Black female leadership: a preliminary step toward an alternative theory

Beverlyn Lundy Allen

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Black female leadership:
A preliminary step toward an alternative theory

by

Beverlyn Lundy Allen

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
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For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1995
A dedication to...

...Clara Duncan—my maternal grandmother, and Carole W. Ruffin—my friend, two special women who no longer walk this earth but continue to guide me on my journey through life.

...Clara M. Hutchinson—my Mother, whose life ain't been no crystal stair. Her quiet energy of survival and verve of insurgency provide a voice for my thoughts and a melody for my soul.

...The jewels of my life—Buz, Brian, Lady, Terre, Tyra and Malcolm. Being your mother is the greatest opportunity and the highest honor in my life. Everything else is but a responsibility.

...Lucy, Mikki, Nuri, Tariq, Terrell, Ayana, Marjani Tiera, and Saraiya—my grandchildren. They are the reasons to remember an African past and an inspiration to build an African American future.

...Tom Allen—forever my friend and confidant.
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Race, class, and gender biases in the construction of knowledge have made invisible the prominent leadership among black women. Nowhere is this exclusion more prevalent than the contribution of black women to the building of the black community. Leadership as a social phenomenon has too often been defined in male terms or associated with elitist positions and operationalized in the “public sphere” (Smith 1974; Hall 1990; Astin and Leland 1991; Sternweis and Wells 1992). Consequently, leadership theories are rarely generalizable to women and minorities. Sociological perspectives place emphasis on the function of black male leaders (Cox 1950; Hunter 1953; Frazier 1957). Black women are not viewed as serving a function to the dominant power structure and are, therefore, regarded as irrelevant actors (Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990).

African-American women have traditionally been relegated to subordinate positions in society which has affected the way their leadership emerged (Collins 1990). Long before the emergence of racism, classism, and sexism, their experiences as black women made them experts on collective action in American society (Hine 1994). Black female leadership exemplifies not only their survival techniques, but also a process of defining life on their own terms (Collins 1990). Hence, the history of black female leadership in the United States is also a history of struggle for liberation from oppression. It is a history of collective struggle to maintain historical and cultural traditions in the black

For the most part, black women have played a major role in political resistance, a role that transcended both the public and private spheres of everyday life (Giddings 1984; Jones 1985). The history and the sociology of the black experience have made it necessary for black females to take on leadership roles over and beyond those of their counterparts in the broader society. The emasculation of the black male, combined with the ignominy placed on the black woman, have formed and structured gender roles in the black community (Hine 1994). As slaves, domestic and industrial laborers, black women received no respect from whites beyond that of producer and reproducer (Jones 1985). It was difficult to separate “work from family based obligations; productive labor had no meaning outside the family and community context” (Jones 1985:64). Race, class, and gender, an “interlocking web of oppression” (Smith 1982:xxviii), forced black women to create safe havens from the hostile environment that prohibited self growth and community survival. As a result, black women developed a “culture of resistance" against the endless tides of despair (Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990). Political resistance required that black women expand their role of homemakers and laborers to that of "caretakers" of the race (Hooks 1990).
Employing a public/private dichotomy negates the reality of black women's leadership experiences.

**Dissertation Organization**

The dissertation addresses the sociological significance of black female leadership. Three papers are included: in the first, an analysis of how race and gender have been studied in sociological scholarship on leadership is presented. The study presents an analysis of leadership theory from a race and gender perspective and moves toward a re-articulation of leadership as a sociological concept. It also distinguishes between different leadership theories and the boundaries they impose on understanding leadership in non-traditional arenas. A distinction is made between *elite and non-elite leadership paradigms*. The paper discusses the various approaches within each group, and compares and contrasts theories across paradigms. It is argued that new voices in sociology represent a movement toward a more inclusive analysis of leadership. This paper concludes by embracing the new voices and their challenges to traditional leadership approaches. Within this framework, a re-conceptualization of leadership is articulated—one that is more inclusive of race, class, gender, and culture.

The second paper employs the concept "culture of resistance" as a focus for the analysis of black female leadership. Subsequent to the presentation of a definition of black female leadership, a socio-historical approach is used to
identify the processes, form, and content of black female leadership. Collective experience, collective action, and community empowerment are used as indicators of the culture of resistance. The paper concludes with a discussion of the application of a unified framework of the culture of resistance for research on black female leadership.

The third paper investigates the Black Organizational Autonomy (BOA) Model (Horton 1992) as a useful framework for the incorporation of black female leadership in the community development process. Perspectives on community development are discussed. The BOA model is introduced and the female leadership component is critiqued. Finally, the paper offers an elaboration of the female leadership component as guided by the conclusions drawn in the two previous papers. The elaboration of the model includes a working definition of black female leadership. A case study is offered to demonstrate the applicability of the female leadership component. The paper concludes with the sociological implications for the model and for research on black female leadership in the context of black community development.

The final section includes overall conclusions. Goals of the study are reiterated and significant findings of the research are highlighted. This section concludes with a discussion of the implications of an emphasis on black female leadership for future research.
CHAPTER 1. TOWARD A RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF LEADERSHIP:
RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND CULTURAL INCLUSIVENESS

A paper to be submitted to the American Journal of Sociology

Beverlyn Lundy Allen

Abstract

This paper summarizes how race and gender have been studied in sociological scholarship on leadership. It is argued that new voices challenge traditional theories and represent a movement toward a more comprehensive analysis of leadership. A framework is presented to contrast current views with traditional perspectives. A black female perspective is used to demonstrate the applicability of the framework. The paper proposes this framework as a preliminary step toward a reconceptualization of leadership that considers the experiences of non-elites and leadership in non-traditional arenas.
Introduction

Traditional models of leadership focus on elite men in authoritative positions in formal and political organizations. This view of leadership ignores non-traditional arenas as important sites for inquiry. Recent scholarly writings challenge traditional perspectives and the omission of women and minorities (Davis 1981; Steady 1981; Spelman 1982; Bookman and Morgen 1988; Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990; Astin and Leland 1991; Brown 1992; Calas and Smircich 1988, 1992; Sternweis and Wells 1992; Van Nostrand 1993; Wells and Tanner 1994). However, traditional ideologies and paradigms continue to overshadow the voices of those defined as “other” (Collins 1986; Halpin 1989; Rothenberg 1994).

Close examination of the literature suggests a paradigm shift (in the Kuhnian sense) and a process of re-visioning alternative definitions of leadership (Morgen and Bookman 1988; Bell-Scott and Guy-Sheftall 1988; Collins 1990; Sternweis and Wells 1992). New and previously silenced voices not only challenge orthodox theories of social phenomena, but also move theory closer to an alternative ontological world view. Embracing these new voices and shift in perspectives facilitates a reconceptualization of leadership. It pushes the notion of leadership to new heights of understanding; knowledge on leadership moves from a deterministic-individualistic paradigm to one that is more reflexive, non-deterministic and collective (Burns 1978; Gilkes 1988; Childs 1989; Gardner 1990).
This paper proposes a framework to articulate this shift. Transformational leadership theory provides the foundation for this re-articulation (Burns 1978). A black female perspective is incorporated to demonstrate the utility of the framework. It is one that suggests a sociohistorical and cultural context other than that traditionally proposed by orthodox theories.

The Concept of Leadership

The concept of leadership has an "ambiguous status" in the social sciences (Gibbs 1950; Gouldner 1950; Pfeffer 1977; Burns 1978; Gardner 1990; Hall 1991). The question of definition has been at the center of debate for a long period of time (Gibbs 1950; Burns 1978).

The problem appears to be the inability to communicate the "idea" of leadership (Gouldner 1950; Burns 1978; Gardner 1990; Henry 1990; Hall 1991). The emphasis tends to be on methodological sophistication rather than on theoretical explanation. According to Karmel (1984:64):

We have tripped over a block of gold, labeled it 'leadership' and hope that it makes sense of both reality and the data. Reviewers of this domain are in substantial agreement that the whole history of research on leadership has led us to no clear conclusions and has provided little guidance in theory building.

Hence, the concept is left open for meaning by the defining theorist or researcher (Pfeffer 1977; Kruse and Wintemantle 1986).

Scholars of feminist and black culture studies consistently challenge theories that distort the experiences of women and minorities. This literature
debunks the view that those traditionally defined as “other” are not actors in the leadership process (Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990; Brown 1992; Sternweis and Wells 1992). Since Burns’ (1978) comprehensive work on transformational leadership, new models have advanced conventional views of leadership (Phillips 1995).

This analysis proposes as a framework a leadership continuum that acknowledges conventional views that still inform leadership scholarship. It also includes new challenges to old paradigms. The framework is developed by employing new voices that inform contemporary issues of leadership theory and practice.

According to Van Nostrand (1993:xvi), the traditional concept of leadership operates on “the continuum of domination and subordinance.” In contrast, “gender-responsible leadership” (Van Nostrand 1993:xviii) can transform conventional models through “linking not ranking” people in the interaction process (Van Nostrand 1993:xvi). The framework introduced here proposes to differentiate between traditional models and nontraditional models. First, traditional leadership models are examined. Secondly, a critique of the models as defined by feminist and black studies scholars are offered.

The Elite Paradigm

According to Fairholm (1992), many of the theories of leadership address one of three dimensions—who the leaders are, what leaders do, and the environment that impinges on leader’s style. Traditional leadership theories
follow this mode and can be found in one or some combination of three generic approaches (Fairholm 1992).

The first approach follows trait theory (Gouldner 1950; Hollander 1984; Astin and Leland 1991; Fairholm 1992) that focuses on who are the leaders. From this perspective, analysis is based on traits inherited and reflected in the leaders’ personalities and the psychological aspects that view leaders as fulfilling needs among their followers (Gouldner 1950). According to Hollander (1984: 32), “the quintessential expression of this theory is in the statement by a contemporary philosopher that all factors in history, save great men, are inconsequential.” Leadership from the perspective of trait theory was based on the assumption that if the individual possesses certain defined cognitive abilities, “[he] would become a leader” (Gouldner 1950:40). However, there were some differences or qualifications depending on the nature of the group to be led (Tead 1935).

The second approach is influenced by behavioral theories that focus on what leaders do. Behavioral approaches to leadership theory gained center stage with an emphasis on leaders’ skills and effectiveness (Perrow 1986; Hall 1991). For the most part, behavioral approaches advocate a single best way to leadership. However, behavioral perspectives of leadership are not far removed from that of the “great man” theory.

Early behaviorists focused attention on how traits interacted with personality (Gouldner 1950; Fairholm 1992). Although they cautioned about the
universality of traits, "they were not ready to give up on the importance of traits to leaders’ effectiveness” (Phillips 1995:60). Individual functions and tasks in organizations and followers’ expectations of leaders, are emphasized. From this perspective the characteristics of a situation determine the relationship between leaders and followers. The primary stress is on the demands for particular leadership characteristics (Gouldner 1950; Hollander 1984; Fairholm 1992).

The third type is the situational/contingency perspective whereby the environment is key to leadership behavior. The approach builds on the research of Kurt Lewin (1950), and focuses on the differences between autocratic, democratic and laisse-faire leadership. The situational approach advanced from Lewin’s (Gouldner 1950) either/or continuum to Blake and Mouton’s (1964) four dimensional leadership grid. The concept involves the leader’s behaviors indicating that the leader organizes and defines the relationship between self and followers. The primary focus of this approach is on task structures and the leader’s effectiveness, each dependent on situational factors (Gouldner 1950; Hollander 1984; Fairholm 1992).

One variation of the situational approach is the contingency model (Perrow 1986). This perspective argues that leaders must change with the situation by adapting their style to fit the environment. Perspectives in this category stress the tension between leaders’ styles and abilities to adapt to a changing environment (Perrow 1986; Hall 1991).
From the early 20th century to the mid 1970s, these three approaches dominated leadership theory (Fairholm 1992; Gardner 1990; Burns 1978). Since then, considerable advances in research have altered the trait, behavioral, and situational-contingency approaches to leadership (Gardner 1990; Phillips 1995). The most significant advance, albeit limited, is the recognition of gender as an analytical category (Kruse and Wintermantle 1986; Astin and Leland 1991).

**Critique of the Elite Paradigm**

Most research combining gender and leadership focus on role expectations, or the leader's style (Kanter 1977). Considerable changes have occurred in research examining gender differences in personality traits. Trait theory has incorporated more of the behavioral approach, and viewing "situational factors as relevant to female leaders' characteristics" and skills (Phillips 1995:59). Research on leadership roles incorporated both the situation and attitudes of women and men as related to issues of gender. Much of this research concludes that no significant differences exist between men and women (Kanter 1977; Phillips 1995; Astin and Leland 1991). Nevertheless, research continues to suggest that "both men and women expect the leaders role to be filled by a man" (Hollander and Yoder 1984:236).

Contemporary research using behavioral theories address gender in terms of leadership style (Hollander and Yoder 1984). *Structuring* (stereotypically male) and *consideration* (stereotypically female) behaviors are the main advances of
the behavioral approaches (Astin and Leland 1991). Although more overlap exist today with the situational/contingency approach than earlier, the research on gender is similar to that advanced in trait theory. However, more emphasis is placed on leader and follower relations rather than the narrow focus on personality and task exhibited by earlier models (Phillips 1995). Basic conclusions suggest that females lead in a more participative and democratic style than do males (Kanter 1977; Astin and Leland 1991). Trait and behavioral theories continue to overlap; both assume that the environment is an important dimension that impacts the leader. Also, both continue to use micro variables to define characteristics based on who the leaders are and what the leaders do.

Situational/contingency theories have made the most significant advances in recent decades (Phillips 1995) by emphasizing macro-level analyses and focusing on structural effects that impact leaders' effectiveness. The advancement in feminist and women's studies has moved leadership theory to an interdisciplinary perspective. This broader framework has witnessed a more critical analysis of gender issues. According to Phillips (1995), some explorations on shared leadership represents an overlap with newer models that see power and influence as important factors. These new models reject the "one best way" for the structuring and functioning of leaders. Exchange models of leadership have developed parallel to contingency approaches (Bass 1990).

Homans (Hollander 1984) provided the initial foundation for exchange models in leadership theory. The most recent work advanced along this line is
the transactional approach (Bass 1990). Transactional leadership is based on independent objectives and the expectancies that exist between leader and follower. While the leader may have the power of the position, influence depends more on persuasion than coercion (Hollander 1984; Gardner 1990). Leadership moved from a focus on the leader to one that considered the transactions occurring between leader and follower.

Newer models have advanced the concept of leadership even though the models of the past are still very much a part of the leadership terrain. Traditional models represent an advancement in research more than in theoretical explanations (Phillips 1995). John Gardner (1990:xii) contends that "the conventional views of leadership are shallow and set us up for endless disappointment." Because traditional models focus on male leaders' success in terms of individual disposition, little attention is given to female leadership. Leadership analyses that do focus on gender are limited to sex differences and sex roles that perpetuate the myths of female and male impersonations (Astin and Leland 1991). Female leadership is subjected to comparison to white elite males and the organizations that they lead (Kruse and Wintemantle 1986). Little critical attention is given to the broader issues of ideology, different world views or the structural position of women.

There is a disquiet arising, however, among women and minorities about the nature of definitions that define their lives. This discontentment is evident in more contemporary approaches to leadership (Burns 1978; Sacks 1988; Gilkes
1988; Childs 1989; Collins 1990; Astin and Leland 1991; Brown 1992; Sternweis and Wells 1992; Van Nostrand 1993). In contrast to the elite paradigm that focused on who leaders are, what leaders do and the style of a leader, contemporary approaches seek answers to different questions. More attention is directed at the processes of leadership, valued leadership and evolving cooperative relations (Burns 1978). Also, more emphasis is on the nature and types of power that call into question traditional elite models of domination and control (Gardner 1990)

The Non-Elite Paradigm

The 1980s witnessed a surge of leadership theories following Burns' (1978) emphasis on leadership for social change. The transformational approach has been heralded by some as the new leadership paradigm. According to Burns (1978), leadership is all about relations between leaders and followers. However, he (Burns 1978:425) makes a distinction between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership is a "reciprocal process of mobilizing...various economic, political and other resources, in the context of competition and conflict."

Transformational leadership, in contrast, concerns values and elevates followers to new levels of morality:

The transformation occurs in the pursuit of higher goals...that represent the collective...interests of leaders and followers. The premise of leadership is that, whatever the separate interests persons might hold,
they are presently or potentially united in pursuit of higher goals, the realization of which is tested by the achievement of significant change that represents the collective or pooled interests of leaders and followers (Burns 1978:455).

The transformational leadership approach provides the study of women with an alternative to traditional models of leadership that have dominated for the past 75 years (Phillips 1995). Traditional models may consider gender as a relevant concept, although there continues to be a bias in the overall conceptualization of what constitutes female leadership (Astin and Leland 1991). Such advances in leadership theory continue to be narrowly defined and distort the experiences of women and minorities. As noted by Harding (1986:646):

It has never been women’s experiences that have provided the grounding for any of the theories from which we borrow....When we begin inquiries with women’s experiences instead of men’s we quickly encounter phenomena that we made invisible by the concepts and categories of these theories.

**Feminist and Black Studies Literature**

Scholars of feminist and black studies offer substantial insight into the understanding of the experiences of women and minorities. These scholars are similar in that they focus on oppression; however, their voices differ in their definition of the causes of oppression (Collins 1990; Rothenberg 1994). Although neither feminist nor cultural theories are by any means homogeneous, several broad yet major contributions related to leadership are identified: the public/private dichotomy, the politics of identity and cultural politics as they

The Public/Private Domain and Female Leadership. One of the central critiques of conventional leadership theory addresses the false dichotomy of public and private domains (Andersen 1993). Some feminist theorists view the issues surrounding the public/private dichotomy as problematic for women (Elshtain 1981); others call into question a separation between everyday life and aspects of social activity (Morgen and Bookman 1988; Collins 1990; Sternweis and Wells 1992). Feminist scholars supporting the latter view question traditional definitions of organizations, politics and ideology. For example, traditional models of leadership undervalue women’s organizations as relevant social structures and sites for leadership (Brown 1992; Wells and Tanner 1994). Until recently, women’s organizations were viewed as not having relevance outside of social movements (Brown 1992). Consequently, the form by which women’s organizations are structured is ignored as relevant to leadership practice and theory (Brown 1992).

Critiques of traditional theory attempt to move away from equating female leadership spheres of activity based on a public/private dichotomy. It also raises the issue of power and control that has pervasive consequences for women centered organizations. According to Brown (1992:4):
Autonomous women's organizations form an appropriate antithesis to conventional organizations on a number of counts; most pertinently they are oppositional groups in that they know what they aren't like as well as what they are, they demonstrate a principled objection to hierarchical forms, and they exhibit an unusual degree of agreement on the level of values.

This notion of women-centered organizations transcends a false dichotomy of public/private spheres of action. It brings into question the domain of leadership activity as traditionally defined (Brown 1992; Wells and Tanner 1994). By locating women in organizations defined on their own terms, the form and the content of their leadership emerge.

Women's organizations, networks, and informal groups are important sites for leadership development (Gilkes 1985; Hine 1994; Wells and Tanner 1994). Brown (1992) suggests that one important factor for women's organizations is their attempt to realize goals of shared participation. Further exploration can provide insight into the core values of women and suggest important dimensions of women's organizations. Feminist scholars that challenge traditional definitions of organization remove the false boundaries of a public/private terrain.

Morgen and Bookman (1988) address the non-traditional aspects of female leadership within a political context from a radical feminist perspective. They redefine leadership in opposition to the conventional definition of elite power structures. They argue that female leadership at the grassroots level is no less political than in formal arenas of politics. Morgen and Bookman (1988:4) employ
the term *empowerment* to connote "a spectrum of political activity ranging from acts of individual resistance to mass political mobilization that challenges the basic power relation...." Similarly, Collins (1990) suggests that women's ways of activism reflect the social construction of their own reality. Empowering women, according to Sternweis and Wells (1992:42), requires definitions of leadership in terms that include women:

> The exclusion of women from definitions of leadership is part of a larger problem of male gender bias in which both men and women tend to accept male categorizations of social phenomena. Traditionally, men have constructed reality and have defined knowledge. Men have been seen as the theorists and have had their theories accepted as legitimate.

Feminist theorists contest mainstream notions of leadership by redefining the terms that render female experiences invisible (Collins 1990); at the same time, they challenge the very definition of politics. By expanding the boundaries of leadership, women assert a "direct relationship between politics and everyday life" (Morgen and Bookman 1988:8). Hence, leadership transcends traditional static boundaries defined as the public domain moving toward more fluid spheres of activity and redefined by the experiences of women.

If we combine the concept of identity politics with a conception of the subject as positionality, we can conceive of the subject as nonessentialized and emergent from historical experiences and yet retain our political ability to take gender as an important part of departure.

Both social and cultural structures determine the position of women (Steady 1981). Within the dominant culture, leadership roles continue to be viewed as a male prerogative. Sternweis and Wells (1992:43) contend that:

a male bias in leadership research affects both researcher and research subject. Scholarship by women and about women is considered relatively trivial compared with the work of men as defined by men.

The beliefs and stereotypes about female leadership become problematic when placed within the context of women’s experiences. Women have traditionally found ways to formulate ideas and models that express the reality of their own experiences. As articulated by Brittan and Maynard (1984:183):

When we talk of racism and sexism as being ‘commonsense’ and as being ‘naturalized,’ we are not referring to abstract concepts but are stressing the social potency of ideology, that is ideology as a constituent part of everyday living—how racism and sexism enter into the way in which people conduct their lives....beliefs are not only cognitive categories or stereotypes—they represent a way of making sense and reacting to a range of social experiences.

Collins (1990) argues that black women’s leadership represents the processes emerging from the meaning they give to their experience with “everyday racism” (Essed 1990). The simultaneous experiences of racism, classism and sexism makes the definition of leadership more complex. It is not enough to define leadership from a perspective of race in isolation of gender, nor gender in isolation of race. Rather, it must be defined in relation to the many dimensions of oppression and domination (Collins 1990).
A gender perspective in isolation of other forms of oppression is unidimensional and limited to a male/female analysis. Like the public/private dichotomy, it places artificial boundaries on what constitutes identity. More important, the male/female dualism assumes that the term woman is universal and that "sexism can be abolished while racism remains intact" (Hooks 1990: 59). Although feminist scholars have argued that "eradicating social class inequality alone will not necessarily eliminate sexism" (Andersen 1993:323), they tend to ignore race as an important factor. Yet, black women's social position is simultaneously interconnected to their race and gender identity. Hence, leadership theories evoking a gender dualistic-apolitical approach maintain an elite world view on the question of identity.

From a race, class, and gender perspective, scholars advance leadership theory to new forms undertaken by minority women. For black women, this represents an "overarching structure of domination" (Collins 1990:222). Resistance to systems of oppression is the basis for everyday leadership.

*The Politics of Culture.* From a cultural feminist perspective, leadership occurs through the development of a female world view (Andersen 1993). These theorists reject the masculine ideal and the labels placed on women as leaders. Missing from cultural feminist analysis of leadership are the patterns of ethnocentrism that distort the cultures of minorities (Lorde 1984). Cultural
biases of race, class and gender help to maintain and perpetuate an elite world view of leadership. Collins (1986:523) argues that:

The focus on black women's culture is significant...it points to the problematic nature of existing conceptualizations of 'activism.' While black women's reality cannot be understood without attention to the interlocking structures of oppression that limit black women's lives, Afro-American women's experiences suggest that possibilities for activism exist even within such multiple structures of domination.

This perspective bridges the gap between changing oppressive institutions and leadership activities engaged in daily life. Since 1980, the term "culture" has become synonymous with politics and change (Lemert 1993). As noted by Hooks (1994:3), critic Stuart Hall states that "the work that cultural studies have to do is to mobilize everything that it can find in terms of intellectual resources in order to understand what keeps making the lives we live, and the societies we live in, profoundly and deeply anti-humane."

A segment of the black/cultural studies literature is devoted to a critical assessment of "cultural hegemony" (Habermas 1971; Foucault 1980; Hooks 1990; West 1990; Jewell 1993) and its ideology of domination. The dominant culture and the representing symbols serve as culture capital "used to maintain relations of power and domination" (Jewell 1993:4). The cultural studies literature emphasizes how informal rules that govern specific cultures are symbolic of the institutional and structural power relations of historical actors.

Whereas feminist theory articulates the processes and content of black female leadership, black/cultural studies literature offers to the study of
leadership insight into the complex set of social relations representing the content and form that emerge naturally from the cultural history of a people (Henry 1990; Hooks 1990). Hall (1974:41,44) argues that a "given pattern is only obvious to a certain category...a group shares patterns that enable them to see the same thing and this holds them together." However, there are many lenses from which to view the patterns. "Sometimes we can be too close [to the pattern] and others not so close can better see the pattern" (Wells, 1995: personal notes).

Despite the advancement in leadership research produced over the last decades, the concept of leadership continues to be viewed from the narrow lens of traditional theories. The results have been an unfortunate lack of understanding of leadership as a useful concept beyond formal structures of domination and control.

The Elite/Non-Elite Continuum

A Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts a leadership continuum. At one end of the continuum is the "elite" leadership paradigm; at the other end is the "non-elite" leadership paradigm. For simplicity, the term "elite" is used to describe traditional models of leadership. Non-elite refers to models centered on those not in formal organizations, the political and government apparatus as traditionally defined. The "elite/non-elite" continuum provides a framework for contrasting perspectives on leadership.
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<th>1990s Non-Elite Paradigm</th>
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<td>Authoritative position</td>
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<td><strong>Type of Power</strong></td>
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**LEADERSHIP PARADIGM**

Figure 1. Reconceptualization of leadership: The elite / non-elite continuum
The second level of the framework depicts leadership approaches defined simply as traditional and non-traditional. Six generic categories of leadership approaches are identified across a time-line and are included in the framework: trait, behavioral, situation/contingency, transactional, attribution and transformational approaches (Fairholm 1992; Phillips 1995). Although advances have occurred in each of these approaches over the last decade, they nonetheless represent an incremental transition along the continuum from 1900 to the 1990s (Phillips 1995).

No one theory with the possible exception of trait theory completely dominated any period (Gouldner 1950; Fairholm 1992). Trait theory was prominent from the turn of the century to World War II. The second phase lasted from World War II until about 1970 focused on behavioral theories (Gouldner 1950; Burns 1978; Gardner 1990). Situational/contingency models continue to have a major influence on leadership theory (Phillips 1995). The current phase centers on interactional models between leaders and followers emerging toward a mutualistic world view.

Figure 1 further differentiates the traditional models of leadership from non-traditional models by six contrasting characteristics: domain, purpose, focus, type of power, process, and outcomes. Each of these characteristics responds to an overarching world view—vanguard and mutualistic.

The elite paradigm, according to the proposed framework, adopts a "vanguard" world view (Brittan and Maynard 1984; Childs 1989). The vanguard
world view seeks to control a dominant center. It is based on nature versus nurture dichotomy. Fundamentally, it is rooted in the human assertion of power over nature (Brittan and Maynard 1984:201). Control may be either "materialistic-based for economic power, or may serve an idealistic purpose and seek to control culture" (Childs 1989:4). Regardless of perspective, "the vanguard world view ultimately seeks to inhibit the direct influence of the masses in decision making" (Brittan Maynard 1984:201).

The elite paradigm from the vanguard world view (Childs 1989) has several characteristics. First, approaches to leadership focus on the individual. Second, the context of leadership is defined as the public domain, including formal organization and the political arena. Third, the vanguard perspective views hierarchy as a necessary and important tool for maintaining the status quo. Static and deterministic in nature, this perspective is based on power over the followers as subordinates (Gardner 1990). In essence, the elite paradigm values individualism, competition and power over others. Leadership is grounded in neoclassical economics. Leaders are viewed as functionaries to maintain the status quo while pursuing their own self-interests. It is based on the assumption that "maximum efficiency presumably is rendered through the competitive market place" (Ryan 1995:8)

The "mutualistic" world view (Childs 1989) is more consistent with the non-traditional leadership approaches. It views leadership as multidirectional, dynamic, influential and facilitating collective action. The focus is not on the
individual as leader since it rejects the leader-follower dichotomy. Leadership is seen as a process rather than a product. Most important, justice is the ultimate goal that moves beyond the ability of any one individual, schema or world view (Childs 1989). Hence, the mutualistic perspective accepts the vanguard world view as legitimate to the degree that it is based on justice for the common good of all. Childs (1989:9) states:

All mutual action will of necessity be extremely difficult, tension-filled, and shifting because it is free. Concomitantly, mutual action can only have real effect if it is also coherent and shared, in a word—cooperative.

This framework will guide the remainder of the discussion employing the voices of black women. Black women, as an oppressed group, perceive leadership as relative to their own experiences and conditioned by their own expectations.

Domain. Traditional theories place emphasis on formal structures and the political arena. These models ignore women's experiences and maintain a public/private dichotomy of what constitutes leadership (Bookman and Morgen 1988; Collins 1990; Brown 1992; Van Nostrand 1993). In contrast, non-traditional models allow for analyses in arenas of community, networks and informal groups, internal and external to traditional domains (Morgen and Bookman 1988).

Black female leadership encompasses the creativity and commitment for individual and group well-being derived primarily from the characteristics of traditional female spheres of activity (Morris 1984; Gilkes 1985, 1988; Hooks 1989; Hine 1990; Salem 1990; Collins 1990). Black women value extended family as
represented by the interrelatedness of family, church and indigenous organizations (Gilkes 1983, 1985; Collins 1990). Female networks historically have served as the mainstay of the black community. The focus of non-traditional models is on the masses who often do not carry official status in formal structures. In contrast to the individual as leader, emphasis is placed on the interactive relations of the group.

Purpose. Management is often synonymous with leadership in the traditional models (Fairholm 1992). From a management perspective, the leader’s purpose is to seek the goals of the organization, irrespective of the needs of workers. Leaders are primarily concerned with organizational goals that maintain the status quo (Perrow 1986; Hall 1991). In the political arena, power is paramount. Traditional models emphasize elite patterns of decision-making and the nature of power relations. Women and minorities are seldom included in analysis (Collins 1990). Lack of access to traditional sources of power and decision-making forced women in general and minority women in particular to develop alternative means of leadership in nontraditional ways.

Nontraditional models emphasize valued leadership. Leadership is a relationship wherein leaders and collaborators influence each other. Connectedness and interdependence are important group properties. Leadership is responsive to the well being of the group and its members (Gilkes 1983; Brown 1992). These values become a part of the group culture and serve as a resource for group survival.
Identification with African-American culture has both historical and political significance. Responses to oppression through activism are guided by these two aspects—it is the “something” missing from traditional leadership analysis. Black female leadership exemplifies not only the survival techniques in family, community and work, but also the process of defining life on their own terms (Collins 1990).

Black women are seen as the “keepers” of culture in the black community (Rodgers-Rose 1980; Gilkes 1988). Community survival means caretaking of the race; it depend on and is directly linked to daily issues such as health, housing, education, child care, jobs, safety, pain and suffering (Lerner 1972; Hooks 1990). Scott (1991:10) contends that these daily routines are ways of “keeping good times going” and for black women dealing with the multiplicity of oppression become “the habit of surviving.”

Focus. Hierarchies structure the leaders’ relations to others in traditional models. The focus on authoritative positions places value on competition and leadership successions. This detracts from the focus on group development as emphasized in nontraditional models of leadership. In contrast to traditional models, non-elite models are concerned with group solidarity (Giddings 1984). The individualistic approach of traditional models assumes that leaders operate in isolation of others.

The major aspects of black female leadership are based on collective action. From an internal perspective, the black community is more than an extension of
white America. The black community has reasons to exist outside of oppression (Billingsley 1992). Black men and women share a common history and have invested in community. According to Horton (1992:7), "black leadership" is as "important internally to the community for its development" as it is for the transformation of external, oppressive institutions (Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990). Gilkes (1988) demonstrates black women's commitment to the development and maintenance of black institutions, especially the black church. She argues that black women are the most important force in the church and other indigenous organizations.

Type of power. In traditional models, power is based on command or stems from the leader's power to provide rewards in exchange for accomplishing goals. The leader has power as defined by the position (Gardner 1990). Rankings of positions is an important aspect of traditional models (Van Nostrand 1993). Nontraditional models, on the other hand, view power as an "expandable resource that is produced and shared through interaction by leaders and followers" (Astin and Leland 1991:4).

Black women view empowerment as the creative use of group resources to realize collective goals. Empowerment is important for group resistance against oppression and is the basis for collective leadership; it is not concerned with domination over others (Collins 1990). Rather, its purpose is for the good of community and not an end in itself (Collins 1990).
Process. Coercion as the process for maintaining power over followers in traditional models is unidirectional. In contrast, solidarity as employed in nontraditional models is multidirectional. Early models of leadership such as trait theory emphasized the strength of the leader (Fairholm 1992). Traditional models view followers as passive individuals responding obediently to orders dictated by the leader. The transactional approach considered rational exchange as the process for accomplishing goals set by the leader (Bass 1990). Exchange is based on means-ends calculations. Nontraditional models, on the other hand promote solidarity of the group. Cooperative networks and collective resources are key components for resistance against external threats to survival (Hooks 1990). When the processes of leadership focus on strategies of empowerment, a climate is developed for collaborative effort.

Through the church, the promotion and development of collective leadership for community empowerment saw the rise of a massive self-help movement (Butler 1991; Billingsley 1992; Hine 1994). Community development activities that grew from this collective community spirit included mutual aid societies. The societies provided a host of services to the black community. The avowed purpose of the societies were to support one another in sickness or death (Grant 1968; Smythe 1976; Hine 1990). The names of these societies are not without significance. They represent the strong leadership role of black women (Gilkes 1985; Dodson 1988; Hine 1990). Women's benevolent aid societies were gender-specific associations. Women received hands-on training which proved
to be a regular component of African American community life during the 19th century (Gilkes 1983, 1988; Dodson 1988; Hine 1990).

According to Dodson (1988:39), black women assumed leadership within the black community despite the position of males. She uses the term “surrogate leadership” to underscore the unrecognized contribution of black women in the development of the church. The names of the societies developed by women give an indication of their leadership (Dodson 1988). For example, at the Wheat Street Baptist Church in Atlanta, two beneficial societies were developed—the “Rising Star” and the “Sisters of Love” (Frazier 1964). At the Bethel Methodists Church was the “Daughters of Bethel.” Similar names in other congregations were the “Independent Daughters of Hope,” “African Female Tract Association,” “Sisters of the Good Shepherd,” and “Daughters of Sharon” (Dodson 1988). Such Mutual aid societies eventually grew to be secular insurance companies (Butler 1991). Mutual Aid societies developed across the nation and across class lines.

The poor in rural America developed societies carrying similar names such as “Love and Charity,” “Builders of the Wall of Jerusalem,” “Sons and Daughter of Ester,” “Brothers and Sisters of Charity,” and “Brothers and Sisters of Love” (Frazier 1964). The names are symbolic of both the religious spirit in which the organizations were built as well as a symbolism of mutual support (Gilkes 1988: Dodson and Gilkes 1987; Billingsley 1992). The church served as a safe house from the outside hostile world (Gilkes 1985; Butler 1991). The black church in one sense was the ‘invisible institution’—“a world which the white
man did not invade but only regarded with an attitude of condescending amusement" (Frazier 1964:51). The black church was in fact an institution of life. It was the only place blacks could feel a sense of freedom—in both self-expression and status (Frazier 1964). The black church laid the foundation for self-help and the development of a host of economic, educational, and social service programs (Butler 1991). Black female leadership and the internal networks they developed were the main support of the black church and its community services projects.

Outcomes. The ultimate outcome of traditional models of leadership is control or compliance. Both assume a rational process of organizations. Control is inherent in positions of authority and compliance is dependent on reward systems (Bass 1990; Gardner 1990). Mutually held goals may result in independent objectives. The exchange relationship is based on obtaining goods or services for individual self-interests (Burns 1978). Hence, the mechanisms used to maintain control or compliance are different but the outcomes are the same. In contrast, nontraditional models are concerned with liberation and autonomy. Power is viewed from a position of strength in collective purpose and action (Burns 1978). The values inherent in nontraditional models are less about "means" and more focused on social change.

Black female leadership views struggle for liberation as primary. Historically, the site for liberation has been cultivated in the black community. Black female networks serve as the major political sites of resistance (Hooks 1990). Black women traditionally worked to create spaces to affirm black identity
and critically assess the role of leadership in liberation struggle. The struggle for liberation is an on-going battle for the black community. Hence, black female leadership is a process that has no end. The only outcome worthy of consideration is justice.

The above analysis demonstrates how differences in interpretation of an vague concept such as leadership can be attributed to differences in assumptions accepted by the elite paradigm. It is suspected, therefore, that the very meaning of leadership changes when articulated from a race and gender perspective. The following reconceptualization of leadership offers an alternative to traditional views.

Black Feminist Literature: Voices from the Veil

The recent popularization of a “race, class and gender” framework is a challenge to an traditional views of social phenomena (Hull, Scott and Smith 1982; Brittan and Maynard 1984; Collins 1990; Andersen and Collins 1992):

Collins (1990:222) posits:

Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift that rejects additive approaches to oppression. Instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, black feminist thought sees these distinctive systems of oppression as being part of one overarching structure of domination.

By embracing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression (Collins 1990), the scope of leadership is not only broadened, but the analysis moves to new arenas. Hence, the leadership of those whose experiences have
traditionally been rendered invisible come to the fore (Sacks 1988). At the same time, the basis for re-articulating the concept of leadership is advanced.

The recent works of black feminists have filled a void in scholarly writings. The depth and breadth of historical analysis enhance the work of other scholars. The feminist and black studies literatures have significantly advanced knowledge relevant to the concept of leadership (Kanter 1977; Astin and Leland 1991; Van Nostrand 1993). Still, race, class, and gender as an interlocking system of oppression (Bookman and Morgen 1988; Collins 1990) remain problematic using traditional conceptions of leadership.

Hence, a re-visioning of leadership based on those most often ignored in the literature is warranted. Minority women bring a world view and a new voice different from existing models. When they speak of leadership, they use different terms. Their visions of leadership are culturally defined by a set of values and beliefs based on their own experiences. For example, Green’s (1990:68) world view is related to a cultural and historical experience that defines a reality of leadership as:

...bonded and defined in community. Leadership for us is not achievement, in the normative mainstream sense. That I have a doctorate makes not a damn bit of difference. That I ever give a speech like this makes no difference. What makes a difference for me and for all the other native women...is what we give to our communities...what is demanded or expected of a person with real leadership ability in my community, is to give to it. The richest person in the Indian community is the person who gives the most away.
The many definitions, and recent advancement in theories of leadership have yet to capture the experiences of non-elites and the distinct experiences of leadership in communities of color. According to Albrecht and Brewer (1990:8):

> All of us are grounded in different cultural traditions. For women whose cultures have been marginalized, culture becomes an even more powerful force. African American women see leadership reflecting collective change. This comes out of a cultural tradition of communalism, which means the survival of the individual is dependent on the group. Many American Indian women see leadership as intricately related to family and Indian community, no matter what sphere this leadership emerges within.

However, such a limitation is not ground to ignore the broader problems confronting sociology—to re-articulate a more inclusive concept of leadership. Employing a race, class, and gender perspective moves beyond the “racial and ethnic stereotypes [that] continue to obscure leadership theory” (Mitchell 1988:18).

If the objective is to gain knowledge of leadership for practical purposes, then the net of inquiry must be widened. Sociology has the tools from which to cast this net. With the challenges from new and previously silenced voices, sociology also has the material for directing the net. The first and most obvious challenge is to erase the ideological premises that hinder an explanation of leadership in diverse groups and settings. One key dimension for advancing leadership theory is the inclusion of culture as an important sociological characteristic (i.e., Weber, Simmel).
Culture should not be separated from its context. Collins (1990) connects culture with activism and the "possibilities for activism..." She implicitly argues that "activism" defined outside of black women's culture is problematic. Collins (1990) calls for a focus on culture as centered in sociological analysis. Likewise, that which is social is centered in cultural analysis. The relationship between the two is not the same as addressing one in lieu of the other. Traditional theories, except for a few early classical community studies, focus on the social dimensions at the expense of the cultural. To better understand black female leadership, theory must therefore be concerned with both.

Leadership based on traditional assumptions have not focused on the processes that give meaning to defining the concept. Instead, the ways of knowing have been restricted to a priori assumptions. What is missing is the understanding of the processes prior to "the doing" of leadership or "the outcomes" of leadership. By connecting the social and the cultural in leadership thought, we better understand the processes by which black female leadership emerges. Only through understanding the action processes in all of their dimensions can we come to understand the meaning, content, and form of leadership as experienced by diverse groups.
Conclusion

A reconceptualization of leadership involves taking seriously research outside of the mainstream literature. The framework offered in this paper suggests a shift in world views. It offers a means to conceptualize leadership beyond a traditional elite model. Most important, it provides a place to contemplate the nature of the questions raised about leadership. The masses do not serve a "leadership" function in formal structures. As pointed out in this discussion, leadership is a natural part of their every day lives. Leadership emerges from informal groups and is supported by informal rules. For example, Gilkes (1988), contends that in the black community ‘race women’ (women who served the community for the sole purpose of race uplift) were not only recognized but held in high esteem. They were given status and recognition by the black community. The black community understood that black women could not capitalize on their leadership talents within the dominant power structure (Gilkes 1988). Lack of access to traditional sources of power forced black women to develop alternative means of resistance and leadership in nontraditional arenas within their own communities (Gilkes 1988).

By concentrating on the political realm, sociologists have presented an incomplete picture of black leadership in general and an inaccurate one of black female leadership in particular. While the meaning of black female leadership is far from universal (Albrecht and Brewer 1990), an unstated assumption in much of the literature on leadership is the “deficient hypothesis” (Nkomo 1992):
women and minorities are assumed not to meet the predetermined requisites that constitute leadership. The requisites are defined by trait theory, behavioral theories, situational theories and assimilation models of leadership. None of these perspectives address leadership in non-traditional arenas. Much of the contemporary leadership research maintains the presuppositions of classical theories dominated by male-oriented paradigms. Leadership is traditionally equated with being male (white) in positions of power and or authority.

An analysis of the literature, through re-visioning, provides the process by which answers can be sought to practical questions. That is, how does the inclusion of the experiences of the "other" re-center thinking on leadership? As argued here, one place to begin to answer this question is to look through the prism of race, gender, class, and culture.

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CHAPTER 2. BLACK FEMALE LEADERSHIP: PROCESSES, NETWORKS, AND A CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

A Paper to be submitted to the Journal, Social Forces

Beverlyn Lundy Allen

Abstract

This paper analyzes the "culture of resistance" as the foundation for articulating the meaning of black female leadership. A socio-historical analysis employs secondary sources to search for the processes, the form, and the content of black female leadership. The three major aspects of black female leadership and the indicators of resistance are identified and discussed. The paper incorporates the concepts as articulated in black feminist scholarship into a unified sociological framework. The paper concludes with implications for future analysis.
Introduction

The sociology of black community leadership has traditionally paralleled that of race relations in the United States (Myrdal 1944). Traditional research on black leadership is defined based on ecological models and places emphasis on the assimilation of male leaders as functionaries within the political arena (Myrdal 1944; Frazier 1957). This literature, while valuable in its efforts to suggest typologies of black leaders, is less useful in understanding black female leadership (Dodson 1988; Gilkes 1988; Sack 1988; Collins 1990; Hine 1990). As noted by Mitchell (1988:18):

Only recently have black women become the subject of serious scholarship, and finally an emerging core of black female social scientists, literary critics, and historians are producing studies that analyze and describe them and document their contributions. This scholarship...offers an opportunity to question the myths surrounding black women, to reveal finally why they are who and what they are (italics in original).

A substantial amount of this literature addresses black women's activism in non-traditional arenas (Dodson and Gilkes 1987; Dodson 1988; Gilkes 1988, 1985; Collins 1990; Hooks 1990; Anderson and Collins 1992).

One of the consistent themes throughout this literature is black women's resistance against the hostile forces of oppression (Lerner 1972; Gilkes 1983a; Collins 1990; Hine 1990; Hook 1990). Collins (1990) supports this view and suggests that a "culture of resistance" articulates black women's activism. Hence, knowledge of black female leadership is best understood within female spheres of action. Consequently, structural and cultural patterns within the black
community are key to understanding the historical processes from which black female leadership arises and by which it is reinforced (Gilkes 1985; Albrecht and Brewer 1990). When the intersection of race, class and gender are included in the analysis, resistance acts as a condition for leadership.

Accordingly, this paper employs the theme “culture of resistance” to identify the relevant aspects of black female leadership and explores the sociological significance that black women hold within the black community. Specifically, the paper has three goals: (1) to provide a definition of black female leadership; (2) to identify the form, content, and processes of black leadership via a socio-historical analysis; and (3) to systematically incorporate the components and indicators of the culture of resistance into a unified sociological framework on black female leadership.

**Defining Black Female Leadership**

The term *leader* is not one that black women accept readily (Gilkes 1983b:132). One reason for this reluctance is that the term is often associated with elitist ideas of domination and control (Gilkes 1983b; Childs 1989). Gilkes (1983b) found in her study of professional community workers that the label “leader” implied belonging to an exclusive club. One woman in Gilkes’ (1983b:132) study defined the term leader as “the ego piece” and a trap that led to co-optation. This response may be a reaction to an individualistic approach and perhaps explains why it is often shunned by black female community workers (Gilkes 1983b, 1988).
Black women view all aspects of community as connected and seldom separate their lives in terms that isolate them (Collins 1990). Black women value the collective spirit of community, where relationships are not viewed as one of leader or follower. Rather, collective action implies connectedness and interdependence for group survival (Childs 1989; Collins 1990). To avoid misinterpretation, the lay and professional black community tends to refer to black women's activities in cultural terms: race women, cultural workers, community othermothers, and centered women (Gilkes 1983b; Sacks 1988; Collins 1990). According to Gilkes (1988:54):

Working for 'the Race' emerged as a central historical role and a highly esteemed social status. Formerly called 'Race men' and 'Race women,' the men and women who do such work are often called community workers now. That term arising during the late 1960s and early 1970s, focused emphasis on community control, group solidarity, and cultural pride.

Community othermothers, according to Collins (1991), are women who provide support to biological mothers and serve as contributors to black community development. Community othermothers are recognized and given status as "lamplighters" that pave the way for political activism. Bell-Scott and Guy-Sheftall (1988:3) contend that:

[African American women] can be likened to the lamplighters of bygone days who turned on street lights at dusk. They have illuminated the community with a positive vision of the future and have pierced the darkness with their words and actions....

Dodson (1988), in her analysis of black women's role in the black church, employ the term "surrogate" to define black female leadership. Sacks (1988: 78) distinguishes between black men and black women "public spokespersons" and
suggests the term "centerwomen" when referring to network centers and the leadership roles of black women. African American women's leadership is fluid and unidirectional, "crossing class and political lines and must be examined within an interdisciplinary, pro-race and pro-woman perspective" (Bell-Scott and Guy-Sheftall 1988:3). Recent scholarly work has employed the term activism to accommodate the many uses and the diverse circumstances in which leadership or political activism is employed (Morgen and Bookman 1988). This paper interprets activism as an umbrella term that encompasses the concept of leadership.

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) suggests two dimensions of black female activism: the struggle for group survival and the struggle for institutional change. Black women's community work is the interaction of both dimensions. However, despite the growing awareness of the role of black women in the community, scholars have yet to provide a definition of black female leadership (Collins 1990). The term leadership as employed here refers to the diversity and unity of black women's collective work for group well being and community development. Hence, this paper offers a working definition of black female community leadership as

the struggle for group survival whereby group collective experience, and group socio-emotional support, as well as the instrumental aspects of developing and maintaining internal female networks for institution building, merge to form collective action for cultural maintenance and black community empowerment.
This definition is supported by the social and historical experience of black women in America (Hine 1994). Thus, the task at hand is to use that experience to identify the processes, content, and form of black female leadership (Giddings 1984).

**SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

*Resistance and Leadership During Slavery*

Black female leadership was evident as early as the slavery era (Aptheker 1982; Franklin and Moss, Jr. 1994; Hine 1994;). Slave women maintained their African values of interdependence and communal relations for collective survival. Black women developed social and mutual aid networks and often served as the leaders for entire slave communities (Davis 1967; Smythe 1976). The mutual aid network was of primary importance. Black people as slaves had to first find the means to stay alive (Davis 1967). The family was the only place to which black people could turn for support. Therefore, entire slave communities became the extended family that developed systems for providing moral and material support for its members (Billingsley 1992).

Racial identity created a medium whereby group survival efforts took precedence over the double standards of gender differences (Hine 1994). Slaves cooperated to protect each other and refused to abandon entirely the culture that they brought from the shores of Africa (Billingsley 1992; Hine 1994). From the beginnings of slavery, black women had a voice in moral, political and religious
affairs (Rodgers-Rose 1980; Giddings 1984). The magnitude of the slaves' suffering was such that, for the group to survive, black women had to do what was necessary (Rodgers-Rose 1980; Hine 1990, 1994).

Traditional kinship ties allowed their role as mothers to be shared within the kin family. Kin-networks took on the cultural beliefs of African societies. Gutman (1976:209) elaborates on the cultural tradition and the connection between the slaves and Africa:

[The] ties between immediate slave families and larger kin-networks affected other important behavior among ex-slaves. Kin-groups had powerfully influenced nearly every aspect of traditional West African community life, including agricultural and other economic activities, but New World enslavement prevented the replication of such organic relationships...central tension between slaves and their owners had its origin in the separation of work and kinship obligations...the extended kin-networks among the plantation blacks were sufficient reason to remain in a local familial and social setting.

As slaves, black women suffered the same indignities as black men. Although women did bear the general responsibility for child-rearing (Dill 1988) and other "womanly" duties, they created female-centered networks as centers of influence without appearing to do so.

These networks evolved through organized group activities such as spinning, weaving, quilting, cooking, and attending to each other in child birth and providing health care. Female networks allowed the women to forge a common consciousness concerning their oppression as women while devising a strategy for group survival...Consequently, their interaction engendered an even stronger sense of community among slaves (Hine 1994:5).

Black women were very much conscious of their treatment based on gender differences. They resisted the harsh treatment of sexual exploitation.
Slave women often ignored the rules or appeared to be endorsing them. Hine (1994:xxvii) states “some slave women saw their bodies and reproductive capacities as their own prerogatives.” As Gutman (1976:79) notes, “reproducing the slave economy required only the ‘dyad [slave] mother and child.’” Forced sexual acts imposed upon slave women sometimes resulted in abortion. However, abortions were not isolated acts by individuals (Gutman 1976; Hine 1994). They were a form of collective resistance against the institution of slavery and the violence imposed on slave women (Hine 1994).

Abortion became a problem that warranted the attention of the Medical Society in Tennessee during 1860 (Gutman 1976). Gutman (1976:80-81) suggests that the “abortion and contraceptive practices of whole families” were a possible conspiracy throughout southern plantations:

[A]s the planters believe, [that] ‘the blacks are possessed of a secret by which they destroy the fetus at an early stage of gestation.’ All country practitioners...‘are aware of the frequent complaints of planters’ about the ‘unnatural tendency in the African female to destroy her offspring.’ Whole families of women...fail to have any children. A situation in which a planter had kept between four and six slave women ‘of the proper age to breed’ for twenty five years and that ‘only two children had been born on the place at full term.’ It was later discovered that the slaves had concocted a medicine with which they were able to terminate their unwanted pregnancies...the older female slave had found a remedy...and instrumental in all...the abortions on his place (italics added).

Black female networks supported resistance by undermining the system. Women who did not have abortions themselves provided support to those who did through networks of ‘secrecy’ and midwifery. Collectively, black women
understood that they and their daughters were potential "mammies" to nurse and nurture another generation of slave holders (Gutman 1976; Franklin and Moss 1994; Hine 1994).

Black women also refused to accept as legitimate their designated responsibilities within the system (Hine 1994). According to Jones (1995:31), black women "challenged the master's authority in direct ways," often using their pregnancy status or the pretense of pregnancy to obtain additional entitlements to increase the resources for the slave community. Hine (1994:32) contends that "the slave woman was perceptive of the importance of her procreative function for the maintenance of the slave system to manipulate to her own advantage the precise function for which she was most valued by her master." Undermining the oppressive system for collective gain was a form of resistance more important than the potential sanctions imposed on the individual (Hine 1994).

Resistance against laws prohibiting slaves to learn to read was common within slave quarters. Black women participated in educating themselves and other slaves. Billingsley (1992:174) notes that the "desire for learning was nurtured and strengthened as an integral part of the socialization patterns and kinship networks of black men and women in bondage." Black women defied laws that prevented them from learning to read by setting up secret schools. The schools served to empower the group and symbolized community autonomy.

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1 Historically, "mammy" projected characteristics that suggested submissiveness toward her owner (during slavery) or her employer (following emancipation). For a detailed account of stereotypes of
Smythe (1976:344) recaptures "the tenacity and strength of black women." She notes that under the most oppressed conditions:

...Milla Granson, a slave, conducted a midnight school for several years...and in her midnight school, hundreds of slaves benefited from her learning...School started between eleven at night and midnight and lasted until two o'clock in the morning...the door and windows of the cabin had to be kept tightly sealed to prevent discovery.

Black Female Leadership and the Black Family

Black women continued to develop networks for resistance from the post-bellum era to the present (Gilkes 1985; Collins 1990). The networks were established within several contexts, but particularly within the black family (McAdoo 1980; Billingsley 1992). Family networks served as the core to the survival of the black community (Stack 1974; Gutman 1976; Scott 1991). Scott (1991) argues that family networks were central in the transmission of information and institution building in the black community. No other institution in the black community was more central than the network of black motherhood (Collins 1990). As noted by Collins (1990:146) "black women's centrality in black family networks led them to exert their political power through existing family structures without appearing to do so." Black women formed family networks to protect the community against the injustices experienced in daily life. For example, Jones (1985:229) observed how familial leadership emerged in times of crisis:

black women, see Sue Jewell, From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy, 1993.
During the Great Depression, black women (wives and mothers) joined together and risked arrest and imprisonment to withhold their money from rent-raising landlords, block the eviction of a neighboring family, or protect a black fugitive from law-enforcement agents.

Black women incorporated traditions passed down from generations. Black women cleverly addressed the immediate needs of the black community while simultaneously embracing the rituals of community life. For example, maintaining housing during the economic downturn of the 1930s was critical for black families (Jones 1985). Black women collectively organized and directed “rent parties” as a means of sustaining housing for family and friends (Jones 1985). At the same time, the “rent parties” served as a social event that brought together the extended family in the community. Selling dinners, organizing dances and other forms of entertainment were means to raise funds for the needed families. The rent parties were initiated by the needy family or by a concerned member of the community. Rent parties were a common means for raising funds to meet the attended need—to pay the rent. No stigma was attached to this activity or to the family. Entire families and friends participated in the general preparations for rent parties.

Black women took pride in the creative ways they could prepare foods. Cooking and the type of foods prepared were important parts of tradition and integral to rent parties. Historically, “what black people cooked for white people was in some important ways distinct from what they cooked for themselves, and much of that had to do with oppression” (Childs 1989:106). Black cooking had
ceremonial significance and also represented resistance to racist oppression.

Childs (1989:110) contends that the control over food is an important means of domination:

food is at once a necessity and a pleasure. Food is a basis of conviviality, a solace in times of sorrow, a respite from hard soil. For black people to control the making of food became the basis for a spirituality liberated space within the oppressive weight of the white world could be put aside...Food vital to the body and soul, was no small matter in the scheme of things. To lose control of food was to endanger one's very existence....

The communal relations in family networks served as a symbol of trust and loyalty and the spiritual component of collective survival (Jones 1985). In fact, the strength of black families, the church and resulting community organizations from slavery through the Civil Rights Era was its reliance on internal family networks (McAdoo 1980; Morris 1984; Gilkes 1985; Collins 1990; Blackwell 1991; Billingsley 1992).

Regardless of the pattern of racism, black women were consistent in maintaining the tradition of networks (Rose-Rodgers 1980). Black people have constructed a "historical community that has provided a context for traditions, distinctive ethnic identity, and group consciousness" for community betterment (Gilkes 1988:223-224).

**Black Female Leadership in the Church**

According to DuBois (1969), "All movements of social betterment were apt to be centered in the church... which has come to be an expression of black life."
The church was so centered in the lives of blacks that Giddings (1984:45) states: "undiscriminating behavior could get a person run out of church." Yet the church was also an outlet whereby blacks could express their suffering and dissatisfaction (Smythe 1976).

Butler (1992:80) proposed that the church in the slave community was similar to a secret society. He further states that the church served as "a forum to discuss grievances and for the organization of insurrection. However, as a result of the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831, Virginia passed a law forbidding African-Americans to preach." Alabama law provided that attempting "to teach slaves to read, write or spell was punishable by fines of $250 to $500" (Grant 1968:21) and imprisonment in the common jail "at the discretion of the court" (Davis 1982:266). Other states soon followed. The punitive laws led the way to black institution building in the 18th century.

Grant's (1968:23) account of black protest captures the essence of the movement towards independence:

One Sunday, church officials (white Methodist) tried forcibly to remove [Absalom] Jones and [Richard] Allen and others...to the rear of the gallery as they were kneeling in prayer...[leaving the church], they set about forming the Free African Society, a mutual aid association.

Self-expression for religious and educational independence resulted in the development of the first black organizations and marked the withdrawal from white society. The black church was the first major social institution fully
controlled by blacks and was the critical training ground for black leadership (Woodson 1929; Blackwell 1991; Billingsley 1992).

Networks within and among churches and voluntary associations provided major communication and support for black female activism (Gilkes 1985; Gilkes and Dodson 1987; Dodson 1988). Historically, however, it is difficult to separate the family from the black church and the outgrowth of black organizations. The black church represents an extension of the black family and its cooperative strategy for group survival. This interdependence between the two is articulated by Smith (1985:13): “The extended family has been employed as a way of imagining the black church...since black families are the source of the black church’s life and growth...”

In the examination of the place and importance of black women in religious activity, Gilkes (1985:679) argues that “the tendency to view black churches only as agencies of sociopolitical change led by black male pastors also obscures the central and critical roles of black women.” Brooks (1993:48) contends that “black women in the Baptist church unquestioningly thought of themselves as the ‘homeforce’...to go out into the ‘highways and hedges’ and forge the link between the church militant and the church triumphant.”

Women represented from 75 to 80 percent of the participants (Gilkes 1985; Billingsley 1992) and their dues provided the bulk of the financial support (Gilkes 1985). Despite the opposition to their recognition as leaders, “black
women cleverly combined political, civic and social goals” for institution building and community empowerment. (Davis 1982:xxiii).

**Black Female Leadership in Community Organizations**

Evidence of the nature of black women’s leadership must be interpreted in their accomplishments and the significance they play in the status of blacks as a group. Black women depended upon their existing networks for community development. As mentioned earlier, education was an important aspect of race uplift and “a number of black women founded their own schools” (Giddings 1984:76). They established educational institutions for youth and worked towards the development of the black colleges and universities (Davis 1982; Hine 1990).

Black women were very instrumental in providing mutual support by organizing group efforts such as the women's clubs (Hine 1994). Black women’s organizations paralleled those of the Charity Organizational Society and the Settlement Houses. The National Association of Colored Women founded in 1896, grew out of this effort and became the “most significant resource available to black female leadership” (Dumas 1980:205). Black women, such as Jarena Lee, the first black woman preacher of an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Grant 1982:142), were instrumental in organizing the female population in the Free African Society in Philadelphia (Hine 1990). As a result of the efforts of black women's organizations, a host of social service programs, including brick
and mortar projects, were developed in the black community. Guzman (1990:470) remarks that:

Projects in health, education, recreation and social rehabilitation are popular ways through which organized groups such as the National Association of Colored Women, the National Council of Negro Women, sororities, lodges, and social clubs in their local communities have contributed to community life.

During the Progressive Era (1890-1935), there was no greater example of black female leadership than their fight against the prevalence of disease, especially tuberculosis (Hine 1990). The racism in society prevented blacks from obtaining medical treatment in white hospitals and other care facilities (Hine 1990). Black women across the nation embraced community assistance by establishing health camps and providing professional care, resource mobilization and volunteer support to sustain the work of Women’s Clubs (Hine 1990, 1994).

Ferguson (1990) provides a detailed account of club members’ efforts in Indianapolis during the years 1903-1938. Ferguson (1990:239) notes that:

It was not until 1919 that the public funds allocated to fight tuberculosis benefited black Hoosiers in Marion county. Club members were also members in church and other secular groups. Their networking abilities, skill in fundraising and resource mobilization gained them the support of the ministry and general black community as well as the ear of some white supporters.

Economic development was also an important aspect to women’s leadership. One example was the Saint Luke Penny Savings Bank in Richmond, Virginia, founded in 1903 by Maggie Lena Walker, its first president (Brown 1988). The present day institution is the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company (Brown 1988; Butler 1991). Spin-off organizations from the same group resulted
in other business enterprises and organizations that provided training in leadership and entrepreneurship (Brown 1988). As a result, the employment for black women and men in Richmond expanded.

Brown (1988) articulates the spirit of black women's collective struggle and underscores the importance and intimacy of black women's networks in community building:

The idea of collective economic development was not a new idea for these women, many of whom were instrumental in establishing the Woman's Union, a female insurance company founded in 1898. Its motto was *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Rules the World*.... Saint Luke women built on tradition. Through the Penny Savings Bank the Saint Luke women were able to affirm and cement the existing mutual assistance network among black women and within the black community by providing institutionalized structure for these activities. The bank recognized the meager resources of the black community...particularly black women. Walker argued...band them together...put their mites together, put their hands and their brains together and make work and business for themselves.

Black women have continued the tradition of networks and the extended family culture today (Stack 1974; Gilkes 1983b). Carol Stack (1974) found in her study of urban single mothers that extended networks in the black family function as a system for social and economic exchange. Responsibility for the well-being of others includes sharing the roles of parenting, protector, provider and supporter (Jewell 1993; Collins 1990). The obligation for a family member was transformed into an obligation to other blacks and their families. Both black men and women shared their devotion to kinship-ties and community networks (Stack 1974; Billingsley 1992).
A contemporary example of black female leadership and network building is Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers. The self-help organization was built and developed by single black women in 1974. Barbara Omolade (1986:8), confirms the importance of the affective kin and family tradition, and self-help in black women’s lives today:

When I became a single parent, one of the first people who helped me was another black single mother...The black woman principal of a private preschool allowed me to work part-time to offset the school fees of my three children...my aunts and uncles stood by in case I needed money or baby-sitting.... Most important, my children’s father continued his relationship with them. These new networks and the traditional kinship ties of black families are the most useful support system for black single mothers...they remain vital and effective (italics added).

Growing numbers of women in Brooklyn now supplement or replace these supports with the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers.... I volunteered to help the group.... I coordinated a 13-week black women’s history series for Sisterhood.... I know how well it helps black single women survive.... It is truly a sisterhood, not a social work agency with paid advocates, who are often distanced from the problems and possibilities of black women and their families.

Black female leadership encompasses the creativity and commitment for individual and group well-being derived primarily from the characteristics of traditional female spheres of activity (Gilkes 1985, 1988; Collins 1990; Hine 1994). Historically, those spaces have been developed and cultivated within the black community. Black female leadership exemplifies not only the survival techniques in family, church and community organizations, but also the process of defining life on their own terms (Collins 1990).

As noted by Giddings (1984:52) “Black women saw no contradiction between domesticity and political action.” Political resistance required that black
women expand their role of homemakers and laborers to that of caretakers of the race (Hooks 1988). Caretaking was foremost prevalent in the building of the black community. Much of the political work of black women took place in and was a natural part of community life. As home protectors, community builders and laborers (slaves, domestics and industrial and professional workers), black women have responded to the perils of race, class and gender oppression (Jones 1985; Dill 1988; Gilkes 1988). In the face of these challenges, black women created networks of resistance (Collins 1990; Gilkes 1988; King 1988). The culture of resistance and the leadership thereof were cultivated and operationalized in the extended family of community, in churchhouses and in schoolhouses (Gilkes 1988; Dodson 1988; Collins 1990; Hooks 1990; Hine 1994). Leadership was first and foremost connected to the well-being and development of the group. It had no meaning apart from survival and community empowerment (Jones 1985; Gilkes 1988).

In essence, black female community networks served as a means of group self-defense. Community networks nurtured and protected the community from harm, and a new generation from humiliation (Collins 1990). Most important, the female networks in the family, in the church and in community organizations were interrelated, forming a matrix of reinforcements that held the black community together while defining a course for a better future.

Black female leadership is conditioned by history, race, class and culture (Steady 1981). Black women's social, political and economic standing serves to
structure their resistance to oppression. To reiterate, resistance acts as a backdrop for leadership in the lives of black women in community.

**THE CULTURE OF RESISTANCE**

The culture of resistance is a key concept toward the understanding of black women’s activism. While the term is not formally defined in the feminist literature, it refers to the various means by which black women have historically opposed oppression to facilitate group survival. As presented in the literature, the concept is not applied to the topic of black female leadership. Moreover, it is not consistently employed across studies. Hence, the explanatory power of the culture of resistance has yet to be fully recognized. Therefore, one contribution of this study is the reconceptualization of this concept into a systematic framework for the study of black female leadership.

*The Black Feminist Perspective on the Culture of Resistance*

Black women take as their political point of departure the historical conceptualization of race, class and gender as interlocking systems of oppression (Hooks 1979; King 1988; Collins 1990). Gender alone, like class, is insufficient to explain black women’s experiences. To rely upon simple fact or expectation is to take an essentialist perspective (Morgen and Bookman 1988; Collins 1990; Hine 1994; Omi and Winant 1994). Bookman and Morgen (1988:23) state:
The essentialist perspective conceals the all-important fact of differences among women. This perspective also runs the risk of exaggerating, or understanding out of context, certain features of women's experiences, particularly motherhood. To obscure differences among women in pursuit of a theory of male-female differences is certainly problematic, but it is especially so when analyzing women's political experiences. Social relations of power are so fundamentally structured in contemporary American society by the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and class that women's struggles for empowerment cannot be understood without making these factors central to the analysis.

Black women's oppression must be understood in relation to a "single, historically created system" (Collins 1990:225). King (1988:270) employs the modifier "multiple" to define an interactive model of oppression:

The 'multiple' refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well. In other words, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism. The sexual exploitation of black women in slavery is a historical example. If the most violent punishments of men consist of flogging and mutilations, women were flogged and mutilated, as well as raped. At the same time, our reproductive and child-rearing activities served to enhance the quality of the 'capital' of a slave economy. Our institutionalized exploitation...distinguished our experiences from that of white females' sexual oppression because it could only have existed in relation to racist and classist forms of domination.

Collins (1990:225) posits that, in addition to race, class, and gender as "interlocking systems of oppression" that "most heavily affect African American women," there exist multiple levels of domination:

people experience and resist oppression on three different levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions. Black feminist thought emphasizes all three levels as sites of domination and as potential sites of resistance.

Hence, the analysis of black female leadership necessitates a black feminist perspective. Collins (1990:222) proposes that "black feminist thought" includes
the interlocking systems of race, class and gender oppression. Black feminist thought is informed by the beliefs, values and assumptions inherent in an Afrocentric world view and at the same time shares a feminist viewpoint of oppression. However, when the experiences of black women and the relations of domination are included, it is necessary, states Collins (1990:222)

...to expand the focus of analysis...Assuming that each of these systems needs the others in order to function creates a distinct theoretical stance that stimulates the rethinking of basic social science concepts.

Figure 2.1 expands the analysis of a race, class, and gender framework to include history, culture, and ideology as important factors for solidarity and collective action. As depicted in the Venn diagram, race, class and gender oppression are interlocking circles. Resistance against these systems of oppression is sustained by the ties that bind the black community—a common history, a cultural tradition and a shared ideology or world view (Gilkes 1985). Black women share a collective experience base on their common history. Black women also share a common history with black men and at the same time have a history differentiated by gender. This shared experiences contributes to group solidarity and lessens the conflict between black men and women when addressing the external issues of race oppression.

Black women experience class oppression based on their race and their gender simultaneously. Class status based on race alone cannot explain black women's economic or social position. Blacks may experiences race differently because of class status, however, culture has served as the glue to hold the black
Culture

Interlocking systems of relations

Black women experience race, class, and gender oppressions simultaneously.

THE INTERACTIVE MODEL

Figure 2.1. The interlocking structure of oppression and the web of relationship.
community together (Gilkes 1985). Black women as a group have not ignored class differences but rather embraced class in terms of race and gender similarities. Black women view social class as a "relationship of communities" to capitalist political economies (Collins 1990:226). Hence there is "an overlap between gender and class oppression when viewing them through the collective lens of family and community" (Collins 1990:226). Figure 2.1 depict the relationship between gender and class oppression. Black women share a common world view that transcend class differences. They hold values and beliefs about who they are as black women and the meaning of womanhood in the black community. This world view or ideology as labeled in the Venn diagram, transcends black women's class differences. Historically, black women regardless of class, have resisted against stereotypes that determined their class standing in the dominant society (Hine 1994). Hence ideology is the tie that bind black women as a group.

In figure 2.1 the external forces of oppression are resisted by internal forces that bind the black community. By connecting the external factors with the internal dimension, an analysis of black female leadership is expanded. Viewing all of these dimension simultaneously, the internal and the external, suggest a web of relations and acknowledges the complexities of black women's experiences. As presented in figure 2.1, the interlocking systems of relations form the basis of black female experiences. It is the only place where all the dimensions come to the fore. Traditionally, class and gender conflict within the
black community was often negotiated by black women in favor of collective
action. A common history, an effort to maintain cultural tradition and a shared
world view serve as the basis for resistance against the web of oppression (Collins
1990).

Most writings in the field emphasize women's struggle—the direct and
indirect confrontation—against systems of oppression (Collins 1990; Hine 1994).
As stated by King (1988:227):

[T]he necessity of confronting and surviving racial oppression, black
women have assumed responsibilities atypical of those assigned to white
women under Western patriarchy. Black women often held central and
powerful leadership roles within the black community and within its
liberation politics... We were the backbone of racial uplift, and we also
played a critical role in racial justice.

In an analysis of the literature on black women's writings, the term
"resistance" appears to be a consistent theme. Hine (1994:xxviii) points out that
"questions about the relationships between gender and forms of resistance...is
repeatedly revisited from various perspectives." Black women's resistance has
served as a pillar for political activism and struggle in the midst of oppression
(Scott 1991; Collins 1990). However, resistance against the "interlocking web of
oppression" (Smith 1982:xxvii) does not come cheap. Resistance requires the
quiet energy of survival and the resounding verve of insurgency. According to
O'Neale (1986:139) resistance requires nurturing in *private spaces*:

Beyond the mask, in the ghetto of black women's community, in her
family, and more important, in her psyche...always...another world, a
world in which she functions—sometimes in sorrow but more often in
genuine joy...—by doing the things that ‘normal’ black women do (quoted in Collins 1990:95).

Similarly, Hooks (1990:46-47) speaks to the political value of homeplace. She argues that homeplace is “that small private reality where women and men can renew their spirits and recover themselves” in the striving for race uplift and the struggle against oppression. For example, historically race uplift included black women’s struggle for education, employment and health. Race uplift also required resistance to social policies of containment and against racist and sexist oppression and violence (Hine 1994). Oppression includes white cultural hegemony and the stereotypes of black womanhood that have historically positioned black women at the bottom of the economic, political and social hierarchy (Collins 1990; Jewell 1993; Hine 1994). Jewell (1993:88-89) articulates black women’s resistance against [dominant] cultural images and its negative impact on the lives of black women, their families and community:

One cannot deny the influence of subliminal messages on the young African American female.... The ability of African American women to overcome negative cultural imagery [Mammy, Aunt Jemima, Sapphire and Jezebel] is indicative of their strength and their resolve...but also reflects how such triumph is achieved through the support, confidence and understanding embodied in the African American sisterhood upon which the mutual aid network is grounded.

In one of the most comprehensive histories of black women, Jones (1985:10) debunks the myth of the “black superwoman” and at the same time demonstrates the courage and “sassiness” of black women in defense of family and community (Gilkes 1989). Giddings (1984:33) underscores black women’s resistance during slavery with a quote from DuBois: “I most sincerely doubt if
any other race of women could have brought its fineness up through so devilish a fire.” Overall, black women’s resistance symbolizes “the cutting edge of the African-Americans’ quest for freedom” (Nicola-Mclaughlin and Chandler 1988:180).

The term “resistance” is not unique to black women’s writings (see for example Caulfield 1974; Foucault 1980; Scott 1985; Childs 1989). However, it does have special meaning in the history of race relations. Hine (1994:41) posits that:

Because of the interplay of racial animosity, class tension, gender role differentiation, and regional economic variation, black women, as a rule, developed and adhered to a cult of secrecy, a culture of dissemblance, to protect the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives. The dynamics of the dissemblance involved creating the appearance of disclosure, an openness about themselves and their feelings, while actually remaining an enigma. Only with secrecy, thus achieving a self-imposed invisibility, could ordinary black women accrue the psychic space and harness the resources needed to hold their own.

Black women are making known more of their histories by which the cult of secrecy is unveiled (McClaurin-Allen 1989; Hine 1994). The term “resistance” gained considerable usage by civil rights participants and the intellectual community during the late 1960s through the mid 1970s. The term, as well as the issues surrounding its use, held great implications for the black community in general and black women in particular. According to Gilkes (1983a:295):

Regardless of the objective realities faced by black men and women as they attempt to create and raise families in a racist society, the policy framework advanced by the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty accomplished more than anything else, the public labeling of black women as officially deviant persons in American society...use [of] ideologies of patriarchy...unlike the media images that could be laughed at...were presented as legitimate social science and public policy. Unlike previous
eras of black community struggle, black women experienced the effects of isolation and degradation within their own communities. The image of dangerous black women who were also deviant castrating mothers divided the black community at a critical period in the black liberation struggle....

Gutman (1976) underscores the collective resistance to the oppressive forces by blacks from a historical perspective. Since slavery, black women have been defined in a non-representative manner which is extended to the family and the community in contemporary America (Gilkes 1983a; Jones 1985). As noted by Dill (1979: 546):

Gutman's work is important in developing a dialectical analysis of black women...Gutman's documentation of the existence of norms which differ radically from those of the dominant culture supports the potential of Afro-American culture to generate alternative notions of womanhood....

Much of black feminist literature adopts a dialectical mode of analysis, making explicit the nature of oppression, the context for political activism and the process of resistance (Dill 1979; Collins 1990; Gilkes 1983)

To reiterate, resistance against institutional oppression required the creation of safe spaces internal to the community and nurtured in the culture of community. As stated by Collins (1990:223):

Black women’s actions in the struggle for group survival suggest a vision of community that stands in opposition to that extant in the dominant culture. The definition of community implicit in the market model sees community as arbitrary and fragile, structured fundamentally by competition and domination. In contrast, Afrocentric models of community stress connection, caring, and personal accountability.
Characteristics and Indicators of Black Female Leadership and Resistance

Scholars of black women's activism tend to agree that collective experience, collective action and community empowerment are the primary characteristics for female community leadership (Steady 1981; Sacks 1988; Hook 1989; Collins 1990). Behind these three concepts lie the indicators of resistance that unmask the complexity and dynamic nature of black female community leadership (Fox-Genovese 1990; Hine 1994). From the writings of feminist scholarship, especially "Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment" (Collins 1990), six basic indicators illuminate the culture of resistance for community survival:

1. Rejecting anti-black and anti-women ideologies;
2. Redefining stereotypes and myths;
3. Rewriting the rules;
4. Defying the rules and redefining the norm;
5. Superficially adhering to the rules, appearing to endorse them;
6. The refusal to relinquish control.

The three aspects of black female community leadership and the six indicators of resistance as identified in the literature provide the basis for a unified framework. Resistance is a response by black women to the dynamics of historical events and connected to the unfolding of social processes. Hence, three additional components are proposed to further systematize the framework: content, form and processes.
Content refers to individual and collective identities of the actors embedded in the ideologies and histories of people (Jackson McCullough, Gurin, and Broman 1991; Semmes 1992). However, identity alone may not result in collective action. When identity has become politicized ideologically, commitment to collective action is more likely (Jackson et al. 1991). That is, racial rule as a slow and uneven historical process "moved from a dictatorship via the slave economy to hegemonic form of racial rule" (Omi and Winant 1994:67). Race is a specific type of relations that has produced a common history for blacks in the United States (Jackson 1991). Accordingly, Jackson (1991:245) states that the nature of the black experience "implies some sense of a common fate and collective commitment." Both the type and the nature of relations are important content properties for understanding the culture of resistance and the experiences of black women in community leadership. Content is one component operative across all aspects of black female leadership.

Form as used in the proposed framework refers to structures. Cultural and social structures are important in unraveling the components of black female leadership (Collins 1990). The use of the term form refers to both patterns of interaction. To place one over the other limits understanding of the complexity and dynamics of a culture of resistance. Resistance as social action is conditioned by social structures internal and external to the black community. Culture is "created and modified" by historical and "material conditions" (Collins 1986:22).
In turn, these same structures are transformed by social action (Sewell 1992). The relationship between the two is not the same as addressing one in lieu of the other. Traditional theories, except for a few early classical community studies, focus on the social dimensions at the expense of cultural aspects. To better understand black female leadership, theory must therefore be concerned with both.

Hence, in this framework, there is a relationship between content and form of leadership. Black female resistance is both a social and cultural battle against oppressive structures of domination conditioned by their identity as well as their experience in community and the broader society (Gilkes 1988, Sacks 1988).

Black female leadership emerges from constructing and redefining identities based on black women's historical experiences and social position (Collins 1990). For example, the mere fact that the black community exists suggests beliefs and assumptions about race and class and the relative character of structural formations (Omi and Winant 1994). It is only when a serious investigation of the black community is undertaken that the relational character of cultural formation is uncovered and black female social structures revealed (Hooks 1990). Reversing this process leads to the same conclusion. That is, serious investigation of social patterns will also reveal cultural formation. This is simply because the processes by which historical actors engage in social change
are shaped by structures and their actions in turn shape and transform structures (Simmel 1955; Childs 1989; Collins 1990).

The final component in this framework is *processes*. Processes include the ideologies and histories of black people as well as the cultural and social patterns structured and restructured, in the web of interaction (Simmel 1955). Leadership based on traditional assumptions have not focused on the processes that give meaning to defining the concept. Instead, the *ways of knowing* have been restricted to *a priori* assumptions. What is missing is the understanding of the intent and purpose of black female leadership. By connecting the social and the cultural in leadership thought, we understand better the *processes* by which black female leadership emerges. Only through understanding the *action processes* in all of their dimensions can we come to understand the *meaning*, the *content*, and the *form* of leadership as experienced by diverse groups. The characteristics of black female leadership are the dynamic interplay of the three components and the three aspects presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 depicts these relationships. For example, the *form* as characterized by extended family within the category labeled *collective action* suggests a linkage to all of the properties in the *collective experience* category. Hence, content and form are related to the processes component. This holds true for each of the components and aspects of black female leadership. Collective action and community empowerment is interconnected to each other and to
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Figure 2.2. Characteristics of black female leadership and indicators of resistance.
collective experience. The indicators of resistance are further discussed within this context.

**Collective experience.** As shown in Figure 2.2, two indicators of resistance within this component are: (1) rejecting anti-black and anti-women ideologies, and (2) redefining stereotypes and myths.

Rejecting anti-black and anti-women ideologies is related to both black women's self and group identities. Black women's history prior to slavery connects to an African identity. They share with black men a connection based on race. The term collective as employed here refers to the idea of a plurality of black people with "a core African value system that existed prior to and independently of racial oppression" (Collins 1988:307). Group identity is defined as the emotional bonds to one's racial group growing out of a sense of common fate (Jackson et al. 1991). Semmes (1992:12-13) suggests that:

> The experiences external to their [Blacks] shared sense of territoriality affect their well-being and survival. Culture is the bond that provides a collective consciousness and a common center through which and from which these phenomena are interpreted...The cataclysmic experience of chattel slavery, the basis for cultural hegemony, produced historical discontinuity and preempted normative culture building through a decentering process.

According to White and Parham (1990:19) black culture today represents "an admixture of two world views coming together, with the African world view as its guiding light."

There exists a dialectical relationship between blacks in the United States and in Africa. Magubane (1987:6) contends that African Americans' "yeoman
struggles against the image of the depravity of Africa and its people represents a quest for dignity and identity in America.” He (1987:6) further states that “their [blacks’] thoughts on Africa remained steadfast in its insistence that its people were not the step[children] of the human race.” African-Americans maintain a conscious relationship with Africa as symbolized in the naming of black people: Afro-American and African American. Hence, black Americans extend their affiliation with black Africans through psychological space (Semmes 1992). However, in America, the collective experience includes a sociological and a philosophical base (Magubane 1987). Black men and women share similar historical experiences.

Historical enslavement and terrorism by rape and lynching represented a common fate of blacks in American history (Hine 1994). For contemporary blacks, racism, cultural hegemony and segregation continue to suggest a collective experience that supports the maintenance of a common belief system structured across socioeconomic status and gender (Giddings 1989; Massey and Denton 1993).

Collective experience is also captured in black women’s resistance against negative imagery of their femaleness. Black women believe that negative images are a residue from slavery (Collins 1990), transformed to continue their subordination as black Americans (Jewell 1993). The negative images are used to maintain their status in the broader society. Black women remain firmly anchored at the bottom of the political economy and social hierarchy (Gilkes
Black women resist the dominant world view that define what they are, who they are, and why they are the way they are (Mitchell 1988).

As shown in Figure 2.2, a second and related indicator of resistance under collective experience is redefining stereotypes and myths. Black women as a group perceive themselves as survivors rather than victims (Collins 1990). For example, black women refuse to accept negative stereotypes of inferiority based on their race, gender, and class status. Internalization of negative images is destructive to blacks as individuals and to the survival of the community. As Hooks (1994:167) notes:

Poverty was no disgrace in our household...my grandparents and parents, assume that nobody's value could be measured by material standards...those lessons were reinforced by liberatory religious traditions that affirmed identification with the poor...emphasized solidarity with the poor. That solidarity was meant to be expressed not only through charity, the sharing of privilege, but in the assertion of one's power to change the world so that the poor would have their needs met, would have access to resources, would have justice and beauty in their lives.

Black women maintain an Afrocentric world view to redefine self-concepts. For example, the black community established their own rules of personhood and individual status. Historically, whites attempted to depersonalizes and devalued blacks by referring to men as "boy" and women by a host of negative labels. The black community resisted such labels and referred to each other using titles such as Aunt, Uncle, Mr., Mrs., or sister and brother. Establishing personhood was a strategy established by most black churches and adhered to in interracial settings (Gilkes 1985). Children were socialized to this practice at a very early age.
Violation of the norm was considered disrespectful and not tolerated by most in the community.

According to King (1988:276) "race serves as a significant filter of what blacks perceive and how blacks are perceived." Many black women have claimed that their racial identity is more salient than either gender or class identity (King 1988:276). Gilkes (1985) argues that racial oppression has been perceived as the most pervasive source of black women's suffering. However, she contends that this is only one source for black female collective action. Black women understand oppression as women, they just don't always act on it.

**Collective action.** The most salient indicators of resistance within this component are: (a) *rewriting the rules for cooperative action*; (b) *defying the rules and redefining the norms*; and (c) *superficially adhering to rules, appearing to endorse them*. Rewriting the rules for cooperative action finds its origins in the extended family that includes the black church (Gilkes 1985; Collins 1990; Billingsley 1992). Black women employ cultural language demonstrating the interrelatedness of community uplift and collective action (Gilkes 1983). The practice of naming and communicative style are inherent in the black church and transferred to all other aspects of community life (DuBois 1920; Frazier 1949; Gutman 1976; Gilkes 1985; Dodson 1988;). The women's club movement symbolized this in their motto "Lifting as we Climb" and "Laying of the Hands" (Gilkes 1985; Dodson 1988). In the black church the preacher is said to uplift and
inspire. The preacher "physically touches the parishioner with the 'laying of the hands'" (White and Parham 1990:62).

Most indigenous organizations within the community maintain the cultural traditions through naming or suggesting the nature of black struggle through the use of cultural metaphors. For example, the slogan of the Detroit Housewives' League (1930-1963), was "Find a Job or Make one and make your dollar do triple duty" (Hine 1994:140). The slogan suggests the reality of the oppressive forces of Jim Crow and discrimination against blacks. Asante (1987) refers to this as the rhetoric of resistance. Black women use their own cultural rhetoric as a form of resistance. According to White and Parham (1990:57, 63), in the black community "tellin' it like it is"

is the pervasive force that connects human experience. Human contact, the connecting linkages between people, is established by the spoken word. Through the spoken word linkages are established across time and space, transmitting Afro-American heritage from one generation to another.

Black women resisted rules of the dominant society that defined "black language" as poor English rather than as a linguistic style based on oral tradition and a basic part of black cultural identity (Collins 1990).

The culture of resistance includes the defiance of rules that humiliated or objectified blacks as less than human. Collins (1990:228) contends that "rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional, that perpetuate objectification and dehumanizing" is powerful. For the black community, reclaiming dignity sometimes resulted in defiance and or
superficially adhering to the rules and redefining the norms. James Horton (1990:58) articulates some of the traditional ways in which the black community attempted to redefine the norms—"men must never be ill-mannered, improperly dressed, or drunk in public. Children must always be neat and clean and display proper respect for their elders lest it reflect badly on the race."

Women who worked as servants in the homes of white families and under the control of males were warned "to be especially careful of any public display of sexuality... as partial protection against unwanted advances" (Horton 1990:58).

Like slave women, black domestic workers were devalued based on gender and race and considered as "mules" of the world (Collins 1990:214). Dill's (Collins 1990:143) research on black domestic workers suggests black women refused to let their employers push them around "by asking to scrub a floor on hands and knees when they had mops to use." Black domestic workers resisted individually and collectively against unfair treatment. By communicating on buses or in community they understood the ways of white folk and employed that information to assist black folk in whatever manner possible.

Black women's cooperative approach to community "allowed them to exert influence without appearing to do so" (Collins 1990:47). During slavery, those who were caught and tried for their leadership in the great revolts would not mention the "collective underground organizations," the networks and institutions on which their plans depended (Fox-Genovese 1990:159). Black
women's networks "undoubtedly provided the institutional links between acts of individual resistance...in the name of collectivity" (Fox-Genovese 1990:159).

Black women also superficially adhered to the rules, appearing to endorse them (Collins 1990). For example, the Detroit Housewives' League (1930-1963) became a powerful group for economic development within black communities across the country during the Great Depression (Hine 1994). In spite of their less visible roles as community leaders, black women used their own creativity and initiative for race uplift. Sometimes this required that class and gender conflict within the black community be negotiated.

Black women favor collective action over community dissension. According to Hine (1994:140-141) the women took great pains not to "disarm potential male [preachers and political leaders] critics who may have thought their autonomy threatened." The women's promise "to confine their work to carefully defined 'female spheres'" reflected an awareness of the broad needs of the race. The Charter established by the Housewives' League disclaimed any interests in competing with existing political or religious endeavors in the black community. They focused their activities on supporting local economic interest and professional enterprise.

The League successfully organized a national campaign to support only black businesses and professionals. The League developed neighborhood based centers culminating in a membership of 10,000 in a five-year period in Detroit alone. After ten years of collective work, the league no longer had to "maintain
the fiction of being apolitical” (Hine 1994:142). Their work and presence was a benefit and source of empowerment to the community until its demise in 1963. Hine (1994) contends that the civil rights movement and the perceived opportunities for women saw a decline in support for the League. Lack of membership and committed community workers contributed to its demise.

**Community Empowerment.** Community empowerment is the third aspect of black female leadership addressed in Figure 2.2. It shoulders both collective experience and collective action within the complex web of social relations with others (Bookman and Morgen 1988: Collins 1990). Empowerment, according to Bookman and Morgen (1988:4):

> is rarely experienced as upward mobility or personal advancement. Rather, feeling powerful is constrained for [women] by ways in which their gender, as well as their race and class, limit their access to economic resources and political power. Empowerment begins when they change their ideas about the causes of their powerlessness, when they recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, when they act to change the conditions of their lives.

For black women, community empowerment is the consolidating of internal community energies, resources and efforts toward building the black community. Community empowerment employs all of the indicators in collective experience and collective action and incorporates: the refusal to relinquish control over past accomplishments of the community.

Empowerment includes community autonomy as an important element for group survival:
Autonomy and separatism are fundamentally different. Whereas autonomy comes from a position of strength, separatism comes from a position of fear. When we're truly autonomous we can deal with other kinds of people, a multiplicity of issues, and with difference, because we have formed a solid base of strength...in order to develop new models for social change (Barbara Smith 1893, quoted in Collins 1990: 35).

Refusal to relinquish control is closely related to group autonomy in that it reflects the ideological belief that African Americans should build and support independent black institutions for collective well being (Gilkes 1985; Brown 1988). Black women’s networks facilitate this process by serving as safe places from which the culture of resistance is developed.

Jewell (1993:86-89) in From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond addresses female informal networks in the black community as basically serving three functions: (1) exchanging invaluable goods and services, including advice and information necessary for the development of positive self-concepts; (2) contributing greatly to the fortitude and resilience of African American women throughout their existence in the United States; and (3) facilitating the cooperation, stability and edification of African American women and the African American [extended] family.

Black female networks are crucial to the transmission of tradition from generation to generation. They support self-definition and self-valuation which is important for the development of potential leadership (Collins 1990). As noted by Jewell (1983:86) “mutual networks are an African retention, one that withstood the harsh realities of slavery.” She further states:
Integral to the mutual aid network and kinship network was the accepted belief that African American women could overcome the most arduous challenges and maneuver and access societal institutions. The African American women relied almost exclusively upon her female relatives and close friends for personal identification. Dominant cultural images were rejected or redefined within the networks of other women and extended kin (Jewell 1993:180).

From an Afrocentric world view, individual empowerment is important for self-expression and is necessary for group solidarity (Giddings 1984; Collins 1990). However, as figure 2.2 indicates, community empowerment and all of its dimensions feed into collective action and collective experiences. The two way arrows suggest that every aspect and component of the model is interwoven and interconnected, indicating a dynamic and complexed relationship. In all of its dimensions, collective experiences, collective action and community empowerment are important for collective resistance. Black female networks "bound the daily lives of individual to the most spectacular attacks" against the interlocking systems of race, class and gender oppression (Fox-Genovese 1990:159).

The six indicators are not exhaustive of all possibilities or combinations. However, they provide a place to begin to formulate a systematic approach to investigating black female leadership.

Conclusion

Employing the theme "culture of resistance" as defined in black feminist scholarship, this paper presents a unified sociological framework for black female
leadership. The paper addresses three goals: (1) to provide a definition of black female leadership; (2) to identify the form and content and processes of black female leadership via a socio-historical analysis; and (3) to systematically incorporate the components and indicators of the culture of resistance into a unified sociological framework on black female leadership.

Defining black female leadership is a major contribution of this paper. Before this study, the black feminist literature focused primarily on black women's activism. Providing a definition of the concept is a necessary step in developing a sociological framework.

A socio-historical analysis suggests three aspects of black female leadership: (1) collective experience; (2) collective action; and (3) community empowerment. Six indicators are identified and incorporated to further illuminate the three aspects.

The aspects of female leadership and indicators of resistance offered here represent a beginning. Other characteristics may also explain the particulars of leadership among black women. The culture of resistance is both limited and radical. It is limited in that resistance is addressed at the community level. The indicators therefore may not be relevant to other levels of oppression. On the other hand, the framework is radical in that it provides an alternative to traditional typologies employed in research on black leadership.

Limitations notwithstanding, the proposed framework has several implications for future research on black female leadership. Primary among
these is that the framework considers the interaction of structure and culture in explaining the historical processes, form and content of black female leadership. As this paper indicates, structure and culture are not interchangeable. They are both interrelated with each other and particular to historical experiences.

In addition, traditional theories of leadership assume a public/private dichotomy that render black female leadership invisible (Bookman-Morgen 1988). By employing a culture of resistance theme, the false boundaries between public and private are discarded. The definition of leadership moves to non-traditional arenas and includes the activities of non-elites. Black female leadership is dynamic and fluid. It is a process in the web of relations whose form and content changes within a structure of domination. However, because of racism, black women continue to identify with black men more so than with any other group. This recognition itself commands further research on the interlocking systems of oppression. Race continues to serve as an important category for investigating the experiences of black women.

The analysis of black female leadership could be extended to include transitions in race, class, and gender oppression. For instance, the post-Civil Rights Era has altered the nature of black female networks (Jewell 1993). There have been changes in the form of collective action. Individualistic approaches to resistance as well as sexist norms practiced in the black community are more apparent than in the past (Hooks 1990). Whether this is a shift towards values of individualism is unknown. Historical definitions of oppression may no longer
be the internal reality for the post-Civil Rights Era generations. Hence, the very meaning of collectivism changes.

According to the scholarly literature, the three aspects of black female leadership as addressed in this paper continue to exist. But we need further research to answer the question, to what degree? At this historic moment, collective experiences among black women may be more symbolic than real. Consequently, collective action and community empowerment may be more difficult for the black community today.

The preceding framework is a step toward future research into factors and circumstances of black female leadership. An analysis of black leadership should take into consideration the processes by which structure, culture and history determine the nature and processes of black female leadership. Rather than focusing on individuals as leaders, inquiry into networks as collective leadership may prove worthy of consideration.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 3. BLACK FEMALE LEADERSHIP: AN ELABORATION OF THE BLACK ORGANIZATIONAL AUTONOMY (BOA) MODEL

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Abstract

Black female leadership in the context of community development has received relatively little attention in the sociological literature. An exception to this general trend is the Black Organizational Autonomy (BOA) Model (Horton 1992). Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to expand on the female leadership component of the BOA Model. Specifically, the following questions are asked: (1) What is the nature of female leadership in the context of black community development? and (2) What is the potential of black female leadership for effecting change in the black community? The paper employs a case study to demonstrate the importance of black female leadership in facilitating social change within the black community.
Introduction

Leadership continues to be a central issue in the sociology of the black community. From the early work of Frazier (1957) to the more contemporary work of Lusane (1994), leadership has been recognized as a critical element in the social and economic development of the black community (Brown 1991). However, one major aspect of this issue that has not been adequately addressed by sociologists or community development theorists is the need and relevance of black female leadership (Collins 1990; Gilkes 1988). Nowhere is this omission more salient than in the context of black community development (Brown 1988). One exception is the Black Organizational Autonomy (BOA) model introduced by Horton (1992).

This paper presents an elaboration on the female leadership component of the BOA model. Specifically, the following questions are addressed: (1) What is the nature of female leadership in the context of black community development? and (2) What is the potential of black female leadership for effecting change in the black community?

Perspectives on Community Development

Sociologists and community development theorists in general argue that leadership is an important and necessary component of the community development process (Stoneall 1983; Garkovitch 1989; Sternweis and Wells 1992;
Wells and Tanner 1994). However, there is a relative absence of studies in sociology that place black women as actors in community development. Several perspectives will be reviewed to explain the exclusion of women and bias in leadership theory and practice.

Stoneall (1983:25) argues that the definition of community itself needs to be expanded "to encompass the informal and the private arenas where people work and make decisions." She refers to the backstage of communities as a neglected dimension that excludes women as well as some men's community activities. Stoneall (1983) focuses on women's organizations and the distinctive local culture perpetuated by women's community work. She also notes women's contribution to farm and family business. Stoneall (1983) incorporates class and gender as important categories in explaining the differential proportions of male and female leaders in communities. This work has relevance for women in general and provides a basis for the examination of black women in the community development process. However, it is limited in that race is not an analytical category and therefore does not capture the experiences of black women.

Sternweis and Wells (1992) contend that sex role ideology contributes to beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate the stereotypes about women. They argue that this bias in leadership practice and research has rendered female leadership invisible. Hence, women have operated from the community's backstage by
developing parallel organizations to facilitate their own development and need for support:

The so-called traditional auxiliaries were quite functional in their day and even now provide women an arena in which their leadership skills can grow. Some have evolved into independent women's organizations... Women's organizations will remain essential until women are represented in sufficient numbers in mainstream organizations because women's organizations provide women a place from which to address the special concerns of women and the opportunity to develop and exercise leadership (Wells and Tanner 1994:225).

Wells and Tanner (1994) contend further that unconscious ideology and stereotypes about women are major barriers for women's access to leadership positions in formal organizations. Accordingly, they (1994: 254) state "the formation of an internal identity, which reflects how the members see themselves, also clarifies how others see them. The development of an external identity to complement the new internal identity may indicate a new stage of maturity." The "process of identity formation" expands on Stoneall's (1983) research and offers an alternative to traditional models of leadership in that it raises the ideological issues associated with the exclusion of women.

In addition, identity formation is an important property in determining the potential for collective action (Collins 1990; Van Nostrand 1993; Wells and Tanner 1994; Ryan 1995). However, for black women, the process of identity formation must incorporate race as well as gender (Davis 1989). The history and experiences of a group are important determinants in the social change process. Black women experience race, class, and gender simultaneously (Collins 1990).
Black women have not had access to organizations open to white women and black men. Consequently, exclusion from access to participation is not the same as exclusion from positions of power. Both are important in relation to race. Historically, black women’s organizations have paralleled those of white women and black men (Hine 1994).

Preston and Enck (1989) present an analysis of black leadership in their elaboration of the sub-community thesis. They argue that the minority population’s leadership is not integrated into the overall leadership structure. Hence, they are not included in the development process of the overall community. The black community for the most part is isolated from community development strategies of the dominant community (Enck and Preston 1989). Race serves as a significant condition to the degree that blacks have access and are able to participate in developmental processes of the total community. However, what Preston and Enck (1989:56) define as the “racial bifurcation of community leadership” does not include gender as a selected characteristic. A focus on community decision-making and power relations models limits an understanding of black female leadership and the structural aspects that influence leadership (Collins 1990).

Horton (1992) argues that the population and structural changes in the United States have altered the status of the black community. Hence, black community development and the contemporary need for black female leadership must be placed in the context of structural change. Traditional
models of community development neglect overall structural impediments such as residential segregation and the interlocking systems of race, class and gender inequality. Hence, they propose theories and models that do not work for the African American community (Horton 1992). Many of the general models and strategies for community development do not address racial inequality as a barrier to leadership development.

Massey and Denton (1993) argue that racial segregation is the most important factor in understanding racial inequality. Using census data on housing to support their arguments, they note that not only are blacks the most segregated group in America, but this segregation is not due to the impersonal forces of the structural economy:

The emergence of the black ghetto did not happen as a chance by-product of other socioeconomic forces. Rather, white Americans made a series of deliberate decisions to deny blacks access to urban housing markets and to reinforce spatial segregation. Through its actions and inaction, white America built and maintained the residential structure of the ghetto. Sometimes the decisions were individual, at other times they were collective, and at still other times the powers and prerogatives of government were harnessed to maintain the residential color line; but at critical points between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, white America chose to strengthen the walls of the ghetto. (1993:19)

As Massey and Denton argue, the decisions are often individual. Consider this comment from Franklin (1991:127):

The acquisition of equal incomes for identical jobs does not necessarily produce equal wealth accumulations because individual members of the black middle class do not have equal access to the housing market. The overcrowding of blacks in the lower rungs of the economic ladder induces middle-class whites to resist entry of middle-class blacks into "their"
communities, "their" schools, and "their" local parks. The Great White Fear is that the middle-class blacks who are "good" types will be followed by lower-class blacks who are "bad" types. As a result, the black middle class, for reasons that cannot but appear racial, are excluded.

Racial inequality has a direct relationship to community development and black female leadership. Race, class and gender form the social categories for black women. All three have informed leadership for community development because the policies developed based on race and gender impact the class positions of people in all categories. Exclusion based on race has been the defining factor for segregation (Massey and Denton 1993). For black women, all three operate simultaneously.

The Black Organizational Autonomy Model

Horton (1992) argues that black leadership is an internal issue for black community development. Differentiating between internal and external problems, Horton states:

Internal problems of the black community are those that are amenable to the direct control of the community members. Thus, issues relative to black leadership, black class stratification, etc., fall into this category. External problems are those that are beyond the direct control of the black community. Racism, white apathy and general economic downturns in society are examples of external problems (1992:7).

The internal/external typology is the point of departure for Horton's BOA model. Accordingly, Horton (1992) posits that viable black communities are those that have community organizations with the following characteristics: (1) economically autonomous black institutions; (2) internally developed and
controlled data sources; (3) an emphasis on black history and culture; (4) socially inclusive leadership, and (5) the development and incorporation of females in leadership roles.

Economic autonomy is the most important feature of the BOA model (Horton 1992). It is based upon the history and sociology of the black experience in America (Wilson 1980). In short, the problems and concerns of the black community have been long enduring (Franklin and Moss, Jr. 1994). To effectively address these problems, the black community must be free to implement programs and policies that are in its best interest, irrespective of the prevailing political winds (Butler 1991). Hence economic autonomy is indispensable to sound black community development (Horton 1992).

Internally developed and controlled data sources is the second component of the model. Horton (1992) notes that this component was necessary to allow the black community to make informed decisions based upon the analysis of empirical data. In addition, this component allows community members to identify and define their problems as opposed to having them externally superimposed.

An emphasis on black history and culture is necessary to overcome the impact of increased class heterogeneity within the black community (Wilson 1980). Such an emphasis will facilitate the development of cooperative strategies that were instrumental to the survival of the black community in the past (Butler 1991).
Social inclusiveness addresses the increasing social, political and philosophical differences that exist among contemporary black leaders (Childs 1989). This component of the BOA model stresses tolerance rather than the infighting and personal attacks that tend to characterize relationships between many black leaders (Blackwell 1991).

The final component defined as the development and incorporation of females in leadership roles is the focus of this analysis. Horton (1992:12) contends that black women have historically been committed to the development of the black community: “one has only to observe the support base of the black community’s strongest institution, the black church. Without the consistent and loyal participation of black females, the church could not exist.” Horton (1992) argues that the demographic and structural changes in the black community necessitate the utilization of the best talent available for rebuilding black communities. The disproportionate number of single headed households in the black community has been attributed, in part, to the low sex-ratios. Much of the literature on sex-ratios has focused on the pool of marriageable black men, increased poverty rates, teenage pregnancies, or the changing black family structure (Wilson 1987; Horton and Burgess 1992).

Little or no attention has been given to the number of females with respect to an untapped resource for future development of the black community (Horton 1992). The sheer numbers represent a potential pool for the promotion and development of female leadership in black community development.
(Horton 1992). Given the history of black female leadership and the aforementioned population and structural changes within the black community, Horton (1992) argues for a gender neutral policy for the development and promotion of females in leadership roles.²

The BOA model implies an understanding of leadership from a historical and cultural perspective. However, the female leadership component as presented is limited in several ways. First, Horton (1992) does not explicitly state the nature and characteristics of black female leadership. While one may infer a definition of black leadership from the many employed in the literature (Gibbs 1950), the concept of black female leadership remains elusive (Albrecht and Brewer 1990). Hence an understanding of the nature of female leadership is in the context of black community development is warranted.

A second limitation of the female leadership component of the BOA model is that it omits an elaboration of the process by which black women are involved in leadership. For instance, Horton (1992) places importance on a gender neutral policy that promotes the incorporation of females in leadership roles. He contends:

Leadership in the black community tends to be male dominated...females should have equal access to leadership positions, and a gender neutral policy on the development and promotion of leaders should be a major component of black community development efforts. (1992:12)

² Interpretation of Horton's term “neutral” is that neither gender should dominate and that females should be integrated into the overall leadership structure of the black community. Black female approaches to leadership may be different than male approaches, but neither is superior.
“Equal access” implies change in the existing structure that allows for an infusion of females in leadership roles. However, Horton provides no descriptive background on existing structures other than being male dominated. The processes and form of female leadership needs to be made explicit.

Finally, the BOA model does not delineate the inter-connectedness of the female leadership component in relationship to the other components of the model. The model itself provides a framework for incorporating black women’s experiences in community leadership. However, the linkages have not been made clear. This elaboration of the female leadership component of the BOA model will address the aforementioned concerns.

Elaboration of the Female Leadership Component of the BOA Model.

An elaboration of the BOA model includes: (1) a definition of female leadership; (2) the important aspects of female leadership; and (3) the integration of female networks into the overall model.

Black Female Leadership Defined

The content, form and processes of black female leadership must be placed in the context of their own knowledge and experiences (Essed 1990). As applied to community development, black female leadership emerges from the creation and maintenance of safe spaces defined as network centers (Brown 1988; Collins 1990). Such network centers are structured for and conducive to the organizing
and mobilizing of social and material resources to enhance the sense of personal and group well-being and to develop the capacity for institution building (Brown 1988). Hence, a working definition of black female leadership in the context of black community development is:

the struggle for group survival whereby group identity, self-valuation and group socio-emotional support, as well as the instrumental aspects of developing and maintaining internal female networks for institution building, merge to form collective action for black community development and empowerment.

Aspects of Black Female Leadership

Black female networks are key, yet sometimes invisible, seams that have historically held together the fabric of community (Giddings 1984). Collective experience, collective action and community empowerment are important aspects in explaining black female leadership.

Collective experience encompasses black women's attempt to maintain African values of interconnectedness, interrelatedness and interdependence for group survival (Steady 1981; Davis 1989; Semmes 1992; Collins 1990). Group survival is conditioned by black women's historical experiences and structural location (Hine 1994). Hence, the construction of identity formation (Wells and Tanner 1994) is the interlocking systems of race, class and gender oppression (Collins 1990). Efforts to maintain community and transform oppressive systems is guided by an admixture of African and American culture (White and Parham
1992). At the same time, it is structured by external forces (Collins 1990). As change occurs both culture and social structures are restructured.

The interrelationship of culture and social structures are conditioned by history. Culture helps define black women's world view which is captured in female networks devoid of any one overarching pattern or leader (Hine 1994). Rather, black women created cultural networks in response to oppressive structures of domination and control (Collins 1990). Black female networks are fluid, yet interdependent. They are connected to other networks at the local and national levels. Within the context of community development, black women's circle-of-networks provide a dimension of leadership not sufficiently explored. This dynamic matrix of reinforcements is first and foremost about community survival and resistance against the threat of survival.

*Collective Action.* Group identity is insufficient to stimulate collective action. However, combined with a long and collective experience and a common fate, group identity provides strong support for a collective approach to community development. Black women in particular have nurtured that relationship as extended family. They have extended community to include black life in all of its facets and dimensions. Collective action for community development suggests group commitment rather than the self-interests of individuals (Gilkes 1988; Childs 1989; Collins 1990; Ryan 1995). Ryan (1995: 17) suggests that:
... more attention should go to attributes that are not reducible to the vested interests of individuals. The intent, however, is not to ignore the importance of personal attributes, but rather to view collective action more broadly where the mutual existence of both groups and their members are recognized.

Black women share a racial identity, a common history and a common fate. Historical experiences and the on-going relations that have stemmed from that experience served as the basis for commitment to community and the reliance on each other to survive. Self-development was just as important as group development. However, first loyalties were for the group. Collective experience served as a requisite for collective action (Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990; Hine 1994). From this perspective black women view leadership as reflexive and collective.

Community empowerment for group survival translates into every aspect of community life. The central focus of community empowerment includes the family, the church and community organizations not as separate but rather as interrelated entities. Community is dynamic and fluid, requiring the resources and contribution of all of its members. As noted by Collins (1990:131-132) black women's actions demonstrate:

A clear rejection of separateness and individual interest as the basis of either community organization or individual-self actualization. Instead the connectedness with others and a common interest expressed by community othermothers [leaders] models a very different value system, one whereby Afrocentric feminist ethics of caring and personal accountability moves communities forward.

Black women's networks serve as a support for women and as a safe refuge to develop strategies for group survival. Hence, black women share a common
philosophy about their responsibility for the betterment of the race. Regardless of differences in experiences and class status, a common history, everyday racism, and a desire to maintain black culture are sufficient reasons to work together for community empowerment.

Methodology

This paper employs a case study as a methodological technique. Case studies have a long tradition in sociology (Liebow 1967; Loflund 1971). According to Yin (1985:13), a case study is "an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." Yin (1985) notes that case studies have the advantage of allowing for an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon via direct observation and systematic interviewing. Thus they allow the researcher to answer "how" and "why" questions in a situation where he/she has little or no control.

There are concerns about the limitations of case studies. Yin (1985) notes that they are often criticized for allowing equivocal evidence to bias results and for their lack of generalizability. One means of compensating for the limitations of the case study approach is the use of historical and demographic data as supplementation (Shryock et al. 1976; Daniels 1990; Butler 1991). Thus, history and demography will be employed to contextualize the case study and thereby
add further depth to the analysis. According to Yin (1985:121) "the case study 'report' does not follow any stereotypic form, such as a journal article in psychology." In this study, detailed descriptions and direct quotes from interviews will be employed.

The current case study is part of a larger study of the black communities of Iowa. This particular case focuses on a black community organization of Waterloo, Iowa: the Community Enabler Program. Interviews and observations were conducted from September 1990 to November 1994. At the outset, the subjects were informed of the identity of the researcher and the nature of the study. Extended, unstructured interviews were conducted with the leaders of the community organization during the initial stages of the study.

Subsequently, observations were made in the context of the normal operations of the organization. These observations included seventeen site visits which were comprised of nine board meetings and eight special purpose meetings. Female members of the community organization's board of directors were interviewed in the final stages of the project to gain their personal insights on black female leadership and the roles that black women play in the community.

Board meetings were not well attended. During the observations over a four-year period, the maximum in attendance was twelve, the minimum three. It should be noted that the size of the board was variable. Also the women interviewed were members of the board over the duration of the project, but not
all at the same time. The majority of the board members who consistently attended the monthly meetings were women. Seven women were interviewed. This number is small but is fully representative of the board members who were actively involved in the organization. One woman, while not formally on the board, was very active in the organization's activities and the broader community. Thus, she was deemed appropriate for the study given her association with the organization and her leadership status.

**Historical and Demographic Data**

Waterloo is a small city in northeastern Iowa. By Iowa standards, the city is large: 66,467. Although Waterloo is located within a midwestern state, its history reflects many of the characteristics of cities in the old South. An examination of historical documents reveal that the city has a history of racial segregation—even displaying "white" and "colored" signs in public places. As one long-time resident and community leader put it: "The Cedar River divides Waterloo into a black East and a white West—and the feelings run as deep as the river."

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, there are 8,077 blacks in Waterloo. This is the second largest black population in the state, after Des Moines. However, whereas blacks in Des Moines represent 8% of the total population, Waterloo's blacks comprise 12% of its population. This makes Waterloo the
“blackest” city in Iowa. Moreover, in a state that is approximately 96 percent white, Waterloo has a percentage black comparable to the nation.

Blacks in Waterloo had poverty levels of 42.8 percent for persons and 41.7 percent for families in 1990—in each case three times that for whites. Similarly, unemployment for blacks (17 percent) was greater than that for whites (6.1 percent) by a magnitude of nearly 3-to-1. In short, Waterloo mirrors the nation in terms of the racial inequality. On every indicator of social and economic status, blacks trail whites. Not surprisingly, many of the problems associated with racial inequality are likewise present. Because of its level of residential segregation, poverty and economic disadvantage, the black population of Waterloo has been ascertained to be a microcosm of urban blacks nationally. As in any natural laboratory, effective problem-solving techniques developed therein are expected to have potential to do likewise at the macro level (Horton 1992).

The Community Enabler Program of Waterloo, Iowa

The Community Enabler Program (CEP) was founded in the late 1960s. It is part of a national network of community organizations called the Black Community Development (BCD) Program that was developed in 1968 as an outreach program of the United Methodist Church (UMC). The national organization has its origins in the demands of black UMC members nationwide for the church to address the needs of disadvantaged minorities. There are
approximately 23 BCD programs throughout the United States. In Waterloo, the
In initial interviews with the CEP leaders, it was pointed out how important the
CEP is independent of the supervision of the UMC. Thus, the program depends
solely upon private donations and community support for its financing.

In the late 1970s, the CEP decided that a community-owned radio station
would be a powerful asset to the black community of Waterloo. In initial
interviews with the CEP leaders, it was pointed out how important the radio
station was to any community or society. One particular leader illustrated his
point with the example of how during a military coup, it is the radio and/or
television station rather than the presidential palace that is first captured. To
demonstrate this point further, the leader took the primary investigator to the
control room and conducted an impromptu live interview. The power to
inform and mobilize was dramatically demonstrated.

However, black community leaders were convinced that the white power
structure would attempt to impede the development of this institution. There
was a history of racial exclusion and discrimination to support their belief. The
most likely means to thwart the black community's efforts was to deny it the
ability to incorporate the radio station in Waterloo. Thus, so as not to arouse the
suspicion of the white power structure, the black community decided to secretly
incorporate the radio station, KBBG, in Washington, D.C. KBBG was
incorporated officially under the title of Afro American Community
Broadcasting, Inc. The radio station is only one component of the overall CEP
structure. KBBG is subject to the policy directives and oversight of the CEP board. In addition, the radio station operates on a 24-hour basis. It offers news, public service and informational programs and a full range of black music (religious, jazz, blues, rythm and blues, hip-hop and rap).

The following is an excerpt from one of the organization's promotional brochures that succinctly provides its history:

The station was incorporated in March of 1977 by Jimmie Porter and Warren J. Nash, and on July 26, 1978 KBBG conducted its first equipment test operating 10 watts of power. On August 12, 1978 the late Cuba Tredwell, Sr. cut the ribbon that signified the first full day of broadcasting.

Not being satisfied with the low wattage and transmitting in Mono, KBBG took another giant step and purchased over $1,000.00 in new equipment. Then on December 27, 1980, Barbara Rucker flipped the switch that moved the station from 10 watts to 10,000 watts of stereo power.

Still not satisfied in June of 1983, KBBG leaps ahead in technology with state of the art equipment, satellite, now replacing telephone lines formerly used to deliver programming, example: Sheridan Broadcasting News, (the largest Black owned News service in the United States). All these improvements were made to allow the station to fulfill its main objectives, which are to provide Waterloo and Northeast Iowa the unique opportunity to become more accurately informed about minority persons and share with them the high artistic achievements of Afro-American culture.

There continues to exist a tremendous need for minority people in Waterloo. Black culture/lifestyle is not accurately represented in the media because Blacks have been systematically excluded from both ownership of stations and decision-making positions. KBBG stands as a model of encouragement relative to self-development and utilization of media as an educational tool—rallying citizen participation in policy issues that impact their lives. And to Also provide skills and work experience for Blacks in telecommunications, that lead to jobs in the broadcast industry. Our Motto "Communicate to Educate" in the final analysis, undoubtedly benefits the entire State of Iowa. (Afro-American Broadcasting, Inc., Black History Calendar 1992).
The Role of Black Female Leadership

Incorporation was only the first step in the establishment of the radio station. The next important task was to build the facility within which to house the station. At this point, the significance of black female leadership became apparent. The community had decided to forego corporate sponsorship or external funding. The women in the community used their networks via the churches to mobilize the support for the radio station. To raise the money necessary for the project, the women of the community organized fish fries and cookouts. Within a relatively short period of time, the women of the community had raised the funds to break ground on the new facility.

Once the facility was built, women became the primary leaders in the development of the station into a community center. Again, they saw the radio station as a means to an end. The radio station itself occupied the basement level of the facility. The first and second floors consisted of conference rooms and offices to support community services and programs. Over the last two decades, women have taken the lead in developing a host of programs, including a day care center which is housed at a separate location, tutorial/student internships, historical and cultural programs, and small business incubators.

Today, the administrator of the facility is a woman who was one of the founders of the CEP. She is one of the most prominent citizens in the city and is respected by the white power structure. She continues to mobilize the black
community around key issues and addresses the concerns of the grassroots citizenry.

Interviews with Female Leaders. The women were asked to provide their opinions on issues in the following areas: (1) the role of black women in the community; (2) black women's networks; (3) the significance of being both black and female; and 4) the future of the black community. The following quotes are a representative sample of their responses.

The Role of Black Women in the Community. As previously stated, one of the key elements of black female leadership is the sense of collective experience. The following respondent echoes this theme in her perspective on black women's role in the community:

Well, I think that first of all, it's always been easier for black women to take leadership roles. Traditionally, it seems that we have not been a threat to white males in power; because, first of all we're women, and I don't know too many cases where black women have been lynched. Traditionally, black women have been raised to be responsible and to do what needs to be done. I see the role of black women as being different from the majority expectation of white women. Based upon what little I know of some of the West African tribes from which our ancestors came, women had dual responsibility. There were certain types of economic things that were women's area. What I have seen, for instance in the black church, women have played an important role. That's been true here."
Collective action is exemplified in the struggle for group survival. Black women do not hesitate to do what is necessary in this regard. As the following respondent states:

First of all, I’d like to say that it’s been black women that have kept the African American community together. We’ve been real active in the church; we’ve been real active in clubs and those activities that have been culturally specific to us. We have taken on the responsibility when something needs to get done in the neighborhood. It’s usually the black women who pitch in to get it done. Or, if it’s something like building or working, we provide the meals. We work real hard at that. We seem to come together when there is an issue that needs taking care of—even with in the church. But, I think that the church has always been the foundation of it. And, we’ve kind of expanded out from there and gone into more social kinds of things. And that seems to be expanded a bit. Now we’re starting to get into more organized social activities.

The idea of community empowerment is essential to understanding black female leadership. The following response adds credence to Collins’ (1990) notion that it is important to understand the complex relationship between race, class and gender. Realities for black women are not necessarily the same as that of their white counterparts:

Black women have a lot of power. That’s because we’ve had the economic freedom. If we needed to work, we had to work outside of the home for pay. Black women have always been able to have jobs. And, having that income, bringing in money, has given black women a kind of power that white women have not had and are trying to get. We live in a society where money gives you power. It seems to be the bottom line. Black women have power not only in the church but also in some of the civic organizations. For example, in the NAACP there have been times when the leadership has been held by women in local chapters. That has not necessarily been true at the national or state levels. We’ve had more access to more avenues to develop leadership skills to carry out those roles.
This comment on the power of black women underscores the uniqueness of their role in the black community. It reinforces the historical significance of black women being able to realize community goals because of the greater resistance to black men (Hine 1994). Black women, by necessity, had to assume roles that white women could ignore (Franklin and Moss, Jr. 1994). However, black women become empowered by the assumption of leadership roles (Horton 1992).

**Black Women’s Networks.** Gilkes (1988) emphasized the importance of black women’s networks. The following responses adds support to Gilkes’ arguments:

Within the church, we usually take on most roles other than the preacher, pastor and deacon. In some churches there are associate pastors that are female; not so much in the Baptist Church. But we always take the role of leading the Sunday school. We usually serve on the usher board and greet people who come to the church. We usually organize the Christmas pageant—those kinds of things are usually handled by the females in the church. Any social event is usually the domain of the woman. There’s usually a network where one person will call and invite someone else to help or other people will volunteer to help and make it more of a social kind of thing. But the goal is the same.

An important element of collective action on the part of black women is the use of networks:

I think that there are many women who see their role beyond their home, their family; and see their role as one of seeing what’s going on in education, health, the job market, the housing market and nutrition. There’s always something coming on that we need to speak to or look at. In Waterloo, there are clubs and organizations that come to mind where women are interested either in providing a scholarship for young women,
providing leadership for the community and working in male dominated organizations.

To reiterate, black women do not compartmentalize the key areas of their lives. Whether in the church, family or the community, they find ways to network in order to achieve their goals:

First of all, I think that some of that is just the way that women work—whether you’re talking about black or white. Some of that comes from that whole business of in the family, getting people to work together, to cooperate. We tend to be much more collaborative. And I would say that daughters learn it from their mothers, and in what they see their mothers do; and from having some idea of what our role is going to be in the family and society. In many ways, women are somewhat lucky in this society because the people that we are going to eventually be like are the people that have the primary responsibility for our care.

The above responses reinforce the literature on black female networks. Black women exhibit leadership not in an individualistic manner, but collectively via the family, the church and community organizations.

_The Significance of Being Black and Female._ Perhaps the primary tenet of a black feminist perspective on leadership is the impact of the interaction of race and gender on the condition of black women. As the following respondent notes, oftentimes race obscures problems that are internal to the black community:

I feel that we’re not being respected. You see it all over. I don’t think the majority of us have done anything to be disrespected as a whole. But it seems to be permeating throughout where it seems to be total disrespect. I see it in music, TV, movies, and I see it in the way that men treat women. And if you stand up for yourself, say ‘this is not acceptable, I won’t let you treat me like this,’ then you’re labeled. After that you’re a ‘bitch’ or a ‘ball-buster’ or whatever derogatory names that they have for us. I don’t
know why this is. If there was an answer then maybe we could get back to
the way we were. It just seems like they just don’t care. I don’t think that
they are looking at the long-term repercussions of that and what’s going to
happen 10 or 15 years down the road.

Yet, despite internal differences that exist, black women articulate the
primacy of race over gender. In the words of this respondent:

I’m of the generation where the black is more important. Most of the
discrimination that I faced was based on my race and not my gender.
When I look at white women, black women have a heckuva lot more
power than they have. And I think that they’re trying to get the kind of
power that we have. We haven’t had to play some of the games to do
some of the things that they do. We can be as assertive as we want. You
ask white women about being assertive and they almost go bonkers; they
don’t know how to answer. I think that in some ways white males have
had the most advantageous role. Probably next is the black female. The
thing that bothers me, and the reason that I can’t get involved with all
this women’s lib, is that in most cases where black men have gotten
positions where they are supervised by a white females, white females
give them more trouble than white males. It looks like white women are
trying to outdo their men as oppressors. Instead of their bringing
something to the system to open it up, and to make it a more humane
thing, they are joining their brothers, fathers, husbands, uncles and
cousins in becoming just as oppressive as they are—if not more.

This statement supports research that highlights the primacy of race over
gender (Collins 1990). More importantly, it is consistent with the reality of black
women day-to-day experiences with racism. Black women see white women as
being little different from white men in the treatment of blacks as a group.
Ironically, the statement also implies that despite the rhetoric, white women
likewise perceive their interests as being more consistent with those of white
men than black women (Horton 1992).
The Future of the Black Community. A major component of black female leadership is concern for the group survival. Thinking beyond individual well-being is a tradition among black female leaders:

One of the things that disturbs me is that young black people have forgotten to look at what it is that the system has done to us, and began to look at things individually. There is a tendency for young blacks to think that they've gotten certain jobs because they're qualified and they forget that the reason that they probably got the job is that somebody worked real hard to make sure that blacks will be hired.

Another respondent voiced concerns about the crisis of female-headed households and teenage pregnancies in the black community. Despite the fact that this is not a personal issue for her, she makes it personal because it is a community issue:

We've let go of many things and that's the reason we find ourselves in crisis. We're talking about grandmothers being 36 years old and in many cases didn't have the parenting skills to raise their own children. I think that there are still enough black women who realize that we are in a crisis. We have to reclaim some of the methods of child rearing and supporting our community. We have to set boundaries in order to reclaim our homes, children and community."

Another respondent returns to the theme of gender conflict within the black community. She laments the fact that many black women blame black men for problems that are structural in nature. Once again, this broad perspective on a seemingly micro-level issue is a clear sign of leadership:

At some point we have to find some way as a people to be more supportive of one another. We have to get off of this male vs. female thing. Unfortunately, I hear a lot of black women say very negative things about black men. It is society that is causing the biggest problem, not the
black man. I really think that white folks have found a way to commit genocide without putting us in concentration camps.

Finally, one respondent argues for greater involvement in the broader community as a means of advancement. This may be indicative of an evolution in the thinking and tactics of black female leadership in the future.

I'd like to see us really extend ourselves more than just the church. I'd also like to see us more involved in the school system. Not just with teachers, which is very important, but also with administrators. That way, we can get some programs implemented that we need that are specific to the needs of our children.

The views of these respondents are consistent with the primary arguments of this paper. Black female leadership tends to be characterized by collective experience, collective action, and community empowerment. The realities of race and gender make black female leadership quite distinct from that in the broader society. Leadership is embedded in the networks that black women create as a means of realizing collectively what may be near impossible as individual actors.

Summary

The Community Enabler Program (CEP) adheres to the components of the Black Organization Autonomy (BOA) model. Its initial fundraising activity for incorporation demonstrated the principle of economic autonomy. The radio station functions as a mechanism for data collection and dissemination. Its grassroots approach to addressing issues embodies the principles of social
inclusiveness of leadership. Its programming exemplifies the emphasis on history and culture.

However, the primary focus of the case study was on the role of black female leadership. Black women were indispensable to the CEP organization. They were the most consistent and loyal members of the organization's board. They have the primary responsibility for day-to-day operations and fundraising. Moreover, the insights of the female leaders on broader community issues highlighted the three aspects of black female leadership: collective experience, collective action and community empowerment.

Conclusions

This paper addresses two questions: (1) What is the nature of black female leadership in the context of black community development? and (2) What is the potential of black female leadership for effecting change in the black community? The paper presented an elaboration of the female leadership component of Horton's Black Organizational Autonomy (BOA) and provided a definition of black female leadership. Moreover, three indicators of black female leadership were articulated: collective experience, collective action, and community empowerment. Finally, a case study was presented to provide support for the BOA model, generally with an emphasis on black female leadership.

The findings from the case study support the BOA model as a viable approach to black community development. The Community Enabler Program
of Waterloo, Iowa, exemplified the key components of the model in its origin and its ongoing programs. More important, black female leadership was found to be indispensable to the organization's success. Finally, interviews with female leaders of the organization provided further insight into the nature of black female leadership. The three aforementioned aspects of leadership were evident in the expressed opinions of black women on the nature of their roles in the black community.

This study is preliminary in nature. More research needs to be conducted on black female leadership. In the context of an unambiguous retreat from affirmative action and an apparent abandonment of civil rights for blacks, black community development is likely to increase in its significance. Based upon the BOA model and the admittedly preliminary findings of this study, black female leadership may be the most important element in successful efforts at black community development.

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GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation addressed the issue of black female leadership. The study articulates the need for a reconceptualization of leadership theory so as to be inclusive of race, class, and gender. It argues that traditional theories are embedded in assumptions that render invisible the experiences of black women. New and traditionally silent voices provided the framework for re-visioning leadership as a social phenomenon.

This study also addresses black female leadership employing the theme "culture of resistance" as defined in black feminist thought. This theme frames the socio-historical analysis that searches for the processes and networks that gave rise to black female community leadership. Finally, the study elaborates on a model that addresses black community development from a sociological perspective: the Black Organizational Autonomy (BOA) Model. Unique in the sense that it is the only community development model to incorporate race, class, and gender, the BOA Model is expanded so as to explicate the manner and means by which black female leaders are developed and promoted. The following is a summary of the three components of the dissertation.

In the first article, Chapter 1, the primary focus is on the inherent biases of theories on leadership (Gilkes 1988; Collins 1990; Astin and Leland 1991). In essence, extant leadership theories exclude the existence of women in general and black women in particular (Harding 1986; Spelman 1987). The paper first
articulates the need for the inclusion of black females in the theoretical schema and concludes with suggestions as to how this goal might be achieved.

The second component of the study presents an explication of the nature of black female leadership. First, black female leadership is defined. Second, the processes, form and content of black female leadership are addressed via a socio-historical analysis. Finally, a unified framework of the culture of resistance concept is developed employing collective experience, collective action and community empowerment as indicators.

The third and final segment of the study involves the elaboration on the BOA model. Black female leadership is defined in the context of community development. A strategy for the development and promotion of leadership is articulated for the BOA model. A case study is used to underscore the pivotal role that black female leadership plays in addressing the contemporary problems of the black community (Horton 1992). The paper concludes with a reiteration of the significance of black female leadership and its primacy in addressing the issues of relevance to the black community.

In conclusion, this study makes an important contribution to the sociology of leadership. First, it identifies the need for reconceptualizing leadership so as to include black females. Secondly, it explains the nature of black female leadership. Finally, it provides an example of black female leadership in addressing problems of the black community. This is a preliminary step on a very pertinent topic. Given the nature of the population and structural changes
in America, the consequent political changes thereof, and the impact of both on the black community, black female leadership is likely to become increasingly significant. Black female leadership may very well be the most important element to facilitate true social change for black as well as other Americans.

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