

AN EXPLORATION OF BLACK WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

by

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(Under the Direction of JUANITA JOHNSON BAILEY)

The purpose of this study was to explore Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. In so doing, the following questions guided this study: 1) How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?, 2) What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?, and 3) How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to elective office and existence as political leaders? A purposive sampling technique was employed to select nine Black female elected officials in the state of Georgia. These women, who ranged in age from 50 to 80, currently serve or have served in elective office at the local, state, and federal levels.

The primary data sources for this qualitative study were in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions, documents, and researcher notes. The methodology employed was narrative analysis, which revealed six major themes concerning Black women's leadership development experiences in the political arena. The women's understanding and awareness of politics was shaped by their Southern heritage and coming of age in the Jim Crow era. Second, the participants developed their political leadership skills primarily through informal learning (i.e., trial and error, listening and observing others). Third, mentors and role models were critical factors in their leadership development. Fourth, the participants' paths to elective office were neither planned nor linear, and fifth, most participants identified their faith/spiritually as guiding

their decisions to run for office. Lastly, the theme of negotiating through the prism of positionality best characterizes the race and gender challenges the participants faced as Black women political leaders in Georgia.

Two conclusions were drawn from the study findings. The women in this study shared common elements of their political leadership. For example, they shared a philosophy of uplifting the Black community, collectiveness, and communality, in addition to the belief in a higher being, which differs from traditional leadership models. Second, the participants developed a political consciousness due to their experiences with resistance and oppression from birth to adulthood as Black females. This experience uniquely prepared them for applying a political analysis as the basis of their worldview.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Education, African American Women, Black Feminism, Black Women, Career Development, Glass Ceiling, Elected Officials, Leadership Development, Narratives, Narrative Analysis, Political Leadership, Public Leadership

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all Black women who have lived and are a living testament to
the late Shirley Chisholm's legacy...

I am, was, and always will be a catalyst –Shirley Chisholm

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CHAPTER I

NAVIGATING MY JOURNEY TO ELECTIVE OFFICE

Prologue

Historically and in contemporary society, Black women's lives from youth to adulthood remains impacted by the interlocking system of racism, sexism, and classism (Collins, 2000). This phenomenon operates in the context of elected office, and in particular Black women's leadership development experiences and the career decisions they make to enter and remain in this sphere. As a Black woman with an interest in pursuing a "career," that is to serve in elective office in Georgia in a long term capacity, I recognize by virtue of my race, gender, and even class that my journey to political leadership is more complex and challenging in comparison to males and White women. One indisputable reason is that, historically, men tend to be socialized to enter politics and remain there long term. Men are encouraged and positioned at young ages to take advantage of opportunities that will prepare them for a life in politics. Women, on the other hand, are often discouraged and even locked out of pursuing such opportunities.

Of note, Black men certainly encounter challenges to entering the political arena. However, the major difference in their experiences in comparison to Black women is that they do not encounter gender barriers, but instead face race and perhaps class barriers. Therefore, the challenge is indeed greater for Black women to enter the political arena. It is my belief then, that because Black women in general are not afforded privilege through their race and gender and must navigate through an often hostile environment, they are in effect "naturally political

creatures”— exposed at birth to the business of politics and must deal with “politics” throughout their lives.

Politics is defined in this study as Black women negotiating between competing social forces involving their use of power, authority, and influence while promoting equality. The nature of this circumstance thereby uniquely exposes Black women to how politics operate, thus contributing to their development as political leaders. In this same vein, former congresswoman Barbara Jordan comments on Black women’s plight to leadership,

I believe that [B]lack women have a very special gift of leadership, because we have been called upon to lead in very trying times. And history has recorded the fact that [B]lack women rose to the forefront in times of struggle during periods of conflict about civil rights. But we don’t have to go that far forward to recall that there was also leadership even in the days of slavery in this country. (Gill, 1997, p. 3)

One must then ask how does a Black woman’s leadership development path(s) look if she endeavors to serve in political leadership roles in a long term capacity? How can she prepare to meet the social, racial, and gendered barriers that historically have negatively affected Black women’s representation in state and national political leadership? In particular, how can lessons learned by Black women politicians be shared with other Black women who have political aspirations? How can an environment that provides an ongoing support system and networking opportunities be provided for Black women with political aspirations? Instead of conveying to these Black women the notion of sink or swim, there should be mechanisms in place to assist them toward successful pursuit and attainment of political leadership roles.

Hence, due to my personal ambition to run for elected office and to become better prepared for this endeavor, I chose to study the leadership development and career development

experiences of Black women who enter politics. In particular, this study examines the paths by which Black women in Georgia come to political leadership and remain in elected office. It is my hope that the contents of this study will reach women and in particular Black women, like me, who are at the early stages of our careers. The goal is for us to see the benefits and possibilities of pursuing elected office as a viable career choice through the life stories of Black women role models who have come before us and paved the way for other Black women to enter the political arena. Congressional representative Carrie Meek makes this point about role models in the following story:

You know when I get a thrill? When some of the little girls come to my office, the little interns. One little girl, I met her in the hall; she came to intern for someone else, and she said, “I just want to take a picture with you....I’m so proud to see a woman like you, a [B]lack woman.” She’s a little [B]lack girl, and little tears came to her eyes. And she said, “Just let me have a picture.” And to see that kind of—I guess the word I want is admiration, for me and for the fact that I’m a woman...and that one day they’ll be here, right? See, ten years ago, or fifteen years ago, she wouldn’t have thought she could be here. But now she thinks she can be here, and that is a great part of what I see here, too—when the young come along, and they see it can happen. (Schroedel & Mazumdar, 1998, pp. 205-206)

In conclusion, it is through the learning that I and other Black women derive from the life experiences of Black women political leaders that will help us better navigate our individual journeys to elective office and to remain there long term.

Introduction

When one surveys society in the twentieth century, it is apparent that women in the United States, both Black and White, have made significant advances since enfranchisement. For example, women are leading Fortune 500 companies, presidents of colleges, and serve as high profile political leaders. Notwithstanding these advances, women remain “vastly underrepresented in elected office for their proportion of the population” (Thomas & Wilcox, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, understanding women’s career and leadership development experiences is paramount. To this end, we see that within the last two decades a growing body of scholarly research has emerged which explores the similarities and differences in how women and men function as leaders in both the public and private sectors (Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). Currently, greater scholarly attention is devoted to understanding women’s experiences in the political sphere. This is due in large part to more women seeking political office and the need to understand the impact gender has on public policy decision making (Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). According to Thomas and Wilcox (1998), as a society we are now seeking answers to the following questions:

Why is women’s representation in elective office important? Why are we concerned about women being represented among those who make policy decisions for our government at the local, state, and national levels? As long as elected representatives are aware of and care about the interests of all their constituents, does it matter that legislatures, governors, and presidents are predominantly male? (p. 1)

Women’s representation in elected office matters for reasons enumerated below. First, the forefathers of the United States designed the government to function as a representative democracy. In other words, theoretically the expectation is that members of the government

should be reflective of the population at large. In order for this government to be truly legitimate, all members of society irrespective of race, gender, and class, should have the same potential opportunities for serving their community and nation. Second, members of a society are more likely to trust and support a political system where it is believed that all citizens have equal opportunity to participate in the decision making that affects their lives. Third, women constitute over 50 percent of the population in the United States. As a result, society has a pool of talent that has abilities, points of view and ideas that can benefit communities and the nation if society “selects its leaders from among both men and women” (Thomas & Wilcox, 1998, p. 1).

Overall, women should be represented in public offices for “symbolic reasons” as well (Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). Social science research has proven that children are influenced by external influences at very early ages. For example, if children grow up seeing both men and women seeking public office they are more likely to view elective office as an option for both genders. As a result of cultural and societal norms associated with gender socialization, both women and men have different life experiences and different points of reference. As Thomas and Wilcox (1998) state, “This can translate into a distinctive way of viewing existing legislative proposals and can lead to different agendas. It is important, then, that women occupy our legislatures and executive offices so that their concerns contribute to policy agendas” (p. 2).

A final and critically important argument is the importance of ensuring the representation of underrepresented segments of society historically designated minority status in a democracy. If minority groups, namely Black women, the focus of this study—are not represented in the political arena, the community at large may feel powerless and voiceless, thus impacting how the democracy functions. For all these reasons, then, it indeed matters that women, and Black women in particular, have access to and assume elective positions. Hence, the present study is an

extension of existing research on female elective officials. However, it goes further to explore an understudied area, Black women's leadership development and career development experiences in their pursuit of elective office.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

A growing base of scholarly literature exists on the topic of women in politics (Barrett, 1997; Carroll, 1983, 1994, 2000, 2003; Clark, 1984, 1991; Darcy, Welch, & Clark, 1994; Githens & Prestage, 1977; Mathews, 1992; Prestage, 1991; Rajoppi, 1993; Rogers, 1998; Rule, 1981; Smooth, 2001; Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). Additionally, a search of the literature revealed that a small but growing number of scholarly studies focus on Black women's experiences in political office, the preponderance of which emerged in the 1990s (Barrett, 1995, 1997, 2001; Gay & Tate, 1998; Darcy, Hadley, & Kirksey, 1997; Moncreif, Thompson, & Schuhmann, 1991; Prestage, 1991; Rogers, 1998; Smooth, 2001).

However, the literature base is scant relative to understanding the process by which Black women acquire the knowledge and leadership skills needed to enter the political arena. Furthermore, a dearth of research examines the societal forces that shape Black women's decisions to approach politics as a career. In fact, information about Black women's experiences serving in elective political leadership roles in a long term capacity and their leadership and career development experiences have been drawn largely from the few autobiographical and biographical memoirs that exist on prominent Black women political leaders in the United States. In effect, more is known from what is called figurative literature/sources. The commonalties that emerge from the profiles of these women include that they have served a substantial number of years in public service and/or have held a high-level political leadership post (Brazile, 2004; Brownmiller, 1970; Chisholm, 1970; Elders & Chanoff, 1996; Jordan & Hearon, 1979). These

women also share the experience of overcoming numerous race, gender, and even class barriers in their paths to elective office, a strong value of education, and community solidarity.

With respect to the career development literature, leadership literature, and political science literature, none adequately study Black women's leadership development experiences. Hence, the current research fills this gap. This study explores why so few Black women consider elective office as a career option. This trend is evident in the representation of women in Georgia politics. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to explore Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

- How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?
- What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?
- How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to elective office and existence as political leaders?

Significance of the Study

Indeed, the number of Black women who have held elective office within federal, state, county, municipal, judicial and law enforcement, and education governing bodies has increased from a mere 160 out of a total 1,469 (10.9%) in 1970 to a record 3,119 out of a total 9,040 (34.5%) in 2000 (Bositis, 2001, 2003). From 1970 to 2000, there has been a steady increase in the number of Black women in elective office. Despite these advances, Black women remain underrepresented in political leadership for their proportion of the population. In addition, this population remains one of the largest groups in society whose talents and skills remain largely devalued and understudied. Because of this lack of attention, Black women continue to be subjected to numerous social and attitudinal barriers that prevent them from seeking and

succeeding in leadership contexts traditionally controlled by White males, such as the political arena. This study fills the gap in the literature on Black women's leadership development experiences in their pursuit of elective office as an effort to help break this cycle of subjugation.

A search of the literature reveals that a dearth of research focuses on how Black women develop their political leadership skills and the complex nature of their experiences in seeking public office as a viable career choice relative to the intersectionality of racism, sexism, and classism. The political leadership experiences of Black women in particular continue to remain at the periphery of leadership discourses and is the least understood. Of note, an extensive search of the literature uncovered Roger's 1998 ethnographic case study of Chicago Black female political leaders. Roger's study shares features found in the present study which are as follows. Both studies expand the discussion on Black women's political leadership development, and both studies identify common elements of Black women's leadership which has implications for educators and program developers of adult leadership, the focus of this study and adult continuing education, the focus of Roger's study. However, the present study diverges from Roger's study along the following lines. First, both studies differ relative to the geographic location in which they are situated. Second, eight of the nine women in this study were born and raised in the Deep South, and seven of the nine came from poor families where as Roger's participant base is larger and therefore has a wider range of class origins. Third, this study sheds more light on how gendered socialization practices affect how Black women approach politics as a "career." Finally, this study departs from other leadership studies on Black women by providing data on which to build a leadership program to train Black women for seeking their first political leadership role.

In conclusion, this study is critical to the field of adult education due to the responsibility adult educators have toward devoting more attention to the learning experiences of marginalized groups. In particular, this research sheds more light on how Black women construct knowledge around leadership and identifies the types of formal and informal learning they experience in their paths to becoming political leaders. A political leader in this study, used synonymously with public leadership, is defined as an individual who serves or has served in elective positions at the local, state, and federal levels. These are positions that have a direct role in shaping public policy. Therefore, uncovering the life experiences of Black women political leaders with a focus on the ways in which they learn about politics relative to their leadership development and career development experiences will help adult education practitioners further expand their understanding of the unique ways in which marginalized groups have historically acquired knowledge and transferred knowledge under challenging life circumstances (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990; Neverdon-Morton, 1989, 1990). In particular, the contents of this study will be most beneficial to adult educators who are trainers and facilitators in the area of adult leadership development.

Overall, this study benefits society as a whole by providing an in-depth analysis of Black women's leadership development experiences in an area historically controlled by males, the political arena. By re-centering Black women's lived experiences from the margins to the center of scholarly discourse, Black women's plight to political leadership and the career and leadership development decisions that they have to make along the way will become better understood.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

- How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?
- What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?
- How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to elective office and existence as political leaders?

A small but growing body of research exists which focuses on understanding Black women's leadership experiences in the context of management positions in higher education and corporate America. However, a paucity of literature focuses on Black women's political leadership development experiences and how Black female leaders acquire knowledge and develop the skills that are necessary to seek and succeed in political leadership roles. Furthermore, the research that exists on Black women's leadership experiences is characteristically anecdotal and does not offer critical analyses of their political leadership experiences. Of even greater concern is that the research on women's leadership experiences tends to group women together as a monolithic group and does not adequately account for the racial and cultural differences that exist in their leadership development experiences and leadership styles. The review of the literature presented in this chapter attempts to address components of these issues.

Section one provides a discussion of the relevant literature pertaining to Black women as leaders and focuses in particular on the process through which Black women have historically developed their leadership skills. Section two focuses on how Black women function as leaders. In addition, section two investigates how both sexism in the Black leadership community and the feminist movement have affected Black women's leadership experiences. Unlike sections one and two, section three focuses on the state of the political landscape for Black women nationwide and in Georgia. In particular, this section presents numerical data reflecting the race and gender changes that have occurred in the local, state, and national political landscape over time. This section also discusses how racism and sexism in this region of the country have had a distinct impact on Black women's political leadership experiences in elected office.

Section four explores the literature concerning women, Black women in particular, who serve in elective office long term or as a career. This section provides an overview of the career development literature and how the traditional career development theories have influenced society's understanding of women and women of color's career and leadership development experiences. This overview was included because it represents a factor that has had an impact on the reasons for why Black women's career development and leadership development remain understudied. Arguably, this lack of attention has had an impact on Black women's ability to enter the political arena. Therefore, this section also focuses on the leadership and career development experiences of Black women in the political arena. The glass ceiling phenomenon and the political concrete ceiling phenomenon are explored. Lastly, section five focuses on the barriers and facilitative conditions influencing Black women's ascendancy to political leadership roles.

Black Women's Leadership Re-examined

Eurocentric oppressive forces, that relegated Black women to subordinate positions in society, have unequivocally affected the manner in which their leadership emerged. Allen (1997) argues that due to their race, gender, and even class status, Black women continue to be denied access to the “traditional sources of power and decision making” that have been afforded to males. This lack of access has had an affect on the types of leadership training Black women have been able to obtain (Bass 1981a, 1981b). According to Allen (1997), Black women's second class status ascribed to them by society's power structure forced them to seek “alternative means of leadership training in non-traditional ways” (p. 2). For example, Black women have developed leadership skills through a variety of roles— serving in nontraditional leadership roles in the church, serving as matriarchs of families, leading their families out of poverty, and leading behind the scenes in political and civil rights activist movements for social change. Thus, the emergence of Black women leaders in the United States represents triumph over oppression (Allen, 1997) to “lift” the Black community out of racial, economic, and educational subjugation. Affirming this point, Davis (1989) states,

[Black women] must strive to ‘lift as we climb’... We climb in such a way as to guarantee that all of our sisters and brothers, regardless of social class, and indeed all of our brothers climb with us. This must be the essential dynamic of our quest for power. (p. 5)

When classical career development theories, leadership theories, and contemporary leadership models are examined, a glaring omission on the part of Black women's contributions to their communities emerges. In the context of this study, also ignored has been the impact of the seamless web of class, race, and gender oppression in Black women's paths toward becoming

political leaders in the United States. With the emergence of more Black women assuming leadership roles in both the public and private sectors, exploring the impact of their leadership on these institutions and their unique leadership experiences is critical to effectively facilitate and attend to their leadership development needs.

Education: A Conduit for Black Women's Leadership Development

Notably, Black women's leadership has been instrumental to the Black community overcoming barriers to obtaining quality education. Black women have contributed to the Black community's educational advances at the familial and community levels. Their contributions to these advances were a result of the influential leadership and policymaking roles they assumed, and roles in other administrative bodies that govern American education (Hazzard, 1982; Scales-Trent, 1990). Indeed, the greatest number of Black women elected officials is in the educational arena (Darcy & Hadley, 1988; Darling, 1998; Perkins, 1990). Black women have been pioneers as members of local boards of education, superintendents, and supervisors of education with an education position as the basis for their political involvement. For example, Mary McLeod Bethune, a Black American teacher, was one of the great educators of the United States. She was a leader of women, a distinguished advisor to several American presidents, and a powerful champion of racial equality (Alexander, 1999). Bethune gained national recognition in 1936, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her director of African American Affairs in the National Youth Administration and a special adviser on minority affairs (Alexander, 1999). As a result of her leadership, Black Americans throughout the United States had more educational, employment opportunities, and recreational facilities.

Another example is, as evidenced in the late 19th century, the leadership of Ida B. Wells Barnett, an anti-lynching activist, and other educational matriarchs like Charlotte Grimke,

Septima Clark, and Fannie Lou Hamer helped to pave the way for many Black youth and adults to obtain quality secondary and post-secondary education by advocating for and helping to found schools and organizations for the personal and educational development of Black women and men (Giddings, 1984; McCluskey, 1994; Murray, 2000; Peterson, 1996; Reagon, 1990; Stewart, 1999; Thompson, 1990; Welsey, 1984). Similarly, contemporary activist leaders like Rosa Parks played a fundamental role in sparking the mass struggle for civil rights in the South. Her leadership encouraged many Black Americans to actively participate in the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, such women like Coretta Scott King and the late Betty Shabazz—who's subtle, yet strong matriarchal leadership displayed in the support both provided their husbands during their life journeys—continued to carry their husbands' legacy of activism after their untimely deaths in the late 1960s. Finally, Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to make a serious bid for the United States presidency in 1970, collectively forced America to recognize Black women's experiences and to acknowledge their plight as manifestations of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation (Brownmiller, 1970). Bethune and other Black female leaders have demonstrated that in the face of great obstacles, Black women strengthen their communities through their leadership in churches, women's groups, charitable organizations, political groups and their contributions to the larger community as writers, activists, educators, and political leaders (Hine & Thompson, 1998).

The work of the aforementioned Black women attests to the intellectual and political contributions Black women in general have made toward attaining equality, especially educational equity and political rights for Black Americans. Although Black women's voices have been silenced for centuries, Black women did not sit idle waiting for the dominant culture to release its hold on their intellectual and political rights. They, instead, took on leadership roles

at various levels in society (familial, community, and institutional levels) to ensure community survival. As such, we will see that the legacy of Black women developing their leadership skills has been through their promoting familial, educational, and political activism. Therefore, Black women's lives are a life of "politics" through their encounters with sexism and racism. The implication of this phenomenon is such that paramount to Black women's survival is their ability to gain wisdom and knowledge about the dynamics of race, gender, and class oppression (Collins, 1997). It is this wisdom that will help guide them as they become political leaders and remain in office. In this same vein, Cooper (2000) writes,

The [Black] woman, then, should not be ignored because her bark is resting in the silent waters of the sheltered cove...watching the movements of the contestants none the less and is all the better qualified, perhaps, to weigh and judge and advise because not herself in the excitement of the race. (p. 93)

Despite the progress that has been made and that Black women's voices continue to be ignored or silenced in the context of political leadership, Black women are observing, learning, and taking action based on the information they have collected. This action develops in the form of Black women serving in non-formal leadership roles, oftentimes leading behind the scenes to help facilitate community change. Countless numbers of Black women developed their leadership skills by serving as educators, organizers of women's groups, and community organizations. Many were strong forces behind political and social movements by organizing rallies, voter registration drives, and leaders of recruitment efforts. Hence, an important dimension of Black women's leadership experiences is to understand "how they lead" which is the focus of the section that follows.

Black Women's Ways of Leading

In the last decade, greater attention has been focused on Black women's unique leadership experiences and the complex process through which they come to political leadership (Allen, 1997; Baraka-Love, 1986; Githens & Prestage, 1977; Gostnell, 1997; McCluskey, 1994; Rogers, 1998, 2003, 2005; Scott, 1982). Historically, Black women have held positions of leadership in organizations "whose mission is institutional change," such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (Collins, 1997). Additional evidence shows that Black women activists hold a decidedly different standpoint from the traditional and contemporary conceptions of 'leadership' about the use of power through leadership, including the purpose and role of a leader. Collins (2000) asserts,

Black women's organizational style within predominantly Black organizations reveals much of how many U.S. Black women exercise power. Understandings of empowerment gained as community othermothers and cultural workers shape Black women's political activities. Drawing on the models of education as empowerment, many Black women routinely reject models of authority based on unjust hierarchies. (p. 218)

For example, the leadership style of renowned civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer held unique ideas about leadership and empowerment in the Black community. Hamer believed that a leader is responsible for cultivating and developing more leaders, and promoting group solidarity (Allen, 1997). Although she did not hold a formal position of authority with the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party (MDFP), the model of leadership she exercised reveals the considerable power she held which was a result of her viewpoint on social change (Galambos & Hughes, 2001; Collins, 2000; Hopson, 1985). In other words, Hamer effectively challenged and

held the Democratic Party of Mississippi accountable for taking the necessary steps to ensure that *all* people of Mississippi were fairly represented. In so doing, she challenged the White and Black male leadership who held the general belief that women and certainly Black women could work behind the scenes, but that they should not try to come forward and lead.

During Hamer's involvement in the formation of MDFP in 1964 and the preceding years, Black women had to contend with overt sexism from Black men and race, sex, and class oppression from White men and women (Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1984; hooks, 1984, 1997; Marble, 1990; Mullings, 1997), which forced them to create safe havens from the hostile environment that prohibited personal growth and community survival (Allen, 1997). Black women, as a result, developed a "culture of political resistance" that required them to "expand their roles as homemakers and laborers to incorporate that of 'caretakers' of the race" (Allen, 1997, p. 2; Giddings, 1984; Collins, 2000). Black female leadership was therefore cultivated and operationalized by their role in the family and the community (i.e., churches, schools, political organizations) (Allen, 1997; Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1984; Robnett, 1996; Murray, 2000; Schisbner, 2001). In effect, Black female leadership developed from and continues to be shaped by both the external and internal forces that impact their everyday lived experiences (hooks, 1984; Collins, 2000). Does this suggest that a universal definition exists for Black women's leadership?

A search of the Black leadership literature for a definition of Black female leadership revealed that no one universal definition exists. However, the following three themes focused on Black female leadership surfaced in the Black leadership literature (Allen, 1997).

- 1) Black female leadership exemplifies survival techniques in family, church and community organizations that encompass the creativity and commitment for group well-being;
- 2) [B]lack female networks, formal and informal, are dynamic and interrelated

entities that form a matrix of reinforcements that hold the Black community together while developing leadership for a better future; and 3) Black female leadership represents the collective experiences and action toward community empowerment. (Allen, 1997, p. 2)

Allen (1997) presents the following working definition of Black female community leadership as:

...the struggle for group survival whereby group *collective experience*, and group socio-supports, 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. (p. 3)

These themes and working definition indicate Black women tend to formulate ideas and models that express the reality of their own experiences while opposing the ideology of domination (Allen, 1997; Collins, 2000; Giddings, 1984). Consequently, Gilkes (1983, 1988, 1994) and Barnett (1993) posit that Black women reluctantly accept the term *leader* because of its association with elitist ideas of domination and control. According to Gilkes (1983),

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. (p. 54)

The underlying message from the literature on Black women's leadership is that they have the tenable responsibility of ensuring community survival and "uplifting" the race. Black community survival means that Black female leaders must continue to play a vital role in

improving the Black community. Moreover, it is also through Black female networks in which the structure for Black women's leadership has historically emerged (Allen, 1997; Giddings, 1984). Also important to Black female networks is ensuring that cultural traditions are transferred to future generations (Allen, 1997). This enables Black women to work together to combat institutional and social barriers that affect disadvantaged groups.

Overall, Black women have and will continue to persevere as they maneuver through the web of sex, race, and class domination. With the help of Black feminists and contemporary social science scholars, a small body of literature exists which decenters traditional sexist and racist leadership and career development literature and places Black women's leadership experiences at the center of scholarly discourse (Easter, 1996; Hopson, 1985; Nasstrom, 1999; Reid-Merit, 1996; Ruderman & Hughs-James, 1998). Analyzing historical accounts of how Black women's leadership emerged and their career development experiences from a Black feminist perspective creates an entirely different picture than the one produced by the dominant culture, which is a picture of inferiority and powerlessness. The picture presented from the Black feminist lens is a poignant reminder of how oppressive forces have become institutionalized and thus invisible to the uncritical eye. The Black feminist lens shows that through education, political activism and engagement on all levels, Black women continue to succeed in the fight for social, educational, and economic parity. Of note, in their efforts to accomplish this, Black women historically have had to contend with the issue of sexism within the Black leadership community as well.

Sexism in the Black leadership community. Sexism exists in the Black community as well as in other communities across the United States (Almquist, 1975; Beal, 1970; King 1975; Walters & Smith, 1999). Within the Black community, sexism reaches as far back as slavery

where Black women were being misogynized, predominantly on the part of White males (Austin, 1999; Levin, 1977; White, 1984). Unlike the sexism that is characteristic of the White community, Bukhari-Alston (1995) asserts that sexism in the Black community has its basis in racism and self-hate. The division in the Black community between the Black male and the Black female did not just come about on its own. For example, Bukhari-Alston (1995) cites:

After the end of slavery, Black men, for the most part, couldn't get jobs. The Black woman had to be the breadwinner as well as the homemaker. This, in conjunction with the already festering sore of having to stand by and watch while the [slave] women were raped and made to bear the master's children...was too much for the Black man to handle psychologically and resulted in the Black man casting the blame for his situation at the feet of the Black woman. As time went on this love/hate/anger triangle began to manifest itself in the sexism that is present today in the Black community. (¶10)

Sexism has been visible in the Black church where Black women historically have been denied opportunities to become “ministers, deacons, or trustees—‘the heads’ and top decision makers in the male dominated hierarchy of the Black Baptist church” (Barnett, 1993, p.170; Grant, 1990; Cone, 1989). Sexism has also been found in the civil rights organizations and student movements (NAACP, SCLC, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Urban League) historically led by men. For example, Black women have tended to be relegated to non-executive positions within these organizations (Barnett, 1993; Evans, 1979; McAdams, 1988). Extending this discussion to the political context, Shirley Chisholm's comment on how sexism manifested itself in the political arena is indicative of its pervasiveness. She states,

There was one basic thing which has always been, I guess, a very personal thing with me.... I just could never understand why it was so difficult for men, who had worked with you and knew of your capabilities, your talents, and your versatility, to really push you for political office. And then you decide to make the move on your own, because you knew they would not do it, and then they would attack you, almost ferociously. (Gill, 1997, p. 18)

Chisholm comments further,

That is something I've never really been quite able to understand. But I do understand it also, from the standpoint of a political history in this country for the feelings of such a long time, that it was time for the [B]lack woman to let the [B]lack man step forth. And therefore, any [B]lack woman who came forth in the early years when I was coming forth was seen as a pest, a hindrance, a woman who wanted to pay [B]lack men back, and all of that foolishness. (Gill, 1997, p. 18)

Research indicates that the sexist attitudes and practices aforementioned are deemed culture related. For example, as Collins (1996) states, "...[W]ithin African-American communities, there is a 'written family rule' that [B]lack women will support [B]lack men, no matter what" (p. 14). As a result, Black women have been silenced because of the cultural expectations of the primacy of racial solidarity and racial loyalty over gender issues. Another example is that research indicates Black women are socialized to not be critical of Black men, and they are even further discouraged to make the criticisms public (Austin, 1999; Collins, 1996; Giddings, 1984). When Black women have revealed to the public their experiences with Black men, they were ridiculed, demonized, and labeled race traders (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

Overall, addressing sexism in the Black community has been a topic of much contention in the Black leadership community and among Black scholars, particularly Black feminist scholars. While some believe that this issue should be openly and aggressively discussed, others feel that there is a more pressing challenge in the Black community that should be attended to, racism (Austin, 1999). For example, Gay and Tate (1998, p. 170) assert “Black civil rights organizations and their predominately male leadership have historically been less than responsive to gender issues of concern to [B]lack women.” Receiving even greater discouragement is Black women’s support of feminism which is believed by some to have perpetuated the “myth of the emasculating Black matriarch” extended by the belief that Black women’s support will impede Black men’s advances (Giddings, 1984). Additionally, a number of civil rights organizations’ stance is that racism is the broader problem for Black Americans and that all other forms of oppression are manifestations of racism (Barnett, 1993; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hull, Scott, Smith, 1982). In other words, by eradicating racism it is the belief by some that sexism, for example, will automatically follow suit. This circumstance therefore underscores the need for the present study.

As evidenced, sexism in the Black leadership community has affected the types of leadership opportunities and leadership development experiences to which Black women have been relegated, thus impacting how they develop into leaders. Not only is it important to recognize how sexism has influenced Black women’s lives, recognizing the impact feminism has had on Black women’s identity and role as leaders within the Black community and among the community of women is important as well.

Black women and the Feminist Movement. The history of feminism in the United States is marked by two distinct periods or waves that are directly connected to, and outgrowths of, two

key movements in Black American history. The first movement is the abolitionist movement, which culminated with the suffragists securing passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. The second movement is the modern civil rights movement, which peaked with the enforcement, during the 1970s, of Title VII and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Taylor, 2001). During both of these monumental periods and the third wave that followed, countless numbers of Black women activists developed a feminist consciousness that gave them agency to strive for empowerment on their own terms (Combahee River Collective, 2000; Taylor, 2001). Collectively, their feminism was more expansive than the agenda put forth by White women, in that specific social, economic, and political issues facing Black American communities were incorporated into a theoretical paradigm that today we call Black feminism (Taylor, 2001).

The ultimate goal of Black feminism is to create a political movement to combat the interlocking systems of racial, gender, sexual orientation, and class oppression, but one that also “seeks to develop institutions to protect what the dominant culture has little respect and value for—Black women’s minds and bodies” (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983; Taylor, 2001, p. 18). Black feminist writers essentially call upon all feminists to recognize the important role this perspective plays in not only giving voice to the silent, Black women, but also the role it plays in dismantling the oppressive patriarchal system. Black feminism in effect exposes the social and economic inequities that exist among women.

Of note are the ongoing debates that concern whether a Black women’s standpoint should be named womanist or whether Black feminism reflects the basic challenge of accommodating diversity among Black women. In her acclaimed volume of essays, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, Alice Walker (1983) introduced several meanings of the term “womanist.” One definition Walker offers is that a “womanist” is a “Black feminist or feminist of color” (p. xi).

Thus on some basic level, Walker herself uses the two terms womanist and Black feminist interchangeably. Like Walker, many Black American women see little difference between the two since both support a common agenda of Black women's self-identification and self-determination. As Omolade (1994) points out, "Black feminism is sometimes referred to as womanism because both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by Black women who are themselves part of the Black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty" (p. xx). Furthermore, Black American women who use the term Black feminism also attach varying interpretations to this term. As Black feminist theorist and activist bell hooks (1997) defines it, feminism is "the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities—intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economic" (p. 228). hooks (1984) further posits that,

When feminism is defined in such a way that it calls attention to the diversity of women's social and political reality, it centralizes the experiences of all women, especially the women whose social conditions have been least written about, studied, or changed by political movements. (p. 27)

Hence, using the term Black feminism positions Black women to examine how the constellation of issues affecting Black women in the United States are connected to the women's emancipation and civil rights issues occurring globally (Davis, 1983). Various Black feminist perspectives exist; however, the thread that binds them together is that the term Black feminism, in general, disrupts the racism inherent in presenting feminism as a for-Whites-only ideology and political movement. Inserting the adjective "Black" challenges the assumed Whiteness of feminism and disrupts the false universalness of this term for both White and Black women. Moreover, the term Black feminism makes many Black American women uncomfortable because it challenges

Black women to confront their own views on sexism and women's oppressions (Collins, 1997; Davis, 1983). Collins (1997) stresses:

No homogeneous Black woman's standpoint exists. There is no essential or archetypal Black woman whose experiences stand as normal, normative, and thereby authentic. An essentialist understanding of a Black woman's standpoint suppresses differences among Black women in search of an elusive group unity. Instead, it may be more accurate to say that a Black woman's collective standpoint does exist, one characterized by tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges. (p. 28)

As evidenced, Black women are not a monolithic group; however, what binds them together is the subjugation they have historically endured from the triple threats of racism, sexism, and classism. Through the sheer determination and resilience of numerous Black women activist leaders, the opportunities for Black women to reach their full potential in society, especially in the electoral system as elected and appointed political leaders, are no longer ignored but being made reality.

Political Landscape for Black Women—Nationally and in Georgia

This section explores the literature relative to the status of Black women's political leadership nationwide and in the state of Georgia. Numerical data are presented to reflect the race and gender changes that have occurred in the state, local, and federal political landscape over time.

The State of Black Women's Political Leadership Nationwide

During the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), Blacks—namely Black men— were elected to Congress and state legislatures of the United States in reasonable numbers for the first time (Asante, 2000). Although Black males were represented at the congressional level, it was in the

state legislature where the concentration of power existed for the Black population just after enslavement (Asante, 2000). Not long after this success, racist organizations threatened and forced Blacks to cease their political leadership and interest in seeking political office (Asante, 2000). As a result of these conditions, by the turn of the 20th century a small number of Blacks remained in elected political office. For example, in 1964, Blacks serving in state legislative bodies across the nation numbered a mere 94 out of over 7,000 positions. This was largely due to the Jim Crow era and the general culture of the United States, which remained overwhelmingly racist and dominated by Whites. By 1990 the number of Black legislators increased four-fold to 406 (Asante, 2000). This was due in part to the passage of Civil Rights laws, Blacks' explosive political activism and engagement in the political process, and a shift in attitudes toward Blacks (Asante, 2000).

How have Black women fared in entering state legislatures since 1929 when Minnie Harper (R-WV) became the first Black female state legislator? According to Barrett (1997), since the 1970s the number of women and people of color entering politics has been phenomenal (Barrett, 1997). Barrett contends that women and minorities are now an integral part of state legislatures throughout the United States. In 1974, women represented 8 percent of state legislatures. By 2004, the number of women state legislators increased four-fold according to the Women in Elected Office 2004 fact sheet developed by the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP). The number of Black female state representatives increased significantly as well; however, the rate of growth has been slower in comparison to White women, from less than 4 percent in the early 1970s to just over 5 percent in 1992 (Barrett, 1997). The CAWP also reports that in 2004, of the 1,647 women state legislators serving nationwide, Black women

currently only hold 209, or 12.7 percent of the seats in state legislatures; 56 are senators and 153 are representatives serving in 37 states.

When reviewing the total number of Blacks serving at the federal level, we see that in the U.S. Congress their representation has increased but remained relatively low as well. From 1869 to 1968, the numbers of Blacks serving in Congress remained in the single digits with the first Black members of Congress elected in 1869; Hiram Rhodes Revels (R-MS) elected to the U.S. Senate and Joseph H. Rainey (R-SC) elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1969, the numbers broke into the double digits totaling 11, with this being the largest number having to ever serve at one time since 1869. Notably, a total of 31 Blacks were elected to the U.S. Congress between 1869 and 1969 (Clayton & Stallings, 2000). Clayton and Stallings (2000) cite the following factors as having contributed to the under representation of Blacks in the U.S. Congress: discriminatory electoral laws and procedures prior to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; low levels of Black voter registration; gerrymandering congressional districts, which diluted the Black vote; racially polarized voting patterns; and for Black women in particular, gender stereotypes.

During these years and particularly “[i]n the years prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920,” Clayton and Stallings (2000) write, “it is not surprising that all were male” (p. 574). The patriarchal forces within the Black community and society at large along with sexism and racism from White men and women, were the major reasons why Black women were not represented in Congress until 1969. Despite these circumstances, Black women have forged ahead to combat these barriers and make the following gains. According to Clayton and Stallings (2000),

In 1971, of the 13 Black members of Congress who founded the Congressional Black Caucus [CBC], only one was a woman, Shirley Chisholm (D-NY). In 1973, [three] more Black women were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives: Barbara Jordan (D-TX), Yvonne Burke (D-CA), and Cardiss Collins (D-IL). By 1991, although the number of members of the Congressional Black Caucus had grown to 26, the number of Black women in Congress remained at [five]: Cardiss Collins (D-IL), Eleanor Homes Norton (D-DC), Maxine Waters (D-CA), Eva Clayton (D-NC), and Barbara Rose-Collins (D-MI). (pp. 574-575)

From 1973 to 2004, a total of 22 more Black women were elected to Congress (see Appendix A) out of 215 women in total (CAWP, 2004). CAWP also reported that of the 73 women serving in the 108th U.S. Congress, Black women constitute 11, or 2.1 percent of the total 535 members of Congress. Moreover, of the seven Black women CBC political pioneers, Maxine Waters and Eleanor Homes Norton served in the 108th Congress.

The year 1992, identified as the “Year of the Woman” (Carroll, 2001; Thomas & Wilcox, 1998), was marked by Black and White women running and winning Congressional elections in record numbers (Carroll, 1994). For example, 12 new Blacks were elected to Congress, five of whom were women. This was due to such factors as the House banking scandal which left an inordinate number of open seats and with incumbents (predominantly males) forced to run in substantially redrawn districts (Palmer & Simon, 2001). However, preceding these advances was the emergence of Shirley Chisholm who helped to pave the way for other Black women to enter the national political scene.

Chisholm, elected in 1969, became the first Black woman to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. In her bid to become New York City’s second Black Congressional

representative and the first Black female elected to Congress, Chisholm met tremendous disrespect towards women running for public office. One of the many lessons in politics she learned was that “minorities provided the votes and women voted and did the work. Neither shared in the power” (Gill, 1997, p. 22). The very party for which she represented in her state, the Democratic Party which was controlled by males, posed as one of the greatest challenges for her. Chisholm (1970) comments,

The county machine never did endorse a candidate but every action of its people showed to the most unsophisticated resident of Bedford-Stuyvesant that William C. Thompson was their man. White people think [B]lack people are stupid, but it came through to the community that the organization could not bring itself to endorse me because I would not submit to being bossed by any of them. It was interesting that even among themselves, they never questioned my competence or dedication. What they said was always that I was hard to handle. (p. 67)

Indeed, Chisholm’s election to Congress was “a historic moment and the result of centuries of labor” cites Gill (1997, p. 2). In addition, because her feminist politics was such that she believed sexism was inextricably linked to both racism and classism, and that they should be eliminated, Chisholm refused to accept the traditional roles and stereotypes imposed on women and instead espoused that women in the United States should become revolutionaries (Gill, 1997). In effect, Chisholm’s political stance influenced her to set her sights on the most esteemed leadership position in America, president of the United States. By not submitting to being controlled by the political power elites and derailed by sexist and racist behavior intended to silence her during her tenure in Congress, she made the decision to seek the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination.

Like her bid for Congress, Chisholm met even greater hostility and campaign challenges thwarting her efforts to seek the presidential nomination. Chisholm received little to no support from both the leadership and membership of two organizations of which she was a charter member, the CBC and the National Organization for Women (NOW). Chisholm was again challenged not on the basis of her competency but her gender and race. According to Gill (1997),

Chisholm's view that women should be revolutionaries placed her outside the immediate objectives of the feminist movement [and NOW], which had as its paramount goal political empowerment for women—but not necessarily women of color or poor women. It also placed her outside the immediate objectives of the CBC, for whom the issue of civil rights and equal rights was meant more for the advancement of men than women. She was bound to clash with both groups not only because of her message but also because of her style. It all came full circle when she announced her candidacy for president. (p. 28)

Despite Chisholm losing the Democratic presidential nomination, she persevered to serve in Congress until 1983. Her stance in being “unbought and unbossed” by anyone (Chisholm, 1970) paved the way for other Black women to enter political leadership roles traditionally held by men to become the firsts in their respective roles at all levels of government nationwide (see Appendix B). Moreover, she forced the nation to reexamine its perception of politics. “Our country needs women's idealism and determination, perhaps more in politics than any where else,” Chisholm wrote in her autobiography. For example, Carol Moseley-Braun (D-IL), elected in 1992, became the first Black woman and the only woman of color to serve in the U.S. Senate; however, she lost her re-election bid in 1998. Following Chisholm's example to become the second woman of color to make a serious bid for the U.S. presidency, Senator Moseley-Braun,

although unsuccessful, ran a strong campaign to secure the 2004 National Democratic presidential nomination.

When all aspects of elected government are examined (federal, state, county, municipality, executive, judicial, and legislative) the political landscape for Black female elected officials is more encouraging. According to a study conducted by The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, “Black Elected Officials: A Statistical Summary, 2001,” Black elected officials (BEOs) have increased over 600 percent from 1,469 in 1970 to 9,040 in 2000 (Bositis, 2003). Black elected officials include the following positions: federal, state, county, municipal, judicial and law enforcement and education governing bodies. Of the 10 states that experienced the greatest increase in BEOs during this 30-year time span, Mississippi had the greatest number, 816 (see Appendix C).

As part of the same study, the Joint Center also noted three trends over the past 10 years. First, a significant generational change is taking place. Over 80 percent of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus have been elected since 1990 (Bositis, 2001). Second, the number of Black female elected officials over the last two years have accounted for all the growth in the number of Black elected officials, their number has increased by a total of 195 individuals while the number of Black men in office has declined by 23 individuals (Bositis, 2001). Third, the number of Black elected officials from non-Black majority constituencies is increasing (Bositis, 2003). With all these successes, there are still gains to be made: there remain several elected offices, such as state governor, U.S. Senator, U.S. President, and other constitutional positions that have been difficult for Black women to attain.

Although Black women remain underrepresented in political leadership when one examines the full spectrum of elective positions, they have made laudable strides, especially in

the political arena nationwide in the last 30 years since Shirley Chisholm became the first Black female elected to Congress. As Figure 1 illustrates, in 1970 there were 160 Black female elected officials in the United States. By 2000 their numbers increased 20-fold to 3,220 in which they comprised 34.5 percent of the total number of BEOs (Bositis, 2003). Furthermore, since 1998, the number of female BEOs increased by 296 or 10.1 percent, while the number of Black male elected officials has declined by 63 or 1.1 percent, reports Bositis (2003).

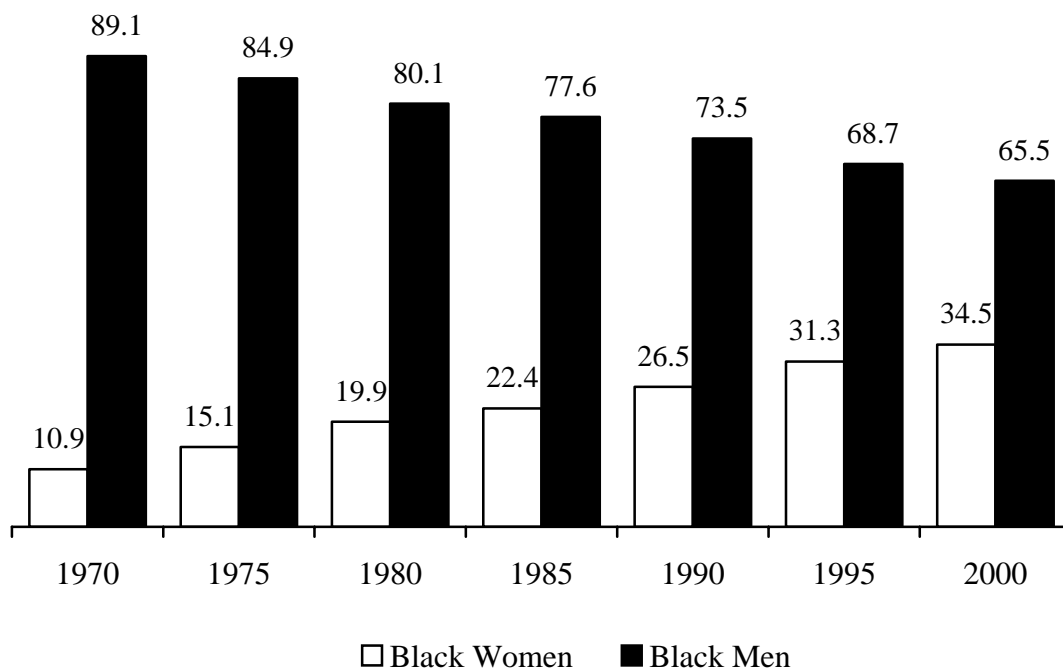
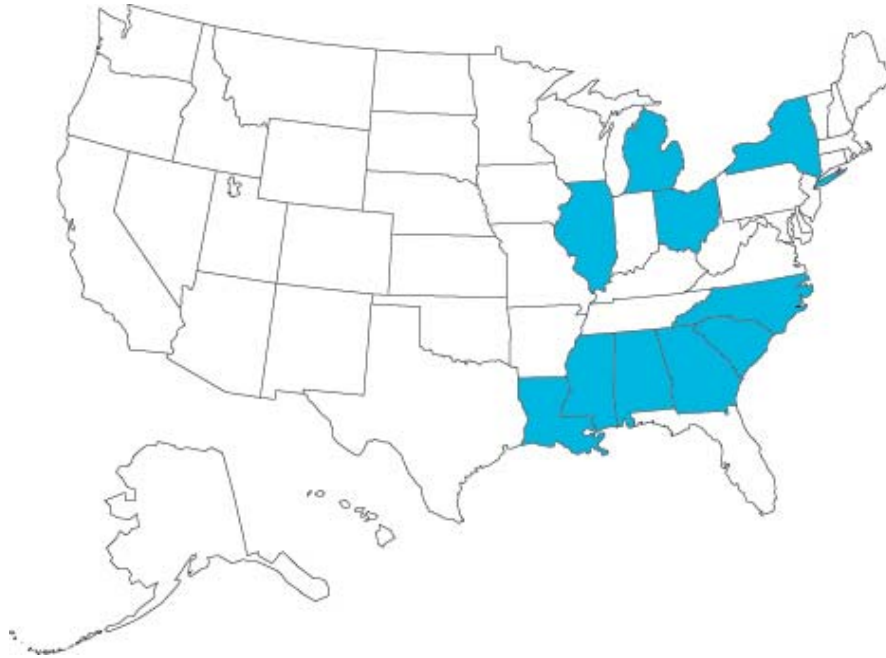


Figure 1. Percentage of Black elected officials by gender, 1970-2000¹

Figure 2 shows which states account for this increase. In 2000, there were ten states ranked as having the largest numbers of female BEOs; Mississippi ranked first with 267 or 28.9 percent of

¹From the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. A Statistical Summary, 2001. Adapted with permission.

the total number of BEOs, and Georgia ranked last with 117 or 30.4 percent of the total number BEOs. In the state of Ohio, although ranked eighth, Black women represented slightly over half of the total number of BEOs.



<u>State</u>	<u>Total Female BEO</u>	<u>Total BEO</u>	<u>% Total</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Total Female BEO</u>	<u>Total BEO</u>	<u>% Total</u>
MS	267	897	29.8	OH	156	309	50.5
IL	264	621	42.5	MI	147	340	43.2
AL	206	731	28.2	NC	144	498	28.9
SC	175	540	32.4	NY	144	320	45.0
LA	165	701	23.5	GA	117	582	30.4

Figure 2. Top ten states in number of Black female elected officials*, 2000²

²From the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. <http://jointcenter.org>. Reprinted with permission. *Black female elected officials (BEOs) include the following positions: federal, state, county, municipal, judicial and law enforcement and education governing bodies.

Viewed from a regional perspective, in 2001, approximately 869 BEOs or 9.7 percent of the total represent Northeast states; 1,636 or 18.2 percent represent Midwest states; and 326 or 3.6 percent represent Western states (Bositis, 2003). Of no surprise is that most of the growth is accounted for in the South which recorded the largest 30-year growth in BEOs, with 6,170, or 68.5 percent of the total (Bositis, 2003; see Appendix C). The reasons for this are apparent. First, according to the 2000 census about 55 percent of all Black Americans live in the South. Secondly, large concentrations of Black Americans reside in local, state, city, and federal office holding jurisdictions (Bositis, 2003). Thirdly, ethnic-bloc and electoral mobilization is a continued critical reality in today's political environment for Black Americans (Bositis, 2003). This remains a reality for other ethnic American groups as well, such as the Chinese-American, Jewish-American, Latino-American, etc.

Overall, the progress that Black women have made in their representation in political leadership nationwide is encouraging. However, more work remains for their numbers to reach parity within the Black population of elected officials in certain states. Among the top ten states ranked in total number of BEOs in 2000, the number of Black females in Michigan had come the closest to reaching half the proportion of the total population of Blacks in elected positions in the state. Additionally, the proportion of the female population in Georgia serving in elected positions was the furthest from reaching half the proportion of the total population of Blacks in elected positions in that state. In the section that follows, a closer examination is devoted to Black women's representation in elected office in the state of Georgia and the socio-political factors that have impacted their representation are identified.

The State of Black Women's Political Leadership in Georgia

In the last two decades, there has been an indisputable increase in the number of women in Georgia securing political leadership positions at the local, state, and federal levels. However, nationally women overall still lag behind men, and Black women in particular lag behind both White women and men. As shown in Table 1, the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) reported in 1981 that the Georgia State Legislature had two women who were elected to the State Senate out of a total of 56 seats and 15 women out of 180 seats in the State House (women representing only 7.2 percent of the legislators elected to the Georgia State Legislature).

Table 1.

Representation of Women in Georgia State Legislature (1977-2005)

Year	Race Total		Total Women/ Total Senate	Total Women/ Total House	Total Women/ Total Legislature	Percent Total Women	Percent Total	
	B	W					B	W
2005	17	26	6/56	37/180	43/236	18.2	39.5	60.5
2003	18	33	13/56	38/180	51/236	21.6	35.3	64.7
2001	19	30	10/56	39/180	49/236	20.8	38.8	61.2
1999	15	29	9/56	35/180	44/236	18.6	34.1	65.9
1997	15	24	7/56	32/180	39/236	16.5	38.5	61.5
1995	17	26	8/56	35/180	43/236	18.2	39.5	60.5
1993	12	29	6/56	35/180	41/236	17.4	29.2	70.7
1991	9	24	3/56	30/180	33/236	14.0	27.3	72.7
1989	8	16	2/56	22/180	24/236	10.2	33.3	66.7
1987	7	19	2/56	24/180	26/236	11.0	26.9	73.1
1985	5	18	2/56	21/180	23/236	9.7	21.7	78.6
1983	5	14	2/56	17/180	19/236	8.1	26.3	73.7

(table continues)

Table 1.

Representation of Women in Georgia State Legislature (1977-2005)

Year	Race Total		Total Women/ Total Senate	Total Women/ Total House	Total Women/ Total Legislature	Percent Total Women	Percent Total	
	B	W					B	W
1981	4	13	2/56	15/180	17/236	7.2	23.5	76.5
1979	6	9	1/56	14/180	15/236	6.4	40.0	60.0
*1977	4	6	1/56	9/180	10/236	4.2	40.0	60.0

Note. From the Center for American Women and Politics 2004 Fact Sheet, National Information Bank on Women in Public Office, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. Adapted with permission. Data in columns 2 and 3 are from the GA Secretary of State’s website. *From 1966 to 1972, Grace Towns Hamilton Homes, the first Black female GA State Representative, was the only Black female in the Georgia General Assembly. Also, from 1972-1975 a total of 5 Black women served in the state legislature. The first White woman was elected in 1923 to the General Assembly. From 1923 to 1966, White women were the only female group represented.

In the year 2005, over two decades later, women represent 18.2 percent of the Georgia State Legislature, a 3.4 percent decrease from the year 2003 (see Table 1). Regarding statewide executive positions such constitutional positions as Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of State, for example, only five women in Georgia from 1995 to the present have held these types of positions. At the federal level, the CAWP 2005 Fact Sheet reports that from 1940 to 2005 there has only been one woman from Georgia, Rebecca Latimer, to serve as a U.S. Senator. She was appointed to fill the vacancy in 1922 caused by the death of the incumbent. With respect to U.S. Representatives, only five women from the state have been elected to this position.

The figures are even more compelling when the previously mentioned data are separated by race. One Black woman in Georgia has been elected to a statewide executive position. Justice Leah Sears, elected in 2004 and sworn in 2005, became the first Black woman ever to head the highest appeals court in any of the 50 states—chief justice of Georgia’s Supreme Court—

although there have been woman judges in the lower courts for the District of Columbia and a Hispanic woman has been chief justice in New Mexico. In addition, Sears is the second Black to head Georgia's highest appeals court. With respect to congressional office, only two Black women in Georgia have served as congressional representatives (Cynthia McKinney, 1993-2003 and 2005-present; Denise Majette, 2003-2005). From 1966 to 2005, 37 Black women have served in the State House of Representatives while nine have been elected to the State Senate from 1993 to 2005 (see Appendix D and E). In comparison, from 1931 to 2005, a total of 64 have served in the State House and 19 White women have served in the State Senate from 1923 to 2005.

Although Black women are slightly better represented among state representative positions, they still lag behind White women (see Table 1). One apparent reason is that White women entered the state legislature 42 years earlier than Black women, therefore placing White women in an advantageous position. Another variable is the legacy of the Jim Crow era in the Deep South and the indelible imprint it left on the social, economic, and political fabric of Georgia. These social forces effectively infringed upon Black women's access to their political rights. Despite the momentous 19th Amendment passed in 1923 which granted all American women the right to vote, along with the historic changes brought forth by the 1965 Civil Rights Movement, it wasn't until the late 1990s that the number of Black women of Georgia serving in elective positions reached the triple digits.

While White women have been represented in the Georgia State Legislature for 80 years with the first elected in 1923, Black women have only been represented for 40 years. Grace Towns Hamilton, first elected in 1965, became the first Black female Georgia state legislator after completing a 20-year career as the head of the Atlanta Urban League (Nasstrom, 1999).

According to Spritzer and Bergmark (1997), she was the first Black woman in the Deep South elected to a state legislature (Fowlkes, 1984; Spritzer & Bergmark, 1997). Through her activism and public service in which she strived for equal education, healthcare and voting rights for Blacks in the Atlanta community, some credit her with having paved the way for the election of other Black women in the South to secure political leadership positions (Spritzer & Bergmark, 1997) (see Appendix F for other Black women “firsts” in Georgia politics).

Overall, this section demonstrates that Black women in political leadership nationwide have experienced growth. However, the issue remains that a substantial number of Black women do not enter the political arena, and numerous states continue to have high-level political leadership positions for which Black women or any women of color have not been represented. Like other states in the U.S., the state of Georgia is facing this issue as well. Exploring Black women’s leadership and career development experiences will provide insights into why Black women continue to encounter barriers preventing them from not only rising to levels of leadership in traditionally male leadership contexts such as the political arena, these barriers also influence the degree to which Black women approach politics as a career.

Politics as a Career Option

The question that undergirds this section is why don’t more women, particularly Black women, consider politics as a career option? One explanation is that history reveals that men tend to approach politics as a career because men’s political ambition is cultivated at an early age. Moreover, men are encouraged at an early age to get involved in politics and to pursue it and thus have planned for it. Women do not receive this same support. Therefore, this is an example of how gender bias can affect women’s access to certain careers and arguably to political leadership roles (Carroll, 1993; Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). While women are left with

the responsibility of determining how to manage multiple social roles: wife, mother, employee, community/civic leader, this often times delays their entrance into politics (Carroll, 1983, 1984). For a Black woman the roles are greater. Not only does she have to manage all roles enumerated above, she has the added burden of coping with the complex issue of conflicting identity issues that surface in her professional and personal life.

According to Farmer and Associates (1997), socialization affects the various career choices we make. Indeed, more women are entering traditionally male dominated professions deemed “credible” for political leadership roles (i.e., lawyers, doctors, business owners, the wealthy, etc.) in respectable numbers (McGlen & O’Connor, 1998; Palmer & Simon, 2001; Williams, 1990). However, they are still socialized into the helping fields such as education and nursing, for example. These fields are not held to the same degree of esteem in the political arena as are the traditionally male dominated professions—though this seems to be shifting slightly in today’s society (Carroll, 1983, 2003; Clark, 1991). Notwithstanding this change, women again, still are not socialized into politics, which can be regarded as a helping field, because of the power that politicians can possibly possess and wield.

While serving in elective office in a long term capacity cannot be regarded as a typical career, it is a job path people have held for a lifetime. It is however, a limited and restricted career. Nevertheless, arguably there are levels. There can be career succession planning, rewards, and development opportunities. Therefore, it is my belief that a critical piece to conducting a thorough analysis of Black women’s conception of elective office as a viable career option is the examination of Black women’s political leadership development and career development experiences—hence the focus of this study. To this end, another explanation for why women and Black women in particular do not approach politics as a career is imbedded in the historical

development of the career development field, which has shaped the way in which women and women of color's leadership and career development experiences have been understood. It is to this that I turn to next.

Career Development and Leadership Development

The career development literature informs the present study on Black women's leadership development and their paths to political leadership. To understand Black women's leadership and career development experiences and why Black women's experiences have been understudied, a review of the historical development of the career development field is warranted.

According to Herr (2001), current usage of the term 'career development' is inherently informed by the blending of two conceptual frameworks, "one that explains the development of career behavior across the life span and the other that describes how career behavior is changed by particular interventions" (p. 196). From a historical context, the pairing of these two terms occurred only as recently as the late 1960s. Prior to this decade the terms career and development were associated with vocational development/psychology, in other words, individual abilities, needs and interests. It is only recently that career development theory and research have begun focusing on how contextual factors, such as history, culture, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender influence the decisions individuals make toward their professional future (Hartung, 2002).

Current research has shown that the career experiences of women and of ethnic groups are directly shaped by these contextual forces (Alfred, 2001; Gati, Osipow, & Givon, 1995; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995). However, because much of the classical career theory and development research is based on studies that used a convenience sample comprised of White

middle class men, women and ethnic group's career experiences have gone largely misunderstood and misrepresented. For example, Parsons's (1909) and Holland's (1985) trait-factor theories posit that career choice is directly related to individual ability and work experience. These theories falsely assume that women have the same opportunities as men to cultivate and explore career interests. They also fail to take into account that because women are socialized to pursue interests that are stereotypically female, their circumstances as a result are much different (Bierema, 1998, 2001; Burlew & Johnson, 1992; Erhart, 1990; Fitzgerald, Fassinger, & Betz, 1995; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Hartung, 2002; Herr, 2001; Inman, 1998).

Super's (1957) life space model, which includes five career stages—growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement—is another foundational concept. Super, too, posits that career development is a cumulative process and assumes that women have equal opportunity to go through the five stages uninterrupted. Moreover, this career model “explains vocational development as a process of making several decisions culminating in career choices representing an implementation of the self-concept” (Bierema, 2001, p. 55). Although this model has been critical to the progress made in the career development field, it, too, fails to recognize that women's career lifecycle is neither linear nor smooth. In fact, several studies (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002; DiBenedetto & Tittles, 1990, as cited in Schreiber, 1998; Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998) show that women's career path tends to consist of numerous interruptions stemming from the choices they have to make regarding when to combine work and family. Schreiber (1998) commented,

While marriage and family have traditionally been viewed as positive for men's careers (represent stability), this combination could reasonably be considered a career liability for women when success is defined by traditional standards....The decision to interrupt

employment for family clearly carries significant consequences....A career interruption may no longer cost a woman her job, yet it may still cost her in terms of promotions and participation in training and career development activities or in the informal networking that can lead to special projects or strategic (and visible) committee work. (p. 8)

Thus, the classical career development literature has taken a dramatic turn with respect to the amount of attention devoted to understanding how and why the career experiences of women and non-White groups are comparatively different from the normed group. A growing body of research calls attention to how problematic these classical theories are in explaining women and especially women of color's career development. Indeed, these theories provide the foundation for this discourse; however, it should not go overlooked that many non-White groups have been and continue to be disenfranchised because of the contextual forces that the classical career theories overlook in explaining women and ethnic groups' career development experiences.

Career development of women of color. Baraka-Love's (1986) research indicates that no clear model of a successful career pattern in public service exists for Black women. Moreover, the current career development literature fails to examine the career development experiences of Black women who choose professions in public service, namely elected and appointed political leadership positions. However, what has been learned about women's career development in general is that the career decisions that women and men face are significantly different which is relevant to this study. In addition, differences in career development also exist between women of color and White women (McCollum, 1998). For example, Barrett, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2003) assert that Black women encounter subtle and deliberate barriers in their career development. Such barriers stem from personal and institutional challenges, in so far as:

Institutional challenges are structural and environmental barriers, such as limited access to vocational guidance and assessment, tracking into 'appropriate' jobs and discrimination in hiring, promotions, and transfers. Personal challenges would encompass specific problems or issues related to the individual. Examples are lack of self-confidence, less career exploration and more career indecision, and the inability or unwillingness to play the political 'game'. (p. 2)

In addition to these challenges, the literature shows the decisions that women of color face tend to be more complicated as a result of the "double jeopardy" of race and sex discrimination (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Bingham & Ward, 1994; Farmer, 1997; Fitzgerald et al.; Fassinger, & Betz, 1995; Leong, 1995). For example, Black women are faced with the phenomenon of "biculturality" (Bell & Nkomo, 2001) existing between a White and a Black world. Accordingly, Barrett et al. (2003) posit that biculturalism is the notion that "depicts how Blacks interact with White society...[I]t is the ability to function in two socio-cultural environments and to negotiate between them" (p. 111). Historically, Black women living within the dominant White culture have been forced to either assimilate or find ways to maintain their identity.

Another major issue for Black women in the workplace is balancing their "personal, professional, and communal lives" (King & Ferguson, 2001, p. 125). Negotiating among these life forces requires an exorbitant amount of physical and emotional energy, which has severe consequences for Black women's health and well-being (Harris-Lacewell, 2001; King & Ferguson, 2001). This circumstance is exacerbated by the "strong Black female" image which has roots in slavery (Boyd, 1998; Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Young, 1989). For example, while the Black female slave was expected to labor in the fields exuding strength and endurance as exhibited by her male counterparts, she was also expected to sacrifice herself for the good of not

only her family but also the slave community as a whole—“making sure everyone’s back [was] covered but her own” (Harris-Lacewell, 2001, p. 10). “In her contemporary form,” writes Harris-Lacewell (2001),

The strong [B]lack woman is a motivated, hardworking breadwinner. She is always prepared “to do what needs to be done” for her family and her people. She is sacrificial and smart. She suppresses her own emotional needs while anticipating those of others. She has a seemingly irrepressible spirit unbroken by a legacy of oppression, poverty, and rejection. (p. 3)

As evidenced, several studies have identified and documented the limitations of employing classical career development theories to the experiences of women of color, particularly, the impact that both “social context” and “positionality” have on their experiences (Alfred, 2001; Barrett, 2000; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Bierema, 2001; Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998; Palmer, 1990; Schreiber, 1998; Thomas, 2004; Wilson, 2004). Potentially more useful and relevant to understanding the career development of women of color and other marginalized groups, whose career development experiences do not fit into existing frameworks, has been the application of social learning theories (Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998). Farmer (1997) concurred, “...promise for a more comprehensive theory, relevant for the diversity of the U. S. population today in terms of ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, will likely come from emerging theories based on social learning theory....” (p. 3).

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) considers several variables that guide people in their career development, such as self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and personal goals. It emphasizes the interplay between these psychological factors with other characteristics of a person (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity) and their environments (e.g., support, barriers) (Lent, Brown, &

Hackett, 2000). For example, within the SCCT framework, five areas can be considered relevant to understanding the career development of women of color: their knowledge of the work world, family factors, environmental factors, the impact of socialization, and the impact of sexism and racism (Lent et al., 2000). Similarly, from a social cognitive perspective, Hackett and Byars (1996) discuss the impact of typical socialization experiences of Black women on career behavior and self-efficacy, and suggest implications for career counseling. In particular, Hackett and Byars note that Black women develop differently from White women due to differences in context and their learning experiences. These experiences stem from socialization and various forms of racism, sexism, and classism (Alfred, 2001; Collins, 2000; Evans & Herr, 1991; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998).

In sum, Bierema (2001) states, “many researchers and theorists [today] agree that women’s careers cannot be adequately explained by traditional theories of career development, there is disagreement [moreover] about whether existing theories need modification or new ones need to be created” (p. 56). Notably, women make up more than 40 percent of the workforce, yet still lag behind men economically. Because the circumstances are worse for women of color, who are even further behind their female and male counterparts (Burke & Nelson, 2002), it is of even greater importance for scholars and practitioners of career development and adult education to continue producing research that examines and exposes the structural and contextual forces that interfere with women of color’s career development. It is these contextual forces that influence the career development experiences of women of color.

Black women’s leadership development. Differences in the leadership characteristics of women and men is not a new phenomenon. Bass (1991) asserts that masculine leadership styles are valued more in the traditional organizational structure and bureaucracies. Moreover,

Helgesen's (1990) study of women leaders revealed the ways in which women lead differently than men. In Helgesen's study of four successful women leaders, whose stories form the basis of her research, revealed that these women did not manage their organizations from a top down approach. However, these women demonstrated a more inclusive style of leadership in which they placed themselves in the middle of the day-to-day activities of their respective organizations. Similarly, both Rosener's (1990) study on women leaders and Rhode's (2003) overview of the current knowledge about women and leadership is to discuss these differences as well. As with these two sources, numerous other studies whose focus is on women's leadership development, (Austin & Leland, 1991; Carli & Eagly, 1999; Indvik, 2001; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002), however, they not only failed to adequately explore Black women's leadership development in the profession, but also in the political arena.

According to Smooth (2001), roughly two and half decades ago few studies existed which critically analyzed women's leadership experiences in the political sphere and their influence on setting public policy agendas. This began to change after 1992, which is identified as the "Year of the Woman" due to the dramatic rise in the number of women elected to public office. This distinction has implications for the present study because with this dramatic increase in the number of women elected to public office; scholars are challenged now to further develop theoretical frameworks around understanding women's leadership development, the influence on and impact of women's leadership in the political context.

King and Ferguson (2001) write about the challenges many professional Black women face in their leadership development, which is directly related to the previous discussion on the impact of the "strong Black female" image on Black women's career development experiences. The women in King and Ferguson's article provide examples of instances during their workday

where they had to combat stereotypes, which were emotionally draining. Additionally, their being physically drained often was a result of having to deal with feelings of isolation as the “only” in a dominant cultural environment. Other examples provided was their encounters with feelings of personal overload resulting from the biculturality phenomenon (Barrett, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2003) to “dealing with conflicts stemming from pressures to fulfill race and gender-role expectations in contexts that have conflicting norms and values” (King & Ferguson, 2001, p. 128). This behavior was further compounded by their belief that in order to remain successful in their jobs, they had to perform two and three times better than their White colleagues. As a result, they are “held to higher and often different standards than their [W]hite colleagues, even when their credentials were extraordinary” (Bell & Nkomo, 2001, p. 145).

Another view of the Black female professional experience suggests that Black women are doubly advantaged—that they are accorded benefits as members of both the Black and female minority groups (Moynihan, 1967), thus discounting the position that Black women do not suffer emotionally and psychologically from the symbol of the “strong Black female.” This image of Black women as a privileged group implies that Black women’s progress in the professions has been at the expense of White women and men, and particularly a threat to Black men (Hare & Hare, 1970; Moynihan, 1967). Notably, this notion has been proven a myth (Beach-Duncan, 2004; Sokoloff, 1992). Sokoloff’s (1992) study on Black and White women in the professions showed that Black women’s gains are “relative” when compared to other groups because “Black women have come from an incredibly low starting point” (p. 96). For example, the concentration of these gains has been in jobs that are traditionally female and tend to be lower in pay. Similarly, we even see in the political arena that Black women’s representation has increased

significantly; however, their access to the more prestigious committees and leadership positions remains limited (Smooth, 2001).

Baraka-Love (1986) studied the racial differences in the leadership and career development of successful Black and White women. Baraka-Love contends that the factors of growth and development of successful Black women leaders cannot be separated from the historical experiences of Black Americans in the United States. Ironically, successful Black women whose experiences provide a wealth of examples of personal strength and triumph in the face of double discrimination remain an understudied group in American society. Similarly, Scott's 1982 literature review on Black women's leadership revealed,

The contributions of Black women are unrecognized; public leadership by Black women is not accorded the same attention that is given to viable Black male leaders; and studies of Black institutions illustrate the exclusion of Black women from positions of leadership. (p. 5)

Over twenty years later the picture Scott describes concerning the lack of attention devoted to Black women's leadership roles in the political arena has indeed improved, although when compared to research on White women's advances, the improvement is marginal. According to Davis (1982), from slavery to the present, Black women have encountered barriers denying them full access to political participation. An impressive number of Black women have found ways to influence political and governmental affairs despite obstacles in their path. Davis (1982) further notes that certain social institutions and organizations (i.e., church, clubs and societies) have been instrumental in educating and training Black women for roles in politics and government. These institutions provided the necessary resources for them to develop their civic leadership skills and to have more involvement in political activities.

To this end, several political organizations have been established to increase the representation of Black women seeking and securing political office. For example, in 1972, the National Black Women's Political Leadership Caucus was established to help educate Black women "in the fundamentals of politics and to encourage them to seek public office" (Davis, 1982, p. ix). Four years later, in 1976, the National Association of Black Women Legislators was organized to serve primarily as a medium to disseminate legislative information and policy changes that affected the Black community. Several other political organizations have served in this capacity, such as the National Association for Colored Women's Clubs, Congressional Black Caucus, and National Political Congress of Black Women. Nevertheless, Black women still face obstacles in their paths to political leadership and in their political leadership development experiences.

Interruptions in their Paths to Political Leadership

Research within the career development field and other academic disciplines have identified environmental factors contributing to Black women's career development success and impediments to their success which have implications for how Black women enter the political arena and their ability to remain there (Alfred, 2001; Baraka-Love, 1986; Beach-Duncan, 2004; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Bova, 2000; Cohen, 2003; Erhart, 1990; Gostnell, 1997; Higgenbotham, 1980; King & Ferguson, 2001; Rogers, 1998). Consistently mentioned as factors contributing to Black women's career development success were multiple mentors, peer networks, strategic career planning, and individual perseverance. The barriers frequently cited are gendered socialization practices, perceptions of women's positionality, and the interlocking system of racism, sexism, and classism (Githens & Prestage, 1977; Gostnell, 1997; Smooth, 2001; Thomas & Wilcox, 1998).

Another common barrier is the ubiquitous glass ceiling effect, or what many women of color describe as the unbreakable barriers of plexiglas, teflon, and the concrete ceiling (Anderson, 1998; Beach-Duncan, 2004; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Brown, 2000; Catalyst, 1998; Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002; Simpson, 1996). According to Catalyst, a nonprofit research and advisory organization based in New York, the glass ceiling is defined as social, organizational, and attitudinal barriers that restrict access to both top-level managerial positions and middle-management positions. However, more elusive is the concrete ceiling in which women of color reported to be more difficult to penetrate and that they cannot see through it to glimpse the corner office (Catalyst, 1998). Like the glass ceiling phenomenon in the professions, the concrete ceiling concept applies to Black women's efforts to seek political office in that they cannot see through the concrete barrier to get a glimpse of certain executive-level political leadership roles at the local, state, and federal levels.

Glass Ceiling

There is no doubt that significant progress has been achieved in furthering the cause of gender equality in the labor market over recent decades. Women have been moving steadily into occupations, professions and managerial jobs previously reserved for men. Their access to education and training continues to improve, providing many with the necessary qualifications to aspire to jobs in senior management. Government, business, and women's organizations have devoted much thought and energy to overcoming the attitudinal and institutional discrimination that bars women from certain jobs, hinders their career development and access to professional training opportunities. Yet, many of the results fall short of expectations. Real obstacles remain, and these are often rooted in the types of career opportunities to which women have access. Women are still concentrated in low managerial positions throughout the professions, and

breaking through the glass ceiling still appears elusive for all but a select few (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987).

Glass ceiling in the professions. In recent years, local, state, and federal government as well as many private companies have had to reevaluate the affirmative steps that they have taken in order to improve the representation of women and women of color in upper-level managerial leadership positions. Numerous studies have identified the ‘glass ceiling’ of invisible artificial and attitudinal barriers as one particularly solid explanation for why women, especially women of color, remain underrepresented in the prominent positions of leadership in government and in corporate America. For women who also experience race discrimination, the barrier to top jobs seems to be made of an unbreakable concrete ceiling, cites Catalyst (1998). Other terms used are teflon (Beach-Duncan, 2004) and plexiglas (Simpson, 1996) ceilings which both also metaphorically suggest that these women encounter barriers that cannot be broken (Beach-Duncan, 2004; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Phelps & Constantine, 2001; Schreiber, 1998; Simpson, 1996) as they attempt to ascend in the leadership ranks of their professions.

One of the major reasons provided for why the glass ceiling continues to exist is that women and men receive different developmental experiences during their careers. For example, women have reported having fewer opportunities to experience certain types of assignments than men (McDonald & Hite, 1998). Moreover, McDonald and Hite (1998) found subtle forms of discrimination occurring that perpetuate the glass ceiling. Women held positions and took assignments that were less visible within organizations and that involved less risk and less breadth of responsibility than men did. Snyder (1993) writes,

To deny women access to high-level responsibilities creates a vicious cycle in the selection and development process. If women do not have access to these challenges,

they may be perceived as less qualified than men and may then be unable to qualify for the next job. If a woman's career is later accelerated for affirmative action reasons, the organization may be setting her up for failure because she lacks these experiences. (p. 102)

Beyond the glass ceilings, Black women are also denied the economic and psychological benefits associated with higher-level positions. Furthermore, the studies on the glass ceiling collectively suggest that there is an unobtrusive, yet persistent, channeling of Black women into positions lacking breadth and depth, ultimately resulting in Black women having insufficient skills and experiences to gain entry into the upper echelons of institutions and organizations (Higginbotham, 1980, 1994). By denying Black women challenging developmental opportunities at each phase of their career progression, organizations, perhaps intentionally, continue to reinforce the existence of the glass ceiling.

Overall, the glass ceiling remains widely recognized as a serious concern. Despite years of media exposure, the glass ceiling also remains a significant part of many organizations' cultures even in the 21st century. Buzzanell (1995) reports that if we do not break the glass ceiling completely, women will continue to be underrepresented in top layers of business, education, and government in addition to suffering unequal economic parity. Further, Bullard and Wright (1993) assert, "American employers, for the most part, are overlooking a resource that could make a tremendous difference over the next 40 years. They're ignoring women. This is, when you think about it, a thoroughly dumb thing to do" (p. 189).

As the literature demonstrates, women and Black women in particular have made tremendous progress toward acquiring educational, economic, and employment equality. However, Black women still lag behind men and White women. Bova (2000) cites that a 1999

study released by Catalyst reported that women of color make up 23 percent of the U.S. female workforce, but account for only 15 percent of women in managerial level positions in the private sector. Black women are the most underrepresented of this group, with slightly more than 12 percent of the female workforce at large, but only 7 percent of the 2.9 million women managers in the private sector. Additionally, they concluded that women of color lacked access to influential colleagues and thus have limited opportunities for mentors and sponsors who are vital to career advancement. This same dynamic is present for women pursuing a career in politics. In fact the political concrete ceiling is a term that can be used to describe women of color's inability to reach select leadership positions in a typical political career trajectory which is based on a White, male, middle class experience (Catalyst, 1998).

Political concrete ceiling. Women aspiring to high level elected and appointed positions hinges on the same environmental factors related to success in the professions: mentors, access to training opportunities, visibility, etc. However, several studies have identified “the pipeline” issue as a particularly strong explanation for why women, and women of color in particular remain underrepresented at the federal level (Kropf & Boiney, 2001; Palmer & Simon, 2001; Reid, Kerr, & Miller, 2000). Palmer and Simon's (2001) study of the social and environmental factors that influence women's decisions to become a political candidate reports that,

In the American electoral arena, there is a hierarchy of political offices that serves as a career ladder for elected officials....In other words, politicians begin their careers serving in local and state offices before running for Congress. Thus, once women begin serving in these lower political offices in greater numbers, only then will we see serious increases in the number of women in the House, and eventually in the Senate. (p. 61)

Another factor preventing women from entering the pipeline is “sex-role socialization” (Githens & Prestage, 1977; Higgenbotham, 2000; Jennings, 1991). The research of McGlen and O’Connor (1998), and Williams (1990) indicate that women have been traditionally socialized to pursue female dominated careers (i.e., nursing and teaching) typically viewed as “less compatible” with politics than in male dominated careers (law and business) viewed as most compatible. However, Palmer and Simon (2001) posit that “Recently, many women have been successful precisely because they come from fields other than law, such as health and education,” (p. 61). Nevertheless, as a result of limited access to the pipeline, Black women’s representation at the federal level will remain marginal.

Another line of research emphasizes the power of incumbency in discouraging women to run for office. For example, Palmer and Simon (2001) assert that women are less likely to participate in primary and general elections in greater numbers if they have to compete against an incumbent. Uncontested races tend to attract greater numbers of women candidates. Therefore, the likelihood of success influences women’s decisions to become a candidate.

As evidenced, the political glass ceiling does not differ substantially from the ceiling present in the professions; the context is merely different. The section that follows provides an extensive review of the more pervasive barriers impeding Black women from securing political leadership roles. Also discussed are the facilitative conditions that support their efforts to enter the political arena.

Black Women’s Ascendancy to Political Leadership Roles—Barriers and Facilitative Conditions

Barriers

Rogers (2003) writes, “[h]istorically, African American women as political actors have confronted racism, sexism, and classism, assumed leadership positions, risked their lives, and

gained ground for Black men and White women...” (p. 359). She goes on to argue that through these selfless efforts, Black women still “...were rendered invisible because Black progress was considered male and any feminist was considered White” (p. 359). Roger’s (2003) research further reveals that Black women who have been elected successfully to political leadership positions at the state and federal levels tend to demonstrate “a strong appreciation for education and learning and strong influential factors in their career development” (p. 362). In addition, these women maintain a strong respect for formal learning and informal, non-formal learning, and experiential learning such as learning at home, at work, and in the community (Rogers, 2003).

Although more scholars are studying and writing about the experiences of Black women political candidates, the findings are conflicting. Barrett’s (1997) research findings suggest that despite the advances Black women have made in state legislatures, the fact remains that they must work twice as hard as their male and female counterparts. Barrett (1997) also notes that Black women must constantly prove themselves by maintaining a balance of breadth and depth in terms of policy issues—that is—they feel obligated to simultaneously advance policies for the Black community while advancing those that have historically been identified as women’s issues: poverty, education, and health. Moreover, Githens and Prestage (1977) contend that Black women face double disadvantage at the polls, confronting biases related to race and gender. According to Darcy and Hadley (1988), the double disadvantage issue forces Black women to face conflicting priorities—that is—some contend Black women’s first priority should be to combat racism by forgoing their concerns and focusing on advancing the situation of Black males. For others, sexism should be of greater concern whereby Black women focus on continuing the fight for their equality (Darcy & Hadley, 1988; Higginbotham, 1994).

Additional factors affecting Black women's efforts to seek and maintain leadership roles are the stereotypes directed toward them. When discussing the role of Black women 20 years ago, Dumas states (as cited in Bova, 2000),

The mass of Black women in America is still at the bottom of the heap—among this country's underclass. And although increasing numbers of Black women are beginning to occupy important positions of authority and prestige in organizations within and outside Black communities, there are forces at work today as in the past that tax the physical and emotional stamina of these women, undermine their authority, compromise their competence, limit the power that they might conceivably exercise and thus limit their opportunities for rewards and mobility in the organization—not to mention the impact of these on job satisfaction. (p. 10)

Other barriers Black female elected officials experience when maintaining leadership positions is that they are often isolated from legislative activities such as making policy deals with colleagues, pursuing policy issues aggressively, and meeting with lobbyists (Smooth, 2001). In addition, it is more uncommon for White males to establish authentic relationships with Black female legislators (Smooth, 2001). Black women are still not invited to the “meetings held behind closed doors” in which men, White men in particular, negotiate policy issues. Moreover, regardless of Black women's senior status in the legislature, albeit senior legislators or even chair of a major committee, their authority is oftentimes challenged (Smooth, 2001). This speaks to the degree of political power Black women wield in the legislature.

Barrett (1997) concludes that despite their advances in terms of numbers, Black women still believe they must work harder than White men do to prove themselves. Black women political leaders must do this while at the same time pursuing an agenda broad enough to show

general interest and narrow enough to show concern for the needs of their female or minority constituents. According to Bova (2000), making matters worse are the stereotypes that have been created by a racist society to define and constrain Black women's lives. The most commonly known stereotype is the Black matriarch. This term is a sexist and racist image created by White society and reinforced by popular culture today, which depicts Black women as independent and domineering, and that they can do all and do not need the help of others, including Black men (Davis, 1989; Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Collins, 2000). This stereotype has served to cast Black women in a negative light. Notably, this image of the Black woman can be seen as having ties to slavery, in both its creation and sexual stereotypes. As Wallace (1979) states:

She was believed to be emotionally callous but physically invulnerable—stronger than [W]hite women and the physical equal of any man of her race. She was stronger than [W]hite women in order to justify her performing a kind of labor most [W]hite women were now presumed to be incapable of. (p. 13)

This negative image of the Black woman was reinforced after the controversial 1965 Moynihan report, which stated that Black families had been destroyed due to slavery and the reversed roles of Black men and women. In other words, men were allowing women to get away with becoming the head of households or the sole breadwinner of the family. Collins (2000) points out, Moynihan's report implied that: "Black family structures are seen as being deviant because they challenge the patriarchal assumptions underpinning the construct of the ideal family" (p. 75). As a result, Black women became a threat to society and to Black male power, and were therefore seen as an emasculating figure. This stereotype ultimately limits Black women's "options and power in organizations and society by creating a one-dimensional image of [them]

as a mother, loyal subordinate and pillar of strength for others in the organization” (Bova, 2000, p. 10).

Influence is also an issue for Black women. Smooth (2001) conducted research investigating how both gender and race play a role in determining who is regarded as influential in the context of state legislatures. Most relevant to this discussion is the conclusion the author draws about Black female state legislators’ experiences. The author’s data show that Black female state legislators hold less power and influence regardless of the amount of time that they have served in political leadership or the type of leadership position they hold. This challenges the conventional thinking that the more political seniority one acquires through years of service, the more power one has. This is a result of the “...preferences around gender and race [that] have become institutionalized and manifest as norms covering legislative behavior,” cites Smooth (2001, p. 3). Substantiating this claim, Maxine Waters (D-CA), a well-respected and established Black female Congresswoman notes that Black women have been held to different standards because of their race and gender (Clayton & Stallings, 2000). She states,

Voters and fellow congresspersons alike have expected them to be representatives on economic issues, health issues, housing issues, the issue of incarceration of Black males and drugs....But at the same time, because of the nature of this job and the nature of our work, it creates the need to be assertive. And sometimes [Black women legislators] are criticized for being too aggressive. Somehow, there is a desire for [Black women] to be tough, but not show it, or to be aggressive, but to mask it in ways that men are not asked to do. (Clayton & Stallings, 2000, p. 579)

In sum, the literature shows as the numbers of women candidates for so-called nontraditional offices increase, “women are still more likely to be elected to public offices seen

as consistent with their social and domestic role, such as superintendent of public instruction or secretary of state rather than attorney general” (Kelly, Saint-Germain, & Horn, 1991, p. 77). In effect, the literature suggests that for Black women to be successful and effective in elected office, they must maintain a proper balance between representing the needs of their constituent and the needs of the Black and the female communities, while working within a political system historically controlled by males. By not having Black women fully represented in our elected offices, untapped skills and talents are foregone, which in the long term places the U.S. political system in a position of missing the opportunity of benefiting from great leaders with the potential to lead the nation to greater heights.

In the following section, I identify the facilitative conditions that influence Black women’s ability to seek and maintain leadership roles. More specifically, strategies prominent Black female political leaders use to achieve and maintain their political leadership roles are identified. Their lived experiences serve as model behavior for other Black women and women of color to learn how to overcome barriers to entering the political arena and rising in the political leadership ranks.

Facilitative Conditions

Research shows that factors contributing to political activity among Black women and the strategies they can use to achieve and maintain political leadership roles are directly related to their experiences with racism, sexism, and classism (Barnett, 1993; Brown, 1994; Gill, 1997; Prestage, 1991; Rogers; 1998; Smooth, 2001). The research profiling the backgrounds of persons more likely to seek and be elected to office consistently mentions certain political cues such as high social status and income (Barrett, 1997; Darcy & Hadley, 1988; Prestage, 1991). Education, professional occupation, and activity in voluntary and community groups have also been

associated with political ambition because of contacts gained, potential visibility, and leadership made possible (Barrett, 1997).

Researchers Darcy and Hadley (1988), Perkins (1986), and Fowlkes (1984) argue that women in politics today were counter socialized away from the prevailing norms of political women. This could be associated with the presence of a politically active mother available as a role model or an encouraging father; others are stimulated by the women's movement to move away from traditionally defined roles (Perkins, 1986). Age, too, is associated with political ambition. We see women waiting later in life to seek elected office. This is due to in part to gendered socialization norms, and family and career obligations. With respect to Black women's political activity in nontraditional political leadership roles, Perkins (1986) argues they are more likely to be driven into politics due to life circumstances (i.e., racism, economic and educational inequality, and sexism).

Reid-Merritt (1996) interviewed over 40 successful Black female leaders (33 employed in the public arena and 12 were leaders in corporate America) whom she titled phenomenal women. These women were self-assured, aggressive and assertive, race-conscious and serious about social justice and change, held a high degree of self-efficacy, and demonstrated a deep sense of resilience. From the interviews she conducted, it became apparent that although the women did not demonstrate "perfectly similar life patterns," they did share seven core characteristics that made them unique as a group of powerful women leaders. The women had strong support of family, church, school, and community. Along with possessing an intense focus on clearly identified goals, political sophistication, and a spiritual foundation, they also possessed a strong sense of identity and self-worth as Blacks and women. The final shared leadership characteristic is that all the women were socially conscious and dedicated to a social

agenda that transcended personal gain. Although not listed as a core characteristic, Reid-Merritt (1996) acknowledges that all of the women in her study had mentors ranging from spiritual higher being to family members to professional colleagues.

Rajoppi's (1993) research suggests that successful women politicians tend to demonstrate a high level of motivation, which is most critical since politics is still a difficult field for women to enter. Among elected and appointed political officeholders, research shows that in comparison to men, women in general tend to have more political leadership experience prior to acquiring an elected office (Rajoppi, 1993; Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). Rajoppi (1993) states further,

Although women elected officials are less likely than men to have held previous elective offices, they are more likely than men to have held appointed positions in government, to have worked in political campaigns, and to have served on the staff of an elected official.

(p. 7)

With respect to Black women, they traditionally enter politics at the grassroots level advocating a specific cause. For example, Mary McLeod Bethune, the first Black woman to receive a major federal appointment—named director of the “Negro Division” of the National Youth Administration in 1936 by President Roosevelt—entered the political arena by fighting for educational equality for Blacks. She gained her political skills through her community activism, volunteerism, and strong social justice stance. Similarly, representative Grace Hamilton, the first Black female elected to the Georgia State Legislator, developed her political skills not only from early exposure to her parents' political activism, but also through her tireless efforts to combat discrimination through her volunteer work for the NAACP, breaking racial barriers within the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and leadership in the Atlanta Urban League.

Overall, most fundamental to Black women securing and succeeding in political leadership roles is that they must acknowledge and prepare themselves for barriers that stem from the confluence of race and gender stereotypes. Collectively, with self-confidence and strong self-esteem, thick skin, and strong professional and personal support networks, strong value of education, Black women are better equipped to maneuver themselves successfully through and around these barriers. Additionally, volunteering on political campaigns to learn the fundamentals of running for office, serving in community leadership roles (boards, professional associations and networks), and acquiring mentors are other important variables to their success.

Summary

This literature review demonstrates that Black women have overcome numerous obstacles, moving from negative gender and racial stereotyping to being considered sophisticated candidates able to attract broad political support (Asante, 2000). Despite these advances, more work remains, namely, understanding why few Black women pursue politics as a career and how racism and sexism combined impacts their career path to political leadership. This chapter creates a clearer picture of the nature of this issue. Noticeably, is the finding that Black women's political leadership development and career development experiences as it relates to politics remain understudied (Darcy & Hadley, 1988; Giddings, 1984; Githens & Prestage, 1977; Gostnell, 1997; Smooth, 2001). Examining the life stories of Black women political leaders in Georgia will reveal rich data that contributes to the small but growing scholarly literature base on the life, leadership and career development experiences of Black women in politics.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

- How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?
- What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?
- How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to elective office and existence as political leaders?

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to investigate the three research questions previously listed and is organized by the following sections: Research Design, Sample Selection, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Validity and Reliability, Researcher Stance, and Summary.

Research Design

Qualitative research is a concept that involves different types of inquiry to help researchers explore and understand social phenomena (Merriam, 1998). The philosophical roots of qualitative research are comprised of different disciplines and vary in assumptions, foci, and methods (Glesne, 1999). The philosophical orientation most commonly associated with qualitative research is the interpretive research paradigm which grounds itself in understanding the process a phenomenon undergoes to exist and its inextricable link to the meanings that are imbedded in people's lived experiences. Thus, the basic guiding assumption for all types of qualitative research is that reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing (Glesne,

1999; Merriam, 1998). Other key characteristics of qualitative research include the following: the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data; the researcher can gather data by observing study participants and their interactions in their natural setting through fieldwork; and through their research, qualitative researchers look for ways to extract meaning from the data they collect (Merriam, 1998). In particular, the researcher is typically looking for a combination of themes, categories, concepts, tentative hypotheses, even theories, that have been inductively derived from the data (Merriam, 1998).

When conducting a qualitative study, the researcher is fundamentally, from his/her perspective, attempting to make sense of people's constructions of what they experience and particularly how they construct the world around them (Glesne, 1999). Overall, qualitative research allows the researcher to conduct a more in-depth exploration of participants' experiences by collecting thick, rich data through interviews, field notes, the collection of artifacts, and through other forms of data collection (Merriam, 1998). It is through the thick, rich data that the multiplicitous nature of peoples' lived experiences and the various ways of extracting meaning from these experiences becomes more compelling. Unlike the quantitative research paradigm, which posits that one reality exists and that this reality is quantifiable and generalizable (Crotty, 1998), the qualitative research paradigm, on the other hand, allows researchers to explore inductively what those socially constructed meanings are, not constraining the researcher to ascribe to a predetermined set of categories of analysis (Patton, 2002).

A qualitative design was best suited for this study because this design enabled me to conduct an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon that has received relatively little scholarly attention—getting beyond the surface issues of why Black women do not pursue political leadership roles as a viable career option. Second, a qualitative design is more conducive to

exposing the complexities of Black women's leadership development experiences in relation to how racism and sexism have impacted their career paths to political leadership. Third, no theory exists to guide this study. Hence, the qualitative research paradigm enabled me to employ an inductive research strategy that uncovered emergent themes, concepts, and hypotheses for the purpose of creating theory around Black women's leadership development experiences. Finally, in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. As the primary data collection instrument, I had the flexibility in collecting information about the research context and study participants. I also had the flexibility to guide the research process in the direction of points of inquiry to get the richest data possible (Patton, 2002) on the individual life stories of Black women political leaders in the state of Georgia.

Narratives

Describing life experiences in the form of story telling has been a widely used means of communication for centuries. "Telling stories about past events seems to be a universal human activity, one of the first forms of discourse we learn as children...and used by people of all social backgrounds in a wide array of settings," states Riessman (1993, p. 2). Data are imbedded in the stories we construct about our life experiences. As such, "Personal [or life] narratives [or the narrative analysis of lives]... reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences...[and when analyzed, these] stories and narratives offer an especially translucent window into cultural and social meanings" (Patton, 2002, pp. 115-116).

Narratives are a form of discourse that have been embraced by Black feminist scholars as a powerful tool in revealing the "multilayered texture of Black women's lives" (Bell-Scott & Johnson-Bailey, 1998; Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 43). Etter-Lewis states,

Black women's experiences, for example, are influenced by their multiple social roles, which are acted out simultaneously. They do not have the privilege of *only* being women, or of *only* being [B]lack Americans in particular situations. Instead, their roles are melded. Usually they must wear both hats at the same time. (p. 56)

Etter-Lewis (1991) goes on to suggest that Black women's narratives as a result are "...not a mere compilation of idiosyncratic recollections only interesting to a specialized audience; rather, Black women's life stories enrich our understanding of issues of race and gender" (p. 43).

Another important feature of narratives is that they make it appropriate for researchers to attend to power disparities inherent in the research process—mediating the degree of control the researcher has in how the narratives are constructed. A strategy that addresses this issue is the empowering nature of narratives in giving voice to the silenced by creating space for them to tell their own life story. As Johnson-Bailey (2004) states, "this format gives preeminence to displaying data in its original state, which is acknowledged as a trustworthy way of giving "voice" to participants" (p. 125). While power issues are acknowledged, this does not suggest that they are all together eliminated through this approach.

In short, the construction of "narratives as way of communicating and knowing" (Johnson-Bailey, 2004) is fundamental to this study. The use of narratives is a method for gaining a deeper understanding of Black women's experiences in seeking elected political leadership positions in a long term capacity. This method also allows the researcher to explore how Black women's leadership development paths are impacted by the intersection of race and gender to help both the researcher and the participants gain insights into who these women are and how they see themselves in their world.

Three Methodological Approaches to Narrative Analysis

Three methodological approaches to narrative analysis, which can be combined or used separately, include psychological, biographical, and linguistic. The psychological approach focuses on what life stories reveal about a person's thoughts and motivations. In other words, a basic assumption for this approach is that a person's identity is revealed in the life stories or narratives she/he constructs (Polkinghorne, 1995). As such, "...[S]tories consistently portray the element of individual knowing and awareness, making them ideal as bridges across the personal barriers of the mind and the political alliances of the conscience" (Johnson-Bailey, 2004, p. 126).

Denzin's (1989) biographical approach is concerned with how society influences a person's self-conception or identity. Denzin (1989) notes that people's "family beginnings" or family history influences who they are and their life experiences (Denzin, 1989, p. 17). This approach recognizes race and class as factors influencing the construction of narratives and the meanings derived from them. Also recognized is that the audience influences how a story is told. In short, the contextuality of people's life experiences and how people come to know themselves is explored through this approach (Denzin, 1989).

Finally, the linguistic approach is concerned with two foci: the written text or the spoken discourse of narratives. Sociolinguists Labov and Waletzky (1967) maintain that components of the written narrative should occur in a particular order. Others interested in spoken discourse believe that stories should be parsed into sections according to a speaker's voice patterns, such as intonation, pitch, and pauses (Gee, 1991). This approach also attends to meanings derived from the content in spoken discourse.

Narrative inquiry was used for this study because it is a research tool most conducive for exploring how Black women negotiate issues of race and gender. It is also useful for gathering

information central to understanding the life and viewpoints of Black women (Collins, 2000; Etter-Lewis, 1991). In particular, “Narrative analysis can be used for systematic interpretations of others’ interpretations of events. This can be an especially powerful research tool if the narratives are accounts of...epiphanic moments, crises, or significant incidents in people’s lives, relationships or careers” (Cortazzi, 2001, p. 384). Narratives enable participants to organize their life experiences and make meaning from these experiences. Thus, the narratives in this study have been analyzed using the biographic and psychological approaches. These two approaches enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of “her story” concerning how she developed into a political leader. Cortazzi (2001) notes that rarely do narratives merely report events but instead give a teller’s “perspective on his/her meaning, relevance and importance” (p. 384). Therefore, in this study the focus of the participants’ stories is a segment of their lives concerning how they see themselves in relation to their career and leadership development paths to elective office.

Analysis of Narratives Approach

The narratives in this study were analyzed using the biographic and psychological approaches. These two approaches enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of each participant’s story concerning how she became a political leader. Through the biographic lens, I analyzed the narratives for how society influenced the participants’ life experiences. The second approach employed was Alexander’s (1988) psychobiographical, which is a nine-part framework to analyze the narratives. To allow the data to reveal itself into manageable units, Alexander (1988) surmises using nine indicators of salience as a tool to accomplish this task. The nine indicators of salience which are described below include: primacy, frequency, omission, uniqueness, isolation, negation, emphasis, error, and incomplete.

Primacy refers to the first idea a participant mentions in her/his narrative. For example, Alexander (1988) notes:

The first [idea] as ‘the key’ to unfolding of meaning is also a prevalent idea in our culture. We can see its expression in the teaching of theme or story writing in which paragraphs are initiated with a topic sentence whose meaning is then elaborated in the ensuing sentences. (p. 269)

The second indicator of salience is *frequency*, which refers to the number of times an idea is mentioned. A third indicator is *uniqueness*. Statements in narratives that indicate uniqueness are those that refer to an action or idea as rarely occurring in a participant’s life. For example, phrases such as “Nothing like this has happened to me before” or “It was the most unique thing I ever went through” (Alexander, 1988, p. 272).

Omission is the fourth indicator of salience. A participant omitting from her story feelings or reactions about an event is generally indicative of *omission*. The fifth indicator, *isolation*, is recognized by phrases that seem out of place or not part of the story being told by the study participant. *Negation*, the sixth indicator, is identified by such statements as “It’s not that the play wasn’t interesting...I just would have liked more dialogue.” Alexander (1988) would suggest that what is really meant by this statement is that that the respondent did not like the play.

Emphasis refers to statements that attract the listener’s attention. For example, “I just want you to know that...” (Alexander, 1988, p. 273) or “I’ll have you know...” indicates to the listener that something important will be stated. The eighth principle indicator of salience is *error*. Alexander (1988) describes this concept by referring to Freudian slips. *Incomplete*, the final indicator is recognized by stories that are incomplete, typically lacking an ending. Overall,

Denzin's (1989) and Alexander's (1988) approaches to narrative analysis were employed because of their compatibility and because they provide a different lens through which to analyze the data.

Sample

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), sample selection in qualitative research is purposeful. Patton (2002) defines purposeful sampling as one from which the researcher can learn the most about an information-rich case. The sample selected for this study was 13 Black women ranging in age from 50 to 80 years of age. Although 13 women were purposefully selected, only nine women were interviewed. The reason why four of the 13 individuals in the sample were not interviewed is due to the following explanation. First, I mailed information to two different addresses in which I identified for two of the four women, and neither one responded. Second, as for the two remaining individuals, one returned the participation agreement form via mail indicating that her schedule would not permit her to participate at this time. Lastly, although the fourth individual had agreed to participate, I could not set a firm interview date with her because of the numerous legislative commitments she had scheduled during my data collection timeframe. Of note, a major factor that contributed to my inability to schedule an interview with two of the four women not interviewed was that the Georgia General Assembly was in session when I attempted to schedule the interviews.

The nine participants selected for this study ranged in age from 50 to 80 years, and they were geographically diverse, representing Southeast, Southwest, Middle, and North Georgia, as well as the Atlanta-metro area. Additionally, participants were selected if they had completed at least one full term in their respective positions and serve or had served in an elected leadership position for the state of Georgia either at the local, state, or federal levels. The intent in

excluding individuals from the study who had not completed one term was for the researcher to obtain data from individuals with experience or history in the political arena.

Lastly, I enlisted the help of four key informants to gain access to the selected participants and to assist me in securing their participation in this study (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002). The profiles of the four key informants are as follows (pseudonyms have been assigned):

Michael is a Black male in his early sixties. He is a former local government elected official and the first Black to serve as president of a local government organization that provides training and networking opportunities for local elected officials.

Sally is a Black female in her mid to late fifties who is a former director of a state department.

John is a White male in his late forties who serves as a trainer and facilitator for a managerial leadership program for local elected officials.

Kate is a Black female in her late fifties. She is a respected community activist and currently serves as an elected board member for a local government entity.

As the informants contacted their assigned participant(s), they notified me that they had secured the approval of their assigned participant(s).

I made initial contact with five prospective participants via phone and four via e-mail. In most cases, I left a voice message, and the prospective participant returned the call. Next, based on the prospective participants' preference, I then sent the following material via mail and/or e-mail: a cover letter (see Appendix G) explaining the purpose of the study and what to expect as a study participant; participation agreement form; interview consent form (see Appendix H); survey seeking demographic information (see Appendix I); and an interview guide (see Appendix J).

Data Collection

The three primary data collection methods in qualitative research include interviews, participant observation, and analysis of documents (written, oral, and visual) and artifacts (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Interviewing is the most common data collection method employed in qualitative research (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The types of interviewing strategies range from highly structured, where the researcher predetermines the order and time that specific questions can be asked to unstructured interviews. Unlike the structured interviews, it becomes for an unstructured interview unimportant to identify questions beforehand and to determine their order. Another benefit of unstructured interviews is that the researcher only has to identify topics of interest to explore through an interview. Although both interview processes are used in qualitative research, the most commonly used format is a semi-structured interview, which is comprised of elements of both the structured and unstructured formats (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

An important component of the data collection process when interviews are conducted is for the researcher to obtain a nearly complete record of what has been said. To accomplish this task, recording interviews via audiotape or video and transcribing them verbatim is critical. One way of transcribing interviews is by using a transcription machine to transfer spoken words to paper. For this study, I used a transcription machine to create a full transcription of each audio-taped interview. I attempted to transcribe the interviews verbatim instead of utilizing an interview log (Merriam, 1998), which is an alternative to full transcription. Each interview transcription contained the interview questions and the interviewee's responses. To help facilitate the analysis process, I numbered each line of the interview transcriptions sequentially.

Although transcribing interviews verbatim can be time consuming, this method was most useful for this study due to the focus on individual life stories. Finally, I attempted to transcribe as soon as possible each interview after it was complete. As a result, I was to identify early in the interview process what was working well, areas that needed improvement, and what points needed further exploration (Glesne, 1999).

In addition to interviews, researcher notes is another form of data that the researcher can employ. This is merely where the researcher takes notes during an interview to help facilitate the interviewing process and to help to remind the researcher of elements of the interview that are not apparent when one reviews the audio version of the interview (Glesne, 1999). And thirdly, another source of data for qualitative studies is the analysis of documents and artifacts. These items are good sources of information about a research context (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). For example, participant resumes, newspaper articles, and biographies were important sources of information to review for this study.

Interview Process

A semi-structured interview was the primary data collection source used in this study. Interviews were conducted with nine Black women elected officials from December 23, 2004 and April 25, 2005. The interviews ranged from one hour to two and a half hours in length. One interview was conducted via phone. The interviews were conducted at the location of each participant's choosing, preferably in a location that would have minimal distractions and interruptions so as not to compromise the quality of the interviewing process (Glesne, 1999). Before each interview began, I asked each participant to sign two copies of a consent form (see Appendix I), one copy for the participant and the other for my records. Of note, pseudonyms were not assigned in this study because most of the study participants were the first Black

women to serve in their respective positions and some remain the only to date. The researcher determined that due to the nature of the positions in which most of the participants have served, ensuring anonymity would be virtually impossible. Therefore, in addition to seeking permission from the participants to audio-tape their interviews, I also requested permission from each participant to use her name. All nine participants consented.

An important element of qualitative research is capturing the actual words of the person being interviewed (Patton, 2002). In so doing, I asked for permission from each participant to audio-tape her interview. Finally, I transcribed each audio-taped interview verbatim for the purposes of constructing narratives, coding and data analysis. I returned the transcripts to each participant to ensure that they approved of the transcripts and to give them an opportunity to make changes. I conducted two follow-up interviews; one took place via phone and the other in person. Only one participant requested changes.

During each interview, I asked a series of open-ended questions facilitated by an interview guide (see Appendix J) to get each participant to tell her “story” in how she acquired her political leadership skills in relation to her perceptions of the role racism, sexism, and classism played in her career and leadership development path to elective office. Interview guides, according to Patton (2002), help the researcher ensure that “the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed...[and] provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). I employed the in-depth probing interviewing technique to pursue all points of interest with variant expressions that mean “tell me more” and “explain” as each participant talked about her perceptions of this multidimensional phenomenon (Glesne, 1999, p. 93). I also took researcher notes on a notepad during each

interview as another source of data. I recorded key areas that needed further discussion, captured my environmental scan of the interview nuances such as body language, facial expressions, and voice tones to help me formulate additional interview questions as the interviews moved along, and finally to help facilitate the data analysis process (Patton, 2002).

Document Analysis

Another important data collection method employed in this study was the analysis of materials or artifacts that helped provide a more in-depth examination of each study participant's life experiences in politics. I reviewed participants' resumes, searched the internet for newspaper articles written about each participant, reviewed historical data, and other documents that each participant provided. This data to helped supplement the interviews.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves making sense of what people have said. More specifically, it is a process in which the researcher "moves[s] back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). It is a continual process. Merriam and Simpson (2000) purport that analyzing data occurs at the beginning, middle, and end of a qualitative research process.

The first step I took in analyzing the data was to construct a narrative summary from each interview transcript. I summarized the interview transcripts to help orient me to the participants' "storying" of their political leadership development. In so doing, I ignored the interview questions and any comment I made throughout the interview. Once I constructed a narrative summary I then went back to each transcript to begin analyzing them first from Alexander's (1988) approach. For example, when one participant did not mention the conflict that ensued her

being asked to step down from her position, this represented omission which is one of Alexander's (1998) nine indicators of salience. Frequency was another indicator of salience. When all participants repeatedly mentioned spirituality/faith as an influencing factor in their life it emerged as a theme. Next, each transcript was analyzed according to Denzin's (1989) approach. These methods of analyses helped to bring attention to what the participants considered important which subsequently helped draw attention to the themes that appeared to be important. Initial coding revealed general categories such as: "non-linear leadership development path," "grounded in spirituality/faith," "learned by doing/no model," and "intra-race challenges." Next, I analyzed each narrative separately by fragmenting the data (Polkinghorn, 1995). Finally, from the summary, preliminary factors of their leadership development experiences emerged across the data sets. These components were strong family support, challenges in personal life, and that sexism and racism still exist.

Coding is a systematic method "naming and locating...data bits" (Glesne, 1999, p. 133). As I began to sort, define, and re-sort the data bits as well as analyze the interview transcripts, researcher notes, and notes from relevant literature (Glesne, 1999), I searched for emergent themes and concepts that appeared to be important. These themes were assigned a preliminary code (Glesne, 1999). The coding scheme that I applied to the data evolved throughout the data analysis process as the data began to reveal itself (Alexander, 1988). To ensure that the coding and analysis processes were accurate, I consulted with my advisor to review the coding process and plausibility of preliminary themes (Glesne, 1999). Additionally, I member checked the summarized demographic profiles, summarized narratives, and study findings.

Positionality

Another important element to attend to when collecting and analyzing qualitative data, such as narratives, is the researcher's and research participants' positionalities. Positionality refers to the ways in which people are categorized by social constructions and the idea that our identities and knowledge are conditioned by our social location in society (Giroux, 1997). The intersections of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and disability, "positions" and condition how we see ourselves in the world in which we live. How these social constructs—race, class, and gender, one of the major areas of this study—are defined depends on the status occupied by individuals and the individual, institutional, and societal status of the individuals who have the power to construct hierarchies.

As stated previously, qualitative research often involves interviewing participants. During the interviewing process and other interactions the researcher has with study participants, numerous opportunities for positionality to encroach on the research process can occur. The researcher must negotiate in and between building trust with the participants, ascertaining participants' willingness to dialogue and share their experiences without reservation, and recognize and claim researcher and participant subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988) and how they impact one another. Importantly, being cognizant of positionality in the research process can guard the researcher and the participant from assuming that one standard for knowledge construction and meaning making from lived experiences exists; using 'otherness' and 'Whiteness' as the norm, for example.

Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, and Muhamad (2001) expressed through their research that researchers falsely assume "the more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, socio-economic class and so on, the more it is assumed that access will be

granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured” (p. 406). Similarly, Johnson-Bailey’s (1999) examination of the lives of re-entry Black women, herself included, through educational narratives revealed that certain nuances exist even when Black women interview other Black women. For example, basing her premise on literature showing that Black women tend to form bonds that are necessarily conducive to the research process, she found this to be generally true—allowing for opportunities for openness and unguarded sharing of personal reflections.

The researcher’s race and gender for the Black female participants served as unifying factors in the dialogues that took place among them. Furthermore, the women in the study shared similar positions on the nature of racism and its impact on their lives, yet class, as a variable alone, did not surface as an issue in the interview process (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). However, they did share similar views on race in terms of their living in a “race-conscious society” which served as another unifying factor in the researcher’s relationship with the participants. Johnson-Bailey (1999) comments:

The women in the study shared their accounts of “knowing” about racial difference and assumed that, as a child who came of age in a segregated America, I also knew....It is an understanding of race, albeit through different means and at different ages, that unites the Black women studied and provides a common ground of understanding an analysis that benefited me as a researcher who shared the same racial background. (p. 661)

Other areas where the participant and researcher narratives linked involved feelings of self worth, how they balanced time devoted to work and family, and the socially constructed gender roles typically ascribed to women (i.e., housework and childcare) (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). As evidenced, there are occasions where it can be more advantageous for the researcher’s gender and race to reflect the participants’ gender and race. However, Johnson-Bailey (1999), Brown

(1997), and Marble (1990) discuss when social status and privilege accorded are examined in the context of Black women's lived experiences, commonalities become even more tenuous.

Johnson-Bailey (1999) comments, "If class was a wall...to be peered across or broken down, then issues of color were most certainly occasional landmines in our mutual process of discovery" (p. 668). She also points out that researchers of a different gender and race or ethnic background of their participants is not inherently handicapped by the racial differences. The researcher can indeed be effective in the research process.

Validity and Reliability

Determining the trustworthiness or research validity is an issue for qualitative research as is with the quantitative research paradigm. Reliability concerns the degree to which the results are consistent with the data collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) or the extent to which a researcher's findings can be found again if a study is replicated. Establishing validity and reliability are important processes to legitimizing research findings. Validity is comprised of two approaches: internal and external validity. Internal validity determines whether research findings are congruent with reality (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The guiding principle for internal validity in qualitative research is to ensure that the researcher's observations and measures are congruent with reality and that the researcher effectively represents the participants' construction of reality (Merriam, 1998). Because qualitative researchers are the primary data collection instruments, "we are closer to reality than if an instrument had been interjected between the researcher and the researched," state Merriam and Simpson (2000, p. 102). Consequently, ensuring internal validity is central to qualitative research.

External validity refers to how generalizable the study results are to other situations. Unlike the quantitative paradigm, for the qualitative paradigm the researcher is *not* responsible

for determining how study findings can be applied to other situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), instead it is up to the reader to do so. In short, for all types of research accessing validity and reliability essentially examine how a study is conceptualized, how data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Merriam (1998) makes the following recommendations to qualitative researchers for establishing validity and reliability. First, it is important for the researcher to divulge his/her subjectivities, biases, assumptions, and theoretical orientation. Second, the researcher should describe in detail the social context from which the data will be collected and analyzed. Third, the selection criteria and how those criteria were derived should be described. Fourth, the researcher should employ the triangulation approach by using multiple methods and sources to collect and analyze the data. Fourth, the researcher should member check his/her data and interpretations. This requires the researcher to send the data and interpretations back to the participants for their review. They will be looking for gaps and plausibility of the study results. Lastly, using an audit trail to describe in detail how the researcher's data collection process, data categorization process, and the decisions that were made in each area will also help enhance the reliability and validity of a study.

All of these strategies were used in this study. Three data gathering techniques were employed to counteract threats to validity and to increase the trustworthiness of and confidence in the research findings of this study. This triangulation approach (Glesne, 1999) comprised face-to-face audio-taped interviews, document analysis (e.g., use key insights from the literature and other relevant material) and artifacts such as resumes, newspaper articles, etc.; researcher notes and member checks. Additional measures were taken to clarify and validate my interpretation of the data. I recognized and monitored how the subjectivities I brought to the study (Glesne, 1999;

Peshkin, 1988) would influence the study findings by recording personal reflections about the interview process in a researcher journal immediately after each interview was conducted. In particular, I recorded my observations, thoughts and feelings evoked by the interview process. In addition, I used a peer review process to examine the data and plausibility of the emergent findings. The accuracy and consistency in coding methods was peer reviewed as well. Lastly, as a way to engage the study participants in the construction of meaning and to check my interpretation of their stories, each study participant member checked her transcript to “identify sections that if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons” (Glesne, 1999, p. 152).

Researcher Stance

As the primary instrument of data collection, I come to this research with a personal and professional interest in Black women’s career experiences in seeking and serving in elected and appointed political leadership positions. My worldview will affect my research process. This subjectivity and others, as Peshkin (1988) writes, are “...qualities [that] have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (p. 17). “One’s subjectivity is like the garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and non-research aspects of our life” (p. 17), continues Peshkin (1988).

As a Black woman who conducts leadership training, I often hear and see contradictions on a regular basis concerning the notion that “all” women have equal opportunities to pursue public office and that their leadership qualifications are the primary factors considered in their electibility—not race, gender, or class. Because I strongly disagree with the latter notion, I feel that it is important to study the factors that influence women’s and in particular Black women’s

leadership development experiences in the political leadership arena. I understand that my passion for seeking equity for women and women of color, in particular, is important to this research. My attachment to this study may lead me to data that support my own hypothesis. I also understand that passion should not become a barrier to my being able to recognize other positions and perspectives as information and knowledge upon which to build to the knowledge base and overall understanding of the external influences on Black women's political leadership experiences.

Hence, I valued this research as an opportunity to reflect on my understanding of Black women's leadership development experiences through the oral narratives of those who have lived it. I conducted this research with a double consciousness as a Black American woman. Lastly, this research was informed by Black feminism in which my analysis attends to issues of race, gender, and class as I critically explored the leadership and career development discourse around Black women's political leadership development experiences.

Summary

This chapter presents the methodological process used to investigate a specific dimension of the lives of Black women who enter the political arena, the stories they construct around their career and leadership development paths to elective office. The design, analysis, validity, reliability, and researcher stance on the research process were presented. This chapter describes the qualitative research design that was employed, narrative inquiry. Also described were the narrative analysis techniques associated with the psychological and biographical approaches that were employed. Lastly, this chapter describes how validity and reliability impact qualitative studies and how recognizing researcher assumptions and bias are central to the integrity of the qualitative research process.

CHAPTER IV

NINE BLACK FEMALE POLITICAL LEADERS

The purpose of this study was to explore Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

- How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?
- What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?
- How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to elective office and existence as political leaders?

This chapter presents each participant's political leadership and career development story. The story is comprised of two parts. First, the demographic profile describing each participant's background is presented, the interview setting, the participant's professional background, and years in elected office. The second part of the story is each participant's summarized narrative, which immediately follows each demographic profile. The narratives are sketches of the life segment that pertains to each participant's political leadership and career development experiences. Presented in each narrative is a description, in most instances with the participants' own words, of their paths to elective office. The participants are listed by the level of government in which they serve (i.e., local, state, and federal levels).

Nine Black women who reside in the state of Georgia were interviewed between December 23, 2004 and April 25, 2005. The interviews ranged from one hour and fifteen minutes to two and one half hours in length. Participants ranged in age from 50 to 80. The

educational level of the participants ranges from a technical college degree to graduate degrees. Two of the nine participants are self-employed. The professional background of the seven remaining participants include: two nurses, two educators, one attorney, one bank manager, one in criminal justice. The participants' years of service as elected officials ranged from 5 to 24 years, and six of the nine participants currently hold an elected office. Table 2 presents demographic information including name, age, marital status, highest degree earned, profession, age elected to first office, years served in elective office to date, and office held during the time the interview occurred.

Table 2.

Demographic Profile of Study Participants

Name	Age	Marital Status	Highest Degree Earned	Profession	Age Elected to First Office	Years Served in Elective Office	Office Held During Time of Interview
*Jackie	55	Married	Masters	Criminal Justice	38	11	Sheriff
Emma	80	Widow	Bachelors	Retired Educator	63	17	Mayor
Sonja	51	Married	Technical College Degree	Cosmetologist	46	5	Mayor
Glenda	50	Single	Bachelors	Nurse	30	20	Commissioner
Evelyn	55	Married	Masters	Finance Manager	39	16	Commissioner
Myrtle	62	Divorced	Masters	Retired Educator	54	8	City Council Member
Georganna	62	Married	Bachelors	Real Estate Sales Agent	38	24	State Representative
*Nadine	53	Divorced	Bachelors	Nurse	39	13	State Senator
*Denise	50	Married	Juris Doctor	Judge/Attorney	38	11	Former Congresswoman

Note: * Jackie, Denise, and Nadine no longer serve as elected officials. Jackie retired April 2005; Denise lost her 2004 U.S. Senate race; and Nadine lost her 2004 U.S. House of Representatives race. The women are grouped by level of government in which they serve and the bold lines delineate these levels of government (local, state, and federal).

Jackie

Demographic Profile

Jackie Barrett is the first Black female elected sheriff in Georgia and in the nation. In order to get in contact with Jackie, I consulted with Michael (see page 71 for key informant's profile) who had mentioned to me on a prior occasion that he knew Jackie personally. Michael gave me permission to use his name when I contacted Jackie about my study. After securing Michael's permission, I then contacted Jackie's office using the number I found on Fulton County's website and left a message with her assistant via phone in which I mentioned that I was a colleague of Michael's. I explained that I was requesting her participation in my study and provided my contact information. A week later I receive a call from Jackie during the course of which she agreed to participate. We made arrangements to meet in the lobby of a hotel in downtown, Atlanta, Georgia.

Prior to arriving at the hotel, I called Jackie via cell phone to let her know that I would be a few minutes late due to my having gotten lost. She made me feel at ease. I arrived at the hotel lobby fifteen minutes after the appointed time. As I looked toward the restaurant area, I saw a dark-skinned, small-framed woman dressed casually who was waving at me. Jackie greeted me with what seemed to be a quiet, yet determined hand shake and a warm smile. Jackie offered me a cup of coffee before turning to get a cup for herself, which allowed me to regroup and get my thoughts together before we began the interview.

Through my internet search for background information on Jackie, I learned that she was born in North Carolina 55 years ago. She and her younger brother were raised by parents who felt that graduating from high school and going to college were givens. In fulfilling her parents' wishes Jackie graduated from high school and subsequently attending a women's college,

Arcadia University (formerly known as Beaver College), in Glenside, Pennsylvania, at which point she became fascinated with the field of criminal justice. Through my search for background information on Jackie, I also discovered an internet article written by *Ebony Magazine* in 1995, approximately one year after she was first elected sheriff. The article recognized Jackie's historical milestone as a Black woman entering a traditionally White male dominated profession. Jackie comments about her interest in criminal justice during an interview with *Ebony* in 1995,

I was also somewhat afraid of it at first because you are dealing with an element that has obviously shown "you that they don't abide by the rules," she recalls. But I became absolutely fascinated by it, and I think even more fascinated by the fact that there weren't very many women in the field. So it became something of a challenge. (Whetstone, 1995, ¶ 3)

Later in her educational journey, she earned a master's degree in sociology from Clark-Atlanta University. Jackie instilled this same philosophy of education into her two children whose development was as a focal point in her personal, professional, and in particular her political life.

Jackie noted that her election as sheriff was a major reason why her first marriage did not survive. She has since remarried and is married to someone whom she describes as "a wonderful person, one who is very secure of himself." In April 2005, Jackie announced that she would not seek reelection. Before announcing her retirement, she was accused of financial impropriety, which she has categorically denied. In addition, the U.S. Attorney's office to date has not charged Jackie with any wrong doing. Currently, Jackie is retired from the law enforcement profession and is enjoying a new phase in her life.

Summarized Narrative

Jackie's path to elected office began with more than 20 years of law enforcement experience. Prior to running for sheriff for the first time eleven years ago at the age of 38, Jackie worked in law enforcement and criminal justice with various state and local agencies within the state of Georgia. Therefore, she was no stranger to the local government process. After receiving support from her community, namely the law enforcement community with whom she worked who suggested that she run for sheriff, she developed the confidence needed to run for the position. Jackie mentions that beyond the support from the community, what truly led her to run for this position, to eventually become the first Black female sheriff in Georgia was that of her faith. Jackie states that she was "led by God" to run and therefore would not have otherwise done so.

Jackie found that she developed her political leadership skills through her work in state government. It was then that she began to learn how to deal with politics. She also learned along the way that by developing relationships with community leaders and gaining their support would be critical to her winning an elective office. Overall, most of Jackie's learning about becoming a political leader was through the process of "learning by doing." While she did not have mentors who were Black and female to help expose her to what she would face as a Black female political leader running in a position traditionally held by White men, there were and continued to be individuals who had taken her under their wing and provided guidance. She also learned by watching how others worked in the political setting. She commented that, above all, the learning really stemmed from her listening to her gut instincts. She relied a great deal on the messages that her inner spirit sent her concerning what would be the best course of action to take in any given situation. Admittedly, there have been times when she did not make the right

decision. For example, she talked about how difficult it was for her to fire people. Although she knew that it needed to be done, however, she was concerned about the impact that the firing might have on the person's family so she would try to find alternative ways of resolving the matter which usually meant giving the person more chances to redeem him/herself.

Through Jackie's political journey of 11 years in elective office, she reflects that her leadership development path as a Black woman in a position that remains dominated by men has not been on smooth terrain. This experience was a result of her being both Black and female.

Emma

Demographic Profile

On January 4, 1988, at the age of 63, Emma Gresham became the first Black and female mayor of Keysville, Georgia. In addition, Emma was only the second elected mayor of Keysville, which until 1988 did not have a mayor in over half a century. The first time I became aware of Emma was four years ago during a Georgia Rural Development Council (GRDC) meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, for which I was providing staff support. I remember scanning the room, and I noticed that there were only two people of color in the room; the rest were White men and women. Emma's presence as one person of color and me the second, made me feel more at ease. Although, Emma did not say much throughout the meeting, I remember having the feeling that behind the quiet reserve was a woman of historical significance and a woman who would have no problem speaking her mind. Although at that time, I was not aware of her history in the city of Keysville and that I did not get a chance to personally introduce myself to her, I knew, however, that she was a woman that I should not forget.

Four years later, our paths crossed again. I remembered Emma from the GRDC meeting and decided to seek her participation in the present study. I tried contacting Emma at her office,

and I was then given her home number. I said to the city employee, “Are you sure...it’s okay to call her at home?” She said, “Absolutely.” I then called Emma at home. Over the phone, I was greeted by a grandmotherly voice that expressed excitement about my interest in coming to visit with her. Two weeks later, Emma and I met at the newly constructed City Hall. Before I arrived at the new City Hall, I traveled around the small city. I passed several abandoned and dilapidated buildings, which Emma later explained how they had been used. I learned that one of the old abandoned buildings housed the health department at one time. I also learned that the trailer I passed along my way was where the old City Hall operated. I quickly came to the realization that this town certainly has a “story” to tell concerning where it has been and where it is going socially, politically, and economically.

I entered the new City Hall at 10:45 a.m. and was greeted by a city employee who welcomed me with a hug and said that Emma was on her way. Around 11:00 a.m. a woman with a cane, salt and pepper colored hair entered the building. Emma greeted me with a warm smile and invited me to follow her to her office, which was one door down. The mayor’s office was neatly organized. Two adjoining walls displayed the numerous awards, recognitions, and pictures she has received over the years. She even directed my attention to the Essence Award presented to her in 1999 by former first lady, Hillary Clinton. Emma was recognized and honored for her longstanding service to the City of Keysville.

Born in 1925 in a small town 130 miles from Keysville, Emma shared that she is the only surviving child of eight children who were raised by parents with deep church roots. After graduating from high school at the age of sixteen, Emma attended a technical school near Hinesville, Georgia, and at which point she developed a strong interest in becoming an educator. It was not long after her time at the technical school that she got married. Emma finally went to

college after her husband, a soldier in the U.S. Army, returned from war. Although Emma became pregnant a year later with her first child and subsequently giving birth to a total of four children, she was determined at the age of 27 to graduate with honors in elementary education from Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. After retiring as an elementary school teacher from a school in South Carolina, Emma returned to Keysville in 1985 to become three years later the first Black and female mayor of a small town that remained underdeveloped for nearly 55 years.

Summarized Narrative

Emma described her journey to becoming mayor of Keysville as one met with numerous barriers as well as successes. Emma shared a story of when the White politicians disassembled the city's government in 1933. This action resulted in the Black residents, who comprised 70 percent of the community, being stripped of their right to vote. Emma vividly recalled the 1988 election, which became the first municipal election held in nearly 55 years. Members of the White community sued the new leadership because they felt that the election was unconstitutional. Notwithstanding this artificial barrier, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the new leadership and thus, Emma was officially elected Mayor and has been Mayor for 17 consecutive years.

Emma recounted how she struggled to get the local residents to empower themselves to not only want but take the necessary steps to acquire the basic services for their community including indoor plumbing, which most of the residents did not have, sanitation pick up, a library, fire protection, a health clinic, playgrounds, streets named, city lights, and a sewage grant. Through Emma's leadership, she has done just this. If one walks through the city with a mere 60-mile circumference comparing the landscape now to 20 years ago, an improved city

emerges. For example, residents have an improved sewage system, street signs and lights, fire protection, and a functioning city government.

Emma's desire to improve the town, in which she was raised, was stirred by her continued involvement in the local church at which her father was the pastor. It was in the church that she remembered first learning about politics, elections, raising money, and giving speeches. Overall, Emma comments, "[t]hat church has ruled my life in a lot of ways, a lot of the things that I've done..." Emma's zeal for serving as a leader was nurtured by her church family, faith, and her sense of community and understanding that she was destined to share her God given talents for the betterment of her hometown.

Emma does not consider her tenure as mayor a career; she views her efforts as nothing more than fulfilling a need that the community had—the need for leadership. It was the combination of the many community residents encouraging her, particularly in the church and by members of the local community group, the Concerned Citizens for Keysville, and most importantly her faith, that gave her the strength and courage to take on such a monumental challenge. Because she could see change occurring, that she was making a difference, Emma continued to serve as mayor for many years. However, like a true leader Emma recognized that the time has come pass to along the leadership torch. Although she expresses that this is her last year serving as mayor, she fully intends to stay actively involved in the city's continued growth and improvement. Emma's vision for where the community should be and the energy and passion with which she described this vision speaks to the well-deserved state and national recognition she has received over the past decade.

Sonja

Demographic Profile

“There was nothing in me that said I could not be Mayor; it was in other people, but it was never in me,” states Sonja Mallory, a 51-year-old self-employed cosmetologist. Born and raised as one of seven children in the middle Georgia area of Jeffersonville, which is the geographical center of the state—Sonja made history in 2000 by becoming the first Black and female mayor of the rural city.

Prior to running for mayor, Sonja served five years in the U.S. Army and eight years in the National Guard, where she was taught that true leaders know how to lead and how to follow. For the next 10 years, she worked at the Veteran Administration Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia. Returning to Jeffersonville, she noted the “heart of Georgia” city was dying, and she committed herself to doing whatever she could to pump it up. As mayor, she is indeed changing lives.

Sonja and I had been introduced to one another three and a half years ago through a mutual family member with whom she is a close friend. Initial contact with Sonja concerning my study resulted in her expressing her willingness to assist me in any way that she could. Sonja’s infectious and jovial personality was one that I looked forward to engaging in what would be an entertaining conversation about her leadership development.

Sonja and I met one Friday evening at her hair salon located in downtown Jeffersonville. When I arrived, Sonja and I greeted each other with a hug and we chatted a few minutes about how she and I had been doing since the last time we saw one another. As I looked around, I noticed that she had begun working on two customers before I arrived. I told Sonja that I did not

mind postponing the interview until she was ready to take a break. Approximately 20 minutes later, we begin the interview.

At the age of 17, Sonja left her hometown after graduating from high school in 1972 to join the military reserves with the intention of making a better life for herself. After one year she returned to her hometown, which had not changed. Sonja later obtained a cosmetology license and became a salon owner in the city of Jeffersonville. Elected mayor in 2004 for a second four-year term, Sonja continues to serve as a business and civic leader in her community.

Summarized Narrative

Sonja's journey to elected office began in a rural community with a long-standing history of racial, social, and economic injustices, some of which remain challenges in the year 2005. As a little Black girl during a time when boycotts and marches were commonplace, Sonja was exposed to and participated in boycotts and sit-ins at a very young age. Sonja learned very early about how to strategize and organize. For example, at the age of seven or eight she was encouraged to participate in civil rights marches, some which were led by key Civil Rights leaders who traveled to the small town of Jeffersonville to assist the Black community in organizing against the racial injustices that were occurring at this time. One could find Sonja marching right along with others for the cause. Sonya's leadership development was also stimulated during her school days. She was a member of the Future Farmers of America and the Glee Club where she participated in many singing competitions. In all of her interests, politics has been the main focus in her life.

During a time when it was commonplace for racism to be overtly expressed, Sonja remembers by happenstance that her interest in politics might very well have stemmed from the moment she recalled as a youth walking past the old mayor's house one day and making the

following statement, “I will live there one day.” Sonja could not pinpoint what might have caused her to say that but perhaps it stemmed from her fascination with the house. Sonja tells another story of how she helped to organize a protest against the White leadership who opposed there being a Black deputy. The law enforcement department had no Black employees, which the Black community at the time was trying to change by marching and protesting to hire a Black deputy police officer. This protest ended with Sonja’s arrest and several of her teenage and adult friends’ arrest, and their going before a judge to contest the charges. She chuckled at having been the only one to follow through with the plan she devised in their going before the judge. What an experience she fondly expressed. They all had decided to give themselves fictitious names like Jane Doe and John Doe and respond as such when the judge called their names. However, when the judge called Jane Doe, Sonja remembered being the only one to step forward. The plan she devised with her fellow protestors demonstrated even then Sonja’s developing sense of responsibility to improving the living conditions and equal rights for the citizens of Jeffersonville, even if it took her being unfairly treated.

Sonja has a strong desire to serve as a role model for not only the adults in the community but more importantly for the youth of Jeffersonville, “to show them that Black people from Jeffersonville can be successful,” she states. This idea crystallized when she returned from her short time in the military. Sonja realized that her short military term afforded her the opportunity to travel to different places to see how other people were growing, how things were happening. She also realized that everything seemed to be the same in Jeffersonville as when she left. Someone has to do something better, and that someone was her she comments. It was from this realization along with the notion that the best way to help make a difference is through civic engagement, Sonja thus considered becoming mayor. It wasn’t until 15 years later

and three unsuccessful mayoral elections, that in 2000 Sonja's realization of becoming mayor was made reality. Sonja is currently serving a second four-year term.

Glenda

Demographic Profile

In 1985, at 29 years of age, Glenda Battle became Decatur County's youngest and first Black female elected county commissioner. Glenda has since served 20 consecutive years as a county commissioner, during which time she made history a second time by becoming in 1996 the first Black female president of the Georgia Association of County Commissioners (ACCG), a prominent organization that serves as the consensus-building, training, and legislative organization for all 159 county governments in the state of Georgia. Currently, Glenda enjoys working as a nurse, caring for her mother, serving on numerous boards, and serving as county commissioner for another term.

I became aware of Glenda through Michael (see profile of key informant on page 71) who indicated that she would be a great Black female local elected official to interview due to her being the first Black female president of ACCG and the career she has made as an elected official. Hence, I contacted Glenda via phone and noted that Michael suggested that I contact her about participating in my study. During our phone conversation, I found Glenda to be quite personable and one that could make anyone feel comfortable. During our last phone conversation, Glenda mentioned that she would be in Atlanta for a conference and perhaps we could meet then. Three weeks later, Glenda invited me into her hotel room just one hour shy of the check-out time where we agreed to conduct the interview. Upon entering the room, Glenda greeted me with a hug and expressed how happy she was that I made it there safely. As with the phone conversations, Glenda's easy, fun-loving manner came to life and instantly put me at ease.

She invited me to sit in one of the two club chairs in the room while she sat at the desk, which was situated near the window and along the wall that contained the entertainment cabinet. She was dressed in a dark blue, short sleeve blouse and skirt. Glenda proceeded to tell me about the conference, which concluded the day before, and how she had a long drive ahead.

During the interview, I learned that Glenda, the oldest of three children was born and raised in Decatur County located in southwest Georgia. After earning a bachelors degree in nursing in 1978 from Valdosta State University, Glenda returned to her hometown to find that the county was undergoing redistricting to allow for better representation of Blacks in rural Georgia. The redistricting that was taking place had an influence on Glenda deciding to run for a seat on the county commission eight years later. During this eight-year period, Glenda continued to build her nursing career working at a local hospital as a registered nurse.

Summarized Narrative

Glenda's motto, which she has carried with her throughout her career and leadership development, is "when the opportunity presents itself, I am not afraid to take it," she states. Glenda credits much of her success and development to her strong spiritual foundation and to the support and wisdom her mother has and continues to provide her as she embarks on a new phase of her personal and political life. She remembers never forgetting her mother's constant reminder that there is nothing that she can't do if she puts her mind to it and that she is just as good as the next person. This way of thinking has not only enabled Glenda for the past 20 years to manage a challenging work schedule and organizational issues that accompany full-time nurses who serve in supervisory positions, but to also effectively carry out the duties that come with being a public servant. Throughout all of the challenges, Glenda does not dwell in the past but wisely focuses

on the future and how she can make that future better for herself, her family, and the community she represents.

As long as she can remember, Glenda has always been one who likes to develop solutions. She likes to be a part of the solutions and not one who merely reacts to them. She states, “I don’t like to have to come back and try to change things. It’s easier to be at the table and make a decision, especially when you want to make changes.” This is one of the reasons why she understood the importance of individual civic engagement. Glenda demonstrated this perspective as a youth when she assumed leadership positions in high school and in college. She specifically recalls how a high school teacher who taught government stimulated her interest in politics. She comments, “...He did a wonderful job with teaching...about how local, state, and federal government works. He might have been the reason why I really pursued it after high school. Because he made it so interesting that you couldn’t help but want to be involved.”

Glenda has an uncanny ability to develop relationships with all types of people. For example, she remembers even as a college student somehow developing a relationship with the dean of the college of arts and sciences who later became her mentor. As a dorm representative with a developing background in the medical field, she was also able to enlist the trust of the female students to adhere to the advice she provided them concerning the health challenges that are typically associated with the experiences of female college students. Glenda also remembers as a college student being asked to manage the women’s college basketball team when it was first created. Overall, Glenda’s development as a leader in both her professional and political life stems largely from the nurturing environment in which she was raised, which in turn cultivated her ability to not be afraid of being bold and taking chances.

Evelyn

Demographic Profile

Evelyn, a native of Columbus, Georgia, has lived there all of her life. She attended Columbus College in Columbus, Georgia, for undergraduate and graduate degrees. Graduating with a financial management undergraduate degree and an M.B.A. in Business Administration, Evelyn has been able to hold a variety of positions in the financial field. She presently serves as the Vice President of SunTrust Bank in West Georgia. In addition, Evelyn holds the position of City Councilor of Post 4, which she has maintained for the past 16 years.

I learned of Evelyn through John (see page 71 for profile of key informant) during a conversation he and I were having concerning my study. John suggested that I interview Evelyn, who he described as a great person whom he respected. John agreed to contact Evelyn to inform her of my study and to obtain permission for me to contact her. Before contacting Evelyn at the phone number provided by John, I searched the internet for background information on Evelyn, and I found a picture of her online. Evelyn appeared to be a dark complexioned and slender woman. After several e-mail correspondences, Evelyn and I scheduled a telephone interview. When I contacted Evelyn via phone, a soft spoken woman responded on the other end. Evelyn seemed to be very pleasant as she began to tell me her story.

Summarized Narrative

“I think it’s just a natural thing...I guess it goes back to leadership positions, even back in high school” says Evelyn as she described the life experiences that helped to shape her into a leader. She goes on further to describe, in retrospect, how growing up with an uncle who taught government had an influence on her developing interest in politics.

Oh...I think it goes back to growing up [with]...an uncle who was a government teacher and he was also a principle of a school in Harris County. But I think [my interest in politics] came from him, from him teaching government. We used to talk about politics all the time, being involved in community activities and things of that nature.

Evelyn grew up in Columbus as an active participant in several civic organizations and service organizations. In particular, she had strong Black female role models who were engaged in the political process, women who wanted to see change. Evelyn's political leadership potential was therefore cultivated by her uncle's teaching along with the nurturing spirit these women possessed. Another important element of her development has been her Christian faith.

Essentially, Evelyn developed her leadership skills by serving in leadership roles at every phase of her life. For example, in high school Evelyn was a cheerleader and captain of the cheering squad. As long as Evelyn could remember, she has been one who has sought results from her efforts, regardless of what she is doing. As a result, her interest and desire to effect political change manifested itself in all the campaigns on which she has worked. In fact, Evelyn first got involved in politics in 1968, the year she graduated from high school. Immediately after graduating, she worked on a political campaign. Four years later she married her first husband in 1972 and disengaged from politics for eight years to concentrate on her life and her children. Evelyn made them her number one priority. After getting a divorce in 1980, Evelyn returned to the political arena by working on campaigns again. She immediately worked on the local superior court judge's campaign, and later she worked on campaigns for state positions, governor's races, and congressional races. Evelyn made it a point to involve her children in the political process.

Myrtle

Demographic Profile

Myrtle Figueras was born in Dublin, Georgia, in 1943. However, Myrtle grew up in Thomasville, Georgia, where her mother relocated to raise eight children on her own. Although Myrtle's mother only had an eighth grade education, she understood the importance of ensuring that her children graduate from high school and college. Myrtle not only graduated from college, she earned her masters degree in education as well from the University of Georgia and traveled to France for additional training.

After graduating from Bennett College in North Carolina, Myrtle returned to Georgia, got married and later divorced. Upon her return to Georgia, Myrtle accepted a teaching position in Gainesville, Georgia. She stayed there until she retired from the Gainesville school system in 1997. After providing thirty years of educational service to the Gainesville community, Myrtle ran for and won a vacant city council seat in 1998. Since then, Myrtle has served one term as mayor of the City of Gainesville, Georgia, making her the first Black female mayor of the city, and she is currently serving her fifth term as a city council member.

Myrtle became a prospective study participant at John's suggestion (see page 71 for profile of key informant). John spoke highly of Myrtle who is a former high school teacher of his and for whom John has provided local elected official training. Once I retrieved Myrtle's contact information via the internet, I left a phone message and sent an e-mail. To my surprise, I received an e-mail from Myrtle the very next day which greeted me with the phrase, "Bonjore!" I later learned during our interview that that phrase meant welcome in French. In the e-mail I received from Myrtle were her typed responses to the interview questions I provided. Because there were

several statements in her typed responses on which I needed her to expand, I contacted Myrtle via e-mail to schedule a meeting in person.

Myrtle invited me to her home on a Monday morning in April for the follow-up interview. As I pulled into Myrtle's driveway, a small-framed woman approximately five feet tall, dressed in a white blouse and light blue slacks was waving at me. As we greeted one another, Myrtle's high energy and fun-spirited personality emerged. After Myrtle invited me into her home, we sat at her kitchen table to conduct the interview. First, we talked about her family during the course of which Myrtle proudly talked about her son and granddaughter. As I listened to Myrtle, I sat in awe at how much energy and zest for life she exuded. I was even more impressed with how she moved effortlessly back and forth, speaking in English and French, as I eagerly listened to her life story and how she had come to run for office.

Summarized Narrative

When asked why she decided to run for a local county commission seat left vacant due to the incumbent's untimely death, Myrtle replied in writing, "Selfishly, I NEED to serve my people, and to cause them to FEEL 'a part' of the system, in order to access the same City services as all others who live here..." Myrtle's sense of responsibility to her community stems largely from her passion and calling to teach youth. She felt that teaching French afforded her the opportunity to show students the benefits of learning, and learning about other cultures. It was her passion for teaching youth that she believes God intended for her to apply in the political arena. "God gives me different jobs to do. That's why I do believe that God did have his hand in this political career here because I can bring City Hall to my community," states Myrtle. In so doing, Myrtle started a new youth group, among other education-based projects, to combat the continued widening gap in educational achievement levels between the haves and have-nots.

Myrtle's path to elective office was not planned. In fact, the only involvement that she had with the city government was primarily as a voter. However, this soon changed in 1998. After retiring in 1997, the first and longest serving Black city council member died. Prior to his death, Myrtle was aware that he was ill and started attending the city council meetings and realized that someone needed to take the responsibility to ensure that the Black community was represented. Myrtle soon realized that she was that person. She shared,

I thought, well, somebody else will do it, you know. It's just, since he died and there was nobody there and the election was coming up, I said, "Well I will not allow this seat to go blank"...I didn't want Black people to lose the position they had. Actually, I believe, I don't know exactly now, but I believe that they divided the city into wards so that a Black could be elected. And I didn't want anybody else to have it, you see, I wanted a Black person to have the seat because a Black idea is needed.

After receiving support from her community and friends, Myrtle gathered the courage to run for the vacant position and won. Myrtle expressed the desire to seek re-election at the end of the term in which she currently serves.

Georganna

Demographic Profile

Re-elected for another term in 2004, Georganna Sinkfield remains the longest serving Black female in the Georgia General Assembly. Georganna was born in South Carolina in 1943 and raised in an environment as the only child where she saw Black people who were not afraid to fight for their rights when segregation was at its highest, when all the segregation was being broken down. After graduating from high school, Georganna moved to Nashville, Tennessee to attend Tennessee State. It was there that Georganna immersed herself in a range of political

activities from participating in elections through the sororities to volunteering on local political candidates' campaigns.

After graduating from Tennessee State, Georganna accompanied her husband to Vanderbilt where he attended law school. She worked at Vanderbilt full time until her husband graduated and accepted a job offer in Atlanta. Upon their move to Atlanta, Georganna knew that she wanted to continue her involvement in politics, to even run for office. As one who does not like to sit idle, Georganna immediately became involved in the community in which they resided. She attended functions with her husband to acquaint herself with key leaders in the community. Georganna was an active PTA member and eventually served as PTA president until both of her children graduated high school. Georganna's interest in running for a state representative position strengthened through her PTA experience and the growing support that Georganna was receiving due to the leadership she was providing.

In addition to providing the contact information for Nadine, Sally (see page 71 for key informant's profile) who knows Georganna personally, offered to inform Georganna of my study as well. When Sally e-mailed me Georganna's personal contact information, I contacted Georganna via phone. During my initial contact with Georganna, she could not talk very long because she was attending a legislative function. Georganna and I made arrangements to meet on a Friday afternoon at her legislative office to conduct the interview. When Georganna entered the office where I awaited her arrival, I saw a chocolate-toned woman with shoulder length hair dressed in a green silk jump suite who walked briskly in and greeted me with a warm smile. Before going to her office, Georganna collected her stack of mail and motioned for me to follow her. Georgina's office is approximately 40 square feet. She sat behind her desk, which was in front of her bookshelf that displayed a variety of books, pictures, and awards. I sat in one of the

two chairs located in front of her desk. As I began to tell her about myself and she about herself, it was at this moment that I realized why Georganna had earned the respected title of being the “Dean of Women” among her Black female political colleagues. Georganna struck me as a woman of confidence and tremendous political savvy, all embodied in a person who projects a sincere concern for others’ well-being.

Summarized Narrative

Throughout her 24 years of service as a state representative, Georganna’s path to elective office was neither planned nor did she have programmed in her mind that “I want to be an elected official,” she stated. Georganna’s upbringing in North Carolina and witnessing her parents, family, and community members engaged in civil rights activities were critical in her development as a leader. Having grown up in the area with other “[B]lack folks who were not frightened, who spoke out,” Georganna realized that with knowledge and a strong self-esteem she could do anything. The additional ingredient in Georganna’s leader development and interest in politics was her experience in college.

Georganna’s experience attending a historically Black college in the 1960s afforded her experiences that she feels she would not have had the opportunity to enjoy had she gone to a different school. In the following story, Georganna shares how being a student at Tennessee State shaped her vision of leadership and politics.

As I said before, after I graduated from high school, I went to college in Nashville.

Tennessee State was a very active school even though it was a state school. [T]hat student body was so active...in Civil Rights...So, I was there in the 60s during a very active period of when students were being used for a lot of the demonstrations. As a result, then

that body was also very elective, that is Tennessee State was very active in politics, not only outside of the school but inside the school.

Hence, when all of her life experiences are connected one can see that Georganna indeed is a wellspring of knowledge and wisdom, both of which continue to served her well during her tenure as a state representative.

Nadine

Demographic Profile

Nadine Thomas's life is dramatically different in 2005 after an unsuccessful congressional bid in 2004. Because Nadine chose to run for a U.S. congressional seat, she in turn relinquished her state senate seat that she has held for the past 11 years. Before seeking the 2004 congressional seat, Nadine served in the Georgia General Assembly for a total of 13 years, two of which she spent as a state representative and the remaining 11 years in the State Senate. Nadine made history by becoming in 1992 the first Black female elected to the Georgia State Senate and she currently holds the title as the longest serving female of color in the Georgia State Senate.

Sally, one of four key informants in this study, assisted me in gaining entry to Nadine (see profile of key informant on page 71). Sally is a friend of Nadine's, and she offered to contact Nadine and inform her about my study. I received an e-mail from Sally two weeks later containing Nadine's contact information. I then e-mailed Nadine information about my study, and she responded several days later. Nadine and I corresponded via e-mail until we were able to secure a date to conduct the interview.

Nadine and I conducted the interview at her office in the home care center for seniors where she currently works. Nadine is 53 years old and does not look her age. She seems to have

a quiet yet determined reserve about herself. This came through in my conversation with her about her background and how she had come to run for office.

Nadine, one of five children, was born in 1952, in Fort Myers, Florida. She attended a majority White high school during the integration period. At 16, Nadine became both a mother of twin daughters and a wife. Despite life not being easy, Nadine was able to finish high school only a few months after her class graduated. Nadine relocated to Georgia after divorcing her husband of eight years. She remarried, had another child, and divorced again. Throughout these life changes, Nadine's faith, familial support system, and determined spirit, enabled her to continue on to earn a Bachelor of Science in nursing. Nadine has continued to work in an acute healthcare setting as a registered nurse since earning her nursing degree and during her tenure in the Georgia State Legislature.

Summarized Narrative

Nadine's interest in politics, although she did not know it at the time, started when she was a young child. She described herself as not being the typical child. She was one who always loved watching and listening to the news; she wanted to learn more about what was going on in the world. Nadine, perhaps subconsciously, had a fleeting thought about going into politics then, however because she didn't see any people of color in office in Fort Myers, she didn't think pursuing politics was realistic. As a high school student, Nadine was always viewed as a leader. She served as class president and she was a member of the student council. Nadine's leadership development and her exposure to the electoral process was stimulated then. In retrospect, Nadine didn't understand the full impact of her participating in sit ins and marches at the age of six or seven, being forced to sit in the back of the bus because she was Black, and serving as a student leader, how all of these experiences shaped her path to elective office.

Another pivotal moment along Nadine's path was when she turned 21 while living in Fort Myers. Nadine made the decision to relocate to Georgia, at which point she was preparing to vote for the first time in the 1973 presidential election. She remembers the Goldwater campaign. Even though she didn't vote for Goldwater, she remembers being fascinated with his name. Nearly 11 years later, Nadine was elected at 39 years of age to the Georgia House of Representatives. Nadine ran for the state position in 1984, 1986, and 1988 and lost each time. A number of factors helped Nadine stay the course for her to eventually win the state representative race in 1990. First, Nadine saw Barbara Jordan, a Black female congressional representative from Texas as a role model who inspired her to pursue elective office. Second, she truly valued the support she received from the one or two friends each time she ran and lost. Finally, most important of all is Nadine's belief that God called her to public life. She knew that she would not win her first three initial races; she understood that God was preparing her for something greater in the year 1990. It was the 1990 race that she believes God intended for her to win—it was then that she would be fully equipped with the necessary tools to change and improve the lives of marginalized groups.

Denise

Demographic Profile

Less than a year ago, Denise Majette was campaigning around the state of Georgia seeking support for her bid for a U.S. Senate seat. During one of her campaign stops at a restaurant in Athens, Georgia, Kate (see profile of key informant on page 71), a friend and well-known community leader in Athens introduced me to her. Denise entered the eating establishment at 12:15 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon, where her supporters and volunteers awaited her arrival. Waving and smiling, Denise went around the room greeting the people who

had come. Alongside my friend, I walked with her towards Denise. Denise and my friend greeted one another with a hug. My friend then turned to allow me to introduce myself. I introduce myself as a doctoral student and that I would like to contact her about my study on Black women in politics in Georgia. A very approachable Denise smiled at me, took my business card and said that she would be more than happy to help me however she could.

Several months later in a conference room of a law firm where she is currently employed, Denise and I sat across from one another at a large oval shaped boardroom table to conduct the interview. With the warm smile I remembered when she and I first met, Denise, dressed in a dark blue pant suite begins to tell me about herself and her leadership development. Born and raised in New York, 50-year-old Denise proudly talks about her two sons and how supportive her husband has been throughout both her congressional and U.S. senate races.

Denise's educational path is marked by her graduation from Yale University in 1976 as one of the first Black women to attend the undergraduate school of the university. After graduating from Yale, Denise continued her upward climb through Duke Law School and years of working for Legal Aid in North Carolina. Denise moved to Georgia with her husband in 1983 to continue her law profession. She entered the political arena in 1993 when then—governor Zell Miller appointed her to the DeKalb County Court of Appeals. She left this job in 2002 to run for the fourth district congressional seat in which she won. After serving one term in Congress, Denise entered the 2004 U.S. Senate race to become, if successful, the first Black woman from Georgia elected to the U.S. Senate. Denise's decision to run for the U.S. Senate seat after only serving one term in Congress was met with mixed reactions. On one hand, Denise was praised for taking the risk and on the other end, Denise's decision was viewed as political suicide.. Nevertheless, Denise defeated a field of seven other candidates and won the Democratic

nomination, becoming the first African-American and woman to do so. Although she lost the senate race, she won almost 1.3 million votes statewide. She has returned to successfully practicing law in Atlanta, Georgia, and is working on her first book.

Summarized Narrative

As one of the “Majette Girls,” Denise the middle child of three girls, fondly remembers how her parents taught her that education was the key to success. Her parents demonstrated this philosophy by their desire to go great lengths, within the range they could afford, however, to place the “Majette Girls” in the best quality of education that the public school system could provide. As a result of this experience, Denise made education the focal point in both her congressional and senate campaigns.

Denise’s development as a leader is deeply influenced by the impact of her experience attending a historically White institution that remained segregated by race and gender only a few years prior to her acceptance as an undergraduate student in 1972. Denise recounts, after having a successful first year at Yale, she was selected among the few students of color to help the school recruit students of color. As a result, Denise returned to her high school in New York to speak to students about her experience at Yale and to encourage them to apply to the school. Denise remembers how she felt in returning to assist the same high school counselor who had discouraged her from applying to Yale. The counselor communicated to her that she need not waste her parents’ money applying to Yale and that she wouldn’t get in. The counselor also advised Denise that her best option would be to apply to Brooklyn College, “it would be a sure thing” she recalls the counselor advising. Denise disregarded her counselor’s advice, remembered her parents’ encouraging words, “wherever you want to go you can go, we’ll find a way to help you get there,” she applied to Yale and was accepted.

Denise, one of two students from her high school to apply to Yale, became perhaps the first Black student and certainly the first female from that school to attend Yale. This experience has deeply influenced Denise's sense of leadership and development as a leader. Denise recognizes that as a Black female Yale graduate, she certainly benefited professionally and personally, but more importantly the countless others who would come after her would benefit even more. This realization was a significant factor in her path to elective office. The following passage best describes this experience,

I realized being there at Yale...how awesome....[and] the fact that as a child, as a Black women, Black girl I could be in this university that, you know, was started right about the time or almost about the time when our country was started. And for me to walk in the steps of all of these famous people who had meant so much to the education and development and growth of our nation and to be a part of that history...I saw that as sort of a signal that [I] have been given an opportunity that not very many people have had...[I] have to tell other people about [my experiences]...[Y]ou have to enable them to be able to have that opportunity just like others sacrificed for [me]. This has been a recurring theme [in my life] and the way that I look at the other steps that I have taken in my path to elected office, how you don't get there without self sacrifice and without others having sacrificed to pave the way...And then you have a responsibility, a moral obligation to pave the way a little bit further...to make sure that you are guiding people along that way so that they...when you are gone...they can clear a little bit more of the path.

Overall, Denise's spiritual convictions have been a constant in her life. She credits God with providing her guidance through the difficult decisions she has faced, decisions that affected not

only her personal and professional life, but life as a political leader as well. Denise continues along her life journey helping others along the way.

Summary

This chapter presents the demographic and narrative profiles of the Black women political leaders in this study. The narrative profiles offer a window into the lives of nine Black women who have served in elective office long term. The participants describe episodes in their life journeys that have aided in their political leadership development. Overall, their stories demonstrate how courage and tenacity combined creates a powerful apparatus against race and gender barriers.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

This qualitative study provides a glimpse into the lives of nine phenomenal Black women political leaders in Georgia. A paucity of research explores Black women's leadership development in the context of political leadership and the factors that enable them to remain in elective office long term. Hence, the purpose of this study was to describe Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. To achieve this purpose, the following questions were considered:

- How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?
- What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?
- How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to elective office and existence as political leaders?

This chapter is organized around three broad sections. The sections are: 1) Black Women and Their Political Leadership Development, 2) Black Women's Paths to Political Careers, and 3) Black Women's Race and Gender Challenges in the Political Arena. The findings presented in the three broad sections represent the salient themes identified during data analysis when narrative analysis tools were employed. Six themes were identified along with their corresponding categories. The themes and categories are enumerated in Table 3, Summary of Findings. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Table 3.

Summary of Findings

Sections	<u>Themes & Categories</u>
Black Women and Their Political Leadership Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing a Political Consciousness Bounded by Jim Crow and Civil Rights 2. “Her” Learning Process <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Formal Learning Experiences b. Informal Learning Experiences 3. Shaped by Mentors and Role Models <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Within Family Bounds b. Outside of the Family
Black Women’s Paths to Political Careers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. A Non-Linear Path to Elective Office 5. Call and Response: A Spiritual Foundation
Black Women’s Race and Gender Challenges in the Political Arena	6. Negotiating Her Way Through the Prism of Positionality

Black Women and Their Political Leadership Development

Developing a Political Consciousness Bounded by Jim Crow and Civil Rights

Factors in the growth and development of Black women leaders cannot be separated from the historical experiences of Black Americans in the United States (Giddings, 1984, Collins, 2000). Accordingly, this phenomenon holds true for Black female political leaders, particularly for those Black women who assume elective office in the South where the legacy of the Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement grew in fertile soil (Darling, 1998; Smooth, 2001). A major thread that connects all nine participants in this study is that their growth and development

occurred between the late 1920s and the mid 1970s, a time span in which the United States had undergone critical social and political changes.

When asked to describe their background, most of the participants reflected at various points in their interviews on how growing up in the early to mid twentieth century impacted their leadership development and shaped their understanding of and interest in politics. Moreover, the degree to which some participants had consciously considered the linkage between their growth and development and the social context in which they were raised to their political leadership development, is consistently apparent. However, in the instance where most did not explicitly state that a connection existed, the use of terms such as “segregation,” “integration,” “desegregation,” “Civil Rights Movement,” and “redistricting” signaled that perhaps the participants subconsciously recognized that the “social context” in which they lived indeed influenced their growth and development (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In short, the Black women reveal in their rich stories that such contextual dimensions as race, gender, class, culture, power, and oppression have been mediating forces in their lives.

The stories shared in this section illustrate this point. First, two moments in Nadine’s life are presented in which she explicitly discusses how her interest in politics was influenced by the political activity that occurred in the environment in which she was raised. Nadine, a 53-year-old nurse by profession and the first Black female state senator in Georgia shares,

I remember—I guess I was about 6 or 7—participating in one sit in at Walgreens with my godmother. I also remember one time we marched. So I guess it all started back then because I used to always question everything. I remember watching Dr. King on television. I was always glued in front of the television during the Civil Rights Movement. Again, I guess these events started my interest then.

Of note, as with Nadine, Sonja, a 51-year-old cosmetologist and mayor of a small town in middle Georgia, shared that she, too, participated in marches and boycotts as an adolescent in which she learned more about equal rights and its impact on her life.

Continuing with Nadine, she shares another incident describing the source of her excitement concerning the 1964 presidential election, which too, explicitly refers to the political environment and her development:

Goldwater was a Republican, I believe from Arizona. I remember he was running for president on the Republican side. I also remember watching the convention; it was just something about that name that I liked, Goldwater. I didn't know a whole lot about him. But I think that was the first political convention that I watched, and after that I started staying in tuned. I cannot remember who was on the Democratic ticket. I want to believe it was John Kennedy. No, that's not correct. [At any rate,] John Kennedy really had an influence on me...I was really into John Kennedy as a child. I just thought that he was all of that. So, again I think it all started back then.

Glenda, a 50-year-old local county commissioner and nurse by profession acknowledged how her social environment influenced her interest in politics. She states,

...[W]e integrated in '69, so all of my high school years were integrated and all of my elementary and junior high were segregated settings. You know [politics] was something that I just wanted to be involved in. I like to be involved in things. I was not athletic by any means...but...as my momma says, I could always talk, and I was always nosey. She said, "you should have been a lawyer instead of a nurse." I would ask her all these questions. I've always been one to always want to know. I wanted to be involved in things when they were happening. And maybe because I came along, I was sheltered

from the integration and the fighting that was happening in communities. You know, we weren't told not to get involved, and we weren't told to get involved. My parents always kind of sheltered us from the real world, and they just told us how things were. And you know I just didn't like just accepting how things were all the time because I came up in the era when the hospital was segregated. I had to go in the back door to go to the doctor's office.

When asked if her experiences with segregation had some bearing on her desire to run for office, Glenda replies,

I'm sure it had a lot of it, subconsciously and then when we finally integrated, and my mother had always told me that there is nothing that you can't do if you put your mind to it, and you are just as good as the next person, or you are just as good as they are. I have always remembered that.

Fifty-five year old Georganna, the longest serving Georgia Black female state representative and a real estate sales agent by profession, identifies specific events in her background that influenced her development and interest in politics.

I think my background as a student at Tennessee State certainly influenced me [to run for office]. Because that's where I learned I liked it. I like talking to people. I like campaigning. I like issues. I like being involved and making a difference about an issue for a cause. And so it was like a natural for me probably...I'd have to say my background having grown up in the area with other Black folks who were not really frightened, who spoke out. I grew up in a town where bombings were done. Just like Birmingham...It makes a difference when you see people stand up. And so I think my general background

and where I came from, my community, and my interest narrowed or focused when I got to college.

Denise, the second Black woman from Georgia elected to Congress and an attorney by profession, shares the following story:

I wanted to be a lawyer since I was 13 years old. That was when I decided then that I wanted to be a lawyer; it was around 1968 during the Civil Rights movement. I was in 4th grade when President Kennedy was assassinated. That day and days after had an impact on me and my family, and the country. And then with the assassination of King and Robert Kennedy and seeing how people have been able to use the law to effect social change, to protect people's rights, to have people to be equal or seen equal in the eyes of law, voter education, all those things that make this country and makes us so great came about as a result of us using the law in different ways. I believe as a lawyer I can help to have that kind of impact, to make people's lives better just like other people use the law to improve lives and the lives of the people around us. So while I didn't at that time really see myself as running for public office, I knew that I wanted to be a lawyer; I wanted to be able to serve the community and to use those talents and that kind of education to make a difference.

Other examples of this notion of implicit linkages between the social context shaping one's development and particularly one's leadership development are evident in self-described backgrounds of Emma, Myrtle, Jackie, and Evelyn. For example, Emma, an 80-year-old retired educator, realized in retrospect that serving as a youth leader in her church first exposed her to politics. Emma asserts that the church was a good example of how politics operate, in particular observing how the church leadership works together on church projects and negotiating roles.

Myrtle, a 62-year-old local city council member and retired educator briefly reflected on her experience assisting her mom in the cotton fields in South Georgia. She noted that this experience is a part of who she is.

Lastly, both Jackie, a 55-year-old who was the first Black elected female sheriff in the nation and Evelyn, a 55-year-old local city council member and financial manager by profession reference specific schooling experiences that they feel influenced their development and interest in politics. Jackie states, “I am a graduate of a women’s college. And so you know I came out thinking that there was nothing that I couldn’t do.” This assertion suggests that the nurturing environment provided by the women’s college she attended stimulated both her intellectual and social development and shaped both her identity and sense of self. Evelyn, on the other hand, noted that it was perhaps her uncle, a high school government teacher, who stimulated her interest in politics and civic involvement. It was through their frequent conversations about politics and community activism that stimulated her political leadership aspirations.

Overall, it is evident from the transcript excerpts and summarized quotes derived from the stories told by the women in this study, that the socio-cultural context in which they lived indeed played a major role in shaping their development as Black women, their understanding of how politics operate in our society, and to varying degrees stimulated their political leadership aspirations. In the segment that follows, another facet of the development process is explored, who or what facilitated their “learning” toward their becoming political leaders and what strategies were employed?

“Her” Learning Process

According to Merriam and Cafferella (1999), learning opportunities in adulthood are found in a variety of settings, from formal institutions to one’s home or place of employment.

Three terms that have grown in popularity within the adult learning discourse are: formal learning, informal learning, and nonformal learning. Formal learning refers to learning typically provided by an education or training institution, that which is a structured learning process guided by learning objectives, learning time or learning support and leading to certification (Livingstone, 2001). Conversely, informal learning is an activity that is “generally unplanned, experience-based, incidental learning that occurs in the process of people’s daily lives” (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 14). Lastly, nonformal learning as defined by Livingstone (2001), occurs “When learners opt to acquire further knowledge or skill by studying voluntarily with a teacher who assists their self-determined interests, by using an organized curriculum, as is the case in many adult education courses and workshops” (p. 2). To identify the factors that facilitated the participants’ learning toward their becoming political leaders, the following questions were posed: “How did you learn to become a politician?” and “How did you learn what to do and what not to do?”

All of the women in this study either explicitly or implicitly identified examples of informal learning experiences. Moreover, these experiences are various forms of experientially based learning and in some cases learning that occurred serendipitously. Hence, the emphasis in this section is on the informal learning or unplanned learning that the women experienced when they first entered the political arena.

It is hardly possible, however, to discuss the leadership development of these women without illuminating the fact that further analysis of the varied stories revealed that none of the women participated in any type of formal learning activities such as workshops, seminars, or political leadership development programs before running for elective office. This is consistent with the career development literature exploring the history of women’s lack of access to training

opportunities in traditionally male dominated professions. Moreover, all of the women expressed a resounding “yes” when asked if a formal leadership development program is needed to help prepare Black women who have an interest in running for elective office. In an effort to emphasize the importance of the previous finding, the next segment presents the participants’ reflections concerning the need for a formal leadership program designed to prepare Black women not only for the nuances of public life as Black women, but to also equip them with the necessary tools to effectively represent their constituency. Following this section is a focus on the informal learning experiences in which the women participated, learning that significantly influenced their political leadership development.

Formal Learning Experiences

When examining the political “career trajectory” of each participant, or the length of time each has been in elective office, none of the participants identified formal leadership training opportunities in which they participated at the formative stages of their political careers. For example, Jackie’s experience as the first Black female sheriff in the nation is a poignant example of how a political leadership program might have been helpful in her preparation for serving in a male dominated and often hostile political environment. Jackie commented about the leadership challenges she faced by not having a resource on which to draw for assistance:

I think that one of them [that] is the gap that you are trying to fill now is where to find the training. Where do you go and sit and learn and dialogue and look at models honestly? I know there is the Emily’s List but that caters more to a national elected office, and so when you start talking about where are the models for local elected office, they really aren’t there. I didn’t find them. So I think that is a big one. It would have been great to have some place to go and some place to call and say to a center, I’m having difficulty

can ya'll model it. Can you help me develop some models or whatever? That would have been great. And I missed that.

Jackie goes on to note that although she did not have key resources at her disposal, the professional training she received by working in state government exposed her to, however, one facet of politics. This was reflected in her response to the question concerning how she learned to become a politician. Before answering this question, Jackie stated that politicians “learn to play the game or we think.” When asked how she learned the “game” of politics, Jackie proceeded to explain what she meant and how both her academic training and work in state government facilitated her learning about this phenomenon. She said,

In my early career, I was in state government and I think I learned a lot of politics then. Who pushes the buttons, who's [egos] you've got to stroke and I did that. I think some of it was my academic training. I'm trained in sociology. [I learned in] sociology 2 or 301 how you get into a community and having to ask permission to be there. It's so true. It's so true. So I learned how to go and talk to leaders in the community to ask permission to be there. And they blessed it that it was okay. I knew as long as I did that and kept those fires stoked that I would be okay. So, the difference again is that I'm not a politician policymaker. I'm a politician practitioner. I go to work every day. Two thirds of what I had to do was to do the work that I was asked to do and then there was a lot of community involvement on the side that lengthened my days. Doing that is what helps you stay political.

Nadine, the first Black woman elected to the Georgia State Senate, encountered a similar challenge concerning the absence of a formal training program when she first entered the political arena. She states, “Yes, yes [a program is needed] because during the time when I

started, I wasn't aware of any leadership programs." Nadine goes further to surmise that leadership training is an ongoing process in which the new generation of political leaders and the senior elected officials should be engaged. She expressed, "...[W]e should never feel that we are at a point where we don't need on-going leadership training...we need to be aware of our style of leadership."

Approaching this issue for a formal political leadership development program from a slightly different vantage point, Denise maintains that regardless of whether one is a newly elected or experienced elected official, she has the responsibility of giving back in an effort to help others along the way. Denise communicates further,

I think, it's really a shame that we don't have something like that now. There is no place for those of us who have the kinds of experiences that we have, there is no place for us to share our experiences in a formal way.

Similar to most of the participants' responses, Denise goes further to express what she believes should be a major component of a training program for Black women with political aspirations.

Getting people prepared to go off in different directions. To run for offices at all levels. To be appointed to boards. To do those things that enables us to control the environment and our political and economic destiny. That doesn't exist in a formal way as far as I'm aware, certainly not in Georgia. Because what's happening is that the wealth of information and experiences is just sort of dissipating. And you know if there had been that kind of program, I would be in it, hopefully as a teacher and as a mentor.

In contrast to Denise and the seven other participants' viewpoints, Georganna renders the following recommendation and her rationale for why she believes that the focus of the program perhaps should be much broader than "politics." She states,

Oh yes, I think that there is a need but I don't think that it just has to be geared toward politics though. You see, I think it's a natural progression when you are, when you do leadership things....[Y]ou know there is nothing to replace your desire, what I call your gut, your desire to do something. Now skills, that's a whole different issue. You could go from a leadership program in honing skills to one just for politics... but the base is there and so you may hone in differently if you were going into politics. For example, one may only require more speaking, more issue orientation or whatever, whereas someone over here may require another type of skill. That's just kind of the way I feel. I don't know that you need, I mean [a program focused on politics] would be perfect at some point. I think politics could be a part of it, but I think leadership is broader than that.

Overall, all the women provided insights into the importance of Black women's access to opportunities for formal learning which guides them at each phase of their political leadership development process. That is, Black women need a place where they can seek guidance concerning what they should be aware of, with whom should they network, and what strategies should they employ to serve effectively in office. Furthermore, the data revealed that of great importance is the need for more opportunities for the mentoring or coaching of Black women as they pursue elective office rather than allowing their learning to principally consist of informal learning exchanges (i.e., learning by trial and error or unplanned learning) as they traverse the political terrain.

Informal Learning Experiences

This segment attends to the narratives that concern how the women in this study characterized the learning experiences they encountered in their pursuit of elective office. All of the women's stories of their learning are identified as informal or experientially based learning.

All nine of the women in this study either explicitly or implicitly referenced that, initially, their learning was through trial and error and through building on lessons learned along their paths to elective office and during their service in office. Of note, most of the women referred to varying degrees that later in their political careers having participated in some type of formal leadership training to assist them in their respective positions. However, it is their learning experiences at the formative stages of their political careers that provide insight into the unique experiences of the Black women in this study as they entered elective office.

In addition to learning through trial and error, volunteering to work on campaigns, professional experience and some combination of this listing was identified as sources of learning in the interviews. Again, all participants explicitly stated or inferred that “trial and error” represented how they learned to become and operate as a political leader in their respective positions. Second, Evelyn, Georganna, and Glenda identified their volunteer efforts in campaigns as a source of learning. Jackie, Denise, and Myrtle explicitly stated that a component of their learning about how politics and leadership stemmed from their professional training. To this end, the women offered the following comments about their informal learning experiences. Glenda comments,

I was naive going into this. When I ran, I didn't know that [the county commissioners] got paid. I didn't know that we appoint the hospital authority. We appoint...seven people and of those seven we appoint four or five of them to the hospital authority. So there were a lot of things that I just didn't know.

When asked did she seek help from anyone who could provide her information on how to run for office, Glenda shared this story:

There was nobody to ask. The one person that I thought I could ask was a Black guy who was already in public office. He was on the city side and I had him on the program. I had a campaign kickoff and at that time we had very few Black elected officials. We had a Black female in Albany...and then we had [a Black male] in Bainbridge. His daughter and I had been high school best friends and I felt that there was nothing wrong in asking him to come and see my kickoff. Well when he came, I kicked it off all right but he said that, "just because I am here does not mean that I am supporting her." A lot of people remembered that.

Like Georganna and Glenda, Evelyn shared that she learned a great deal about serving in elective office from the numerous campaigns on which she has worked. Evelyn responded,

I think it came from the fact that I worked on so many other campaigns because I worked after I got a divorce in the 80s. I immediately worked on the local superior court judge's campaign. I worked on some state positions, and also the governor's races and congressional races.

Denise describes how she first became a judge in DeKalb County. She provides the following story which implicitly illustrates that her learning experience in becoming a politician was a combination of both trial and error and one in which she was able to draw from experiences in her professional career. In particular, it is through this experience from which Denise draws lessons learned concerning the political nature of seeking a judgeship position in the county, lessons that she used for her congressional and senate bid. Her story is situated in the context of how she believed others perceived her when she first ran for Congress. She recalled,

Actually, when I became a judge that was an elective office. You know the reporters tried to make it sound like, well she just showed up one day on the doorstep and decided that

she was going to run for Congress. But I had the foundation. I had been appointed to fill a vacancy but then I had to run to retain that seat which I did successfully without opposition. I was appointed to the state court of DeKalb County by then—Governor Zell Miller. That was in 1992, in June of 1992. And then that next year I had to run, and after four years, it's a four year term, I had to run for reelection, and I was up for reelection again in 2002. I, [however] decided to resign and run for Congress. But the district, the 4th congressional district at that time was and is currently DeKalb County....So, I had to run countywide. The judgeships are non-partisan, so there is no political affiliation. And so as a result of having been in the judicial position and running countywide, successfully reaching out to people literally all over the county regardless of their political affiliation, I had a base of support that I knew simply because of the way I had been able to run successfully first without opposition and then when I had two opponents.

Nadine shares an example of how she learned about the process of creating a bill through trial and error. She explains, "Being thrown in the trenches and having to learn it...and usually when you go in you want to learn it and learn the process. Once you learn the process then it's kind of easy. There's a psychology to it." Nadine comments further about how she had to learn about how to run a campaign simply by learning from her mistakes. Nadine states,

For example, there was no one that I could seek guidance from to show me how run a campaign. There weren't any books out there and those that were out there were not geared towards people of color. The only thing people would do or say is, "yes, it takes a lot of money." I really didn't have anyone to show me how to do it so I just had to fumble my way through. To show you how I fumbled through it, do you remember the entertainment signs that were once used on telephone posts, the big yellow signs? Well,

those were the kinds of signs I was using, though I think each time I got a little bit better. When I finally threw my hat in again in 1990 and won, former commissioner Lou Walker and his wife, both of whom owned a PR firm, came and said look I'm going to help you. That is when we took it up another notch, and I won. But I think now, in today's time, young people who want to run for public office, the resources are out there. You can go get a book and look at how to run a campaign.

Likewise, Myrtle simply states, "Trial and error...yet there is not much difference in what I normally did and what I do now." She also notes that her becoming the first Black female mayor was by happenstance and that even though she had no prior experience serving as mayor, it was a good thing for her. She states,

In my heart, it was good for me because I didn't know how to be mayor. In fact, I wasn't supposed to become mayor when I did, but the girl who was in this spot, Sissy Lawson had surgery and it was her turn. And so, she called and said, "Would you mind serving as mayor?" What you talking about? I said, the mayor? But, I figured I could do it as good as anybody else.

Sonja's experience raising money is an example of how she, too, learned through trial and error. When I asked Sonja if she had a campaign manager and what was her campaign, she replied:

And that is going to be cute because there was no strategy and there was no money. I believe in that work the door-to-door person. And you know, I didn't put a whole lot of money in [my campaign]. And well that was probably another thing I learned from this experience is that you kind of do need to raise money, because the kind of stuff that you want to do for people you basically can't do it. So, if I had to do it all over again I would probably just raise a bunch of money to have it and be okay.

Another dimension of their learning through informal learning experiences is when and how they learned what to do and what not to do. All nine participants identified observing others as a fundamental strategy they used to help facilitate their learning. The second most frequently mentioned strategy was listening. The following responses illustrate this point. When asked “how did they learn what to do and not to do?” Sonja simply stated, “From looking and listening to other politicians and from going to classes.” Denise shared the following: “Some of it I learned from talking, observing, or viewing other people’s mistakes.” Similarly, Jackie states,

I would say looking at any other people who I saw either did that or didn’t do that very well and learning from the triumphs and learning from the mistakes. I heard it first from speaker Murphy. I’m sure it’s an old adage that goes around and around, and it has been around forever, “there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies there are only permanent interests.” And so you learn...that I think it’s the nature of human beings that “I like you or that I don’t like you.” But in politics, you have to put that away. You learn very quickly to put that away.

In a story that Glenda shared, learning by observation became apparent. Glenda states,

When you get into [politics] you look at everything that happens to Blacks as like news worthy, especially if it’s criminal. So you look at everything that happened, and you don’t want to repeat those things or you want to try to do better. And like Mary Young, she was the person I found in Albany to come down to give my kickoff speech. She was an attorney by practice, but she had some bad values. She did some stuff that kept her in the news, wrote bad checks and stuff like that. Because she was an elected official and every time she wrote a bad check, it made the news. So you know I had some people I could learn from, what I should do and what I shouldn’t do before I got elected. I started

going to the commissioners meetings just to see what the issues were and then I took my time and went down to the office and read the minutes from the previous year before I took office so that I would have an idea of what had happened over the previous year.

Nadine commented:

By observing and by listening to leaders such as Thurbert Baker, Sanford Bishop, Georganna Sinkfield, Nan Orrock, and others who I trusted. I looked for people whose values were similar to mine and who really wanted to be there for the people.

As with Nadine, Evelyn shared that upon first taking office she, too, listened to those who had been around much longer than she. Evelyn stated that she learned what to do and what not to do as follows:

By listening. When I first got into office I sat down and talked with some of the people who were already in office both elderly people and young people. And one of the things I learned from that was even though you may have a strong belief about something you still have to listen to other people's opinions, and you have to learn to choose your fights, your battles rather. And it's a lot of give and take. If you want something, you must also be willing to give something up. At some point in time you have to support other people's issues also if you expect yours to be supported.

In summary, it is my finding that the women in this study learned about the mechanics of politics prior to and after their elections to office, not through deliberate educative means but through their lived experiences. In addition, an important factor in their success was their understanding of how observing and listening are powerful tools to use for learning "the hidden rules" of the political arena, an arena historically reticent to women, Black women in particular. The use of these tools became particularly useful in instances where the women were

intentionally denied access to key sources of information, sources that generally were at the disposal of White males.

Shaped by Role Models and Mentors

Throughout the interviews that were conducted for this study, what became very clear was that role models and mentors within family bounds and outside of the family shaped each of the nine women's leadership development. More specifically, it became evident that one or more Black female figures (i.e., mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and godmother) were critical in their lives. These women served as role models, oftentimes serving in leadership roles themselves.

Within Family Bounds

In an interview with Myrtle she talked about how her mother was a strong force in her development. The sixth of eight children and the first to graduate from high school, Myrtle shared the following:

My momma was one of the greatest leaders I have ever known, I think I will ever know. She didn't even finish the eighth grade; she quit school in the eighth grade....I often wondered after I started making money how did momma feed her children and keep everyone off of us....Momma took care of us and fed us without the benefit of a father for all of my life....So, momma fed seven children because by the time I was born my oldest brother had gone to the war....when she died [in 1967] her pay check was \$26 a week and she was one of the highest paid maids in Thomasville, Georgia...but she spent most of her life in the fields until she couldn't work....So, momma was a leader to me in more ways than one...she taught me to fend for myself, to stay in school and go to college....She knew that I had to have education; and she said if I don't go [to college now], I will never go.

Not only did Myrtle attend college, she was the first of her siblings to graduate from an institution of higher education. Similarly, Denise's parents had strong values around education. Denise talked about how her parents' value of education influenced her along with the leadership roles in which her mother served. She had this to say:

My mother was a teacher. She had graduated from Hampton Institute where she met my father. He had attended college but did not graduate because he went to serve in WWII. Both of my parents understood that education was the key to success, and so they wanted to make sure that within what they could afford that we had the best education...My parents were, though, very involved, especially my mother, in the activities of the school. She was very active in the PTA. At one point she was president of the PTA for this school.

She also shares later in the interview,

My mother worked outside of the home. So I had these influences right there which let me know—I didn't know that I wasn't supposed to be able to do because I was Black or because I was a Black female...

As with Denise, Georganna's mother was very active. Georganna described activities of community activism in which her mother was engaged. Georganna recollects:

My mom I would consider an activist for the community at that point in time. Even though then I did not think of her that way, she has always been involved in things. As a matter of fact, they used our house for the federal government Headstart program. I don't remember the year, but I do know she really let them use her home for the first Headstart program.

Emma conveys how her mother not only served as a role model for her children, she was also recognized as a leader in the church and community. She conveys the following story:

My mother was a Sunday school teacher and the head woman in the church that's right over there. That church has ruled my life in a lot of ways, a lot of the things that I've done...She was a member of the PTA, and the Sunday school superintendent...[On Sundays] she would get up to fix us breakfast, cook dinner, and she probably cooked that Saturday and that Sunday morning. She would get up and make biscuits and chicken and biscuits. We had a good breakfast. And we'd be at Sunday school at 9 a.m. Every house that she went by, what do you think would happen? "Hey, Miss Ida is coming. Miss Ida is coming"...So, at that time the kids would be running behind her. It didn't seem like all that to me then...So a lot of my doing what I do is because of the encouragement that I got from my mother who really encouraged us to excel.

Outside of the Family

As with role models in the family, Sonja, Nadine, Glenda, Myrtle, Denise, and Emma identified individuals outside of their families who served as mentors, role models and coaches during their tenure as elected officials. In some cases, participants identified having White and Black male mentors. In the following excerpt, when asked had anyone provided her guidance in terms of when she was first elected, Sonja commented,

Well, not in the beginning, but GMA [Georgia Municipal Association] was one of the major guiders for me. They brought me a long way, but I have to say that the Congress for Black mayors, they took me a much, much longer way. Because at that time I was with people who were under the same conditions as I was, so we kind of reached out, learned stuff on our own, and did research so that we could find out.

Emma's experience in running for office is slightly more unique than the other women in this study. Because the Black community in which she represents had been socially, economically, and politically oppressed for decades, Emma not only had to overcome these factors as well as her own fear of becoming something that she had never done before, to serve as mayor. In the following dialogue with Emma concerning how she was mentored or coached, Emma begins by explaining what influenced her to run and how she developed the comfort level to pursue this challenging endeavor. She states, "By going to meetings and being taught...when I told them, the National Council for Black Mayors, that I needed help and then Tyrone Brookes told them I needed help, they sent someone here to kind of guide me along." When asked was she coached, she proceeded to say,

I had some coaches and they had been mayor before. I had one guy to come with me to my first meeting. He talked to me before the meeting because I was nervous. The national council had given me a coach. There was a conference that goes on every year, all mayors get an invitation to go. I was so glad to go to that conference because when I got there it really dealt with how to work with the media if you wanted something published. How to talk, how to build interest within the city council and how to try to bring them together, how to get each city council member engaged.

In comparison, Denise shares an experience whereby she was mentored by a White male after passing the bar exam 22 years ago. She shares the following mentoring experience:

When I moved to Georgia 22 years ago come September, Keegan was the one who took a chance; I basically found out through his secretary that the decision came down to: does he pick the daughter of one of his old friends to be his law clerk or does he pick a Black woman who he hardly even knows?

She goes on to explain that after passing the bar examination she made the decision to leave North Carolina to travel to Atlanta, Georgia, to interview for a position as a law clerk for then Superior Court Judge R. Keegan Federal, who now heads the law firm with which she is associated. Denise states:

So I was coming for this job interview and I'm thinking okay now, I didn't know who this man was. All I knew is that he was a superior court judge, DeKalb County superior court judge. But my thought was without knowing anything about him, I just knew that he was a superior court judge. I assumed he was White, and I knew he was male due to the name, that he was old and...that he [would be] this dyed in the wool southerner that probably wouldn't be trying to hire a Black girl from Brooklyn despite the fact that I had the credentials and all that stuff. Well, I was very wrong. I mean I came to the interview and saw that he was 40 years old and had been on the bench since he was 32. About nine months or so after he hired me, he announced that he was retiring....[He] was this maverick, but he was the one who hired, he hired the first African American law clerk employee to work in the courthouse and I was the second...[He] was the kind of person who was willing to take risks. He identified me as being somebody who was smart and he was willing to take a chance on alienating his [long time] friend whose daughter had just gotten out of law school and needed a job. So he gave me an opportunity to do something like that which was out of the ordinary and risky, I guess potentially for him. I proved that I was able to do the job and do it well. He has been my friend and mentor for the last 20 years.

Overall, the narratives shared by the women in this section illustrate how social context indeed shapes one's identity and understanding of oneself. Accordingly, for the women in this

study, learning about politics stemmed from their lived experiences and their willingness to search for other avenues to learn to succeed in politics, even when information and knowledge were purposefully kept from them. Lastly, the previous statements illustrate that mentors, role models, and family have contributed to the direction in which the women traveled during their journeys to becoming leaders and in particular leaders in the political arena.

Black Women's Paths to Political Careers

A Non-Linear Path to Elective Office

A major theme identified in this study concerning the participants' political leadership development experiences is that their development path is nontraditional in scope and is best depicted not by a straight line but one that has peaks and valleys. This is consistent with the career development literature in which it is well documented that women's ascendancy to the leadership ranks in certain traditionally male dominated professions which women historically have been underrepresented, yet have made significant strides in their representation over the last two decades, historically male dominated professions such as law, medicine. These peaks and valleys represent the highs, lows, the successes and barriers that surfaced along their path. Of note, when asked to describe how they developed their political leadership skills, Myrtle, Glenda, Sonja, Nadine, Georganna, and Evelyn reflected on specific experiences whereby they served in leadership roles either in primary school, high school, and/or college. For example, Nadine shared the following when asked what influenced her to run for her first elective office:

I think it was the encouragement I received from my community and my neighbors...well perhaps it started before then. I was always viewed as a leader even in school. I was the president of my class. I was on the student council. I really didn't know the impact of those experiences on my development at the time. Also, I think when I

became involved with the governor's association and really started looking at the process and at my elected officials, I realized that I wasn't pleased with what I saw....And Barbara Jordan, she was my inspiration....I wanted to be like Barbara Jordan, so I took a chance.

In addition, Emma shared that serving as a youth leader in her church was a major ingredient of her leadership development and path to elective office. In fact, she explained that it was in the church where she learned about politics.

Although most of the women noted that their interest in serving in leadership roles emerged when they were youth; however, their narratives indicated that they were neither mentored nor socialized into politics. In effect, as young leaders, no one at the time encouraged them to think about serving their community as an elected official, not to mention to serve in a long term capacity or as a "career" public servant. To this end, the stories that follow illustrate that their entry into politics was largely a process that occurred serendipitously.

When asked how she came to serve in the office that she has currently held for 24 years, Georganna comments,

That's kind of a difficult question for me primarily because I did not start out on a career path to elected office. And so if I did anything I probably should tell you how I got here.

But it certainly wasn't a programmed "I want to be an elected official."

Similarly, in Glenda's story, it is evident that her entrance into elective office was serendipitous in the following story:

The politics at that time was that counties were being sued because they wouldn't redistrict. Some of them were resistant to change and did not want to redistrict to allow for [B]lack representation. But in our county, even though they were [W]hite men of

wisdom or there was a [W]hite man of wisdom that happen to be chairman at the time and he chose, he guided the board toward going ahead and redistricting. And at the time, they drew a county with six districts. They took the county and divided it into 6 districts with the group that was helping counties redistrict and making sure that Blacks had representation, something like the justice department. I know it was based in Atlanta, and then they came down and helped them do a redistricting. The board ended up with six districts, two of them were predominately [B]lack and I said, I just kind of jokingly said to Brandsded, "I should run for that district." And I just kind of blew it off. And then when it came time for elections and he came back to me and said okay, you know you can run for this district now. I said, "Well, I was just joking." But then I went ahead and I threw my hat into the ring and ran in a race of four, three men and me, one woman. I had a runoff. There were two [B]lack males and one [W]hite male and myself and I had a runoff with the [W]hite male. I beat him and I've been there ever since.

Furthermore, Glenda proceeds to explain:

I was 28 or 29. I was one of the youngest, well the youngest female. I took office when I was 29 so all of that definitely had an impact on me. And the fact that my mother never said that I couldn't do it. The only thing that she ever said about it that the only thing negative about it is that I have not been able to work from home since I ran for office. And for a long time I was bitter, and in talking to my pastor he said that it could be a blessing in disguise....Because I ran for office...and at that time I was naive going into this. I...when I ran I didn't know they got paid. I didn't know that we appoint the hospital authority. We appoint the hospital authority, seven people and of those 7 we appoint 4 or

5 of them we appoint them to the hospital authority. So there were a lot of things that I just didn't know.

Sonja shares a different story, "...[B]asically, nobody really influenced me. I kind of came up with that crazy idea. It was a crazy idea at that time because for one reason we had no females, not even a Black person had run." Similarly, Myrtle states that after retiring from her teaching profession she "accidentally" got involved in politics of elective office. She explains,

I accidentally got into government, because I thought I could do it until somebody got ready to do it. [It was an accident] because I never did anything in government. I was retired expecting to come and sit down and be nothing. But I have this burning desire to share information with people. And so the guy who was the first Black on the city council in Gainesville, had been there for 20 years, he got sick, and I knew he was sick. So I started going to city council meetings, just looking, you know, after I retired. So I thought, 'Well, we'll hang.' And then he died and I said ok, I guess this is going to cause me to continue what I call my involvement in people's lives. So I said, 'I can go do this. I can do it as good as anybody else, and I'll do it until somebody else wants to do it.

Denise describes how her career path to elective office was not a deliberate process. It was her experience as a lawyer and then her tenure as a judge that inadvertently prepared her for elected office. She states,

So the career path that I followed to elective office wasn't one that was, that I decided at 13 that, oh I want to be president, but I did, once I decided that I wanted to be a lawyer then plotted the course okay what do I do to get to be the kind of lawyer that I really need to be?...and it goes back again to what my parents have instilled in me that you as a

women, as an African American you have to be better than anybody else. You have to be the best that you can do and we're not taking anything for an excuse.

In the same vein, later in the interview Denise was asked what influenced her to run for Congress, and she commented, "Well actually it wasn't something I ever thought I'd do."

Overall, the narratives presented in this section concerning the women's paths to elective office is consistent with the existing research on how Black women's leadership and career development experiences are shaped and what factors influence their development in the professions. Furthermore, it is evident from the stories told by the women aforementioned that their paths to elective office neither were planned nor was their entrance into politics intentional in most cases. Moreover, the data revealed that once they were elected to their respective positions, the women took a more deliberate approach to ensuring that they succeeded. As such, a major factor in that approach was their faith or spirituality, which emerged as a prominent marker along their paths.

Call and Response: A Spiritual Foundation

Another key finding identified is the important role faith/spiritually has played in the participants' decision to enter and remain in politics. Hence, in one way or another, all of the women introduced the subject of their spirituality into their stories in their journey to elective office. Each participant indicated that she participated in politics or ran for her position because she felt compelled or "called" to do so by her experience of spirituality. This sense of calling is an awareness that the participants have concerning the responsibility they have to use their talents, skills and abilities for a specific purpose. Buechner describes it as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (1973, p. 95). On the other hand, Kovan and Dirkx (2003) describe calling as being "like a force beyond our conscious awareness that seems

to be inviting or leading us somewhere, to some place, to do that which we were intended to do” (p. 110). The latter notion of spirituality is echoed in the statements that follow. First, however, is Nadine’s statement concerning the significant role spirituality has historically played in the lives of Black Americans, Black women in particular. Nadine poignantly states,

I think one of the things for Black women and with African Americans I believe, not to say that other people are less spiritual, is that we have always been taught to go to the Lord and pray about it. I firmly believe in that. I think there is a time for everything, and I know that if things don’t work out the way that I want them to work out, I will be okay. This was clear to me through all of those times I ran for state representative and lost. In particular, it was during the election in which I lost by only 28 votes, even with a PR person on staff...[E]very body knows [that person] is shady. And when I realized ____ had cheated me out of money, I remember praying and saying Lord you know I don’t have \$7,000 dollars to pay this man. I need your help. I lost that race by 28 votes and I was happy because I felt that God answered my prayers, because I could not pay this person and I found out that ____ had been cheating me.

Nadine goes on to say,

And in 1990 you know, having ____ there, even prior to winning in 1990, I knew that I was not going to win a race until 1990. I knew that in 1986, but I continued anyway and I lost. But, in 1990 I won. So, I really believe in being led by the spirit. I feel that I was also led by the spirit to enter the U.S. Senate race and then the U.S. House of Representatives race, however I lost.

Jackie describes her spiritual “calling” to serve as sheriff, an elected position fraught with racism and sexism. She states,

There has to be a reason, to me, that you are serving. And you have to be comfortable about why you are there. Is it, you know all of us want to help people. [But] it's much deeper and so for me the issue was that I never felt like I could have been here had this not been where God wanted me to be. There were too many obstacles. But he put me here for a reason and so the question then is so what's the reason? What is it that I'm supposed to do? I have to stay true to that otherwise I violate the agreement. So everyday I ask for guidance in making certain that I'm staying on track for what it was I think he wanted me to do. Now what I think he wanted me to do is to bring a sense of civility into an area that is uncivil. That is jails and prisons.

With regard to Sonja, the role faith played in helping her overcome obstacles in her life is apparent in the advice she offers to Black women who have political leadership aspirations. She advises,

[B]asically, in politics you don't ever know what's going to happen and no two things happen at one time. And the other thing is, is learning that there is only one man in charge. And you know that's God...And no matter what you do and if it's for you then it's going to be for you anyway and people can't, people can't really block you.

Emma's story addressed the relationship of her spirituality and decision making, moreover, she says:

You have to have a vision for yourself and in that vision definitely put God as your leader. Because after all, God holds your lifeline in his hands. No matter where you go or what you do, you cannot make yourself live if you treat your life any kind of way. You know they say basically you have one life to live?

She goes on to explain what sustained her through the battles she encountered during her 17 years serving as mayor. She states,

Being a Christian you learn that no matter what you say to me you can't make me hate you. I was determined of that. Being frustrated and [before] going to bed, I prayed for every household in Keysville. I have had a really strong prayer life.

Similarly, Myrtle shares how spirituality guided her decision to run for office:

I believe that becoming a leader means that you study, you study, you study all the time. You study then you learn how to become confident in yourself. And I believe that in becoming confident in yourself that one has to have a higher power to call on. I call on God all the time to help me make decisions because I don't want to make a decision that is going to inadvertently affect you in a negative way. And you know, that's one thing I don't worry about. I don't get up, I don't carry my bible with me everywhere. I don't get up and say, "Oh the Lord tell me where to go," ok, because God doesn't speak to me like that. But I believe that my underlying faith in God and my principles in life have all come from the base of spirituality. I believe that God guides me. Like he gives me a job to do. My job in this world is to help somebody else. To see if they can do better....And he gives me different jobs to do that. That's why I do believe that God did have his hand in this career here [in elected office] because I can bring City Hall to my community.

Denise shares the following story which describes the cognitive process in which she went through to make the decision to run for Congress and later to run for the U.S. Senate seat. More specifically, she describes how her faith led her to run for both positions and that it was a "call from God" to which she felt she was obligated to respond.

In the course of training for a marathon, I knew that God was just preparing me for something. I just didn't know what it was, and I was very restless after the judicial elections. I just didn't know why. After that I said, "Okay, I'm here but this is not feeling just right." I don't know what it is that I'm supposed to be doing or what I really want to do but this is not it. In the course of my training for the marathon and being able to take long runs, hours on end and being by myself, it was the first time as an adult, really, that I had spent that kind of time just on me. Work, kids, and your husband, you know it's all this kind of stuff. So it was a very spiritual experience in a lot of ways and educational, in and of its self. And that's where on one of my long runs I was running down Stone Mountain Lithonia Road and it just hit me. It was this voice (*pause*) You know I can't tell people this because they think I'm crazy, but it was almost like (*pause*) I had had that experience before a couple of times when I had been in church, sort of moved to do something and then I just can't sit still until I respond to do this "thing" and so it was like I almost heard this voice saying you are going to run for Congress. And I'm like, what, no way.

In the course of her telling the above story, I then commented to her that I read somewhere that she had a similar experience when she decided to enter the U.S. Senate race. Denise responded:

Well, yes and it was again a struggle because all of the things that happened, I knew were going to happen. I knew that people would react and that was the struggle with the congressional race. It was because of what I had seen happen in my life that I knew this was God at work in my life. And so, and every time something would happen, I just knew that this is the Lord working this out, this is God, this is God's hand on this. And so I believe that as long as you take one step and He will take two; and as long as you are

doing what you have been called to do, yes it maybe difficult, yes people won't understand, yes you may be dog tired, you may wonder why and you may think did I really make the right decision, but it will be all right because that is the way that you are supposed to go. I had just had so many experiences in my own life, being able to go to Yale, being able to become a lawyer, having my child be born 3 months premature, 2 lbs 4 oz and the doctors saying he has a 50-50 chance of survival, not even talking about the terrible things that you may have to potentially deal with, and seeing all of those things just kind of being worked out.

Glenda's faith has helped to sustain her throughout her 20-year political career. She stated, "I feel that being in politics has been a good experience for me...I feel that this is the way the Lord had me to go and I don't regret it." Sonja's stance of spirituality and politics is evident in the following statement:

...And the other thing is, is learning that there is only one man in charge. And you know that's God, from the bottom of my heart. And no matter what you do and if it's for you then its going to be for you anyway and people can't, people can't really block you.

Similarly, Evelyn states,

I think from coming from a strong family where you had women who were very strong in their beliefs and especially Christians, Christian beliefs. And I think that's just something that that person either has or they don't have.

Finally, Georganna provides another illustration of the significant role spirituality plays in Black women's lives, especially when overcoming challenging situations. She describes a situation in which she encountered resistance the first time she chaired a committee. It was her faith that helped her to get beyond a barrier that was clearly race and gender based. She states,

People would, they'd tell me in the meetings that they were trying to take the issue from me, you see what I'm saying? She's just a first time chair...she shouldn't be so frank...but you see to me the Lord has already fixed that and nobody can take that from me. That was there and I never worried about it; they came and told me are you aware well so and so is trying to get at you? You know, well I just said well you know if they can get it, let them have it but I'm not going to even worry about it and so yes it's the same as outside.... see I just don't think things happen by accident that's just my own faith and the way I see things.

In summary, in this section I am reminded of the biblical scripture, "...many are called, but few are chosen,"—Matthew 20:16. Several participants alluded to the fact that entering the political arena certainly isn't for everyone and that there are many factors to consider when making the decision to seek office, especially for Black women. One such factor is how these women lived their lives through their spiritual convictions, even as they fulfilled their roles as political leaders. The narrations in this segment identified that there is perhaps a direct link between their spirituality and the women's paths to and life in politics. Moreover, significant to this segment are the stories the women shared regarding the sustaining power spirituality has in their ability to persevere in the face of adversity.

Black Women's Race and Gender Challenges in the Political Arena

In the previous section, the women's stories revealed how their spirituality was an influencing factor in their entrance into the political arena as well as their ability to remain in their elected positions long term. The stories also reveal how many in this study managed to succeed in the political arena in the South in the circumstance of breaking new ground, which is instructive in this study of Black female leadership experiences. Therefore, in this section I attend to the women's accounts of the unique challenges they encountered as Black women entering the political arena and remaining in office. The women shared informative stories of how they negotiated their way through and around the race and gender based barriers constructed not only along their paths to office but also during their terms of service in office.

Negotiating Her Way Through the Prism of Positionality

A number of issues emerged from the interviews regarding how the women's positionality as Black women, Black women of the generation with one foot in the segregation era and the other in the desegregation era, role as mothers, and professional women which affected their ability to not only "break into the system" of politics but also remain there long term, even in the 20th century. Such issues include the following: 1) encounters with sexism from White and/or Black males, 2) gender socialization; 3) the presence of the good ol' boys network, 4) critical professional and personal life decisions that women must consider before entering office, 5) and the all too common issue of men's ability to garner significantly more financial support than women. Arguably, it is well documented in the political science and leadership literature concerning women's ability to enter elective office and their ascendancy in the political leadership ranks is affected by such barriers as the issues previously listed (Carroll, 1983, 2003; Clark, 1991; Cohen, 2003; Darcy, Welch, & Clark, 1994; Rajoppi, 1993). Notably,

what is largely posited is that women, as a monolithic group, have the same experiences in the political arena concerning the issues aforementioned. However, the data revealed that for the women in this study such was not true particularly for three of the five issues previously listed—sexism, gender socialization, and fundraising. In addition, following the discussion on fundraising is a discussion of three additional issues Black women political leaders encounter that were not explicitly named by the participants but should not go unacknowledged. These include choosing when to have children, acknowledging one's race and gender as assets, and the impact of class on Black women's political leadership experiences.

Sexism

All of the women in this study shared stories of instances when their encounters with sexism was different from White women's experiences. In particular, it is their contention that the difference lies in their belief that they must fulfill a double role, being Black and female. Myrtle, for example, who is the first Black female and the only Black female to serve on her city council described herself as one who has no reservations about being outspoken and saying what is on her mind. To this end, she shared an example of an encounter she had with a White male on her council who demonstrated behavior toward her which suggested that he was raised in an era when "Black folks weren't supposed to say anything," asserts Myrtle. In addition, Myrtle along with six other women explicitly identified examples of the tendency for Black women's credibility to oftentimes be challenged because of their race and gender. Myrtle commented,

Being a Black woman, White men, I think are the hardest people to come around to understanding that women have thoughts, they have ideas, their ideas are just as legitimate as yours are. You need a women's perspective. So I feel like I'm filling a

double role. I'm filling the spot for the woman and I'm filling the spot for Black folk because people need to hear our issues, too.

Similarly, Nadine commented from her experience serving as the first woman of color to serve in the state senate:

Well, in the senate there were never many women in there at any given time prior to 8 or 10 years ago. I guess initially, my leadership really was taken for granted especially being a woman of color, being the first woman of color in the senate...I had to show that I was not a person that they could just run over. You know, people would come before one of the appropriations committees I chaired and give me a bunch of bull. They didn't expect me to know to ask a lot of questions, but you know I trained them. I asked questions; I questioned them about their outcomes. I remember a young lady came in one day and she wanted a million dollars in the budget to expand five programs. I figured by the time a person comes to me for a million dollars, he/she should have a business plan already prepared. [I said to her,] I need to know where you are going to put those five programs. She was unable to tell me and I didn't bite my tongue. In fact, I let her know what my feelings were on [the issue] in front of other people. And so, I had to get to that point for people to recognize me as a player and as a leader.

Sonja reflected on how she overcame the issue of Black women's authority and leadership being challenged more frequently than White women and Black men combined. She stated:

[B]asically you have to prove yourself and you have to get people to open up to you and then you have to be aggressive. No White person, no White male is going to tell you anything extra so therefore you kind of have to dip in and listen with the other ear and just juggle things.

Georganna also discussed, from her vantage point, how Black women have greater challenges serving in elective office. She said,

This is one [issue] that applies particularly to Black women; I think it's a race issue and gender issue. Other people give men in general, [B]lack men also, but particularly White men, they come with credibility...When they walk through the door they are all ready, they have everything they need to talk to the public. There is no question about what they say, they can stand up and lie; they can you know, ignore the issue; they can fool around and the audience gives them all the credit. You have to come in and make them give you credit. You know you have to show yourself to be knowledgeable and most women know the issue better, they know all the minute details. They probably were much more effective in something getting done....they have the credibility just because they are White and because they are male. And I don't care if it's a Black male. I see Black men stand up and b__s__. I mean you know I'm like, I know, they are not buying this, but they do.

She also noted how her 20 years of service in the Georgia State Legislature has precluded her from experiencing challenges to her credibility because of her race and gender in one respect.

Georganna acknowledges,

Now my district knows me. They have sent me down there 12 times...I don't have that problem with them. As a matter of fact, they probably will take me over anybody, any White male, anybody. See that's through 20 something years of working, but I guarantee you, I bet you if I walk into a room that doesn't know me from Adam, I come with nothing. I have to prove everything coming in the door.

Socialization

With respect to the issue of socialization, Denise comments on how Black women must not only be better than everyone else, she must also contend with the notion that it is not Black women's role to serve in certain leadership roles in the American society. Denise shared how from her perspective sexism is systemically imbedded in society's gender socialization practices and leadership roles. She commented:

[Black women] have to be better than everybody else, other folks can be out just like they've done ...and so I am White, male, I am rich therefore I am going to be senator. I am going to be president. But you know we don't get to do that. Black women don't get to do that, Black folks don't get to do that, but especially Black women. We have to fight against men, other Black men who think, "who do you think you are when my wife works in the kitchen. You need to be over there and this is our game." You see that even right now.... So the expectation is that...this is what White people do, they are president, you know Black women are not president...they don't even run for president, they don't even think about it. You know, Shirley Chisholm ran so that people could talk about the reasons why she couldn't win. So it's the mentality that men are in charge, they run stuff...from the church to your political arena to business, you see it over and over again because men learn to do it. But you know there are the good old White boys and the good old Black boys, there are, they get together and decide still what the deal is going to be.

Similarly, Sonja offers the following observation concerning how Black women's conception of leadership is shaped:

I think we need to start from elementary school with [B]lack women's leadership. We are just like other people, once we are molded a certain way it's kind of hard for us to

change....So we need to start now, like in first grade starting out at least getting them involved to a small extent [in leadership roles] and then build [their involvement] as you go.

Financial Support

The final issue the data revealed is that Black women tend to experience differently than White women and certainly men in general, the ability to generate financial support for their campaigns. First, all nine women stated that White men tend to raise more money than women in general. However, the next level of differentiation occurred between Black women and White women, which has ties to current manifestations of the legacy of Black American's disenfranchisement from the political system and gender socialization. Jackie made this point clearly, which elements of her statement were echoed in the narratives of the other women in various forms:

I think that White women probably have an easier time, running [for office] basically. Because they come from a community that is more likely to give money. They have a history of giving money to support political causes. So I think a White woman's race is a little easier because she has less difficulty raising money...I think that then doubles because White men really don't have a problem raising money. If they have problems it's a bad day or a bad candidate. So there is that and there is the boys club, the good old boys club. There is the network that he can generally tap into. There is more of a likelihood that there are generational ties to office and to power. In the context of the community, the granddaddy, the uncle, or somebody got it really going for them. So they have a history built in and almost an entitlement to ascendancy which is interesting. When you think about places like Harvard and Yale, and Morehouse on the other side, they are

designed to build, to create the leaders of the country. I mean, these men are expected to come out and run for political office, they are winged for that, they are groomed. We don't really have that now, and I think that's a big difference.

She goes on to say,

And if you look at the last presidential race the big deal that they made out of the fact that Bush and Kerry came out of the same club. I mean, you know we don't have that. [We meaning] women in general but Black women in particular. The best we can do is call our sorority sisters sometimes, but we don't have that base of support that is kind of out there going through cities and states. And so [for example], you can't tap into Wisconsin and be connected in Mississippi somewhere. It's interesting. I think that we have that going against us still.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that three additional issues—choosing when to have children, embracing race and gender as assets, and class status—surfaced during analysis which were not named by all of the participants, but seemed to be important elements of their experiences. First, the all too common issue women encounter when pursuing elective office, that is when to have children in addition to determining to what degree their families should come before making the decision to enter the political arena, was apparent in the nine interviews. Seven of the nine women whose children were not of age when they entered politics made the decision to put their children first and consequently delayed their entrance into politics.

Second, an interesting point identified in Emma, Georganna, and Glenda's interviews was how they not only identified the race and gender challenges that surfaced along their paths to political leadership; however, they also explicitly referred to how they strategically elected to use their race and gender as assets. For example, Emma responded to the question concerning how

her race and gender affected her time as mayor by stating, “Sometimes it was helpful.”

Similarly, Georganna responded this way concerning how her race and gender affected her political career. She asserted:

In some ways good. It’s been a blessing in a lot of ways because one way is that for Black women, people don’t expect you to do some of the things you do. So, you catch them off guard. That’s how you beat them at it. And I know that’s a fact now because the people who have worked over there have told me that by the time they realize that I was for real it was too late. So, it puts you at an advantage because their expectations are lower...So, you are at an advantage because you can surprise them always.

Glenda shared the following experience:

[My race and gender] have been a plus for me on the state and regional level and then attach my profession. I have served as a state officer for the rural health advisory board, I served on the Department of Human Resources advisory board, I serve on the Department of Community Affairs, so it’s been a plus....I don’t forget I’m Black. I know I’m Black. I know I will always Black, but I don’t let that bother me too much.

The third and final point is the issue of class. Although class in this study was framed in terms of economics, Frazier (1962) cites that this term in the Black community is much broader. Class in the Black community is typically associated with one’s education level and position in the community (Frazier, 1962). Therefore, one can conclude that for the participants in this study whose parents were educated, ensuring that their children reached a higher social level in the community was likely a common goal they worked toward. Of the nine women in this study, only Jackie and Denise’s parents were college educated, and eight of the nine women came from disadvantaged families. Nevertheless, when asked how economics affected their political careers,

none of the participants identified class as a variable in their political leadership and career development experiences. However, upon further analysis, it is seen that all nine of the women explicitly identified “fundraising” as an issue they faced (see previous section on fundraising). They also delineate how their experiences with raising funds differs from their male and White female counterparts, differences rooted in the history of Blacks’ disenfranchisement and lack of access to political power. Notably, perhaps the issue of class is a variable in political leadership through the guise of fundraising challenges expressed by all nine of the women.

Summary

The women in this study revealed ways in which they negotiated their way, sometimes through, but most often around barriers of racism and sexism along their paths to elective office and while in office. First, the participants’ lived experiences as Black women provided them with opportunities for learning that sharpened their understanding of how politics operates in their lives. For some, this study provided them with the opportunity to reflect, for the first time, on what events, people, and life situations helped to cultivate them into leaders. Second, it was the women’s spirituality, which served as a major source of inspiration for their serving in elective office. Lastly, all nine of the women were “resourceful” in overcoming adversity. The women not only took advantage of the resources that were available to them, especially those who were the first Black women to serve in their respective positions. These women also found ways of uncovering intentionally hidden resources to aid them in entering the political arena and remaining there long term. In effect, the women’s strong sense of self-determination aided them in this process. In the words of the late Shirley Chisholm, these women were determined to be “unbought and unbossed.”

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore Black women's leadership development experiences as they pursue a career in elective office in Georgia. To achieve this purpose, three research questions guided this study:

- How do Black women develop their political leadership skills?
- What are the paths Black women take in their political careers?
- How has the intersection of race and gender affected Black women's journey to and existence as political leaders?

A qualitative methodology was employed, specifically in-depth interviews, to collect data from nine Georgia Black female political leaders. Data were analyzed using narrative analysis tools and resulted in a descriptive set of categories that characterize the leadership development experiences of the study participants. This chapter presents a summary of the study, the major conclusions derived from data analysis, a discussion of these conclusions and their relationship to current literature on Black women's leadership development. Next, is a discussion of the implications for theory, future practice and research. A chapter summary concludes this chapter.

Summary of the Study

Nine Black women who have served or currently serve in an elected position at the local, state or federal level in Georgia were purposefully selected (Patton, 2002) to participate in this study. The participants ranged in age from 50 to 80 and they were geographically diverse, representing Southeast, Southwest, Middle, and North Georgia as well as the Atlanta-metro area.

Additionally, participants were selected if they had completed at least one full term in their respective elected positions. The total years of service ranged from 5 years to 24 years. Of the nine participants, two were educators by profession, and two were nurses. The professional backgrounds of the five remaining participants include one attorney, one bank manager, one in criminal justice, and two were self-employed.

As the primary source of data, face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with seven of the nine participants. I conducted one interview via phone and one participant submitted her responses in writing via e-mail. Using a semi-structured interview format, the interviews ranged from one hour to two and a half hours in length. Two follow-up interviews were conducted, one via phone and the second face-to-face. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. A secondary and tertiary data source included the collection and analysis of documents supplied by the participants (i.e., resume, newspaper articles, bios) and documents I collected during my internet search for background information on the study participants, respectively.

Data analysis was facilitated by analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993). First, narrative stories were constructed from each interview transcript. Second, each narrative was analyzed separately by fragmenting the data (Polkinghorn, 1995). Lastly, reoccurring categories, themes, and concepts were identified across the data sets.

Analysis of the data collected from the study participants revealed six themes concerning Black women's leadership development experiences in the political arena, particularly women who have served in an elected position long term. More specifically, for research question one, three themes emerged regarding how Black women develop their political leadership skills. They are as follows: 1) Developing a Political Consciousness Bounded by Jim Crow and Civil Rights,

2) “Her” Learning Process, and 3) Shaped by Mentors and Role Models. For the second research question, two salient themes emerged regarding Black women’s paths to elective office: 1) A Non-Linear Path to Elective Office and 2) Call and Response: A Spiritual Foundation. Lastly, for research question three, the theme Negotiating Her Way through the Prism of Positionality, best characterizes the race and gender challenges the study participants faced as Black women political leaders in Georgia’s political arena.

Conclusions and Discussion

Two major conclusions were derived from the findings of this study. In this section, I will discuss the two conclusions and relate them to theoretical and practical issues in the literature. The two conclusions are as follows: First, the women’s leadership experiences were grounded in their culture as Black American women. It was through their informal learning experiences, self-determination, interactions with family and their community along with their spirituality that proved to be important dimensions of their culture that shaped their leadership. Moreover, due to their cultural experiences as Black women and their experiences with racism and sexism, common features of the leadership of the women in this study surfaced.

The second conclusion derived is the idea that Black women have a conception of politics grounded in their experiences with opposition and resistance from birth through adulthood (Giddings, 1984; Gostnell, 1997; Rogers, 1998, 2005; Delaney, 2004). As a result of these experiences, the Black women in this study developed a political consciousness that uniquely prepared them for the political life. In effect, their lived experiences of leading lives in opposition and resistance uniquely prepared them for applying a political analysis as the basis of their worldview.

Black Women's Leadership: Common Features and Cultural Legacy

The conclusion explicated in this section is from a Black feminist standpoint which purports that a unifying element of Black women's lives is that of their lived experiences which shapes both their world views (Collins, 2000) and in the context of this study, how they lead. The findings of this study revealed that Black women share common features of their leadership, features stemming from their culture which remain rooted in the leadership roles in which Black women have historically served, a legacy of leadership that is evident in contemporary society.

Common Features

Women neither are a homogeneous group in society nor are they a homogeneous group of leaders. The same should be noted of Black women as leaders. It should not be understood from this section that I am suggesting that Black women have "one style of leadership." However, the women in this study possessed the following seven common features of their leadership in which their "various styles of leadership" converge:

- Self-determination cultivated by mentors and Black female role models,
- Intrinsic motivation to serve and improve the Black community,
- Reliance on faith/spirituality in decision making,
- Strong value of learning and education,
- Informal learning as primary source for their learning and leadership development,
- Balancing role expectations associated with the circumstance of biculturality, and
- Familial and community-based support systems.

Cultural Legacy

Numerous examples exist in Black history of the leadership roles in which Black women oftentimes were placed, out of necessity, to ensure that the family and community survived.

From slavery, to emancipation, to the civil rights movement, to the present, Black women have served in numerous leadership capacities as mother, wife, grandmother, church leader, othermother, community leader and civic leader, while remaining grounded in the philosophy of uplifting the Black race. Historically, Black women have demonstrated characteristics of their leadership not consistent with the traditional leadership models, and the ways in which they learn to become leaders varies from the experiences of “the middle class White male” (Bass, 1981a, 1981b) on which leadership theory is based (Allen, 1997; DeLany, 2004; Gostnell, 1997; Hine & Thompson, 1998; Rogers, 2005). Therefore, Black women’s leadership is characterized by a cultural value of uplifting the race, communality, and collectivism shaped by their lived experiences as Black American women (Allen, 1997; Arrington, 1998; Giddings, 1984; Nasstrom, 1999).

Black women’s leadership experiences are overlooked in the literature on women and leadership along with the elements of race and culture that differentiate their leadership experiences from White men and women’s experiences. The women in this study provided illustrative examples of how race and gender affected the ways in which they learned to become leaders and operate as leaders. For example, one participant stated that a major reason for why she ran for office was to ensure that the Black community was represented among the elected leadership. Therefore, she felt that it was her responsibility to ensure that the needs of her Black constituency were addressed and not overlooked. Another participant described how she would remind herself of the legacy Black female leadership from whom she had come, women who overcame adversity against seemingly insurmountable odds. In particular, she described the leadership of Harriet Tubman and how others like her left a legacy of leadership for Black women to follow. She stated,

[Harriet Tubman] couldn't read, and write. She had a dent in her head from her slave owner beating her head. She had seizures. People thought she was crazy; she had no money. She managed to move 300 people from slavery to freedom across the country and had a bounty over her head something like 40 thousand dollars which at that time was a huge amount of money. But she was always able to figure out a way to go right under the noses of the White folks and get them to freedom. She never lost a passenger on the Underground Railroad and they couldn't stop her. They'd try one thing and she'd go another way. That is the kind of inspiration and creativity that we as Black women need to have now, to hold on to that kind of history and the legacy that was created for us.

Other examples of common features of Black women's leadership are evident in the history of the Black women who served in leadership roles in Black American history. For example, Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, a former slave, Black woman political leader, educator, and advocate for human rights declared herself "the voice of the South" accurately predicted that the 20th century would require the recognition of women's greater status in society and that women have and will continue to play a significant leadership role in guiding the country to "greater plains." More specifically, it is Black women's leadership that will be the guiding force in "lifting" the Black community out of subjugation to greater self-empowerment (Giddings, 1984; Hine & Thompson, 1998; Marble, 1990). Historically, one way of uplifting the race was through their pursuit of an education. Cooper and other Black women leaders such as Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Fannie Lou Hamer, Shirley Chisholm, represent a legacy of Black female leaders whose work was guided by a political agenda of race and gender equality. These women demonstrated a leadership style grounded in their lived experiences as Black women faced with race, gender and class oppression and resistance. As a result, they led with

compassion, community solidarity, along with the fundamental belief that education is the vehicle to freedom, to economic success, and to social and political mobility to improve their lives and the quality of life for the Black community. These women and others emerged as leaders oftentimes not at their personal choosing but as a way of individual and community survival.

Developing a Political Consciousness

The second and final conclusion derived from the findings of this study is that the identities of the study participants (i.e., Black women, came of age between late 1960s and early 1970s, born in the south, exposed to the Civil Rights Movement, and social class origins) and their experiences with race and gender opposition and resistance from birth through adulthood cultivated and sharpened their political consciousness. The women in this study and the women in Roger's (1998) study,

Learned very early in their lives how to move in and interpret the White world and their world of origin. This ability to move between environments, cultures, and systems represented a high degree of political sharpness that was instrumental in their rise to positions of political leadership. (pp. 150-151).

In other words, their lived experiences sharpened their awareness of the notion that the “personal is political” such that their experiences, feelings, and the possibilities of their personal lives were not just a matter of personal preferences and choices, but were limited, molded, and defined by the broader political and social setting. From birth to adulthood, Black women's lives are shaped by racism, sexism, and classism (Collins, 2000; Giddings, 1984; King, 1990; Marble, 1990). At young ages, Black females become aware of the marginalized status to which they are ascribed due to their race and gender. King (1990) points out, “...unlike many other ethnic groups,

women and Blacks possess ineradicable physical attributes that function systematically and clearly to define from birth the possibilities to which members of a group might aspire” (p. 79). Hence, Black females operate in a system in which they are systematically marginalized throughout their lives; it is this marginalization that manifests in the form of oppression and resistance that they then begin to understand and process their life experiences through a political lens, a lens that forms the basis of their worldview. According to Kerka (2003),

World views or ways of perceiving and being in the world are a significant distinguishing characteristic of cultural groups. Walsh et al. (2001) cite the work of Cheatham and Nobles in comparing differences between African (cooperation, communality) and European (competition, individualism) worldviews, noting how the interplay between the two may influence the career behavior of African Americans. (¶5)

The Personal is Political

The concept of the “personal is political” has implications for Black women’s place in the political arena. Scholars of Black politics typically assume that the experiences of all Black elected officials are similar and scholars of women in politics typically assume women’s experiences in politics do not differ. A major oversight resulting from these assumptions include: the identification of the impact of both gender and race in shaping the leadership experiences of Black women in politics. A few studies have conducted an analysis of the intersection of race and gender in politics (Barrett, 1995, 1997, 2001; Button & Hedge, 1996; Rogers 1998; Smooth, 2001). However, it is from Prestage’s (1977) seminal work on the 35 Black women who served in state legislatures from 1971-1973 that underscored the unifying thread of their lived experiences. These were Black women grappling with the vestiges of Jim Crow and segregation,

opposition and racism. These social challenges effectively influenced the Black women to enter the political arena, challenges in which the women in this study experienced to varying degrees.

Hence, it is important to locate my study in the socio-political context of the 1960s and 1970s when all of the participants came of age. With the exception of Emma who is 12 to 30 years older than the other participants, the women all credited either, implicitly or explicitly, the Civil Rights Movement as having major influence on them, shaping their growing sense of politics and its relationship to the interlocking system of racism, and other sources of marginalization. The findings of this study also reveal that it is through the women's lived experiences with encounters of resistance and opposition not only due to their race but also gender, which formed the basis of much of their learning about politics. Moreover, it was these very experiences in dealing with the politics of their identities in the face of racism, sexism, and oppression that exposed them to how politics operates in other contexts, namely the political arena. One participant even commented that most of what she learned about politics in college is the very same type of politics that operates in the context of electoral politics. That is, as a Black student she had to learn how to build alliances with people and find ways overcoming resistance to be successful.

Black Women's Conception of Politics

The women in this study rejected contemporary conceptions of the term politicians as those who "wheel and deal" in the words of one participant, and who are corrupt but instead embraced the term public servant, whose core conviction is that true leadership stems from serving those whom one leads rather than striving to gain power and control over them. This idea is consistent with Rogers's (2005) notion of "Afritics" derived from the researcher's 1998 ethnographic case study of 23 Chicago Black female political leaders. Based on her findings that

the women in her study learned about politics from their lived experiences as Black women, their interactions with family, church and community, Rogers (2005) theorized,

Afritics is an Africentric understanding of politics. Afritics is an African-centered perspective of politics and operates as a defining construct in which people are viewed in an existential context as being participatory, collective, subjective agents in history who have been and continue to be manipulated by the Western concepts of the political process. (p. 703)

As with the Black female Chicago political leaders in Rogers's 1998 study, the women in the present study described their learning about politics through experiences with forces of opposition and resistance around their race and gender. Likewise, McCluskey's (1994) article represents another illustration of Black female leadership and the relationship that exists between their leadership and Black women's political consciousness (Rogers, 2005). The multiple consciousness of Mary McCloud's leadership is explored in this article. Equal parts educator, politician, and social visionary, Mary McLeod Bethune was one of the most prominent Black women of the first half of the twentieth century—and one of the most powerful (Hine & Thompson, 1998). Known as the "First Lady of the Struggle," she devoted her career to improving the lives of Black Americans through education and political and economic empowerment, first through the school she founded, Bethune-Cookman College, later as president of the National Council of Negro Women, and then as a top Black administrator in the Roosevelt administration (Hine & Thompson, 1998). McCluskey described the overwhelming pull required of Bethune to fulfill multiple expectations in the workplace, family, and community. "In terms of community, Black women have a bicultural (or at times polycultural) need to fulfill expectations within the Black community and the larger society," cite King &

Ferguson (2001, p. 127). Hence, it is the multiple lenses through which Black women view the world that not only prepares them to a political life, but also influences the way they lead.

In summary, the leadership experiences of the women described in this study show that Black women share common features of their leadership. An element that is consistently identified in existing leadership studies on Black women's leadership is their sense of "connectedness" (Gostnell, 1997). According to Gostnell, "Black women's leadership [is] built upon connectedness and responsibility for others" (p. 202). Their leadership cannot be separated from the "private self [and] public/leadership self, and [their] leadership [is] embedded and interwoven in [their] daily acts of life" (Gostnell, 1997, p. 202). Finally, Black women's experiences of resistance and oppression on the basis of their race and gender from birth to adulthood indeed shapes the way they view the world around them and how they come to understand their life experiences, experiences that are systemically political.

Implications for Theory and Practice

An extensive internet search for leadership programs designed to prepare Black women for political leadership roles revealed that none exist. However, I did find leadership programs designed for Black women in the business arena and in a community/grassroots leadership context. Furthermore, as with the present study, other studies on the leadership experiences of Black women in the political arena (Baraka-Love, 1986; Gostnell, 1997; Rogers, 1998; Smooth, 2001) consistently identified the need for Black women to participate in leadership training opportunities. This study, however, departs from other studies on Black women leaders by proposing a leadership development program design that attends to the unique leadership development experiences of Black women in the political arena (see Appendix K). My

background as an adult educator who provides instruction and facilitation around the topic of adult leadership development informs the proposed leadership program outlined in Appendix K.

Because Blacks share common features of their leadership resulting from their lived experiences as Black American women and worldview (Allen 1997; DeLany, 2004; Rogers, 2005), a leadership program designed with this characteristic in mind is warranted. All nine participants unanimously recommended that a political leadership program is needed to prepare Black women with an interest in serving in elective office.

The discussion that follows highlights the problematic nature of viewing women as a monolithic group of leaders which has implications for adult educators who develop programs that provide targeted leadership training to multi-race and mixed-gender groups. Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) conducted research, which is well cited in a variety of disciplines, exploring women's leadership issues and the phenomenon of how and why men and women lead differently. However, this and other studies have failed to acknowledge the differences in leadership experiences and styles of leadership among women due to their race (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1995; Eagly, Makhijani, Klonsky, 1992). In Eagly et al.'s 1995 study of gender differences in leadership effectiveness, which builds on previous research exploring "the nature and extent of the similarities and differences between female and male leaders," these researchers found that differences indeed exist between women and men's effectiveness, which is influenced by socially constructed gender roles (p. 125). The study indicates that socially constructed gender roles mediate and drive these role differences. The researchers purport that women in general are more effective in leadership roles that are stereotypically feminine, for example, roles that are emotionally driven, and emphasize

relationship building and collaboration. Men's effectiveness in relation to stereotypically masculine roles often include roles that value aggressiveness, are power driven and task oriented.

Eagly et al. (1995) state that it would be irresponsible to attempt to generalize the study findings given the lack of consensus around leadership effectiveness. This is at least one indication of their possible awareness of racial differences in women's leadership. They explain that, at best, the only conclusion one can draw from their findings is that "female and male leaders are differentially effective in many settings." According to the researchers, their study "suggests that gender role expectations spill over onto leadership roles within organizations and groups and produce important consequences for the effectiveness of leaders" (Eagly et al., 1995, p. 140). I concur with the researchers in that paying closer attention to the mechanisms that produce those consequences can be used to help make the barriers to effectiveness less impenetrable for men who lead in feminine defined settings and women, women of color in particular, who lead in masculine defined settings such as the political arena.

The existing leadership paradigm remains structured around the "White male experience" and as a result does not reflect Black women's ways of leading as legitimate perspective. As Allen (1997) states,

Contemporary leadership models are based on traditional assumptions that ignore the processes that give meaning to the concept itself. In essence, the *ways of knowing* have been restricted to *a priori* assumptions....What is missing from traditional models of leadership is the understanding of the processes prior to "the doing" of leadership or "the outcomes" of leadership. By focusing on the historical and cultural aspects, we can better understand the social and political realities of everyday life. (p. 3)

Since the publication of Eagly and Johnson's 1995 study, more research studies have focused on understanding not only the impact of gender but also race in a variety of contexts in which leadership development occurs, thus broadening the knowledge base around leadership studies (Colman, 1998; DeLany, 2004; McKenzie, 1996; Reid-Merritt, 1996). However, more work remains. As our society becomes more ethnically diverse and as more women of color move into leadership positions traditionally held by men, a significant implication exists in the area of adult leadership training. This study and other related research can assist educators of adult leadership development to not only understand, but also incorporate learning activities that attend to the different learning needs of marginalized groups (Baumgartner & Merriam, 2000; Colin & Guy, 1998; Guy, 1999).

Implications for Future Research

This dissertation moves toward developing a better understanding of Black women's leadership development experiences in the political arena which is an underdeveloped sphere in career development, leadership, and political science literature base. As more Black women assume elected political leadership positions with the expectation of remaining there long term, it is important for educators and trainers in the area of adult leadership development to attend to the ways in which culture affects learning (Guy, 1999). We also have the responsibility to understand the ways in which the intersections of race, gender and other differences impact learning that occurs among marginalized groups. As such, the following recommendations for future research are:

1. To conduct a cross-study analysis of the existing studies on Black women's leadership development experiences in a variety of contexts to identify differences, similarities, or unique characteristics that emerge concerning Black women's leadership style and

leadership development experiences. This information would help inform the research and practice around Black women's leadership.

2. To explore how generational differences among Black women might affect their leadership development experiences. This has implications for how adult educators approach teaching environments that comprise younger adult students and older adult students, that is, those born before and after the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts.
3. To explore the implications of how the traditional "male leadership model" has been one in which Black women have been forced to ascribe, therefore, shaping their conception of their role as leaders in the political arena and other professional contexts. Further examination of the development of a model for Black female leadership would contribute to the small but growing literature base on Black women's leadership development and would be instructive for educators and trainers who develop leadership programs designed for diverse groups.

Summary

Indeed, research indicates that Black women nationwide and in Georgia have made significant advances in their representation in political leadership roles. Despite these advances, this population remains one of the largest groups in society whose talents and skills remain largely understudied relative to their leadership development experiences. Because of this lack of attention, Black women continue to be subjected to numerous social and attitudinal barriers that prevent them from seeking and succeeding in leadership contexts traditionally controlled by males, such as the political arena. This study concludes that Black women have common features of their leadership situated in their culture and lived experiences as Black women. Therefore, it is

imperative that adult educators and trainers of leadership of mixed-race and mixed-gender groups to understand and employ culturally relevant activities in their programs to attend to the learning needs of these groups.

This study also concludes that Black women learn about politics through their lived experiences with systems of oppression, in their everyday experiences in identifying ways of surviving and overcoming barriers based on their race and gender combined. These experiences uniquely cultivate and shape their political consciousness from birth through adulthood, preparing them for a political life. This study therefore fills the gap in the literature on Black women's leadership development experiences in their pursuit of a career in elective office as an effort to help break this cycle of subjugation. The findings of this study will assist scholars and adult educators who provide leadership training and facilitation in their efforts to conduct research on and to develop leadership programs that better prepare women of color for leadership roles not only in elective politics, but also in other leadership contexts in which they have been underrepresented.

Concluding Thoughts

Completing this dissertation has been a rewarding experience in many ways. Not only have I learned from and been inspired by the women in my study, I have also learned more about myself as a leader and adult educator. This process caused me to reflect on my practice as an educator of adult leadership. I have come to recognize that I must do more to ensure that what I espouse in my research is reflected in my practice.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without the nine women whose words of wisdom conclude the final pages of this dissertation. I chose to do this for two reasons. One reason is to appeal to not only Black women, but all women of color to serve in elective office. Their representation will ensure that efforts remain in place to circumvent the interlocking system of racism, sexism, and the other “isms” which surface in multiple disguises as each year, decade, and millennium passes. Second, as a symbolic gesture, the listing of the women’s words is an effort to emphasize the need for a leadership program for emerging Black female political leaders. To this end, the women in this study shared the following advice:

Jackie Barrett

Former Fulton Co. Sheriff, Fulton Co., Georgia (1992-2004)

I think if it’s political leadership or just general leadership that again we have an obligation to be very clear about what we are leading, who we are leading, and why. If you are going to be a leader you’ve got to be able to speak truth to power. A leader to me is not somebody who simply goes with the status quo. That’s not a leader. A leader is that person who breaks through and sets new paradigms, and takes the community with her. Overcoming the fear of stepping out into those new paradigms only comes from an inner strength, and *that* only comes from an outer source. So I say stay connected to that source.

Sonja Mallory

Mayor, City of Jeffersonville, Georgia (2001 - present)

The bottom line is that it is about you...what you can handle; it has nothing else to do with anybody else. People can do a thousand and five hundred things against you; however, as long as you stay focused and you have a strong self-esteem, there is nothing they can do really to you.

Myrtle Figueras

City Council Member, City of Gainesville, Georgia (1996 - present)

Being true to oneself. Not backing down, if you know you're right. Making sure Black issues are brought to the forefront. Allowing self-assessment of other races. Allowing them to know where you're coming from.

Evelyn Turner Pugh

City Council Member, City of Columbus, Georgia (1989 - present)

If they are running for a district or if they are running city-wide, it is important to understand there is a difference between the two. They have to be able to listen to the people who live in the district if they are a district elected official, to see what their needs and wants are and to be able to discuss those with them, and see how they fit into the overall vision for the community.

Emma Gresham

Mayor, City of Keysville, Georgia (1998 - 2005)

Take advantage of all of the trainings that you can get. If you don't have the money, write for a scholarship because a lot of groups are willing to sponsor individuals from rural areas...I've gone on many scholarships and attended different things. Also, it doesn't hurt to send a little note of thank you whenever somebody does something for you.

Glenda Battle

Commissioner, Decatur County, Georgia (1985 - present)

Don't be afraid to take the chance. You don't lose anything if you never try. It is hard work and if you are tender skinned, then you need to get out of it. Don't be afraid.

Georganna Sinkfield

State Representative, Georgia State Legislature (1984 - present)

I think the key thing is that you want to do it and that you come here with something in your gut. Because if you don't come with something, I just don't know that you could focus because there is so much to distract you....[Also,] I think if you really want to be in politics and you really want to represent people, you will be doing something in your community...[For example], when I got involved in the PTA, I got involved for my children and in doing so I helped my community....When you look at [my service] over the years I was also president of the Atlanta bar for spouses with attorneys...I also worked in my church. So I'm just saying your life will be reflective of your interests.

Nadine Thomas

Former State Representative (1992 - 1996)

Former State Senator, Georgia State Legislature (1996 - 2005)

Always, always know who you are. Never let the perception be out there that you are somebody's puppet. Stand up for what you believe in, let people know what you want and never forget, never lose sight of your principles, your integrity. Always be a lady, but be firm, be tough and don't let anyone run over you, demand respect.

Denise Majette

Fulton County Judge (1994-2002)

Former U.S. Congresswomen (2002-2004)

To have the confidence, have the understanding of our history and the confidence to go out and do whatever it is that you think you are being led to do. And you can prepare yourself to do it in a way that you run the race and maybe win...but you could certainly run the race in such a way that you can convince enough people that she could win and you know and she's running it like she intends to win. And not to be dissuaded just because you got a no or two or three no's. If you know that this is something that needs to be done, believe that that you are the one that can do it and projecting that kind of strength of leadership is going to draw the resources to you that you need.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Black Female Members by Congressional Term, 1969-2005

Table A1

Black Female Members by Congressional Term, 1969-2005

108th Congress (2003-2005)				
No./Total^a	Chamber	Name	State	Party
13/38	House:	Corrine Brown	FL	Democrat
		Julia M. Carson	IN	Democrat
		Donna Christian-Christiensen	VI	Democrat
		Eddie Bernice Johnson	TX	Democrat
		Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick	MI	Democrat
		Barbara Lee	CZ	Democrat
		Shelia Jackson Lee	TX	Democrat
		Denise Majette	GA	Democrat
		Juanita Millender-McDonald	CA	Democrat
		Eleanor Holmes Norton	DC	Democrat
		Stephanie Tubbs-Jones	OH	Democrat
		Maxine Waters	CA	Democrat
		Diane E. Watson	CA	Democrat
			Senate:	None
107th Congress (2001-2003)				
15/39	House:	Corrine Brown	FL	Democrat
		Julia M. Carson	IN	Democrat
		Eva Clayton	NC	Democrat
		Donna Christian-Christiensen	VI	Democrat
		Eddie Bernice Johnson	TX	Democrat
		Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick	MI	Democrat
		Barbara Lee	CA	Democrat
		Sheila Jackson Lee	TX	Democrat
		Cynthia McKinney	GA	Democrat
		Carrie Meek	FL	Democrat
		Juanita Millender-McDonald	CA	Democrat
		Eleanor Holmes Norton	DC	Democrat
		Stephanie Tubbs-Jones	OH	Democrat
		Maxine Waters	CA	Democrat
Diane E. Watson	CA	Democrat		
	Senate:	None		
106th Congress (1999-2001)				
14/39	House:	Corrine Brown	FL	Democrat
		Julia M. Carson	IN	Democrat
		Donna Christian-Christiensen	VI	Democrat
		Eva Clayton	NC	Democrat
		Eddie Bernice Johnson	TX	Democrat
		Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick	MI	Democrat
		Barbara Lee	CA	Democrat
		Sheila Jackson Lee	TX	Democrat
		Cynthia McKinney	GA	Democrat
		Carrie Meek	FL	Democrat
		Juanita Millender-McDonald	CA	Democrat
		Eleanor Holmes Norton	DC	Democrat
		Stephanie Tubbs-Jones	OH	Democrat
		Maxine Waters	CA	Democrat
	Senate:	None		

(table continues)

105th Congress (1997-1999)					
No./Total	Chamber	Name	State	Party	
14/40	House:	Corrine Brown	FL	Democrat	
		Julia M. Carson	IN	Democrat	
		Donna Christian-Christensen	VI	Democrat	
		Eva Clayton	NC	Democrat	
		Eddie Bernice Johnson	TX	Democrat	
		Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick	MI	Democrat	
		Barbara Lee	CA	Democrat	
		Sheila Jackson Lee	TX	Democrat	
		Cynthia McKinney	GA	Democrat	
		Carrie Meek	FL	Democrat	
		Juanita Millender-McDonald	CA	Democrat	
		Eleanor Holmes Norton	DC	Democrat	
		Maxine Waters	CA	Democrat	
	Senate:	Carol Moseley-Braun	IL	Democrat	
104th Congress (1995-1997)					
12/41	House:	Cardiss Collins	IL	Democrat	
		Corrine Brown	FL	Democrat	
		Eva Clayton	NC	Democrat	
		Barbara-Rose Collins	MI	Democrat	
		Eddie Bernice Johnson	TX	Democrat	
		Sheila Jackson Lee	TX	Democrat	
		Cynthia McKinney	GA	Democrat	
		Carrie Meek	FL	Democrat	
		Juanita Millender-McDonald	CA	Democrat	
		Eleanor Holmes Norton	DC	Democrat	
		Maxine Waters	CA	Democrat	
		Senate:	Carol Moseley-Braun	IL	Democrat
		103th Congress (1993-1995)			
	10/40	House:	Cardiss Collins	IL	Democrat
Corrine Brown			FL	Democrat	
Eva Clayton			NC	Democrat	
Barbara-Rose Collins			MI	Democrat	
Eddie Bernice Johnson			TX	Democrat	
Cynthia McKinney			GA	Democrat	
Carrie Meek			FL	Democrat	
Eleanor Holmes Norton			DC	Democrat	
Maxine Waters			CA	Democrat	
Senate:			Carol Moseley-Braun	IL	Democrat
102nd Congress (1991-1993)					
5/27	House:	Cardiss Collins	IL	Democrat	
		Eva Clayton	NC	Democrat	
		Barbara-Rose Collins	MI	Democrat	
		Eleanor Norton	DC	Democrat	
		Maxine Waters	CA	Democrat	
	Senate:	None			

(table continues)

101st – 99th Congress (1985-1991)^b				
No./Total	Chamber	Name	State	Party
*	House:	Cardiss Collins	IL	Democrat
	Senate:	None		
98th Congress (1983-1985)				
2/21	House:	Cardiss Collins Katie Hall	IL IN	Democrat Democrat
	Senate:	None		
97th Congress (1981-1983)				
3/19	House:	Shirley Chisholm Cardiss Collins Katie Hall	NY IL NC	Democrat Democrat Democrat
	Senate:	None		
96th Congress (1979-1981)				
2/17	House:	Shirley Chisholm Cardiss Collins	NY IL	Democrat Democrat
	Senate:	None		
95th – 93rd Congress (1973-1979)^c				
** ***0/1	House:	Yvonne Burke Shirley Chisholm Cardiss Collins Barbara Jordan	CA NY IL TX	Democrat Democrat Democrat Democrat
	Senate:	None		
92nd – 91st Congress (1969-1973)^d				
** ***0/1	House:	Shirley Chisholm	NY	Democrat
	Senate:	None		

Note. Information obtained from the Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Black Members of the United States Congress: 1789-2001. Updated July 12, 2001. Adapted with permission.

^aTotal number of Black female members by total number of Black members of Congress.

^bCardiss Collins was the only Black woman elected to the 99th, 100th, 101st terms. *Total number of Black males during the 99th, 100th, and 101st Congresses were 20, 22, and 23, respectively. ^cBurke, Chisholm, and Jordan were the only Black women to serve during those years. **Total number of Black males during the 93rd, 94th, and 95th Congresses were 13, 14, and 14, respectively. ^dShirley Chisholm was the only Black woman to serve during these years. **The total number of Black males during the 91st and 92nd Congresses was 10 and 13, respectively. ***One Black male served in the Senate during the 91st-95th and Congresses.

APPENDIX B

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Table B1

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1891	Minnie M. Geddings Cox	Federal Appointment —Cox was the first Black postmistress in the United States. Cox was appointed to serve in the town of Indianola, Mississippi. President Benjamin Harrison appointed her to the post. President William McKinley reappointed her in 1897 which drew controversy from Whites who wanted Blacks removed from leadership positions. In 1902 she offered to resign but President Theodore Roosevelt refused her resignation.
1929	Minnie Buckingham Harper	State Legislatures —Harper (R-WV House) was the first Black female Republican to serve in a state legislature.
1936	Mary McLeod Bethune	Federal Appointment —In 1936 President Theodore Roosevelt named Bethune director of the Negro Division of the National Youth Administration. She became the first Black woman to receive a major federal appointment and to head a federal office.
1938	Crystal Dreda Bird Fauset	State Legislature —Fauset was the first Black female Democrat to serve in a state legislature.
1950	Edith S. Sampson	Federal Appointment —Sampson was named delegate to the United Nations and became first Black woman to hold the designation. President Harry S. Truman appointed her to the post.
1952	Charlotta A. Spears Bass	Candidate for U.S. Vice President* —Bass was the first Black woman to run or vice-president. She was the nominee for the Progressive Party.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1955	Jewel Stradford Lafontant	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Lafontant was the first Black woman named assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern Illinois district. President Dwight Eisenhower appointed her to the post.
1964	Charlotte Moton Hubbard	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Hubbard was the first Black woman deputy assistant secretary of state for public affairs. President Lyndon Johnson named her to the post—the highest permanent position held by a woman at that time.
1965	Patricia Roberts Harris	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Harris was the first Black woman ambassador appointed to an overseas post and the first Black woman to hold diplomatic rank.
1965	Aileen Clarke Hernandez	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Hernandez was appointed to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission by President Johnson, making her the first woman commissioner and one of the five minorities on the board.
1968	Barbara M. Watson	<i>Statewide Elective Official</i> —Watson was the first Black and the first woman to serve as an assistant secretary of state.
1968	Shirley Chisholm	<i>U.S. House of Representatives</i> —Chisholm was the first Black woman elected to Congress. She served from 1968-1983.
1970	Gloria Gaston	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Gaston, human resources development officer for the Bureau of Latin America, was the first Black to hold a major post in the Agency for International Development.
1972	Ellen Walker Craig-Jones	<i>Mayor</i> — Craig-Jones, mayor of Urbancrest, Ohio was the first Black woman elected mayor of a U.S. municipality.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1972	Shirley Chisholm	Candidate for U.S. President and Vice President —Congresswoman Chisholm was the first Black woman to make serious bid for the U.S. presidency. She ran for the president in the Democratic primaries. At the party’s national convention, she garnered 151.25 delegate votes before Senator George McGovern clinched the nomination.
1975	Julia P. Cooper	Federal Judiciary —Cooper was the first Black woman appointed judge of the District of Columbia Appellate Court. She was the highest-ranking woman in the federal courts.
1977	Emma Daniels McFarlin	Federal Appointment —McFarlin was the first Black woman to head the western region of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
1977	Joan Scott Wallace	Federal Appointment —Wallace was the first Black and the third woman to serve as assistant secretary for administration in the Department of Agriculture.
1977	Patricia Roberts Harris	Presidential Cabinets —Harris was the first Black woman to serve in a presidential cabinet and the first woman to hold two different cabinet positions. President Jimmy Carter appointed her to serve as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development during 1977-1979. From 1979-1981, she served as Secretary of health and Human Services.
1978	Carolyn Robertson Payton	Federal Appointment —Payton was the first woman and Black to head the Peace Corps. She held the post from September 1977 to November 1978.
1979	Joyce London Alexander	Federal Judiciary —Alexander was the first Black American federal judge in the District of Massachusetts.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1979	Amalya Lyle Kearse	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Kearse became the first woman justice in the Second Circuit Court. President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the Court of Appeals for New York City on June 21 this year.
1979	Anna Diggs-Taylor	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Diggs-Taylor President Jimmy Carter appointed Diggs-Taylor to the federal court for Eastern District of Michigan (based in Detroit). She became the first Black woman in the sate to receive such a post.
1980	Norma Holloway Johnson	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Johnson was named chief federal judge for the District of Columbia, becoming the first Black woman to lead the federal court in the nation’s capital.
1981	Gloria E. A. Toote	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Toote was the first Black chair of the Merit System Protection Board (formerly the Civil Service Commission).
1983	Barbara J. Mahone	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Mahone was the first Black woman to chair the United States Federal Labor Relations Authority.
1984	Aulana Louise Peters	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Peters was the first Black woman appointed to the Securities and Exchange Commission.
1984	Ann Claire Williams	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Williams was the first Black woman nominated to the federal bench in Chicago—an appointment to the U.S. District Court.
1985	Sharon Pratt Dixon	<i>Political Civic Leader</i> —Dixon was the first Black and woman treasurer of the Democratic National Committee.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1988	Lenora Fulani	<i>Presidential Cabinet</i> —Fulani was the first Black woman to qualify for federal matching funds in a presidential election—and the first Black and woman to appear on the presidential ballot in all fifty states. She was also the only Black woman Marxist psychologist to run for president.
1989	Gwendolyn Steward King	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —King was the first Black woman to serve as commissioner of social security. She held that post until 1992.
1989	Audrey Forbes Manley	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Manley was the first Black female assistant secretary in the U.S. Health and Human Services Department.
1989	Constance Berry Newman	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Newman, a government official, was the first Black administrator of the Office of Personnel Management.
1989	Condoleezza Rice	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Rice was appointed by President George Bush as director of Soviet and East European Affairs on the National Security Council, making her the first Black woman to hold that post.
1993	Dr. M. Joycelyn Elders	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Elders became the first Black and the second woman named United States Surgeon General. Appointed by President Bill Clinton
1993	Carol Moseley-Braun	<i>U.S. Senate</i> —Moseley-Braun(D-IL) became the first Black women and first woman of color elected to the U.S. Senate. She had also been the first Black Democrat elected to the Senate.
1993	Pamela Carter	<i>Statewide Elective Official</i> —Carter (D-IN) was the first Black woman elected statewide official to serve as Attorney General.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1993	Jeanette L. Brown	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Brown became first Black woman to hold the position of director of the Office of Acquisition Management, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
1993	Alexis M. Herman	<i>Political Civic Leader</i> —Herman became the first Black woman to direct a White House liaison program From 1993 to 1997. Herman was director of the White House Office of Public Liaison as well as assistant to President Bill Clinton.
1993	Hezel Rollings O’Leary	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —O’Leary was the first Black and the first woman secretary of energy.
1994	Evelyn M. White	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —White was named director of personnel for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the first Black woman to hold this post.
1994	Rhea L. Graham	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Rhea L. Graham, the first Black person nominated as director of the U.S. Bureau of Mines in its eighty-four-year history. Action on her nomination was blocked in the closing hours of the Senate.
1994	Lorretta Collins Argrett	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Argrett became the first Black woman in the history o the Justice Department to hold a position that required Senate confirmation. She was the first Black member of the Joint Committee on Taxation of the U.S. Congress.
1994	Marian C. Bennett	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Bennett was the first Black to become inspector general for the United States Information Agency.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1994	Laura Fitz Pelgado	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Pelgado was approved as assistant secretary of Commerce and director general of the Foreign Commercial Service. She is the first Black to hold the post.
1994	Vanessa D. Gilmore	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Gilmore was sworn in as a federal district judge in Texas, becoming the only Black and the youngest sitting judge in that post in the state.
1995	Vikki Buckley	<i>Statewide Elective Official</i> —Buckley (R-CO) was the first Black woman elected statewide official to serve as Secretary of State.
1995	Covette Rooney	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Rooney was the first woman and the first Black federal administrative law judge in Mississippi.
1995	Renetta Smith	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Smith became the first Black and the only woman judge for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Agency in the city of Chicago.
1995	Minyon Moore	<i>Political Civic Leader</i> —Moore became the first Black woman to serve as political director for the national Democratic Committee. In 1997 she became the first Black deputy political director in the White house.
1995	Jacquelyn L. Williams-Bridgers	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Williams-Bridgers became the first Black and the first woman inspector general of the State Department.
1995	Joan Parrott-Fonesca	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Parrott-Fonesca became the first woman director of the Minority Business Development Agency at the Department of Commerce.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1995	Shirley Ann Jackson	Federal Appointment —Jackson became the first Black woman to chair the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
1995	Carolyn G. Morris	Federal Appointment —Morris was promoted to assistant director of information resources for the FBI, becoming the highest-ranking Black woman in the bureau's history.
1996	Delmarie Cobb	Political Civic Leader —Cobb was hired as the press secretary for the Democratic National Committee making her the first Black woman in that post.
1996	Carol Jenifer	Federal Appointment —Jenifer was the first Black woman to direct operations of an Immigration and Naturalization Service Office.
1996	Darlene Grant	Federal Judiciary —Grant was the first Black woman to become special master for the District Court in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
1996	Joyce London Alexander	Federal Judiciary —Alexander became the first Black woman chief judge in Massachusetts and first Black chief federal magistrate the nation.
1997	Harriet Elam	Federal Appointment —Elam became the first Black agency counselor of the U.S. Information Agency, and the highest-ranking American woman in all three of the U.S. diplomatic missions in Belgium.
1997	Norma Holloway Johnson	Federal Judiciary —Johnson became the first Black woman chief federal district judge for the District of Columbia.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1997	Shirley Robinson Watkins	Federal Appointment —Watkins was the first Black food-stamp chief named undersecretary for Agriculture’s Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services agency.
1997	Ruth A. Davis	Federal Appointment —Davis became the first director of the Foreign Service Institute, the top training facility for U.S. diplomats. Later this year she was promoted minister, becoming the first Black woman to hold the top rank.
1997	Patricia C. Smith	Federal Appointment —Smith was named head of the Commercial Space Transportation section of the Federal Aviation Administration, becoming the first Black woman to lead a line of business in FAA history.
1998	Susan D. Davis	Federal Judiciary —Davis became the first Black federal magistrate for New Jersey as well as the state’s youngest judge on the federal bench. She was the second woman to become U.S. magistrate and one of 11 magistrates in the district.
1998	Tomasina Rogers	Federal Appointment —Rogers became the first Black commission for the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.
1998	Carolyn D. Jorday	Federal Executive Position —Jorday became the first Black executive director of the National Credit Union Administration, an independent federal agency that supervise insures 97 percent of the 12,000 federally insured credit unions.
1999	Evelyn Juanita Fields	Federal Executive Position —Evelyn Juanita Fields became the first woman and person of color to direct of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), located in Washington, D.C.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
1999	Donna L. Brazil	Political Civic Leader —Brazil became the first Black woman to manage a major presidential candidate. She was placed in charge of the day-to-day operations for presidential candidate Al Gore. She has managed four presidential campaigns working for Jesse Jackson in 1984, Richard Gephardt, and Michael Dukakis.
1999	Broadine M. Brown	Federal Executive Position —Brown was named management chief at the U.S. Marshal Service in Arlington, Virginia, becoming the first Black to reach the executive level.
1999	Sylvia Stanfield	Federal Appointment —Stanfield became the first Black woman ambassador to Brunei. She also became one of the highest-ranking Blacks in the diplomatic service.
2000	Ezola Foster	Candidate for U.S. Vice President —Foster was selected as Patrick J. Buchanan’s vice running mate representing the Reform Party in the U.S. presidential elections. She became the first Black candidate to seek the vice presidency for that party.
2001	Dr. Condoleezza Rice	Presidential Cabinets —Rice, appointed by President George W. Bush, became the first woman to hold the post of National Security Advisory (formally known as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs).
2000	Petrese B. Tucker	Federal Judiciary —Tucker, confirmed by the senate, was the first Black woman federal judge in Philadelphia.

(table continues)

Firsts for Black Women in U.S. Politics Nationwide, 1891-2004

Year	Name	Position
2000	Johnnie Rawlinson	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Rawlinson the first Black woman judge for the Court of Appeals, ninth circuit, was confirmed, making her the first Black woman ever to serve on the court.
2001	Ruth A. Davis	<i>Federal Appointment</i> —Davis was sworn in as director of general of the United States Foreign Services and director of human services for the U.S. Department of the State. She became the first Black woman to reach that high level in the Department of State.
2004	Jennett Bradley	<i>Statewide Elective Official</i> —Bradley (R-OH) was the first Black women elected statewide official to serve as Lieutenant Governor**.
2004	Denise Nappier	<i>Statewide Elective Official</i> —Nappier (D-CT) was the first Black woman elected statewide official to serve as State Treasurer.
2004	Leah Ward Sears	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Sears elected in 2004 and sworn in 2005, became the first Black woman ever to head the highest appeals court in any of the 50 states—chief justice of Georgia’s Supreme Court.

Note. Information obtained from the Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University and Smith, J. C. (2003). *Black firsts: 4000 ground-breaking and pioneering historical events* (2nd edition). Detroit: Visible Ink.

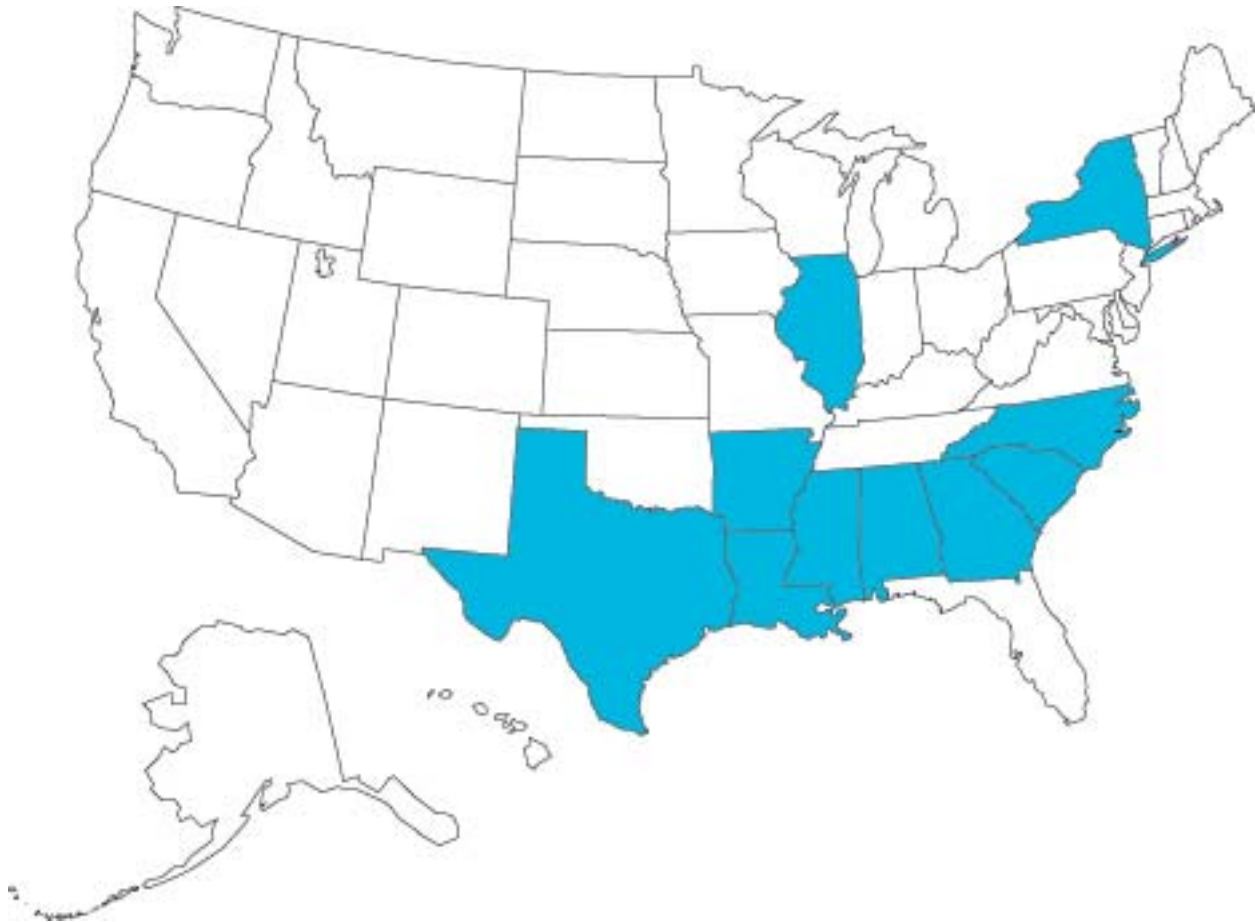
*To date, no Black American or female has served as U.S. President and Vice President.

** To date, no Black woman has served as a state governor.

APPENDIX C

Ten States That Experienced the Most Growth in Black Elected Officials, 1970-2000

Ten States That Experienced the Most Growth in Black Elected Officials, 1970-2000³



<u>State</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Total</u>
Mississippi	816	Ohio	502
Alabama	645	Arkansas	447
Louisiana	637	Texas	446
Illinois	547	North Carolina	436
Georgia	542	New York	246

³ From the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Reprinted with permission. *BEO's include the following positions: federal, state, county, municipal, judicial and law enforcement and education governing bodies.

APPENDIX D

Black Women in the Georgia House of Representatives, 1966-2005

Table D1

Black Women in the Georgia House of Representatives, 1966-2005

Name	Years Served
Roberta Abdule-Salaam	2005-present
Alberta Anderson	1997-present
Alveda King Beal	1979-1982
Sharon Beasley-Teague	1993-1998, 2001-present
Henrietta Mathis Canty	1975-1976 (Special election); 1977-98
Betty J. Clark	1973-1990
Grace W. Davis	1987-1998
Mildred Glover	1975-1982
Grace Towns Hamilton	1966-1984
Bettianne Childers Hart	1993-1996
Teresa Greene-Johnson	2003-2004
Carolyn Fleming Hugley	1993-present
Sheila Jones	2005-present
Diane Harvey Johnson	1983-1994
Jo Ann McClinton	1993-present
Cynthia McKinney	1989-1992
Barbara J. Mobley	1993-2004
Alisha Thomas Morgan	2003-present
Dorothy B. Pelote	1991-2002
Nikki Randall	1999- present
Mamie Randolph	1995-1996
Valencia Seay	2001-2002
Freddie Powell Sims	2005-present
Georganna T. Sinkfield	1983-present

(table continues)

Black Women in the Georgia House of Representatives, 1966-2005

Name	Years Served
Pamela Stanley	2001-2002
LaNett L. Stanley-Turner	1987-present
Pam Stephenson	2003-present
Maretta Mitchell Taylor	1991-2002
Mable "Able" Thomas	1985-1992, 2002-present
Nadine Thomas	1991-1992
Regina Thomas	1995-1998
Henrietta E. Turnquest	1991-2002
Lottie Heywood Watkins	1977-1978 (Special election); 1979-80
Juanita Terry Williams	1985-1992
Mary Young-Cummings	1983-1992

Note. Information obtained from the Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Black Members of the United States Congress: 1789-2001. Updated July 12, 2001. Adapted with permission.

APPENDIX E

Black Women in the Georgia State Senate, 1993-2005

Table E1.

Black Women in the Georgia State Senate, 1993-2005

Name	Years Served
Gloria S. Butler	1999-present
Donzella J. James	1995-2002
Diane Harvey Johnson	1995-2000 (Resigned in Jan. 2000)
Steen Miles	2005-present
Valencia Seay	2003- present
Connie Stokes	1995-2004
Nadine Thomas	1993-2004
Horacena Tate	1999-present
Regina Thomas	2000-present

Note. Information obtained from the Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Black Members of the United States Congress: 1789-2001. Updated July 12, 2001. Adapted with permission.

APPENDIX F

Black Women Firsts in Georgia Politics, 1966-2001

Table F1.

Black Women Firsts in Georgia Politics, 1966-2001

Year	Name	Position
1966	Grace Towns Hamilton	<i>State Legislator</i> —Hamilton was the first Black woman elected to the Georgia House of Representatives. She was known as “Lady of Fulton County.”
1969	Edith Jacqueline Ingram-Grant	<i>Judiciary</i> —Ingram-Grant was first Black woman judge in the state when she became a judge of the Hancock County Court of Ordinary.
1990	Glenda Hatchett	<i>Judiciary</i> —Hatchett was appointed judge of Fulton County Juvenile Court, becoming Georgia’s first Black chief presiding over judge of a state court.
1985	Gloria Butler	<i>Statewide Elective Executive Official</i> ^a —Butler was the elected first Black and first woman to chair the state campaign and financial disclosure commission.
1992	Leah Ward Sears	<i>Judiciary</i> —Justice Sears the first woman and second Black to serve on the Georgia Supreme Court was Leah J. Sears-Collins. She was first appointed to the seat, but in the same year she won a permanent seat in the statewide election. 1992, she became the first woman and the youngest person to ever serve on the state's Supreme Court.
1992	M. Yvette Miller	<i>Judiciary</i> —Miller became the first woman director and judge of the appellate division of the State Board of Worker’s Compensation.
1992	Jackie H. Barrett	<i>Local Government Official</i> —Barrett was the first Black woman to be elected sheriff in the United States, winning the Fulton County post.

(table continues)

Black Women Firsts in Georgia Politics, 1966-2001

Year	Name	Position
1993	Cynthia McKinney	<i>Congressional Representative</i> —McKinney was the first woman elected a U.S. congressional representative from Georgia.
1993	Nadine Thomas (D)	<i>State Legislator</i> —Thomas is the first Black woman elected to the Georgia state Senate.
1994	Beverly J. B. Harvard	<i>Local Government Official</i> —Harvard became the first Black woman to lead the police force in a major metropolitan city in the United States
1999	Penny Brown	<i>Executive Appointment</i> —Reynolds was named chief executive counsel in the office of Georgia Governor Roy Barnes. She was the first Black to hold the position.
1999	M. Yvette Miller	<i>Executive Appointment</i> —Miller, appointed by Governor Roy Barnes, is the first Black woman to serve on the state's Court of Appeals.
2001	Shirley Franklin	<i>Local Government Official</i> —Franklin is the first Black woman elected mayor of Atlanta and the only Black woman then leading a major southern city.
2001	Glenda Battle	<i>Local Government Official</i> —President of the Assoc. of County Commissioners (ACCG) ^b
2004	Leah Ward Sears	<i>Federal Judiciary</i> —Sears elected in 2004 and sworn in 2005, became the first Black woman ever to head the highest appeals court in any of the 50 states—chief justice of Georgia's Supreme Court.

Note. ^aStatewide elective executive offices (Executive, Constitutional, and Judicial) include: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, State Auditor, State Comptroller/Controller, Chief Agriculture Official, Chief State education Officer, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Labor, Corporation Commissioner, Public Service Commissioner. Thurbert Baker, Attorney General, is first the Black to hold this position and the first to hold a statewide elective position. Michael Thurmond is the first Black to serve as Commissioner of Labor. ^bACCG serves as the consensus-building, training, and legislative organization for all 159 county governments in the state.

APPENDIX G

Cover Letter



The University of Georgia

Cover Letter

November 8, 2004

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia's Department of Adult Education. At the suggestion of _____ who believes as I do that you are an excellent example of a Black woman political leader for the state of Georgia, I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in my doctoral research entitled, **An Exploration of Black Women's Political Leadership Development**. The purpose of this study is for me to learn directly from experienced Black women political leaders who are willing to share and reflect on the processes by which they developed and acquired the leadership skills and knowledge needed to run for public office and remain in the political arena. It is my hope that this study will shed more light on an understudied area, Black women's leadership development. Additionally, it is my hope that this study will demonstrate the importance of and the need for more Black women to run for public office at all levels of government in the state of Georgia.

As a participant of this study, you will be interviewed for no longer than 1 ½ hours in which I will audio-record your responses to the interview questions enclosed. Also enclosed is an interview consent form, which explains your rights as a participant of this study. I will send you a copy of your interview transcript and the themes that I think emerged from your interview to verify that I did not misrepresent what you stated. In the event that I need to clarify any statements made during your interview, one 30-minute audio-recorded follow-up conversation may be required. This follow-up conversation can take place via phone or in person at your choosing.

Thank you for your interest in this very important study. Please complete the following documents enclosed: 1) participant agreement form and 2) participant demographic information survey. Return both items via mail (see below) or via fax 706-542-7007 (Note: If you choose not to participate please only return the participant agreement form). If you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at 706-542-7039 or my advisor, Dr. Johnson-Bailey, at 706-542-6600.

Respectfully,

Dionne Rosser-Mims, Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia
Enclosures (3)

APPENDIX H

Interview Consent Form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled “AN EXPLORATION OF BLACK WOMEN’S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT” conducted by Dionne Rosser-Mims from the Department of Adult Education at the University of Georgia (706/542-7039) under the direction of Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia (706/542-6600). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

I understand that the purpose of this study is for the researcher, Dionne Rosser-Mims, to examine Black women’s leadership and career development experiences in their paths to elective office.

If I volunteer to take part in this study I understand that

- I will participate in a 1 ½ -hour long interview session.
- The researcher will ask me open-ended questions about my experiences in getting to political office.
- The researcher will audio record my responses.
- I may be asked to participate in a 30-minute long follow-up session via phone or in person.

I understand that the contents of my interview will be not be held confidential and that pseudonyms will not be used. I understand that my audio-recorded interview will be destroyed by August 1, 2005.

I understand that there are no foreseeable risks associated with my participation in this study. I also understand that I will not directly benefit from this study, but my participation may lead to information that will improve understanding of Black women’s political leadership experiences.

I understand that Dionne Rosser-Mims will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. The researcher can be reached by phone (706/542-7039) or by email (drosser@fanning.uga.edu).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Dionne Rosser-Mims
Telephone: (706)542-7039
Email: drosser@fanning.uga.edu

Signature of Researcher

Date

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX I

Participant Demographic Survey

Participant Demographic Survey

1. What year were you born? _____
2. Where were you born? _____
3. How many siblings do you have? _____
4. What is your religious affiliation? _____
5. What is your highest degree or diploma earned? (check one)
 - High School
 - Associates degree
 - Bachelors degree
 - Master's degree
 - Other: _____
6. Which of the following best reflects the area of your highest degree earned? (check one)
 - Humanities
 - Sciences
 - Education
 - Social Work
 - Law
 - Business
 - Other: _____
7. Please list the educational institutions you attended.

8. Please describe your parents' highest educational level below.

Mother or other guardian (check one)

- No diploma
- High School or GED
- Some College
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Master's degree or higher
- I don't know

Father or other guardian (check one)

- No diploma
- High School or GED
- Some College
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Master's degree or higher
- I don't know

(turn over)

9. Which of the following best describes your political orientation? (check one)

- Radical right
- Conservative on most issues
- Sometimes conservative, sometimes liberal
- Liberal on most issues
- Radical left

10. Which of the following best describes your political party affiliation? (check one)

- Democrat
- Independent
- Republican
- Other: _____

11. How many years have you served as an elected official? _____

Please fax to 706-542-7007 or by mail using
the enveloped provided.

Thank you!

APPENDIX J
Interview Guide

Interview Guide

1. Describe your career path to elective office.
2. Who or what influenced you to run for your first elective office?
3. How did you develop the comfort level to run for office?
4. Who or what influenced (or influences) you to remain in elective office?
5. How did you learn to become a politician?
6. How did you learn what to do and what not to do?
7. What do you consider as your best political leadership skills?
8. What do you consider as areas of weakness and how do you manage them?
9. Describe the types of opposition you faced as you moved into political leadership?
 - Follow-up question: (What about family, friends, and general opposition?)
10. Describe the difficult decisions you had to make regarding your life in order for you to pursue a political career.
11. Describe the leadership challenges you face(d) in pursuing a career in politics.
12. How have those challenges changed over time?
13. As a Black woman, how do you think your experience running for public office differs from
 - White women's experiences?
 - White men's experiences?
 - Black men's experiences?
14. How have your race and gender affected your political career?
15. How has economics affected your political career?
16. What issues should aspiring Black women politicians be aware of?
17. What advice do you have for aspiring Black women politicians?
18. Is a leadership development program needed to combat the barriers preventing Black women from pursuing and succeeding in political leadership roles?
19. What would you include in such a program?
20. What other insights can you share concerning Black women's leadership development and career development experiences as they enter elective office?

APPENDIX K

Leadership Program Design

Leadership Program Design

The target audience of the program will be Georgia Black women with an interest in strengthening leadership in their communities via pursuing appointed and elective political leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels. The purpose and goal of the program will be to provide skills-based and issue-based leadership training in an experiential learning environment based on the empowerment model. According to Fong and Furuto (2001) described empowerment as the activity of helping people “to discover and use the resources within and around them, and to seize some control over their lives and the decisions that are critical to their lives” (p. 23). They further assert that for women to be empowered a nurturing environment must be created which they can make choices and explore possible career options. According to Collins (2000) empowered women understand that they a responsibility to act upon these options and the greater their options are for developing their skills and abilities the greater their sense of empowerment (Green & King, 2001).

Another feature of this program is that it will offer a secure environment for Black women to explore, in a substantive way, issues that “uniquely” affect Black women’s ability to secure and succeed in elective political leadership positions. For example, important discussion topics will be issues around the barriers and challenges to Black women’s leadership roles (i.e., issues of power, sexism, racism); how to balance work, home, and community obligations; the benefits and challenges to mentoring the Black woman (Blake, 1999); how to spirituality functions in their decision making processes; and how to negotiate her way through competing social forces of the Black community and society at large.

Participants will also have an opportunity to evaluate their own leadership styles, how others perceive their effectiveness, and discuss implications of their leadership style in the

political arena. Experienced female officeholders will have a prominent role in the program. They will serve as mentors by providing the participants guidance as they develop realistic, practical, and effective plans for personal and professional growth.

The Center for Creative Leadership has studied extensively the process of developing leaders and purports that the most effective leadership development programs include: basic practices of a formal 360-degree assessments, feedback-intensive programs, challenging assignments, and developmental relationships in which all “are as important for women and people of color as they are for White men” (Ruderman & Hughes-James, 1998, p. 329). The reality is that women and people of color have less access to these experiences than White males. Notwithstanding this barrier, Ruderman and Hughes-James note that these professional development experiences enhance the overall leadership potential of participants. Hence, these four key practices form the framework for the leadership program.

The 360-degree feedback will provide participants important information they need for their own development and to improve aspects of their leadership abilities. Secondly, because this is not a traditional mixed-group program, it creates a setting for participants to capitalize on their special cultural and situational life experiences, and thus becomes a single-identity group feedback-intensive program (Ruderman & Hughes-James, 1998). Third, participants will be required after the first session to construct an action plan based on their 360-feedback. They will be challenged to set goals to achieve by the next scheduled session. Additionally, the participants will be strongly encouraged to attend the ½ day workshops to obtain targeted training as an elective official. The greatest challenge that will be presented to the participants is that they commit to running for office at their desired level. Finally, to foster developmental relationships

participants will leave the program paired with an experienced elective official who not only will mentor them, but also serve as a resource as they enter the political arena.

Perhaps the most unique feature of this program is the adoption of Africentrism as a framework for the personal and leadership development of participants. According to Guy (1996),

The Africentric perspective is a culturally grounded philosophical perspective that reflects the intellectual traditions of both African and African American cultures.

Africentrism is understood as an attempt to reclaim a sense of identity, community, and power in the face of Eurocentric cultural hegemony. (p. 21)

Therefore, when focusing on the learning and development of African American adults, learning models that reflect the Africentric perspective should be considered (Colin, 1994). Africentric learning models “focus on the development of the racial self and the bond between the individual and the racial group and the impact that racist interactions have on the development of the self-ethnic image”(Colin 1994, p. 58).

A key element to ensuring that this program is successful will be the active participation and candid sharing of experiences and lessons learned from experienced Black women elective officials. To help ensure that this happens, I will incorporate a woman-to-woman dialogue with experienced female political leaders. For example, some of the women who I would invite are Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), former Congresswoman Denise Majette (D-GA), Mayor Shirley Franklin—City of Atlanta, and Nadine Thomas— former State Senator. These women bring local, state, and national perspectives to make for a stimulating and informative learning environment for the participants concerning the impact serving in elective office has on Black women’s psychological, physical, and professional well-being.

Overall, this program is intended to serve as a leadership development model for Black women to learn about the critical issues and skills needed to seek and maintain political leadership roles long term. More importantly, the program should serve as a tool guided by an ongoing professional network/mentoring system that will demystify the political candidacy process, help participating women empower themselves to realize their full leadership potential for elective office, and thus increase the number of Black women in Georgia pursuing and succeeding in political leadership roles.