in 1939, but Bethune’s outside responsibilities continued to increase. So a search for a new president was initiated. It failed, and Bethune stepped in to reorganize BCC’s academic curriculum. This was her main focus until she hired James Colston as president.

The curriculum of the institution had always been Bethune’s priority. As she saw things, it was her duty as an educator to provide others with the tools they needed to serve. This philosophy was described in a statement she made to an interviewer:

“Education is a tool, an instrument. It is not just something to have, like many of our possessions. It is something useful; it is meant to be of service. Its only value, in fact lies in the usefulness to the individual and to the society” (Cited in Martin, 1958, p.66).

Despite her objections to Simpson’s public statements, the industrial arts/vocational training component of the curriculum was increased. Bethune held the industrial arts, as well as the liberal arts, in high regard.

However, Bethune sought to bring some sophistication to the subjects through the inception of the junior college curriculum. Classes moved away from basic offerings such as sewing, dressmaking, and broom making to more sophisticated offerings such as
automobile mechanics and business. Bethune believed these subjects would allow the students to obtain practical experience that could boost their place in other areas of society. They would be in a better professional and economic position, once they left the school.

The College had earned full accreditation and had this junior college curriculum in place before Bethune reclaimed the presidency on an interim capacity in 1939. At that time, and because Bethune wanted to expand BCC’s educational presence in the community as a place where the community could come to learn and go out to serve, she hired James A. Bond, to serve as the academic dean of the College.

Bethune’s always sought followers who shared her vision. She had mentored many such as James Bond, and she wanted to ensure that he and others in top-level positions at the institution had the credentials and experience to carry forward her vision of academic excellence. Once she was sure of their beliefs and credentials, Bethune put a great deal of responsibility and accountability on her academic staff. She charged them with facilitating her vision to help elevate others through the academic structure at Bethune Cookman.

Bond had a degree and experience in education, so he was charged with building a teacher training program. It was Bethune’s vision to be the top institution in this particular field. Despite initial objections from the Methodist Board concerning the cost of this new program, it approved the addition of teacher training. In a very short period of time, BCC achieved accreditation as a two-year junior college and began pursuing four-year accreditation, which meant the possibility of more state
funding and increases in enrollment. By the fall of 1940, the Board had approved a third year of junior college and a four-year option at Clark College in Atlanta. The Board compromised with Bethune about the cost of phasing out the high school component of the college. M. J. Holmes, the secretary of the Board, was main liaison. He wrote to Bethune about the need “to focus the efforts in the areas of growth.” (M.J. Holmes, personal communication, July 1938).

Bethune’s vision and accomplishments are captured in the words of an alumnus who wrote about what he was able to do after leaving the College. “I attended Bethune Cookman College for the term of 1924-1925. Since then I have attended Lincoln University. I received my A.B. degree from Lincoln. Since finishing College I have located to Penn. Where I am teaching at Lincoln Univ. If I was able to describe what Bethune-Cookman did for me, I would list as the most important it allowed me realize myself from a standpoint of what I was best fitted to do. It gave me basis upon which to regain most of my faith in the supernatural God. In doing so it changed my outlook on life (Espy, personal communication, 1929).

Leadership Analysis

Transformational and transactional approaches to curriculum development

Bethune’s leadership and vision in this area was clear. As the research accounts indicate, her life experiences, vision, and leadership style helped to design a curriculum that would educate and empower her students. Her academic leadership style had both transformational and transactional characteristics. She demonstrated two of the “I”s of transformational leadership. Bethune was intellectually stimulating and demonstrated
inspirational motivation. She demonstrated contingent reward leadership and management by exception (active) as a transactional leader.

**Intellectual stimulation**

Intellectual stimulation is a key component of transformational leadership. Bass defined intellectual stimulation as “the arousal and change in followers of problem awareness and problem solving, of thought and imagination” (Bass, 1985, p. 99). Intellectual stimulation forces those impacted by the leader to change and challenge their thoughts.

Bethune’s transformational leadership was revealed in her ability to intellectually stimulate students through a curriculum that cultivated transformative knowledge. She was able to, as Bass stated, “Motivate us to do more than originally expected to do” (Bass, 1985, p. 20). At the start of her career, her curricular philosophy resembled Lucy Laney’s. It was grounded in the industrial arts, which domesticated young Black women to subordinate roles in society. She believed that her students would gain important skills to help support their race and families, but her philosophy and her curriculum evolved in ways that challenged convention. Bethune offered more liberal arts and business classes, which stretched student ideas and ambitions beyond the race and gender restrictions that the Jim Crow era placed on Black men and women.

James Banks described transformative process as “challenging mainstream academic knowledge by questioning its basic assumptions” (Barnett, 1996 p. 218). Bethune encouraged The classes at Bethune Cookman College challenged her students to rise above the limits of industrial education. In addition, Bethune challenged mainstream
society’s assumptions about the limited abilities of Blacks in society by hiring faculty and staff who supported her vision. They had to be dedicated to the empowerment of Blacks through education.

Inspirational motivation

As Speight noted, Bethune inspired her students and staff to reach beyond their limits. Northouse (2007) describes inspirational motivation as “leadership that stimulates followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their own beliefs and values as well as those of the leader and the organization” (Northouse, 2007, p. 183). Bethune was able to rally people even during tough economic times to come to her school and receive an education. Students would appeal to Bethune for assistance through working on campus in order to pay their tuition. Some sought these challenges, but Bethune had to motivate others to see beyond self-imposed and societal limitations to empower themselves or to support her cause in providing an education to Blacks. Like other transformational leaders, Bethune was able to “motivate and followers to reach ambitious goals, that may have seemed previously unreachable” (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002, p. 9).

Inspiration requires more than a motivating speech. It requires high standards to be transformative. During the 1932-1933 academic year, Bethune hired several new academics to help carry out her vision. James Bond was hired to oversee the curriculum and came with impressive credentials. He and another professor, J.R.E. Lee, were hand selected to strengthen BCC’s curriculum. Bethune raised the vocational and educational levels of the College by gaining junior college status and accreditation for a teacher’s
education curriculum. The teacher’s education curriculum was vocational, and, “vocational instruction in all of its phases [was] very important” to her (McCluskey & Thomas, 1999, p. 121), but teachers were catalysts for social change as well as social stability. Bethune She stated, “The teacher’s primary business is that of the stirrer-up. He is primarily a stimulator of knowledge and curiosity” (McCluskey & Thomas, 1999, p. 109). This conception of a teacher’s vocation fit DuBois’ philosophy more than Washington’s.

**Transactional tendencies: management by exception(active) and contingent rewarder**

Bethune was a transactional leader in some aspects of curriculum management. She exemplified two different styles of transactional leadership with men, specifically those on her staff.

She exhibited the trait of management by exception (active). As defined by Northouse (2007), this type of leader is someone who relies on “corrective criticism, negative feedback and negative reinforcement—watching followers closely for mistakes or rule violations and then [taking] corrective actions” (Northouse, 2007, p. 185). This is the way that Bethune treated male staff members such as Abram Simpson and James Colston when they questioned or changed the curriculum of Bethune Cookman. On campus or off, she made it clear to male staff that her vision was the rule. Bethune stepped to the side to let Simpson and Colston lead in theory, but in practice she maintained close control of what was implemented. Then, Bethune pressured and dismissed those she felt strayed from her vision for building the skills of students at the College. Avolio and Yammarino (2002) wrote that contingent reward management is based on “economic
and emotional exchanges, by clarifying role requirements and rewarding and praising desired outcomes” (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002, p. 10). Bethune’s success with White philanthropists was contingent on rewards; funds were exchanged for emotional righteousness in this relationship. Bethune gained financial support from the philanthropists, and in return they felt good because they were helping to alleviate the Black plight by providing resources such as books, and financial outlets. Bethune tapped into history when necessary. The Rockefellers were renowned for giving back to Blacks, and matriarch Rockefeller had Spelman College named for her in exchange. In the academic area, Bethune worked with persons such as Gamble, Rockefeller and White to obtain funding that would allow her to expand her offerings, but she accepted the funds in exchange for assuring her White advocates that vocational and domestic training would be the primary means of education at the College. Then Bethune transformed her College through advanced vocational education that fit her own vision of academics for Blacks.

Skills in both types of leadership

Bethune demonstrated the attributes of a transformational leader in regard to her purpose and transactional skills in regard to the maintenance of her institution. Bethune expertly negotiated the tightrope of opinions about what Black education should have been during that time in America. She was able to integrate Washington’s industrial emphasis and DuBois’ emphasis on liberal education into a curriculum that offered transformative knowledge for many Blacks through new and higher levels of vocational programs. This affirms one of the findings in Jones’s study of contemporary Black
women presidents, that many of them saw Bethune’s approach as transformational. There is evidence from alumni, administrator, and donors that her academic offerings made a transformative difference. However, Bethune’s transformative curriculum required practical skills of criticism and exchange that she used to fulfill her vision.
CHAPTER FOUR: BETHUNE AND FINANCES

“She understood the godlike power that Whites often held over Blacks, and witnessed that power being used to deny African Americans their human rights, property rights, and even their lives. As the beneficiary of White noblesse oblige Bethune learned like so many Blacks, to appeal to it.

Audrey Thomas McCluskey 1994 p. 69

The first years of Mary McLeod Bethune’s life were typical of many Blacks in post-reconstruction America: she was disenfranchised by the racist system of Jim Crow laws. Elaine Smith wrote, “She grew up in a county, where in 1880, the 9,979 whites dominated 27,058 African American in ways reminiscent of the past.” (Smith, 2003, p. 9). Bethune witnessed the oppression and unequal conditions of Black and White life during her formative years, but her experience at Scotia Seminary helped to alter that view. There she found Whites who wanted to help Blacks. At this one point in her life, at Scotia, her race and gender did not burden nor block her relationships with Whites. There she was able to realize the possibility that Blacks and Whites could work together.

However, she would encounter several reminders as a leader that equal treatment was not the norm, and thus she would have to dedicate her entire life to helping others, primarily through her institution, to use education as a tool to overcome racism and sexism in American society.

Bethune’s ability to negotiate a maze of oppressive circumstances to work with the majority would be represented best in her financial leadership. This particular area of Bethune’s leadership as a president demonstrates the skills she acquired to build an
institution during a time when the odds were against any alliance between Blacks and Whites.

In essence, Bethune was the benefactor of what William Watkins (2001) described as the post reconstruction “charity movement,” an American social perspective that was grounded in missionary outlooks and populist discontent (Watkins, 2001). Bethune received the benefits of this charity because of her ties with Methodist Board members who were, in turn, connected to Northern Whites who wanted to support Black ambitions to become a an equal part of American society. Blacks such as Bethune, and most notably Booker T. Washington, reaped the benefits of this movement for their schools.

This chapter is focused on Bethune’s varied forms of solicitation and her partnerships with White philanthropists, such as Gamble, Rockefeller and White. Her efforts occurred during the country’s biggest economic crisis, the Great Depression. The Depression presented challenges to Bethune as a financial manager beyond the ones inherent in her race and gender.

The context of finances at Bethune Cookman College

Big businesses collapsed and non-profit organizations such as churches withered from a lack of financial support during the Depression years, 1929-1935. Individual families had little to no income. Jobs were hard to come by, and many young people could not afford to attend school. These national issues were exacerbated by conditions in the state of Florida. The Florida land bubble burst in the late 1920’s, and two hurricanes hit the state during this decade. These conditions made it difficult for Bethune to raise funds, especially since she was soliciting them to support a Black institution.
Bethune employed creative methods to pull Bethune Cookman through these unstable financial times. Her determination and charisma forged her success, but raising and stabilizing the funds of the college had to be at the forefront of her work throughout Bethune’s presidency.

The decade between 1930 and 1940 contained the most vulnerable financial years of her presidency. Bethune had to work diligently to keep the school above water in part because a larger school meant larger costs. Support from the state of Florida was limited by the Depression and the Methodist Board’s support was inconsistent for the same reason, so Bethune set out to increase her donor solicitation. Her growing national stature created access to funds, and she pursued them from diverse resources: 1) large scale philanthropic donations, 2) personal donations from “friends” of the school, 3) funds from speaking engagements, 4) sales of tickets from choral troupe tours, 5) grants from various companies, and 6) investment endeavors. These creative ways of fundraising marked her presidential legacy.

*Solicitation*

Bethune’s honesty was always a part of her approach to soliciting funds. In her appeals, whether big or small, Bethune was candid about her need for funding and how exactly how those funds would be used. Some of her mentors, such as Laney and Washington, warned against such honesty because it demonstrated vulnerability and created doubt about her strength. But Bethune had an innate ability to motivate and inspire others to support her efforts, and she was grateful whenever she succeeded, whether the gift was large or small.
In one example, Bethune was thanking a donor whose committee donated $2,500 to the school. Bethune explained at length to Ms. Bogue, the head of the committee, why the money was so important and made sure to share her deep gratitude at the conclusion of the letter. In every instance, Bethune made a case to each donor why their gift was needed and appealed to them to continue to give:

The twenty-five hundred dollars granted us last year by your committee made it possible for us to meet a conditional grant from the General Education Board. We pray that in such times as these, when our friends and donors are essential to our existence that your committee look upon our efforts here with favor and grant us as much material aid as you can possibly invest in this enterprise at this time. Our completion of this year’s work is entirely dependent upon our own faith and hard work and the consideration those friends who believe in our work.

(M.M. Bethune, personal communication, January 1933)

Requests for support from staff and students

Bethune was constantly reminded that fundraising and solicitations were important. In addition to meeting the normal expectations of her Board in regard to the survival of the institution, Bethune was subjected to constant pleas from others for financial assistance, staff and students alike. Bethune never shunned the responsibility that came with being a leader in this capacity.

Staff members often called Bethune with requests and reminders of the college’s needs. One particular faculty member, F.W. Henderson, head of the athletic department, wrote to Bethune on behalf of the staff of the department. Athletics were poorly financed,
and Henderson’s letters mentioned the need for basic resources such as a typewriter. He stated that the lack of resources “handicapped us in many instances.” He continued: “the present method is very unsatisfactory. I realize there are times where athletics letters and various articles must be rushed. Under the present set up there is no certainty as to where we’ll get work done” (F.W. Henderson, personal communication to Bethune dated 1936)

Bethune held her staff and faculty in high regard, and she knew it was important to keep them happy and make sure that they felt appreciated, since they were the workers who carried out her vision. She also received pleas from students, parents and perspective students, requesting further support. In one case, a mother wrote on behalf of her daughter:

I am writing you concerning my daughter Thomassina Jackson. She is a graduate of class of 1936 Washington High. I was unable to enter her into college this year. I am a widow of fourteen years, and just recovering from a long spell. I saw your advertisement in the Courier a few weeks ago, concerning the N.Y.A. scholarships thinking that you could help me along this lines I am writing you at this time. Any consideration you can give will be appreciated. She is very anxious to enter school.(Parent, personal communication to Bethune, 1936)

While sympathetic in such cases with students and her staff, Bethune kept a larger perspective. She wanted to help as many people as she could, especially students, but Bethune was aware that a lack of tuition or too much aid were detrimental to other areas of the college, especially when operating expenses needed to be met. Every penny counted in her eyes, and it was hard to turn down requests. She chronicled, “I felt for my
students, I wanted to help them they were my motivation in hard times” (M.M. Bethune, personal communication from correspondence to Sterne, 1952). She was also very direct with those who could not pay tuition. In one case, she wrote:

We regret to learn from your letter of August 3rd, that you have little or no money to help you with your expenses in school for the ensuing year. We would be glad to allow you some NYA aid but it is impossible for Bethune-Cookman to give full aid to any student, when he is going to school here (M.M.Bethune, personal communication,- 1932).

*The never-ending struggle*

Despite her unrelenting efforts, the years of the Great Depression were hard on Bethune Cookman College. The College auditor reported that gifts from concerts were not as substantial as in years past and individual philanthropy was decreasing. Refusing to be discouraged, Bethune created the Office of Publicity and Promotion at the College. Gerald Allen served as its fundraising agent for the North. Allen faithfully sent Bethune reports about his work, but by the fall of 1935 he could demonstrate few tangible results. Given the lack of results and the economic state of the country, Bethune informed Allen that it was “difficult for me to convince my trustees and business men and hold their faith in furnishing your salary and hold your position without returns” (Hanson, 2003, p. 84). Therefore he was let go.

Bethune continued to push forward and traveled extensively on the College’s behalf, overlapping College duties with her responsibilities in the political and civic arenas. Those responsibilities helped her efforts. In, 1935, Bethune founded the National
Council of Negro Women, and that led to her receipt of the Springarn Award from the NAACP. The Springarn Award was established in 1915 by Joel Elias Springarn, who was chairman of the NAACP in 1914. It recognizes African Americans for their outstanding achievement, and such recognition gave Bethune an advantage in continuing to receive donations.

Bethune accepted any donation, big or small. One example is detailed in a letter dated December 1936 from W. Abner Brown: “Enclosed you will find a check for $4.55. This money was collected in our Junior Church after you had gone. We only wish that we collected more. We are praying for you and wishing you all success in your work” (W.A Brown, personal communication 1936).

Individuals seemingly were compelled to help support Bethune’s efforts and saw the value in her dedication to improving the lives of young people. Another letter reveals the significance of a donation, given the hardships that were the norm in this era. John Kennedy wrote in March 1936: “My dear Mrs. Bethune, enclosed please find a check for $1.00 as a little encouragement to you in your great work. I wish that I could make it $100.00 but can’t. With kindest regards” (Donor to Bethune, personal communication 1936).

Bethune’s influence and reputation as an educational and civic leader prompted others to give unsolicited funds. This was the case even from such notable philanthropists as Rockefeller:
Dear Mrs. Bethune—Although we have not received your usual appeal, I am sending Mrs. Rockefeller’s check for $400 for your splendid work at Bethune Cookman College. (A.L. Kelly, personal communication 1936).

The College also received non-monetary donations, such as books from Emma Goodman and her committee. B.L. Mitchell, Bethune’s confidante, thanked Goodman for one such donation, and described how it would aid the College. Mitchell stated:

We are simply elated with the response to the Book Drive for Bethune Cookman College. Two or three packages of books came in daily and our library assures us their value as addition to our book collection. We can not thank you enough for this generous help, for your far reaching influence and service on behalf of Bethune Cookman College. (B.L. Mitchell personal communication 1936).

Dealing with debt

Bethune was faced with many overdue notices from businesses that provided the school with goods, such as books, paper, and food. She remained unnerved, working with her secretary, Bertha Loving Mitchell, to address these matters. Mitchell was Bethune’s long time confidante and assistant who became skilled in speaking for a busy president. Mitchell assured creditors that Bethune was out working to acquire the funds needed to pay off the debt.

Bethune’s approach to many creditor inquiries is revealed in the following example:

We have regretted our inability to settle the balance of $81.50 due to our account with you. Mean while, we enclose a check for $25.00 to apply on this balance,
leaving $56.50 still due. Please send the 3x5 cards, C. O. D. Please send with this order also 3,000-3 ½ x 13 sheets of mimeograph paper-white.” (B.L.Mitchell, personal communication, April 1929)

This correspondence showed Bethune’s persistence in obtaining goods and support for her institution, despite her indebtedness. She was direct and persuasive in her approach which always resulted in her getting what she wanted. Bethune was also constantly careful to recognize those who did give to the College, even through the delay of payments. Her philosophy of recognizing those who supported her efforts was key in maintaining and nurturing close relationships.

“Worker bees”

Bethune created a significant number of “worker bee” women’s groups. to work on her behalf and raise funds for the school. They organized book drives, bake sales, and toured the country with the Bethune Cookman chorus groups to raise funds. The groups’ members were Black and White women who saw the importance of Bethune’s work. Such membership reveals Bethune’s skill in appealing across racial lines to mobilize and organize people on behalf of a shared vision.

Bethune was grateful for every effort that these volunteers made. In this letter, she thanked Mrs. M.C. McGrier, head of a woman’s book club that worked on the behalf of the College:

I just want to express the appreciation of our entire institution for your recent thought of us. Your gift of ten dollars, in full settlement of your pledge made when I had the pleasure of serving you, means so very much to us at this time.
Please extend our expressions of sincere gratitude to each member of your club.
(M.M. Bethune, personal communication, June 1933).

Bethune called herself the “beggar” for the College, a term of acceptance and humility about one of her major roles as president. She was never embarrassed to solicit funds because it was on the behalf of her beloved College. This extended from small donors to national efforts to help support the financial foundation of the College.

Large scale debts and donations

During the late 1920’s, some of her major funding came from loans from insurance companies. One such company was the Mutual Life Insurance Company. In 1929, on the eve of the stock market crash, Bethune employed her charm asking:

Dear Mr. Lehman, Will you be kind enough to look over my accounts there and let me know exactly what I can do to secure loans from the policies sufficient to take care of the premiums for this year. I am in a worse situation now than I was last year. –Please investigate this matter and let me know just what can be done”
(M.M. Bethune, personal communication, May 28, 1929)

Bethune recognized that she was indebted to such companies, but her persistent nature and reputation often resulted in favors from them. The favors included delays of payments and small loans.

The role of the Methodist Board. The Methodist Board promised annual funds of $20,000 but found it difficult to pay (Flemming 1995). On many occasions, Bethune wrote to the secretary of the Board, MJ Holmes, requesting and questioning the funds promised. For example, she wrote:
the College is in need. While the Board’s support is appreciated we would most appreciate the funds promised this year of $20,000. This amount would help greatly the cause of reaching our endowment goal.” (M.M.Bethune, personal communication, 1937)

This particular struggle was present for the duration of Bethune’s presidency. Bethune took her obligations to the Board seriously, frequently updating the Board on fundraising matters. However, she also made it a point to remind the Methodist Board of its commitment prior to the merger to provide yearly funding. Unfortunately, the Methodist Board did not anticipate the difficult years of the Depression and also underestimated the cost in running an institution. The Board relied heavily on membership funds. The Methodists’ financial support was limited and with reduced giving because of the economy unable to maintain their annual support of $20,000. Even stable organizations such as the General Education Board, were only able to provided limited support.

Support from philanthropists. Some of Bethune’s collaborations with White philanthropists led to tangible benefits for the college. Thomas White, a long-time supporter, donated a cottage for McLeod Hospital and sewing machines used in the classroom. James Gamble provided the funds for a new building, Faith Hall. Such gifts allowed Bethune to cover her expenses in raising funds, but the College was always at a place of just being able to “maintain” itself until the next round of bills was due.

Other forms of large scale support were bequeathed gifts. Bequeathed gifts came in varied amounts from a variety of individuals.
The estate of Thomas White brought $67,500 to the College. Another bequest came from Simon J. Peabody, another long-time supporter and board member of the College. He left the College $10,000. This money was earmarked for the endowment fund. Concerning Peabody’s gift, Bethune stated in 1937, “Bethune Cookman College and its local predecessor have always benefited from the benignant influence of his friendship and sympathy” (Flemming, 1995, p. 52). She was always thankful for any gift.

**Grants.** Bethune also received money through grants, and the General Board of Education was one of the major sources of this support. This federal agency was incorporated by Congress in 1903. The brainchild of John Rockefeller Jr., its purpose was “the promotion of education within the United States of America, without distinction of race, sex or creed” (Watkins, 2001, p. 128). The general intention of the Board was to provide funding and support for education in the Southern states.

In order to receive funds regularly, the Board mandated that an institution had to demonstrate need. In 1937, Bethune was working on raising $30,000 for her endowment, and she forfeited her salary of $1,077.59 that year in order to qualify for relief. The Board provided a $12,000 grant (Flemming, 1995, p. 52).

During the same time, Bethune was also connected to the National Youth Administration. The NYA was similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps, which recruited young men to work on buildings of parks, bridges and other restoration projects” (Long, 2004, p. 38). The NYA’s motto was to “earn and learn” (Long, 2004, p. 38). As the director for the Minority Affairs division of this governmental administrative
office, Bethune took special effort in securing education funding for Blacks, and her position allowed her to secure a grant of $2,700 for BCC.

Fame and fortune

Bethune’s ability to transcend race and gender obstacles led to her entry into the world of wealthy White investors. However, she still had to deal with the obstacles. In one instance, she was traveling to a meeting with a potential donor, and was on the elevator when a white busboy referred to her as the cleaning help. She corrected him and relayed that she was indeed there for a meeting. This situation was not unusual, but Bethune persisted in meeting with all White groups that understood the need for Black education. She reassured others but was direct with her comments. Bethune did not let her minority status hinder her ability to articulate the need to increase Blacks’ status through education.

One of Bethune’s greatest resources was her friendship with First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. The two met during Bethune’s trips to New York. Her friendship with Roosevelt led to Bethune becoming the first Black woman to serve in a high profile political position in the country, as a cabinet member of the Minority Affairs Board. This gave her access to political leaders. Through this work in the political arena, Bethune gained a better understanding of the country’s priorities of pressing issues. She learned how to push to the forefront the importance of proper funding for Black education, especially at her own institution. Like her mentor, Booker T. Washington, Bethune argued that educated Blacks would give back to the economy through vocational skills that would make them independent. But in the same vein, Bethune supported the
philosophy of DuBois with comments that the higher education of Blacks was essential in raising their status in this country and improving their socioeconomic condition. Bethune agreed with DuBois that education, for Blacks, was a tool of intellectual freedom, not only allowing them to obtain vocation skills but also to help them to think independently and begin seeking entree into spheres in American society that were off limits, such as politics.

Leadership Analysis

Transformational and transactional approaches to finances

Bethune’s leadership in this area demonstrates an interesting combination of both transformational and transactional skills. Both were necessary to move her agenda forward. She was able to motivate and enlist the support of many across gender and race lines, but Bethune also utilized a skillful give and take approach to secure fiscal stability for her institution.

James MacGregor Burns wrote that transformational leaders “cause a metamorphosis in a form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of things” (Burns, 2003, p. 24). Bass made the same point, stating, “Transformational leaders attempt and succeed in raising colleagues, subordinates, followers, clients or constituencies to a greater awareness about the issues of consequence.” This heightening of awareness, according to Bass, “requires a leader with vision, self-confidence and inner strength to argue successfully for what he sees is right or good.” (Bass, 1985, p. 16).

Inspirational motivation
Inspirational motivation was Bethune’s dominant trait of transformational leadership. Martin Chemers and Roya Ayman described this type of transformational leader in their text, *Leadership Theory and research: perspectives and directions*, as one who “provides symbols and simplifies emotional appeal to increase awareness and understanding of mutually desired goals.” (Chemers & Ayman, 1993, p. 52). Bethune was able to appeal emotionally to a large cross section of individuals. She was able to rally enough support to motivate individuals to give, even when they did not have the means. This was remarkable given the period of the great Depression in the United States and the object of her efforts

Bass stated, “Transformational leaders attempt and succeed in raising colleagues, subordinates, followers, clients or constituencies to a greater awareness about the issues of consequence” (Bass, 1985 p. 17). Bethune was able to rally “worker bee” teams of students, faculty, and others to work on her behalf. Her attempt to formalize transactions through a development office failed without her personal example. Through book sales, bake sales, chorus performances, and personal meetings, Bethune’s vision for uplift and empowerment of Blacks through her educational endeavors mobilized others to want to give and support her financially.

Bethune was not afraid of grassroots efforts. Such efforts began in her early years as president. She knocked on doors and went to the beach to sell baked goods. As the years passed, Bethune utilized her students and members of the surrounding community assisted in her efforts. Students went around the country, collecting funds for their choral performances. She tapped the creativity of those around her to develop different means of
outreach in the community to solicit funds. An example was her annual Student and
Teacher’s Rally. The Rally increased awareness of the College and raised funds. A staff
member solicited funds on behalf of the College through this initiative:

One of the methods we employ to help relieve Mrs. Bethune of the great task of
raising funds for the maintenance of Bethune Cookman College is an “Annual
Students and Teachers rally. We know of your interest in the College and we
request its continuance. We are now in the midst of our 1939 Rally and would
greatly appreciate your aid.”(Office Director, personal communication, 1939)

Bethune was straightforward about the needs for funds and always displayed
humility in seeking them. An example was revealed in a 1936 letter to a donor named
Arthur Titcomb. She wrote:

Bethune- Cookman College will always have to hear the calls of some of these
needy boys and girls, however, who would never be able to fill their places of
service unless some aid could be secured for them. On behalf of this type of
student, and with the knowledge of your behalf in their investment in human
lives, I am appealing to you Mr. Titcomb. They need such amounts as $20, $25,
$32 and the like. Won’t you help a group of them. Mr. Titcomb, as you helped a
similar group of them some years ago? I sincerely hope that you will hear this call
from the boys and girls in whom your interest has been proved. (M.M.Bethune,
personal communication 1936).

In being straightforward with details, Bethune was able to help others share her
vision. By sharing how funds were being utilized, Bethune created a sense of human
value for those who donated. Buildings were for children to use, not to sit empty of purpose.

In a time of great need one may ask how Bethune was able to rally diverse populations around her vision. In this case, Bethune was able to raise what Bass called “issues of consequences” through her personal example. Bass (1985) wrote that transformational leaders “raise consciousness about higher considerations through articulation and role modeling” (Bass, 1985, p. 17). Bethune’s charisma as a leader made people, despite limitations, believe in her cause. She served as an inspiration, especially to those of her own race. This was evidenced by alumni who wrote to her about their later success. It was evidenced in her ability to rally teachers, students and staff to support the campus in fundraising initiatives. Last, it was evidenced in correspondences from citizens and organizations from various areas of the country who helped support the financial sustainability of the school. Bethune exemplified this component of transformational leadership because she was able to rally others to support her in soliciting funds and utilizing the institution as a symbol of inspiration. Bethune was able to motivate people to invest, believe, dream and work for her to help sustain the College.

Transactional Leadership: Contingent Rewarder

In her interactions with White philanthropists, Bethune demonstrated a contingent reward transactional style. Bethune was able to convey a sense of comfortable reassurance to philanthropists such as White, Gamble and the Rockefellers, when taking their donations for the institution. Avolio and Yammarino (2002) explain that a contingent rewarder bases his or her transactions on economic and emotional exchanges. In this case, White
philanthropists received satisfaction and sovereignty in exchange for their financial support. This was especially the case when the support was directed toward academic causes. This area of Bethune’s presidential career reveals a greater depth of her leadership and it is the best illustration of the determined, skillful and charismatic leadership that Bethune is known for.
CHAPTER FIVE: BETHUNE AND PERSONNEL

“She had a genius for evolving a master plan and finding the right sources for helping her develop them.”

Mrs. George C. Zeiger-President of the Advisory Board, Bethune Cookman College

Mrs. Zeiger’s sentiments were similar to those of others who have described Bethune’s leadership. Her statement alludes to a key component in understanding the last area of Bethune’s leadership that will be examined: personnel. Bethune was an innate, strategic manager in reference to her personnel issues. She was a master in surrounding herself with those who could carry out her vision. Those who did were the recipients of mentoring to grow professionally. Those who did not were removed swiftly from Bethune’s inner circle.

The data in this chapter provide insight about the major components of this particular area of Bethune’s leadership. The first section is about the general characteristics and attributes of Bethune’s approach to personnel management. It provides insight into the steps Bethune took in recruiting, hiring, and informing individuals about her expectations. Those relationships differed according to gender.

The relationships section has two themes. The first involves Bethune’s commitment to the recruitment and hiring of female staff. First and second person sources revealed her desire to have strong women around her, therefore enabling her to serve as a mentor for many women who would go on to lead. She wanted to lift the status of her gender as well as her race, which clearly showed that elevating the status of
women was key and this was not limited in this particular sphere. She hired women, exposed them to key roles in her administration, and allowed them entrée into her inner circle to learn. The second theme is her management style with men. Bethune was a leader during a time in American society when female leadership was scant. Black women had two strikes against them, gender and race, and Bethune’s interaction with men was quite different than with women.

Bethune’s Approach to Personnel

Step One: Identifying and Recruiting Staff

As noted in the preceding chapters, Bethune was a workhorse. Her multifaceted public work to uplift the status of her race made her a master at multitasking. Bethune was president of an institution while working as a political advisor, traveling as a speaker, and championing the cause of Black women’s rights. This work ethic became a standard for the staff whom Bethune employed.

One of Bethune’s major tasks was the recruitment and hiring of staff and faculty. Bethune sought hard working and capable staff. Reginald Johnson described this attribute of Bethune’s approach to identifying key personnel:

She made sure that she was constantly surrounded by able people. This was important because her entire operations depended on people who could advise and counsel her. To me, this was the secret of Mrs. Bethune’s success, because she was a good listener and able interpreter of the suggestions given to her by many able advisors. (Martin, 1958, p. 79)
Josie Roberts exemplified Bethune’s strategic hiring. She was a former student of Bethune’s who had moved north to work. Roberts and Bethune had frequent correspondences that served as a type of “negotiation process” to bring her to Bethune Cookman. In a 1929 letter, Bethune directly conveyed to Roberts her desire to have her at Bethune Cookman and what she specifically wanted Roberts responsibilities to be: “So far as your position is concerned, I want you to do that line of work regardless of any “Dean Moore” or anyone else. You are to be the field secretary of Bethune Cookman College” (M.M. Bethune, personal communication, 1929). Dean Moore was the academic dean.

This example illustrates Bethune’s persistence in personnel matters and her dismissal of formal reporting lines. Bethune knew the type of people she wanted to carry out her mission at the College and worked diligently to obtain those individuals.

*Step two: setting expectations*

Despite her many outside obligations, Bethune remained the sole decision-maker in hiring and dismissing personnel. She had clear expectations of her employees, primarily that staff and faculty were hired to maintain a rich tradition of academic excellence. In her later years, Bethune would make it clear that those who did not uphold her standards would face consequences. She often conveyed this message prior to employment. In a letter to Professor Leonard Archer, Bethune wrote:

We have given careful study to your qualifications, in relation to the position to be filled in our institution. I am offering you the position of Professor of English in Bethune Cookman College. – May I say that termination of the services of any
member of our staff may be effected upon thirty days notice, in the case of dissatisfaction on the part of the teacher or any part of the college. We are desirous of having our teachers equipped with the most comprehensive training and efficiency in their respective fields; we are equally desirous of having them possess the spirit of real service, adaptability to our program here and full cooperation with our ideals. (M.M.Bethune, personal communication 1936)

Despite the individual talent of her staff, Bethune insisted that her vision was prevalent in the culture and climate of the College. Perhaps this was due to fear that manifested itself in a controlling nature. Bethune feared that her personal legacy would be lost if the founding mission was not always at the forefront. She controlled employment to be sure the vision and mission of the College were unchanged.

Relationships with personnel: A gender gap

Elevating women-mentorship

Bethune put women at the forefront of employment from the early years of her school and beyond. She stated, “I need strong women to help me realize this vision” (McCluskey, 1994, p. 73). Thus, she continued the legacy of mentoring that Lucy Laney and Emma Wilson had provided for her. Dr. Richard Moore, Bethune’s successor as president, stated, “She would say to groups of them, stand on my shoulder or carry the torch a little bit higher” (Martin, 1958, p. 86). Bethune wanted to mentor women she viewed as potential leaders, such as Josie Roberts, whom she hired as staff and faculty at the College. Josie Roberts’ position at the College was in all accounts a small one of office support, but it was not intended to be her final position. Bethune’s aide, Bertha
Mitchell, was another example of Bethune’s dedication to helping young women. As noted in Long’s text, “Truly Dr. Bethune had unusual charisma and magnetism to persuade people to believe in her dreams” (Long, 2004, p. 66). This notion is verified by researchers such as Earl Martin, who had the opportunity to speak to those who knew Bethune. Her magnetism and charisma were influential in her interaction with others, especially young women she wanted to nurture.

Many of Bethune’s high ranking staff members and closest confidantes were women. At Bethune Cookman, they included Bertha Mitchell, her long time secretary, and Frances Keyser, her academic chief during the early years of the school’s history. But as much as Bethune recognized the importance of mentoring women leaders in general, she was especially aware of the effects of discrimination against women, especially Black women. This made her work harder to insure that women were placed in prominent positions.

Adam Clayton Powell, US representative, was one of the interviewees in Martin’s study of Bethune. He stated:

There are hundreds of women who are now considered effective leaders who were influenced and encouraged by Mrs. Bethune. I might say they were tutored by her. Among them are Mrs. Edith Sampson of international fame; Dr. Dorothy Ferebee, former President of the National Council of Negro Women and Director of Health Services at Howard University; Dr. Arenia Mallory, Founder; Mrs. Majorie Stewart Joyner, Supervisor of the United Beauty School Owners and Teachers
and one of the best organizers of women in the country; Mrs. William Mason, former President of the National Council of Negro Women, and many others. (Martin, 1958, p. 85)

**Control and leadership-the male factor**

Bethune remained heavily involved with operations of the College despite issues with her health and extensive off-campus commitments. This intense dedication set the bar for those who were connected to her beloved institution, whether she was directly supervising them or not. They were her people, and she made sure they understood and carried out her dream.

This could be intimidating, especially with male leaders. As noted in the previous chapter, the most visible figures at the College, including her eventual successor as president, were men. Bethune had seemingly adversarial relationships with some of them and was very direct and straightforward in her approach to conflicts. Was this due to her role and race? Did Bethune resent the fact that she had to appoint men in more visible roles than women? Did this, in turn, cause her to be “harder” on men than women?

Answers to these questions are inferred from her experiences with two men, M. J. Holmes, a long term member of the Board, and James Colston, Bethune’s successor. Data demonstrate that Bethune took on transactional, direct, and sociologically masculine approaches in her dealings with men instead of the coaching/mentoring approach she took with women. This might have been due to societal discrimination. Professor Rayford Logan, a colleague of Bethune’s, noted in Martin’s research, “She was most effective with women” (Martin, 1958, p.86). Men, Black or White, may have responded
negatively to Bethune’s straightforward, guided vision. Women may have viewed Bethune more as a teacher, while men viewed her as a rival.

Example one: Relations with Holmes and the Board of Trustees

Holmes was the secretary and liaison of the Board, so he and Bethune were in constant contact with one another. Holmes was supposed to solicit updates from Bethune regarding the College and submit them to the Board. In some instances Bethune’s stubbornness and determination blinded her. Since it was common for her to make decisions first and ask questions later, she did not have easy relationships with the Board and Holmes. For example, Holmes wrote about Bethune’s single-handed dismissal of a faculty member:

Does the Constitution or By-Laws make provision for a dismissal of a member in this fashion? It would seem to me that a Trustee may properly bring before the authorities of the school for due consideration any problems affecting the welfare of the school, including reports and rumors. (M.J. Holmes, personal communication, 1930)

He sent many letters like this throughout Bethune’s tenure as President.

Bethune did not back down when challenged by men. She would go to great lengths to justify her decisions but never changed them. The justifications protected her vision at a minimum and might have been her means to show she was a “strong” leader. No matter her reasoning, there were many exchanges between Holmes and Bethune that demonstrate this type of relationship. This protective and unmoveable stance even
extended to some cases when she was not physically present, at the College as President, such as in the case with James Colston.

*Example two: James Colston.*

Bethune made it clear that she wanted a woman to succeed her as College President upon her departure: “I had hoped that I could find a woman to wear my mantle but I cannot” (Flemming, 1995, p. 65). The Board chose a familiar person in Bethune’s circle, James Colston. Colston was married to one of Bethune’s former students, Wilhemina White, and the ceremony was held in Bethune’s living room in 1935.

Colston was highly recommended by Bethune. She described him as “clean, spiritual and with a vision of service” (Flemming, 1995, p. 66). He had an impressive background and resume. Colston graduated from Morehouse College and Columbia University, and prior to his arrival at BCC, he served as vice president of Florida’s Teacher Association and on the Georgia Curriculum Committee. On December 15, 1942, the board officially elected him the second president of Bethune Cookman.

Colston made his educational philosophy clear from the beginning. He stated in his first address:

A college might well implement its teacher education by strengthening it in itself more thoroughly in the life of the community. As a school improves the life of the people, greater support and cooperation are likely. A program of education designed to meet the needs of the people will encourage the financial support. (Flemming, 1995, p. 67)
As President-emeritus Bethune had no direct supervisory control, but Colston seemed to report to Bethune. Her regular correspondence demonstrated her need to pronounce and maintain her visionary control of the institution. In a letter in January 1943, Bethune wrote:

I can hear the voices and see the faces of a great paranormal of thirty-eight years duration. It thrills me and fills me as I think how privileged I have been during the past thirty-eight years in touching these lives, representing almost every walk of life. And, whether they are on the Earth or in the other world, there is a connection and a companionship that is everlasting. May this be a glorious year for the College. May the spiritual blessings and guidance of our Father be yours, Mr. Colston as you step to the front lines and take up the battle to conduct this great group into a new field of service in a new day. (Letter from Bethune January 1943)

Four days later, Bethune expressed again her unwavering connection to the College that she founded. She wrote to Colston:

I am sending you this little Barber-Scotia Index, any questions that may come to your mind, please write me and give me an opportunity to give you any information on anything that I can. I have not had a line from the college since I left. I have been away eight (8) days—it seems like months. (M.M. Bethune, personal communication, January 1943)

When Colston was in the early stages of his presidency, BCC had 614 students and the institution was plagued with unstable finances, so Bethune remained important to
the College, and her connections to governmental programs and resources proved valuable contacts to the new President. One program was The National Youth Association (NYA). It provided vocational training, and Bethune received funds from the government to provide housing and resources to those enrolled in the NYA. During 1943-1945, the last years of World War II, the Board recognized the importance of returning veterans, and Senator Claude Pepper informed Colston that 51 temporary housing units would be housed at BCC. The Federal Works Agency provided $456,341 in additional requests and aid. Enrollment increased.

Colston was making an impact. He argued that becoming a charter member of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) would help stabilize the College’s funds: “Although the financial outlook for the current year is more favorable than any of the previous years I have had . . . one of the greatest needs of the college is for more stable financial resources.” (Flemming, 1995, p.73). It cost $14,000 to join, a large sum by College standards, and paying the membership fee revealed the Board’s support for its second President.

Increased enrollments and new revenue streams were in hand, so Colston’s impact on the College was clear. He implemented a rigid system of fee collection, and a slight increase in tuition aided this financial upswing. The College budget increased by $82,000, but these gains were temporary. New Deal programs, such as the NYA, ended, and the College lost federal funding to pay personnel. In the spring of 1946, faculty salaries went unpaid, and the instability of finances, a nagging problem under Bethune’s tenure, began to plague Colston as well.
Despite his achievements, Colston could not escape the shadow of Bethune’s constant presence. Bethune’s work and legacy were the reason for donations from alumni and others, and Bethune did nothing to dissuade that perception. She continued to write directives from afar. In another January 1943 letter, Bethune told Colston very directly, “While I may not be present in body but my spirit will always be lurking around you, extending a helping hand when strength is needed.” (M.M. Bethune, personal communication, January 1943). Her correspondence with Colston occurred bi-weekly, and every letter contained advice.

In some cases, Bethune circumvented Colston and sent her directives and inquiries directly to staff or faculty. On April 23, 1943, Bethune sent a letter to one staff member inquiring about support for another, former staff member in finding work. In another letter, she asked the academic dean for a report on the accreditation process. With such constant intrusions, it is no surprise that Colston offered his resignation in 1945.

Members of the Board inquired about this sudden resignation, and Colston made it clear that Bethune’s interference caused it. He wrote:

In my original proposal... I stated if I should come as President, I would like to have the privileges of a President. To be President in fact not just in name. I have not had the feeling that this fact has occurred. Following my resignation, I stated that my only reason was that I did not satisfy Mrs. Bethune as successfully as I had hoped. Mrs. Bethune made the statement that she felt I was unable to develop the institution in accordance to her ideals (Flemming, 1995, p. 77).
Working in Bethune’s shadow had become unbearable. Bethune, for her part, made it clear that she supported Colston’s resignation. She stated, “I feel that he has done a grand job in the academic work… but I have known that he does not . . . does not have the administrative and executive ability to run this institution” (Flemming, 1995, p. 78). No matter her level of involvement, College personnel would maintain Bethune’s image of what the institution should be.

Bethune believed that Colston was secretive and did not involve faculty and staff enough in the decision-making process. Some might speculate that this was due to Bethune’s protective nature as founder of the institution, but the review of Bethune’s interaction, communication, and management shows that these were consistent with her leadership style, especially with women. Bethune was dominant, purposeful, intense, and direct. She questioned Colston, and challenged his decisions. She might have thought she was coaching Colston, but there is nothing in the research to show that Colston welcomed it. Bethune wrote that she wanted to be helpful and supportive, that she “wanted Colston to succeed,” but her style and her legacy were too powerful. They might have been too powerful for any successor, male or female, but Bethune seemed to take an adversarial role with Colston, and gender cannot be dismissed as a factor in their relationship.

**Leadership Analysis**

*Transformational and transactional approaches to finances*

*Transformational leadership*

Bethune’s leadership style was both transformational and transactional in personnel matters. Her ambition was to empower those she employed. She motivated
them and helped them to elevate their thinking, expectations, and standards, but this transformational style was exhibited mainly with female staff. On the transactional side, she accepted and valued staff based on her judgment of their ability to reciprocate her work ethic and maintain her vision and values. This style was evident largely with men.

Bethune might have viewed herself as a transformational leader in the personnel area, because she wanted people like Colston to succeed. But Bethune transformed people in order to transform her institution. She clearly demonstrated the ability to “provide high standards of performance and accomplishment and the inspiration to reach such standards” (Bass, 1985, p. 16), but her controlling nature in many cases can be interpreted as her need to push others harder and higher to meet her interests. Nature and need interacted in Bethune’s leadership style.

First and second person accounts reveal that Bethune used her position as a leader to elevate and mentor women. Some may argue, like Dr. Rayford Logan, professor at Howard University, that she was most effective with women like Josie Roberts and Bertha Mitchell, who were close confidantess of Bethune. Bethune brought Roberts to Bethune Cookman clearly to mentor her in the same style that Laney mentored Bethune. Bertha Mitchell was her long time secretary and confidante, her chief aide and communicator.

Bethune’s leadership with women staff at the college paralleled another major area of her life’s work: civic engagement. As president of the NCNW, Bethune was engaged and committed to the empowerment of women.
Bethune brought women to the College in order to give them a chance, one that was difficult at that time in others areas of American society. As her successor, Moore, stated in relation to her leadership with women, “She would say to groups of them stand on my shoulders or carry the torch a little bit higher. These were compelling challenges to women who had a desire to serve humanity” (Martin, 1958, p. 86). Bethune gave individualized consideration to women; she “customized socio-emotional support to followers, while developing and empowering them” (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002, p. 10). She was an inspirational motivator to women because she helped them to become committed to a mutual vision in the organization (Northouse, 2007, p. 183). Despite low wages, many women remained at the college as teachers and administrators.

Bethune demonstrated transformational leadership qualities even when she severed ties with those who did not live up to her expectations. This directive push to elevate standards and performance had transformational aspects because it “arouses or alters the strengths of needs which may lay dormant” (Bass, 1985, p. 17). Richard Moore stated that Bethune “recognized in people their potential to participate in making their own lives better in this way she gave many the feeling of belonging and acceptance.” (Martin 1958, p. 78).

*Transactional leadership*

In this, as in the other areas of her work as president, Bethune’s leadership style was affected by her race and gender. Men were treated differently. While she may have had the best intentions, Bethune’s style was significantly different with male staff members. Research illustrates a more domineering, interfering approach. Some examples
include her interactions with Simpson in her direct and abrupt dismissal of him because of what she deemed to be insubordination. He insisted that the “school needed more emphasis on industrial arts” (Hanson, 2003, p. 85) and put too much “undue emphasis upon a college preparatory course and too little emphasis on terminal occupations” (Hanson, 2003, p. 85). Bethune did not allow any questioning of her curriculum, and made that stance clear in his dismissal.

The same transactional approach was demonstrated with Colston. Bethune supported him in the beginning, perhaps because of the Board of Trustees support for him and his marriage to an alumna, but she interfered when Colston began to independently lead the institution. She wrote frequent letters, questioned his decisions, and bypassed Colston when she wanted information. This was management by active exception. She watched “followers closely for mistakes or rule violations” (Northouse, 2007, p. 185) and took corrective action: in Simpson’s case, his dismissal; and in Colston’s through her clear support of his resignation.

Perhaps, given the times, a Black woman leader such as Bethune felt she had to exercise extra control when dealing with men. One observer described her as a woman with an “iron fist and a velvet glove” (McCluskey, 1994, p. 74). Bethune’s interactions with such men as Simpson, Colston and others clearly demonstrated the iron fist. She used a forceful and direct style of leadership with them. There was a sense of threat and protection. New male leadership threatened Bethune’s vision, and she had to overcome the stereotypical views of men and power to remain a leader of the College. She believed
she had to stand her ground when it came to men, and it did not matter if the men were Black or White.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“The touch of her hand will be forever on the community of Daytona, where she has reclaimed both land and souls.”

-Catherine Owens Pearce-from Mary McLeod Bethune 1951.

Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the leadership style of Mary McLeod Bethune as President of Bethune Cookman College. Multiple sources were analyzed, including first person and second person accounts of Bethune’s personal and professional life. Data collected from archival resources were used to determine Bethune’s transactional and transformational leadership styles in three major areas of her presidency. The definitions of transformational and transactional leadership styles came from three primary theorists: James MacGregor Burns, Bernard Bass, and Bruce Avolio. Bethune’s leadership was also compared to M. Colleen Jones’ (1991) findings about contemporary Black women college presidents.

The study was guided by four research questions:

1) What was Bethune’s experience leading up to the founding of Bethune Cookman?

2) What happened during her presidency?

3) What leadership styles characterized her presidency?, and

4) How do these leadership characteristics compare to Jones’ description of the characteristics of contemporary African American female presidents?
Findings

Background to Findings about Bethune’s leadership styles

*Personality traits.* The examination of first and second hand data yielded background information about three personality traits which related to Bethune’s leadership style: strength, persuasiveness, and determination. These traits were reflections of Bethune’s ideals, it seems, because she stated, “There is a place in God's sun for the youth "farthest down" who has the vision, the determination, and the courage to reach it” (http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/mary_bethune.htm).

Bethune had the strength to face adversity. Hard financial times threatened the existence of the College, and Bethune overcame physical illness to solicit funding to support the institution. Doctors warned her about her health, but Bethune persevered and toured the country to raise awareness of the work being done at her College. She showed her strength in the face of a different threat, as well. The Ku Klux Klan rode through the grounds of her campus, but Bethune was unmoved by the racist threat.

Bethune was persuasive with White philanthropists and others who held the “power” to support her institutional efforts. She knew how to persuade her predominately White board to give her room to lead. Although members provided input about the direction of the school, Bethune ultimately persuaded them to maintain her vision for the institution.

Bethune’s life was a lesson in determination. She overcame low expectations for Black education at that time in American society. She went into the deep South to face racism, and even opponents within her community, to build a school to educate Black
youth. Her determination allowed her to forge a path for others who followed her as president of Bethune Cookman, including Black women leaders and many other Americans who benefited from her refusal to let obstacles and societal limitations stand in her way of her building her dream.

*Life experiences.*

Many of Bethune’s early experiences impacted her leadership, as noted in biographies about her. Even in her early years, Bethune was seen as “different.” Her parents and others knew that she possessed the determination to overcome obstacles and improve her status. She never settled for less, even when socio-economic, race, and gender obstacles were placed in her path. Bethune overcame her limited educational options, went to Scotia Seminary, and became a leader there. Later on, in 1907 Bethune was a single mother with little money. She did not let these issues distract her efforts to improve the lives of others in her new Florida community.

Bethune’s leadership was profoundly affected by the ethos of the Jim Crow era and the later era of Civil Rights. Bethune endured major experiences of racism and sexism, while witnessing major upheavals of ideas about race and sex during her life. She channeled the challenges of being Black and female into a motivation to help young Black girls like herself from the deep South. She was never deterred by those who doubted her success or her lack of resources. She is quoted in Martin (1958) as saying, “I rang doorbells and tackled cold prospects without a lead. I wrote articles for whoever would print them, distributed leaflets, rode interminable miles of dusty roads on my own bicycle; invaded churches, clubs, lodges chambers of commerce.” (Martin, 1958, p. 38).
She wanted to be educated, and projected that onto other Black girls whom she assisted in uplift.

**Bethune’s leadership styles**

The study’s primary purpose was to analyze Bethune’s leadership in three major areas of her presidency: 1) finances, 2) academics and 3) personnel. The analysis was based on the characteristics of transformational and transactional leadership as described by leadership scholars.

The analysis is offered, first, in relationship to the components of transformational leadership known as the four I’s. Avolio (et al., 1991) identified four interpersonal or “I” traits of transformational leaders: 1) *Idealized* influence-these leaders are admired, and respected, and followers want to emulate them, 2) *Inspirational* motivation-these leaders inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge, 3) *Intellectual* stimulation-creativity is encouraged, and questioning assumptions and challenging new thinking is encouraged, and 4) *Individual* consideration-special attention is given to each follower’s needs in order to cultivate growth.

**Inspirational motivation.** Bethune’s leadership style contained some of the four I’s, throughout her presidency, but her primary attribute was inspirational motivation. Her lasting impact as a leader was built on her ability to inspire others in a way that transcended race. One case was her interaction with a Mrs. Jacobson, a respondent to Earl Martin’s survey. Jacobson stated “Her life was a source of great inspiration to me. She made me feel more deeply than ever that honor, social position and wealth were not the only things in life that satisfy.” (Martin, 1958, p. 92).
From the founding of her institution as an all girls Normal school to its status as a four year co-educational college at her retirement, it was based on her ideals and effective across race and gender lines. Bethune motivated others in her duties as president, on campus and off.

Bethune motivated others through her vision of educational uplift. Martin (1958) provided several observations of those who knew her. Dr. Foster P. Payne was a dean at Shaw University, and he stated that Bethune “gave people the feeling that they had in her the champion of the rights of the common and underprivileged man” (Martin, 1958, p. 77). Dr. Moore, her successor after Colston as President stated, “Her ability to make sensitive people feel that they were close to her and that they had received her blessing was often the inspiration to set some woman leader out to do a larger work.” (Martin, 1958, p. 85).

Bethune’s ability to motivate others was effective across race and socioeconomic lines, affecting poor Black women and rich White men. Bethune obtained the financial support of Rockefeller, Gamble, and White. She was able to obtain resources and support from the predominately White Methodist Board, which helped with the merger of Bethune and Cookman Institute. Finally, Bethune aligned herself with Eleanor Roosevelt, which enabled her to be involved in national policy making and the recipient of resources for the Black community at a time when very few Blacks held key positions in the federal government.

*Intellectual stimulation.* Bethune was an expert in intellectual stimulation. She fostered this in her students, working from a pragmatic center in the curriculum. She and
her teaching staff provided students with practical tools to serve their community and make them better citizens, while advancing the level of those skills beyond social norms about the domestic abilities of Blacks and women.

She stimulated those in the surrounding community of Daytona Beach and the nation, as well as those on her campus. She helped them understand there was a way to overcome the social obstacles that impeded the progress of many Blacks during that time in the American South. The power of her intellect was affirmed by Eleanor Roosevelt’s support, who would not have enlisted Bethune as a representative of women’s rights if he did not have faith in her intellect as well as her inspiration. It stimulated Rockefeller and other entrepreneurs who received many requests to finance causes more popular than the education of poor Black students in Daytona Beach, Florida

*Individual consideration.*

Bethune also provided individualized consideration to her followers to develop their skills. This was seen in her personnel management. Representative Adam Clayton Powell identified several women leaders who were influenced and encouraged by her, such as “Edith Sampson, Dr. Dorothy Ferbee president of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Marjorie Stewart Joyner former teacher at Bethune Cookman.” (Martin, 1958, p. 85).

*Bethune’s transactional tendencies*

The data also revealed Bethune’s use of transactional leadership in the major areas of her presidency. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as “one or more persons engaging with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one
another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978, p. 101). In contrast, transactional leadership occurs “when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things” (p. 101). Wren (1995) stated that “transactional leaders substitute one thing for another, to give or take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another,” whereas transformational leaders “define public values that embrace the supreme and enduring principles of a people” (Wren, 1995, p.24). Transactional leaders assist followers by: (a) clarifying what is expected of them, (b) explaining how to meet expectations, (c) spelling out criteria for evaluation of effective performance, (d) providing feedback to the follower, and (e) allocating rewards contingent on performance (Bass, 1990, p.339). In essence, transactional leaders exchange rewards for performance.

*Contingent rewards.* Bethune was what Burns and others have called a “contingent rewarder” whose feedback was directed to work performance, and positive reinforcement was contingent on her belief in the followers’ work quality. This behavior is obvious in Bethune's leadership approach to personnel matters and how she dealt with men and women. Bethune inspired her staff, but she also had clear expectations about their success in meeting her goals for their work. This was true during and following her presidency.

Bethune was a transactional leader in her interactions with her successor, James Colston. She expected Colston to maintain her dream and carry on her vision. When he did not, from her perspective this served as justification for his subsequent departure.
Management by active exception. Bethune also demonstrated management by exception (active). She gave direct feedback when she believed her wishes, and vision were being disregarded.

Conclusions about Bethune’s leadership style and related models.

Bethune displayed both transformational and transactional leadership styles throughout her presidency. Her dominant style was that of a transformational leader with situational transactional tendencies.

Related styles were evident in Bethune’s leadership as president of Bethune Cookman College. One of them was charismatic leadership. This model is very similar to transformational leadership. Avolio and Yammarino state that transformational leaders “act accordingly to a certain vision that specifies a better future state. The leader will communicate messages that contain references to his or her overall vision. (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002, p. 122). This does not characterize the style of communication, however, and all evidence is that Bethune communicated her vision with grace, charm, and power.

Another related model is situational leadership. Northouse defined situational leadership as a style that “stresses that leadership is composed of both directive and a supportive dimension” (2007p. 91). Bethune used transformational and transactional leadership methods in different situations with different people, so it would be worth exploring how this model fit her leadership style.
Comparing Bethune to contemporary African American women presidents

Another goal of this study was to increase one’s understanding of contemporary Black women presidents through Bethune’s experiences. Bethune was a foremother of today’s Black women higher educational leaders, so her history is necessarily connected to perceptions that personal and societal life factors (education, marital status, exposure to role models) affect the leadership of all African American women presidents.

Some of these connections were not explored earlier. For example, Bethune was a single mother who still maintained focus on obtaining her dream. During her lifetime, Bethune was an exception to the status quo, because separation from a spouse and being a single working woman of color were frowned upon in her day. Her personal situation required extra resources for her to escape her low socioeconomic status. Bethune’s energy and determination to gain financing for her college might have been related to her drive to leave more to her child than she received in her early years. Regardless, Bethune’s success against these social expectations was far less predictable than the success of current contemporary presidents with similar personal circumstances, but not similar social ones.

Bethune did not have the same support networks that recent Black women presidents have. Huge barriers faced any support for a small Historically Black College and University (HBCU), but Bethune became president at a time when charitable contributions to HBCU’s were popular among northern Whites, including women of privilege, such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Laura Spelman Rockefeller. She capitalized on this spirit.
Unlike contemporary presidents, Bethune had to work in a segregated environment. Bethune was equal in race in her own community, but she faced gender bias in comparison to her male counterparts. When interacting with Whites, Bethune faced the double bias of being Black and a woman. This is still an issue endured by contemporary Black women presidents though perhaps it is manifested in more covert than overt ways.

McCluskey (1994) called Bethune’s leadership one of “multiple consciousness.” She saw it as “emerging from her racial and gendered experience and (this is the) key to understanding her effectiveness as a leader.” (p. 69). McCluskey compared it to what W.E.B. DuBois coined as “twoness.” Bethune’s work as a political, civic and educational leader was impacted specifically by her race and gender, and this “twoness” ultimately influenced how she perceived others and herself as a leader. McCluskey’s observation and the results of this study support Jones’ theory that life experiences impact the perception of how Black women view their place in society. It affects their judgment and approach in relationships as leaders.

Implications of the study

This historical study can aid the understanding of several components of leadership in higher education, especially one segment of higher educational leadership: Black women presidents. Bethune, like contemporary Black women presidents, was faced with social disadvantages due to gender and race discrimination. Also, like many of today’s Black women presidents, it seems that she did not give exclusive priority to one identity over the other.

Research implications
This study focused on Bethune’s leadership during her presidential tenure. There have been several studies of Mary McLeod Bethune’s leadership, but none have had this focus. Martin (1958) examined her impact as a leader in general, using first person testimonies and second person data to gain a better understanding of Bethune in all of the major areas of her work: politics, civics and education. McCluskey and Thomas (1996) reinforced Martin’s research and provided a volume of primarily first person, “in her own words,” testimonies about Bethune’s work as a civic, political, and educational leader. Long (2004) provided another general perspective of her life and her major accomplishments, and added interviews from family members who knew her. Finally, Flemming (1995) examined Bethune Cookman University from its founding to 1994, which was the most specific look into Bethune’s work as president prior to this study.

Several aspects of Bethune’s leadership affirm Jones’ findings about contemporary Black women presidents, so this study adds information about the historical impact of race and gender on the development and styles of leadership. Bethune’s decision making style was transformational in the areas of finances, curriculum planning, and personnel management, even though she displayed transactional tendencies in relationships with some Whites and males during her presidency. Apparently, discrimination does not yield unitary, procedural leadership behaviors in a person who wants to achieve equity and uplift.

Finally, the study provided a glimpse of the education of Blacks in higher education from the post reconstruction period to the post depression era through Bethune’s experiences and ambitions. Her dream evolved from single gender education
to co-education, and included a curriculum that synthesized the philosophies of Black leaders such as Washington and DuBois. The industrial curriculum conformed to society’s perception of what Black education should be, but challenged that perception through its increased levels of “vocational” training. Bethune walked a fine line between the expectations of White America and her expectations to elevate the status of Blacks in this country.

Recommendations for further study

The legacy of Mary McCleod Bethune has been honored by a monument in Washington, D.C., and the designation of her homes as national historical monuments, but nowhere is the impact of her work as a leader more evident than at Bethune Cookman University. Her picture, quotes and her traditions pervade the campus, including the chapel she built over a century ago. A recent addition is President Trudie Reed’s International Institute for Civic Participation and Social Responsibility, which the University calls an effort “in preserving” Bethune’s legacy. Further study should be conducted to see how her legacy impacts students, particularly Black females, who attend Bethune Cookman University.

Also worth noting is the current mission of Bethune Cookman University, which reads:

The mission is to serve in the Christian tradition the diverse educational, social, and cultural needs of its students and to develop in them the desire and capacity for continuous intellectual and professional growth, leadership and service to others. The University has deep roots in the history of America and continues to
provide services to the broader community through a focus on service learning and civic engagement.

Bethune-Cookman University accomplishes its mission by providing quality instruction in an intellectually stimulating environment that nurtures the mind (intellect), the heart (transformative leadership) and the hand (service learning) according to our founder’s motto and the institution’s seal(http://www.cookman.edu/subpages/Mission.asp).

The reference to transformational leadership indicates that this style of leading is an important component of the culture of the University. That importance is supported by the University’s development of a Masters’ of Science program that focuses on transformational leadership.

(http://www.cookman.edu/academics/degree_prog/index.html)

Future researchers may want to examine how transformational leadership is interpreted as a historical reflection and a cultural element in the University. The current president of Bethune Cookman University, Dr. Trudie Kibbe Reed, is the fifth president overall, and the first woman to serve as President since Bethune. She also has lectured on the topic of transformational leadership. How does her style compare with Bethune’s? A case study might reveal whether and how leadership has remained consistent or changed since Bethune’s tenure at the University.

A final area worth exploration is the role of White philanthropy in Black education. White philanthropy sustained Bethune Cookman during its early years, and there is a significant amount of data about Bethune’s work with early twentieth century
philanthropists such as the Rockefellers and the Whites. In addition, some research
details the impact of White philanthropists on early Black American educators such as
Booker T. Washington and Lucy Laney. For example, William Watkins’s (2001) text *The
White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954*
examines this notion in some detail. Further research of this topic may assist one’s
understanding of the foundation and continued practices of Historically Black Colleges
and Universities (HBCU’s).
**Personal reflection**

This study of Mary McLeod Bethune has been a personal journey. I have learned a great deal about the struggles of this foremother of Black higher education leaders. The story of her personal sacrifice and her unrelenting fight to build an institution to aid in the progression of her race was powerful. I am humbled and honored to have had the opportunity to learn more about Dr. Bethune. I will walk away from this research as not only more educated on the life and work of Bethune but as more appreciative of my position as a Black woman in the field of higher education.
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