2022

Reframing Leadership Narratives through the African American Lens

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REFRAMING LEADERSHIP NARRATIVES THROUGH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LENS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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February 2022

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Graduate School of Leadership and Change
Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

REFRAMING LEADERSHIP NARRATIVES THROUGH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LENS

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Reframing Leadership Narratives Through the African American Lens explores the context-rich experiences of Black Museum executives to challenge dominant cultural perspectives of what constitutes a leader. Using critical narrative discourse analysis, this research foregrounds under-told narratives and reveals the leadership practices used to proliferate Black Museums to contrast the lack of racially diverse perspectives in the pedagogy of leadership studies. This was accomplished by investigating the origin stories of African American executives using organizational leadership and social movement theories as analytical lenses for making sense of leaders' tactics and strategies. Commentary from Black Museum leaders were interspersed with sentiments of "Sankofa" which signify the importance of preserving the wisdom of the past in an effort to empower current and future generations. This study contributes to closing the gap between race and leadership through a multidimensional lens, while amplifying lesser-known histories, increasing unexplored narrative exemplars, and providing greater empirical evidence from the point of view of African American leaders. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: African American, ancestry, art, Black, collective, culture, discourse analysis, history, identity, generational, generativity, leadership, legacy, museum, narrative, oral history, race, racial identity, social movement theory

Acknowledgements

My highest acknowledgement belongs to the God of my understanding who gave me the grace and strength to access the creative power to manifest a dream, which proved to be exceeding, abundantly, above all that I could ever ask or think. I am honored and humbled to briefly express my deepest gratitude to my entire village (both kin-folk and chosen family), including my parents, dearest friends, sister circles, the *homies*, writing buddies, and every Godly counselor who took time to pour into my life, share an encouraging note, text, phone call, or greeting card, ensuring that I kept the faith and finished the journey.

To the amazing faculty and staff of Antioch's Graduate School of Leadership and Change, most especially Al Guskin, Laurien Alexandre, Leslee Creighton, and Elizabeth Holloway, for demonstrating the very best of what the Antioch learning experience has to offer. To my entire C-14 family, I knew from our very first residency in the summer of 2014, I had the good fortune of finding my tribe and I will be forever grateful for the privilege of learning with you and from you as we continue striving to win some victory for humanity.

I am especially grateful for my committee chair, Dr. Donna Ladkin, who somehow made a typically isolating dissertation writing experience one that was truly inspiring through a heartening journey of discovery. Many thanks to my internal committee member, Dr. Lem Watson, for being truly divine while sharing your infectious and authentic enthusiasm for my research topic, as well as my external committee member, Dr. Damion Thomas, for your wealth of experience and the practical expertise you generously shared.

To my ancestral family (both the McGee and Pickett lines), everything that I ever imagined I could do or be, began with the generational blessings passed down from my ancestors. I am eternally grateful to my wonderful parents, Nathaniel and Marion "Lynn"

McGee, for always seeing, speaking, and believing the very best for me and never tiring of reading countless drafts as my dissertation gradually took shape; to my big brother, Jason "J-ball" McGee for always encouraging me to speak my mind; to my Aunt Eudora for your mentorship and encouragement every step along the way; to my dearest Aunt Alice who provided the prayer and spiritual nourishment to keep me focused and grounded in faith to complete every assignment. My profound gratitude extends to every member of my family tree, which includes more aunts, uncles, and cousins than I can name or count.

To my maternal grandmother, Rozelle Garrison Pickett and her mother, Malissa Lee Garrison, as well as my paternal grandmother, Annie-Lois Friar McGee and great-grandmother, Minnie Nelson Allen, thank you for the wealth of wisdom passed down through each successive generation and for the particular type of strength, self-less sacrifice, and excellence you embodied. I pray that your legacy lives on through me and the generations that will follow.

The path which led to the completion of my doctoral journey was paved with some of the most gifted, supportive, and wonderful people I have ever encountered. These brilliant women include: Drs. Dani Chesson, Dorothy Fields, Julie Johnson, Deborah Mack, Laura Morgan-Roberts, and the incomparable Marsha Semmel, each of whom shared generously with me in your own special way.

To the Black Museum practitioners, organizational activists, and public historians whose leadership made my chosen profession possible. This dissertation is my attempt to bring greater recognition to the leadership legacies I have inherited and to ensure these narratives remain accessible to the generations yet to come. My thanks to all for your unwavering support, encouragement, and love throughout my doctoral adventure and for being a permanent part of my beloved community!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

> *Until the story of the hunt is told by the Lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.*
>
> *– Chinua Achebe, The Bravery of Lions*

I will never forget the first time I encountered a space of African American memory. The year was 1988 and I was a shy but inquisitive 10-year-old overjoyed to be spending a weekend in Chicago flanked by cousins, aunts, and uncles for our biennial family reunion. In addition to the rich fellowship, exquisite meals, and longstanding oral tradition of elders passing on family lore, the Pickett family reunions always included outings to enjoy the best of what each host city had to offer.

The DuSable Museum of African American History, founded in 1961, is among the oldest African American community-based museums in the United States, established during the height of the modern Civil Rights Movement, to correct the apparent institutionalized omission of Black history and culture in the education establishment (DuSable, 2008). I hardly realized the transformative impact a visit to the DuSable would have on me. It marked the first time I ever saw real-life shackles used on enslaved people, particularly the smallest pairs reserved for children, which burned a haunting image in my mind.

Located in the heart of Chicago's Hyde Park community, the vibrant material culture on display provoked a multitude of responses, while weaving together equally evocative images of Black historical achievement and cultural triumph. The gravity of my first time experiencing a museum that boldly emphasized the history and cultural traditions of my foremothers and forefathers was further complicated by my first visit to the nation's capital during a summer road trip the following year. One of the most unforgettable stops along the way was a tour of the Mount Vernon estate, home of the first American president, George Washington. To my total

surprise, the tour guide made a very cavalier mention of the slaves' quarters as he pointed toward a set of wooden shacks that were practically in shambles. In complete shock and confusion, I exclaimed, "Wait ... George Washington, our first president, owned slaves?"

My parents' response was swift, yet reassuring, "Yes of course he did, along with many other American presidents. Who else do you think did all the work?" A revelation, which rendered my eleven-year-old self completely speechless. It had never occurred to me that such a highly esteemed national leader could simultaneously have been an oppressive enslaver of human beings. Particularly human beings, whom like my own ancestors, were brutally held captive against their will. Especially because those aspects of American history were not shared, or in any way acknowledged in my social studies or history classes, a favorite subject of mine at the time. Both museum experiences made a lasting impression on me and were significant in exposing me to historical narratives that were never mentioned during any of my formative years of education, grade school through high school.

The juxtaposition of these two unforgettable experiences left me feeling somewhat deceived, but more importantly, deeply curious about what other aspects of history had been conveniently overlooked, or worse yet, intentionally neglected. Gaining access to context-rich historical narratives from previously unknown perspectives, greatly influenced the development of my cultural identity, ultimately leading to a career in the historic preservation field.

Likewise, as a public historian and research practitioner, I remain committed to illuminating lesser-known histories and unexplored narratives to catalyze change. Examining the context-rich experiences of black museum leaders, many of whom were artists, educators, and social justice activists pioneering a new form of museology, may challenge and expand leadership studies by considering new dimensions of leadership. To this end, studying the

impact of race and ethnicity on leadership relative to the proliferation of Black Museum leaders nourishes my curiosity about the practical implications for recruiting, retaining, and increasing representation of Black leader experiences in leadership studies and the museum field.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to reveal the leadership practices used to proliferate Black Museums and provide context-rich experiences that challenge the lack of inclusion of Black executive leader perspectives in the pedagogy of leadership studies. This research may inform the recruitment, retention, and sustained representation of African Americans in the historic preservation field.

This was accomplished by investigating the origin stories of African American museum leaders and used organizational leadership and social movement theories as analytical lenses for making sense of leaders' tactics and strategies. The dissertation study involved interpreting Black Museum leaders' responses to two-phases of semi-structured interviews, with the first phase conducted between 2005 and 2007 and the second phase conducted between 2015 and 2017. The provenance of the individual interviews was established by the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) board members, Wayne Coleman and Dr. John Fleming, who conducted the interviews contained within this study. In 2017, the oral history interview recordings were entrusted to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture for digitization and archival preservation.

Interview participants were comprised of persons who established institutions that were among the nation's earliest museums exclusively focused on the advancement of Black art, history, and culture in the United States, between 1950 and 1975, amid the vicious policies and vestiges of the Jim Crow era. Understanding the endeavors of people responsible for creating an

entirely new genre of museology is vital to sustaining and advancing the work of museums and the development of museum leaders.

Now that I have introduced the purpose of the study, the remainder of this chapter will summarize the historical contexts in which Black Museums emerged, while offering an explanation of the significance and multidisciplinary theoretical models to aid in the analysis of research data. This chapter includes assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study along with the research questions to be explored, and the data gathering methodology. Chapter I concludes with a summary of the technical terminology used throughout the research dissertation proposal.

Constructing a Racial Caste System

Beginning in the 15th century and extending through the 20th century, Western society generally, and the United States of America, more specifically, disrupted, disparaged, and dismantled the preservation of African derived history and culture. In August 1619, English colonists brought Africans who had been forcibly taken from present day Angola, onto the shores of the burgeoning British colony in Jamestown, VA (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019). Setting in motion the caste system that would become the cornerstone of the social, political, and economic system in America (Wilkerson, 2021).

A year before the *Mayflower* dropped anchor off Cape Cod, the *White Lion* disgorged "some 20 and odd Negroes" onto the shores of Virginia, inaugurating the African presence in what would become the United States (Kendi, 2021). This marked the beginning of American slavery, and resulted in 12.5 million Africans being kidnapped from their homes and brought in chains across the Atlantic Ocean in the international slave trade (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019). For the first time in history, one category of humanity was ruled out of the "human race" and into a

separate subgroup that was to remain enslaved for generations in perpetuity (Gross, 2008; Wilkerson, 2021).

Since 1619, the African descended people who arrived or were born in the U.S. have comprised a community of self-actualizing and sometimes self-identifying as African American or Black America; with *African* used as reference to a people of African descent and *Black* used as reference to a people racialized as Black (Kendi, 2021). The institution of slavery was, for a quarter millennium, the conversion of human beings into currency, into machines who existed solely for the profit of their owners, to be worked as long as the owners desired, who had no rights over their bodies or loved ones, who could be mortgaged, bred, won in a bet, given as wedding presents, bequeathed to heirs, sold away from spouses or children to cover an owner's debt, or to spite a rival or to settle an estate (Wilkerson, 2021).

Although the Emancipation Proclamation (Lincoln, 1862) did not end slavery in its entirety, it did provide immediate relief and enforcement within states occupied by Union soldiers until Congress subsequently passed the 13th amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery in the United States, on January 31, 1865. The outlawing of chattel slavery in 1865 brought on racial progress (Kendi, 2017). In the aftermath of a five-year Civil War between the American north and south, battle-damaged cities throughout the country began the process of rebuilding the nation and navigating the concept of freedom among newly emancipated and alongside free-born Blacks.

> In April 1865, the United States was faced with a discomfiting reality: it had seen two percent of its population destroyed because a section of its citizenry would countenance anything to protect, and expand, the right to own other people. The fallen Confederacy's chroniclers grasped this historiographic challenge and, immediately after the war, began erasing all evidence of the crime—that is to say, they began erasing Black people—from the written record. (Coates, 2017)

Black Americans were not recognized as citizens of their country of birth until the subsequent passage of the 14th amendment to the constitution in 1868. This period of history, referred to as the Reconstruction Era, involved a swift effort to secure voting rights for Black men and the protection of civil rights for Black Americans. During this nation's brief period of Reconstruction, from 1865 to 1877, formerly enslaved people zealously engaged with the democratic process, where they placed other formerly enslaved people into seats that their enslavers had once held (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019). Over a dozen Black men were elected to Congress and two to the U.S. Senate, hailing from states where African Americans were a majority of the population in southern congressional districts. By 1868, all persons born in the United States were (considered) equal citizens under the law (Reaven & Wong, 2018). Finally, in 1870, Congress passed the 15th amendment, guaranteeing the most critical aspect of democracy and citizenship—the right to vote—to all men regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019, p. 21).

Immunity to Racial Equity and Change

Efforts to create an interracial democracy were immediately contested from the start and a harsh backlash ensued, ushering in a half century of the "separate but equal" age of Jim Crow (Reaven & Wong, 2018). Federal, state, and local government policies systematically sanctioned racial oppression of persons of African descent to advance a distorted narrative of inferiority of the Black race. The legalization of Jim Crow brought on the progression of racist policies in the late nineteenth century (Kendi, 2017).

By 1870, Southern legislatures began implementing new laws, which systematically dismantled the civil rights of Black citizens, eliminating their ability to vote, hold elected office,

and access public spaces or services. The Jim Crow regime persisted from the 1880s to the 1960s, some 80-years, and afflicted the lives of at least four generations (Wilkerson, 2010).

When considering the millions of African descendent people who were uprooted, displaced and enslaved, one must also consider the explicit efforts they undertook to preserve historical memory, protect their cultural identity, subvert systems of oppression, and challenge the status quo. Black people have long realized the importance of preserving their history and have expended much effort over generations to that end (Horton & Crew, 1989).

> The 'Black Freedom Movement' is a distinct era in the African American struggle for civil and human rights that began in the mid-1940's with a surge in public protest and ended in the mid-1970s with a shift in emphasis toward electoral politics. It encompasses two of the most unique and enduring periods of Black activism: first is the Civil Rights Movement, which resulted in the elimination of Jim Crow laws in the South and the upending of Jim Crow customs in the North; the second is the Black Power Movement, which not only expanded on the gains of the Civil Rights Movement, but also elevated African American racial consciousness, forever changing what it meant to be Black. (Jeffries, 2018, p. 22)

The outlawing of Jim Crow in 1964 brought on racial progress, then the legalization of superficially unintentional discrimination brought on the progression of racist policies in the late twentieth century (Kendi, 2017). Despite these highly oppressive conditions, Black Museum leaders and practitioners emerged who courageously created spaces for intellectual liberation, professional development, and positive racial imagery through the sharing of African derived art, history, and culture.

An often-overlooked method of "resistance" to racial oppression is the African American Museum Movement, based on the notion of equal rights and the recognition of African American contributions on a national level where previously they have been neglected (Fairchild, 2008). The resultant demeaning of Black achievement in public and private sectors systemically extends into the cultural sector, thereby prohibiting access to spaces for historical, artistic, and cultural

expression or reflection (Fleming, 2018). The movement to establish Black Museums in America is the tangible manifestation of committed individuals whose subversive acts of resistance and unfaltering resilience produced cultural institutions with an explicitly generative focus.

This study examined a number of their personal accounts and professional reflections to understand how they made meaning of their experiences and how it impacted or influenced their leadership approaches. Whether serving as museum founders, founding directors, or first-of-their-kind exhibition curators, the pathbreaking work and personal reflections of this distinctive group of forerunners is worthy of further investigation and inquiry. Given the significant role Black Museum leaders played in leading the formation of institutions, governmental policies, and equitable financial practices, both within and outside the museum field, it is imperative that these individuals not be overlooked nor their organizational leadership legacies forgotten.

The institutional histories of Black Museums are not widely known, much less, the people who acted as catalyst in the creation of these organizations. Biography serves as a mirror on culture, society, and history, and, as such, can radically impact thinking about the past and the present (Salzburg Global Seminar, 2006). Although an abundance of literature exists on the development of exhibitions about the contributions of African Americans to society, a dearth of empirical data, industry publications, case studies, and other literature exists on the contributions of Black Museum leaders and their organizational development efforts to establish cultural institutions. My study seeks to address this oversight by centering the context-rich of Black leaders based on their personal accounts of leading path-breaking cultural institutions.

Significance of the Study

This study explored the lived experiences of Black Museum founders and executive directors to gain insight on how these individuals successfully navigated the challenges of establishing, funding, and sustaining community-based cultural institutions. The study focused on participants who were among the first leaders to establish independent, community-based museums that were committed to the preservation of Black history and culture, at a time when it was deemed inconsequential or irrelevant to prevailing narratives of American history. Organizational leadership and social movement theories were used as analytical lenses for making sense of leaders' tactics and strategies for advancing the Black Museum Movement.

The efforts undertaken to establish institutions that provided spaces of liberation and empowerment for African Americans, subverting Jim Crow policies, are herein referred to as the Black Museum Movement. This study placed particular emphasis on the contexts in which these organizations emerged and the dual ability of leaders to build upon the work of prior generations, engage in activism, and advance the institutionalization of Black art, history, and culture.

The study endeavored to understand the theoretical relevance of the Black Museum Movement through the lens of organizational leadership and social movements in order to contribute empirical data and context-rich research to an understudied and under-told history of African American leaders. Social movements are theorized to be relatively spontaneous and unstructured, with participants often portrayed as nonrational actors functioning outside of normative constraints and propelled by high levels of strain (A. D. Morris, 1984) and were previously considered sporadic or disconnected from institutional and organizational behavior (A. D. Morris, 1999). However, Social Movement Theory (SMT) ultimately evolved due to the

retrospective work of scholars who challenged the applicability of classical theories when applied to the modern Civil Rights Movement.

The research also challenged dominant narratives through the use of critical discourse analysis. It is hoped that the insights which emerged from the study can positively inform theoretical perspectives in leadership studies and illustrate the impact of race on leadership from the viewpoint of Black leaders. Of note to this discourse is the axiom of "Sankofa" to emphasize the connection of past and present. The word Sankofa can be translated to mean, "go back to the past and bring forward that which is useful" to more effectively shape our understanding of the forces that will have an impact on our collective future (Shields, 2021). To this end, the study was also purposed to explicate relevant strategies from Black Museum forebearers to aid in the recruitment and retention of future museum leaders who will be navigating extensive demographic shifts, widespread cultural trends, and rapid technological change.

History of the Black Museum Movement

Over the past 150 years, community-minded leaders employed social activism to establish spaces of liberation to promote, preserve, and commemorate Black cultural identity within the United States. Black Museums do not emerge in the contexts of museums like the Smithsonian Institution or the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which resulted from a bequest of a wealthy social elite with a heralded collection of art and artifacts preserved for use by individuals in the upper echelons of American society. Black Museums were started without a collection; beginning with an idea of preserving our heritage and name it a museum, not for what it is, but of what we hope it will become (Fleming, 2018, p. 61).

Unlike many of their mainstream museum counterparts, Black Museums developed in direct response to the needs of the community enclaves, in which they were situated, often

serving as a counterbalance to prevailing narratives of American history that ignored and/or distorted the role of African Americans. It is their responsibility to provide a true picture of a history that has been continuously and, in many instances, purposefully, neglected over time, this in turn has affected their patterns of organizational development (Dickerson, 1988, pp. 1–2).

The Black Museum Movement is one who's organizational history aligns seamlessly with the momentum of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and was subsequently chartered on the heels of the Black Arts Movement. The Association of African American Museums (herein referred to as "AAAM" or the "Association"), is the museum service organization representing the interest of African American museums and is the most appropriate organization to take the lead in organizing a convening of African American museum leaders (Mack, 2017).

AAAM is a non-profit membership organization established in 1978 to support the establishment of African American and African Diaspora focused museums nationally and internationally, as well as the professionals who protect, preserve, and interpret African and African American art, history, and culture. AAAM was birthed in an effort to formally organize the Black Museum Movement into an active membership-based body, leveraging its collective strength to advocate for public policy, professional standards, and funding equity based on the needs of institutions founded by or on behalf of African descendent communities.

AAAM is currently the largest convener of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums focused on Black culture in the United States. The next decade promises an unmatched level of change within the museum field. Emerging leaders are challenged with moving their organizations beyond hierarchical or transactional leadership approaches into a more responsive 21st century model, particularly as cultural institutions seek to remain relevant amid societal changes.

The deliberate development of leaders with an understanding of the relevance of theoretical leadership approaches is essential to the evolution of 21st century museums and cultural organizations. Considering the emergence of Black Museums and the proliferation of African American sites of memory through the use of formal and informal networks to influence change, proper attention must be given to valuing institutional knowledge in cultural spaces, among existing leaders, and fostering understanding of leader effectiveness to ensure future leader cultivation within the Black Museum field.

The activism work of Black Museum leaders did not culminate with the establishment of 20th century museums. The pioneering efforts of these individuals paved the way for an ever-increasing number of existing Black Museum practitioners. Some chose to undertake careers in predominately white institutions, inserting their voices and perspectives to change systemic patterns of disparaging or misappropriating Black art, history, and culture. While others have chosen to invest in the long-term success of some of the historic institutions included in the study, ensuring that historically Black Museums are sustained for generations to come.

Multi-Disciplinary Theoretical Models

The addition of the Civil Rights Movement in Social Movement Theory resulted in a more comprehensive and inclusive framework for examining the role of both movement leaders and participants. Throughout the 20th century, leadership research tended to focus on more traditional, hierarchical views of organizations, placing emphasis on the traits or efficacy of executive leaders and managers with regard to their followers. Likewise, definitions of leadership have evolved continuously for more than a century, having been influenced by factors ranging from world affairs to the perspectives of the discipline in which it was being studied (Northouse, 2013).

James MacGregor Burns (1978) is credited with initiating a concept of leadership as the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers. The need for leadership is evident when encounters with uncertainty demands an adaptive, heuristic, or innovative response: past practices are breached, new threats loom, a sudden opportunity appears, or social conditions change (Heifetz, 1994).

A new mindset is beginning to emerge, however, which recognizes that social processes are too complex and "messy" to be attributed to a single individual or pre-planned streams of events (Finkelstein, 2002; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Traditional, hierarchical views of leadership are less and less useful given the complexities of our modern world; hence, leadership theory must transition to new perspectives that account for the complex adaptive needs of organizations (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). Whereas, the work of Lichtenstein, et al. (2006) denoted some researcher's evolving perspectives within leadership studies literature and attempts to address the intricacies of contemporary leadership within modern organizations.

My research study explored the lived experiences of individuals whose institution-building efforts were considered revolutionary during an era of social and political activism to dismantle the racial caste system which subjugated these leaders to the disgrace of Jim Crow policies and practices. My dissertation study unearthed the strategies employed by Black leaders, which pre-dated any "modern" conceptualizations of leadership as a complex or highly collaborative activity. This study illuminates how Black Museum leaders were embodying a form of leadership in the mid-20th century with a keen awareness of the complexities of navigating state-sanctioned apartheid conditions, relying on formal and informal collaborative

networks, long before more contemporary leadership theories, which attend to more collectively based dynamics, ever existed. By bringing their strategies to light, my study extends leadership theorizing by elevating counternarratives from the point of view of Black leaders, to challenge the dominate cultural narrative and provide more diverse context of what constitutes leadership.

My research indicates that traditional views of leadership that centered white/Euro-centric perspectives or classical organizational development scenarios which narrowly focuses on maximizing revenues with little regard for constituent or stakeholder needs, are unsuitable for understanding the experiences of Black Museum leaders. The founders of these institutions sought to provide African Americans with a meaningful alternative to the misrepresentation or utter neglect of Black history found in standard textbooks and most public history sites through the embrace of a distinctly Black identity and new methods of interaction between the museum and local community (A. Burns, 2013). Determining the theoretical relevance of Black Museum leader experiences requires a multi-disciplinary approach to data analysis to understand the context of the time in which the study participants undertook their institution-building efforts.

Given the socio-political climate of Jim Crow era policies and subsequent vestiges of these customs which did not end immediately following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the organizational development activities undertaken by study participants were subversive in nature, requiring them to engage in social movement activism in concert with their organizational development efforts. Much attention has been devoted to the study of organizational development for the purpose of increasing profitability, maximizing human capital, and achieving economies of scale.

The Western (or *Euro-centric*) perspective of organizational development that centers capitalism or profitability as the primary metric of success can greatly limit other ways of

constructing organizations or quantifying value when knowledge of African American historical perspectives is not readily available or generally accepted as valid within an organizational development context. Likewise, much has been written about the theoretical imperative of the Civil Rights Movement in challenging prevailing notions of collective behavior and transforming classical assumptions, through more nuanced analysis of the structure, leadership and organization of social movements.

Of note to this dissertation is the effort the researcher has taken to underscore the need for a similar progression within leadership studies literature. The implication of this empirical research would be a contribution that reframes prevailing notions of leadership theory and posits this study in a manner that underscores the imperative of leadership studies becoming more inclusive of non-white leaders and thereby more representative of the diverse landscape of context-rich organizational leadership experiences.

The identification of applicable organizational leadership theory revealed through this study is useful for increasing understanding of the requisite skills and approaches for managing, sustaining, and advancing Black Museums and the persons who acted as catalysts for the creation of hundreds of cultural institutions for over half a century. I ultimately desire to use my research dissertation to broaden the understanding of how the leadership legacies of these change agents have influenced the ability of Black Museums to engage community, sustain funding, build capacity, retain leaders, and prepare or rebound from organizational change.

In the same manner that the study of social movement theory evolved to more accurately reflect the nature of leadership and organizational strategy of the Civil Rights movement, and the subsequent movements it spawned, organizational leadership theory must evolve to be more

inclusive of the organizational development experience of institutional leaders in order to remain relevant and responsive to societal changes.

The research study provided an opportunity to further investigate the firsthand accounts of individuals responsible for establishing the first museums in American cities to positively reflect Black cultural traditions and accomplishments. Yet the concept of institutionalizing a social movement and activism focused on developing organizations that serve as sites of consciousness, may not be sufficiently described by organization leadership or social movement theories. Hence, the research study sought to identify ways of leading not captured by extant leadership theorizing, but exemplified by Black Museum leaders.

The objective of the study was to consolidate and extend this line of thinking through a critical discourse analysis of the self-described experiences of Black Museum founders and directors. Chapter II situates this line of inquiry within extant literature on evolving perspectives of the impact of race and ethnicity within leadership studies and multi-disciplinary theories in order to discover linkages that may exist between these theoretical perspectives and make meaning of the institutional development efforts of Black Museum leaders.

Research Questions

The central Research Question was: How might the context-rich experiences of Black leaders challenge, change, or extend Leadership Theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership?

The qualitive questions that guided the narrative analysis included the following:

1. How did the participant's race impact their executive leadership role?
2. How did participants engage in racial, social, or organizational activism efforts?
3. How did the participants share or receive knowledge across generational boundaries?

Researcher's Positionality and Assumptions

The preservation of Black history and culture is a topic in which one enters bringing the fullness of one's worldview, based on personal history, cultural traditions and values to the endeavor. Likewise, doctoral research is a space one enters shaped by personal history and professional experiences. My research lens was influenced by my external reality and informed by my internal perception of that reality.

When considering my self-identifiers as a member of Generation-X, an Arkansan, a person of African descent, and my Black womanhood, all these identifiers have impacted my view of the world and the ways in which the world views me. Every word is a theory; the very way researchers talk about their subject matter reflects their leanings, regardless of whether they present these inclinations as such, or even recognize them (Sandelowski, 2010, p. 80).

My assumptions are drawn from personal and professional experiences that have led me to a worldview that perceives racism as inherent to the fabric of American society, from its foundation as a collection of British colonies to its present-day social order. In my view, the American historical record reflects a racially oppressive system of laws, policies, and customs designed to structurally diminish, limit, and eradicate the progress of Black Americans. Hence, both conscious and unconscious racism is a permanent component of American life (Bell, 1992). However, my personal interests and experiences will not preordain the findings or bias the study.

My curiosity about the lived experiences of Black Museum leaders stems from interests in what motivated them to challenge dominant historical narratives and the racially offensive perspectives that persisted within social systems at a time when establishing such institutions may have placed their careers, families, or livelihoods in jeopardy. I started this journey interested in learning what may have been the primary impetus for these individuals to create and

contribute to the proliferation of Black museums and what salient factors or insights may emerge from their personal reflections.

Prior to joining the staff of the Smithsonian's newly opened National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), I served as an executive director of an historic house museum dedicated to preserving the legacy of a small Black community enclave, known as Smokey Hollow, in northern Florida. Having first apprenticed the John G. Riley House Museum's founder, Althemese Barnes, for two years prior to assuming the role as executive director, I gained a rich appreciation for the generative work of creating and sustaining spaces of memory within historic Black neighborhoods for the purpose of preserving the only remaining tangible evidence of an entire community's history.

The Riley Museum, like hundreds of systematically gentrified formerly all-Black enclaves, was only made possible through the work of successive generations of community members who invested money and sweat equity into salvaging buildings from planned demolition in order to preserve the home of a beloved educator and path-breaking Black mogul, hoping to someday make it a museum, even if their generation did not live long enough to see their hope come to fruition. This was a sentiment echoed by many Black Museum leaders, who attested to the need to build cultural institutions in, and for the benefit of, the Black community, because they belong to that community (Moore, 2018).

In the spring of 2016, I was recruited to join the NMAAHC staff to aid in the National Museum's efforts to fulfill its congressional mandate dictated by the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act (2003). The Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) is the strategically focused unit of NMAAHC charged with furthering specific directives mandated by the congressional legislation governing the National Museum's mission. This mandate,

accomplished through the development of mutually beneficial partnerships with constituent and peer organizations, provides professional development and training opportunities to museum practitioners by working collaboratively with national and international museum associations to expand access and enhance institutional capacity building.

As a member of the OSP team, I am tasked with furthering our mission to strengthen and elevate the profile of African American museums, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and other organizations that promote the study or appreciation of African American history and culture. OSP's unique purpose enables our unit to lead the effort in providing support to institutions and individuals from states that have been largely underrepresented, building awareness of African American museums while addressing the unique needs of Black Museums by developing strategic collaborations with external constituents and stakeholders.

In addition to my work at NMAAHC, I currently serve as Vice-President of the AAAM board of directors, while completing my third (and final) 3-year term board. As an extension of NMAAHC's commitment to AAAM, our museum also provides technical support and funding for the Association's annual training and professional development efforts, which are maintained through a Memorandum of Understanding ratifying the terms of the partnership.

As a result, the AAAM and NMAAHC have established a strong collaborative relationship that dates back over 50 years to the charter members of the Association, who mentored, trained, and employed many Black Museum executive leaders (including Lonnie Bunch, the first African American to serve as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution), while simultaneously advocating and serving as catalysts for the creation of NMAAHC for decades leading up to our museum's historic opening day.

As an emerging leader in the museum field, I want the work I am privileged to do on behalf of Black Museums, to successively build upon the accomplishments of our founding generation of leaders. Moreover, as a direct beneficiary of the Black Museum Movement, I stand on the shoulders of these pioneering practitioners whose efforts changed the museum field and established federal policy benefiting successive generations of Black Museum practitioners.

Given the renewed emphasis on diversity, inclusion, equity, and decolonization within the museum and cultural sector, my activism often takes the form of giving voice to the concerns and challenges faced by micro, small, and mid-sized Black Museums and holding my colleagues in the overwhelmingly white, mainstream field, accountable for more accurately reflecting the communities they serve. My museum activism and volunteer work involve proactively addressing and exploring new approaches to inclusion and collaboration to effectively support or advance the needs of the institutional partners both NMAAHC and AAAM were established to serve.

Relevance of Research Topic

The study was prompted by myriad observations and discussions with founders, elders, and current Black Museum leaders. In 2017, I served as chair and lead coordinator of programmatic content for AAAM's annual conference, and specifically a lively panel discussion on preserving leadership legacies, which featured pioneering leaders of the Black Museum Movement. Although I have always had an appreciation for the African American oral tradition, I was forever transformed by the richness of this exchange and even more determined to further investigate their origin stories following the unexpected passing of several leaders the following year.

Motivated by the desire to gain an in-depth understanding of what constitutes leadership, where it originates, and how these lessons can inform and improve my area of practice, I embarked on this examination of relevant leadership theory to determine what theories were most applicable to Black Museum leaders and practitioners. These personal narratives aided in addressing the need for organizational development among the future generations of museum professionals, and those most impacted by our ability to sustain and manage Black Museums.

I began my research with the assumption that Complexity Leadership Theory or "CLT" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) would help to shed light on how leadership was accomplished by the Black Museum leaders working to effect change in a racially oppressive social climate. CLT is grounded in the notion that leadership is an emergent event or an outcome of relational interactions among individuals or groups of individuals, who resonate through sharing common interests, knowledge and/or goals, due to their history of interaction and sharing of worldviews (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

Although I anticipated the salience of CLT to the nature of organizations historically steeped in community activism and advocacy, I was surprised to learn how much resonance materialized from the readings on Social Movement Theory. In the same way that Black Museums emerged out of a dire need to more accurately reflect notions of historical and cultural relevance, Social Movement Theory likewise evolved in order to more accurately reflect critical dimensions of the Civil Rights Movement, which were not readily explained by classical application of the theory. As Social Movement Theory was challenged and interrogated through scholarly research endeavors, a more expansive theoretical approach emerged, providing more in-depth understanding of Black Liberation Movements like the Civil Rights Movements, and subsequent movements it spawned.

The organizational milestones and public policy accomplishments of the past 150 years can often be heralded as markers of progress that tend toward an unfortunate level of complacency among museum practitioners who see the opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture as evidence of the proverbial "hard-part" being completed. However, given present-day challenges to the Civil Rights era policies of inclusion and federally mandated integration, compounded by the ongoing debates about public funding for arts and cultural organizations, there remains much more work to do.

Future of the Museum Field

Museums globally are now reckoning with the reality of museums serving as agents of social change and voices for their communities. Specifically, this includes the need to move beyond museum walls into the community to establish a two-way relationship with their stakeholder audiences and reflect the needs, interests, and values of their surrounding communities. Now the field has entered an era in which it is more important to "do the right things" by demonstrating that [mainstream] museums, historic sites, and cultural organizations matter to their communities because traditional activities of collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting, and interpreting are simply no longer adequate (Matelic, 2012).

Emerging museum leaders are challenged with identifying strategies to move their organizations beyond hierarchical or transactional leadership approaches into a more responsive 21st century model. The study sought to identify these strategies and their potential relevance to present-day museum leaders navigating ongoing social, economic, and racial justice movements, which challenges institutional leaders/organizations of all sizes to think critically about what their organizational identities have been, what they strive to be now, and what they will be in the future.

List of Definitions/Technical Terminology

The terminology used throughout the research study are commonly used phrases in the nomenclature of social sciences more broadly, and the museum field specifically. The research study was undertaken at a time when misinformation had been weaponized and the proliferation of alternative facts was at an all-time high. Contemporary debates regarding the existence of institutional racism among contemporary scholars and even among persons holding elected office, created an imperative to provide historically accurate definitions of terminology referenced throughout the study.

Most recently, the 45th President of the United States appointed a *1776 Commission* to coordinate the development of a national publication written primarily in response to the Pulitzer Prize winning *1619 Project* (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019), which centered the contributions of African Americans to the American historical narrative. Although the attempted recasting of American history, vis-a-vis the 1776 Commission, was quickly dismantled by the incoming administration of the 46th President of the United States, the actions taken by the federal government to influence the way history would be taught and/or enforced by the government, has lasting consequences on the general public's understanding of their nation's history.

> This doesn't—and shouldn't—come as a surprise; the historical archive has been carefully written in favor of the colonizer. After all, the purpose of colonization, in many cases, is to reform the "uncivilized," and language and history are no exception to this endeavor. As a result, we've adopted a mindset inclined to justify the colonizer's side of the conflict. When we do approach these conflicts with a critical eye, we still make excuses that there are no veritable sources available from the perspective of the colonized. (LaBrecque, 2018)

The following list of terminology offers historically accurate references to aid in contextualizing experiences of interview participants and to serve as narrative guiderails for the research exploration of the study.

The very notion of “Black culture” is a phenomenon unto itself, emerging from the displacement of African descendent peoples during the multi-century transatlantic slave trade throughout the Western hemisphere, resulting in a resilient construction of identity, language, and cultural expression.

The term “Black Museum” is an inclusive reference to historic structures, monuments, galleries, libraries, archives, and museums originating over the past 150 years by, or on behalf of, African Americans. Namely, an organization whose primary purpose, as reflected in its mission, is the study, preservation, or elevation of African American life, art, history, and/or Black culture, encompassing: the period of slavery, the era of Reconstruction, the Harlem renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, and other significant periods of the African American diaspora.

According to the Museum and Library Services Act (1996), museums are defined as a public or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes, that utilizes a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for the tangible objects, and exhibits the tangible objects to the public on a regular basis. For the purpose of this study, “Black Museum leaders” are defined as institutional founders, founding directors, or pioneering practitioners within historically white institutions.

The term “Double-Consciousness” was primarily popularized in the classic work *The Souls of Black Folk* (DuBois, 1903, 1953, 1986). With roots in 19th century psychological and philosophical discourse, DuBois brought the term into 20th century social, political, racial, and cultural thought to capture and convey African Americans’ feelings of dissonance and dividedness between their distant African ancestral homeland and their present American environment; arising out of the dilemmas and dualities or rather, the conundrums and complexities of what it means to be Black in a white-dominated world (Rabaka, 2018).

The “Great Migration” refers to the transformative pilgrimage within the borders of the United States over the course of six decades in which some six million Black southerners left the land of their forefathers and fanned out across the country for an uncertain existence in nearly every other corner of America (Wilkerson, 2010).

Museology is the science, profession or discipline of the museum, including its historical evolution, its role in society and the activities linked to it, such as management, organization, conservation, research and communication (Economou & Tost, 2011).

The term “racism” refers to the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied (Lorde, 1981).

Chapter Outlines

The first chapter has introduced the purpose, significance, and theoretical relevance of the research study. It has also described the historical contexts in which Black Museums emerged, while exploring the applicability of organizational leadership and social movement theories as possible lenses for gaining understanding of how the study participants dealt with the complex circumstances, they faced in an effort to make meaning of archived interview data about their self-described experiences. Chapter I also summarized the researcher’s positionality and assumptions in undertaking the study, along with the fundamental research questions, the data gathering method, and overview of the technical terminology used throughout the research dissertation proposal.

Chapter II provides a review and critique of extant literature including: (a) the preservation of Black cultural heritage and establishment of Black Museums; (b) empirical research chronicling the Black Museum Movement, and (c) theoretical frameworks for understanding experiences of Black Museum leaders through a critical review of race in

leadership studies literature (Ospina & Foldy, 2009) and the evolution of Social Movement Theory (A. D. Morris, 1984, 1999). The second chapter concludes with an identification of gaps in existing theoretical frameworks and empirical literature about the emergence of Black Museum leaders, historical basis of marginalizing certain voices, and contemporary implications for contextualizing race in leadership studies.

Chapter III describes the qualitative methodology in the analysis of select oral history interview transcripts. This chapter situates the study as a critical discourse analysis with emancipatory goals and details the overlapping genres found to be most relevant for underscoring issues of power, uneven resource distribution, and marginalization. The third chapter provides an explanation of my research philosophy and research design, including the interview population and secondary source material. Chapter III concludes with an explanation of my analytic strategy and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV provides the findings of my narrative discourse analysis and describes the significance of my dissertation research. Chapter V relates my findings back to the extant literature and describes the unanticipated findings. Chapter VI describes the implications and limitations of my study, along with the discoveries and recommendations to inform future leadership studies research and museum praxis.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

> *In creating their own organizations and institutions, African American museums were established to both serve Black communities and serve as vehicles for social change.*
>
> *– Deborah L. Mack, The State of Black Museums*

Overview

Despite a record of accomplishment spanning more than a century, there remains a lack of empirical literature to reference in teaching or writing about Black Museum leaders from an organizational development, change, and leadership studies perspective. My thesis explored the lived experiences of Black Museum founders and executive directors to understand how race and ethnicity affected their leadership approaches and ability to be viewed as leaders within a racially oppressive social context.

This chapter comprises a review of relevant empirical data and non-empirical publications to determine what literature may recognize the experiences of individuals responsible for the proliferation of Black Museums. It explores extant literature related to the field of African American museum practitioners from a reference point that addresses a range of topics, including cultural expression, historic preservation, professional museum practice, organizational development, leader engagement, and globalizing influence.

To ground my study, I have focused on three comprehensive bodies of knowledge. Essential to this review of literature is an investigation of empirical and non-empirical sources of information which contextualize the impact of race and/or ethnicity on organizational leaders broadly, as well as among persons responsible for the establishment of Black Museums specifically.

The first section offers historic evidence of the existence of African art, history, and cultural ephemera prior to the colonization of the continent and the explosion of the transatlantic

slave trade. Rather than attempting to trace the vast richness of Africa's history over multiple millennia, the first section highlights issues of voice, representation, imperialism and the enduring impact of colonialization on cultural production and historical memory.

The second section provides a chronology of individuals engaged in the conservation, preservation, and proliferation of African derived culture and identity. Given the multi-century efforts to sustain Africanized language, song, foodways, dance, architecture, iron works, and other forms of cultural expression, section two summarizes the historic origins and progression of Black cultural preservation following the end of America's Civil War in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The second section establishes the historical foundation for what became known as the Black Museum Movement and the social context in which individual and collective activism is required to address the need for social, political and organizational change.

To effectively portray this context, I summarize the substantive literature contained in two seminal publications, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (A. Burns, 2013) and *State of Black Museums: Historiography Commemorating the Founding and Existence of Black Museums Over Four Decades* (Fleming et al., 2018). The latter publication is a collection of essays and case studies published in celebration of AAAM's 40th anniversary in 2018. This second section included time periods that revealed the racially oppressive structures and systematic opposition related to the historical establishment of Black Museums with emphasis on the contemporaneous struggle for racial equality and social activism throughout the burgeoning movement.

The third section describes my pursuit of theoretical frameworks for understanding the complex experiences of leaders within the Black Museum Movement. This section explains the strengths of cross-disciplinary approaches including, complexity leadership, and social

movement theory, along with the gaps of these existing frameworks. This section centers on Ospina and Foldy's (2009) *Critical Review of Race and Ethnicity in the Leadership Literature*, which advanced a comprehensive review of theories related to leadership, race, and ethnicity. It includes a summary of their research findings regarding extant leadership studies literature, or lack thereof and the gaps in empirical literature as a framework for understanding the contextual significance of race in leadership studies.

Chapter II concludes with a summary of suggestions offered by the authors for adequately contextualizing the impact of race and ethnicity from the point of view of Black leaders, along with recommendations for challenging expanding, and changing existing structures through future empirical research.

African Cultural Conservation in the Pre-Colonial Era

The following discussion of literature related to Black cultural conservation efforts would be remiss without first acknowledging the fact that civilizations and empires throughout the African continent effectively preserved their distinctive histories and cultural traditions for over 18 centuries, prior to the destructive interference of colonial conquests. Thus, the work of preserving one's history is not a Western ideal nor a concept introduced to enslaved people of African upon arriving in colonial North America. In fact, many Black Museums emerged in an effort to repudiate inferior notions that Black history began with chattel slavery.

In 2018, the Marvel Studios blockbuster film, *Black Panther*, not only ranked as the highest-grossing movie worldwide, it reignited longstanding conversations about colonialism, black identity, and cultural preservation. The film, albeit fictional, sparked discussions about the lasting global impacts of colonization and brought increased attention to longstanding demands for restitution of African art, artifacts, and cultural ephemera.

This was particularly the case among leaders of sovereign nations whose African cultural iconography and material histories are currently exhibited in the National Museums of Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, and the United States. Some of the earliest African art and artifacts are among the permanent collections of institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Penn Museum, and numerous other well-resourced, world-renowned cultural and educational institutions.

As the imperative to decolonize cultural and educational institutions grows, issues of restitution of museum collections have gained renewed attention (International Council of Museums, 2019). In the fictional Marvel Universe, *Wakanda* has the distinction of being the only country within the African continent never colonized by outsiders, allowing it to thrive and sustain a vast array of natural and technological resources. The notion of an African nation that was somehow protected from the devastation of colonization and able to remain unapologetically Black, was deeply inspiring for many, while quite disconcerting for others. More than any other Marvel film, *Black Panther* is a reflection of the world we live in, and the world we are destined to live in if change does not happen (Muller, 2018).

The questions raised within the film aligned with present day discussions and debates focusing on issues of ownership, control, and power. Compelling questions it piques include: who are the rightful owners of objects collected as a result of colonialism and its legacies; who controls the narratives that give meaning to these collections; and who has the power to set museum agendas and prioritize whose voices count (International Council of Museums, 2019).

Although colonialism is often viewed as an archaic notion of the past, its global impact is still evident today, particularly as notions of “American exceptionalism” and nationalism continue to gain momentum among political leaders in the western world. Such hubris is

evidenced by the arrogance of the 45th President of the United States who criticized leaders of Greenland when his offer to purchase the sovereign nation was flatly refused. His ignorance and audacity are a stark reminder that the colonial past is in many ways a prologue to the challenges we face today.

Likewise, in the summer of 2018, the British government refused to return sacred stolen items to their rightful owners, the sovereign nation of Ethiopia. This is in contrast to many other European countries which have acquiesced, following decades of fierce debate, and agreed to return treasures stolen during the colonial era. But more than 150 years after the invasion of Maqdala, Ethiopia, during which the British army looted thousands of valuables, requiring 15 elephants and 200 mules to transport them all in 1868.

> Among the stolen treasures were a gold crown, a gold chalice, royal and ecclesiastic vestments, shields and arms, a royal wedding dress, processional crosses, gold and silver jewelry, illustrated manuscripts and priceless Christian plaques, known as tablets, representing the sacred Ark of the Covenant. But Britain still owns all Ethiopia's treasures and is refusing to return them; only agreeing to return a lock of hair belonging to Emperor Tewodros II, who claimed a bloodline which dated back to the biblical King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. (Charleston, 2019)

For Ethiopians, the treasures represent much more than an invasion; they signify a world of Ethiopian history that was stolen from them. According to human rights scholar, Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, "The war was imperial aggression against the King of Ethiopia. The stolen treasures amount to pure vandalism, a theft of knowledge and a crime against the current Ethiopian generation who are dispossessed of their intellectual heritage and history," thus far, the British have refused, offering only to consider the possibility of a long-term loan to the Ethiopian government (Charleston, 2019, para. 38).

Figure 1.1

Twitter Post from @AftricaRepublic

Similarly, a report commissioned by French President Emmanuel Macron states that many of the 46,000 items in the Africa collection in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris were acquired with a "degree of duress" from the west African state of Benin in 1892. But the authors of the report recommended much more than that: they advised that all objects removed without consent from Africa and sent to France should be permanently returned if the countries of origin ask for them (Charleston, 2019).

During the summer of 2019, various cultural heritage sites and institutions paused to commemorate or acknowledge the arrival of the first enslaved Africans to the British colony of what became known as Jamestown, Virginia. The 400-year commemoration of the founding of the Jamestown colony was the subject of a recent *New York Times'* publication called, "The 1619

Project," which endeavored to provide a more inclusive account of American history by centering the experiences of enslaved persons of African descent.

*"*The 1619 Project" generated a great deal of acclaim, including the awarding of a 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary to project creator, Nikole Hannah-Jones. But it was also plagued by negative criticism, albeit tenuous, which only intensified following its national commendation. The decision by the Pulitzer Prize board to award Hannah-Jones for her provocative and personal essay, which seeks to place the enslavement of Africans at the center of America's story, prompting public conversation about the nation's founding and evolution (Pulitzer Prize, 2020) was immediately challenged.

For instance, 21 self-described prominent historians penned an open letter to the Pulitzer Prize board calling for Hannah-Jones' award to be rescinded for "attempting to alter the historical record in a manner intended to deceive the public" (Wood, 2020, para. 8). In a *Forbes* magazine article entitled, "Ideology Over Excellence," Patricia Barnes (2020), questioned the integrity of the Pulitzer Prize board, citing its racial makeup and noting the two African-Americans who served on the 7-member board as evidence of alleged bias in awarding the prize to *"*The 1619 Project." The Pulitzer Prize-winning essay and subsequent companion curriculum reignited fierce debates about representation, voice, and broader interpretations of the American historical record.

This represents a recurring episode in the decades-long battleground of the culture wars in which some insist on advancing a sanitized narrative of a nation founded by exceptional men, rather than facing the truth about the inhumaneness of our collective history. The "culture wars" of the past century still persist today, as tensions over which cultural identities and voices qualify for inclusion within national narratives continue to rise. Deliberations about historical memory,

access to power, and prioritization of certain narratives require greater scrutiny and critical analysis in museums globally. The very nature of museum work, selecting which objects to collect and whose memories to preserve—or not, deciding whose stories was be told—or not, and not least, defining which voices are worthy of being heard in the great human choir of history speaks of a great deal of power (Brekke, 2019). It is therefore not unreasonable to expect museums to be held morally accountable as institutions with great power comes great responsibility (Hein, 2011).

Origins of Heritage Activism

Although the African American struggle to establish and enjoy full American citizenship gained significant momentum during the post-Civil War/Reconstruction era, active resistance to oppression and demands for civil rights originate from the moment enslaved Africans are stolen, shackled, and shipped from their ancestral lands to colonies throughout the Western Hemisphere. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, these acts of resistance often took the form of uprisings, among persons endeavoring to self-emancipate, as a result of being held captive against their will. Among the earliest documented attempts to preserve African American history from the perspective of the oppressed, were autobiographies of Africans in America—once known as "slave narratives"—whose authors sought to record their own stories for posterity. Some were published in Spanish and Dutch as early as the 1500s (Ruffins & Ruffins, 2007).

The struggle to combat racialized oppression persists in the 19th century, among formerly enslaved and free-born persons of African descent. For instance, in the early 1800s, improvement societies developed a historical consciousness that not only helped to refute racist stereotypes, but also helped to integrate formerly enslaved persons who self-emancipated [sometimes referred to as *runaways*] and other free-born men and women into northern black communities (Stewart

& Ruffins, 1986), such as Boston and Philadelphia, where people of African descent could find support and refuge from the depravity of chattel slavery. One such group known as the *Reading Room Society* was founded in 1828, providing a besieged Black population with a heroic view of the past, which elevated the history of Africa to inspire achievement through lectures, book collections, and sponsored debates (Stewart & Ruffins, 1986).

By the mid-19th century, White allied individuals and organizations who were opposed to slavery seized the opportunity to institutionalize the education of African descendent people in direct opposition to racist notions of eugenics and other distorted views of black intellectual capacity perpetuated by the peculiar institution of slavery. During the 1830s slave narratives became more widespread in the United States when abolitionist organizations published dozens each year, constituting some of the earliest white efforts to preserve and disseminate African American history (Ruffins & Ruffins, 2007).

In 1837, the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, subsequently renamed Cheney University, was the first institution of higher learning made fully accessible to African Americans (Tomar, 2018). Although providing access to literacy skills and a formal education to any black person was illegal in the United States at the time, education remained the primary path to social liberation for free-born and formerly enslaved African Americans. Cheney University was the first in a long and proud line of Historically Black Colleges Universities (HBCUs) such as, Ashmun Institute in 1854 (later renamed Lincoln University), Wilberforce University in 1856, and the Raleigh Institute in 1865 (later renamed Shaw University), all of which recognized the connection between education and racial equality (Tomar, 2018).

> Throughout the 19th century, African Americans recorded their contributions to the society and proudly extolled their heritage as wiling patriots, as evidenced by the activism and agitation by Black Bostonians, who in 1851, launched a 37-year campaign

> to establish a permanent marker in memory of Revolutionary War hero, Crispus Attucks, which was finally dedicated by the city of Boston in 1888. (Horton & Crew, 1989)

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring, “All persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, thenceforward and forever free” (Lincoln, 1863). Yet it took two additional years for news of emancipation to finally reach inhabitants of southern states. Congress subsequently passed the 13th amendment abolishing slavery in the United States, on January 31, 1865. In the aftermath of a five-year Civil War between the American north and south, battle-damaged cities throughout the country began the process of rebuilding the nation and navigating the concept of freedom among newly emancipated and alongside free-born Blacks.

This period of history, known as Reconstruction, involved a swift effort to secure voting rights for African American men and the protection of civil rights for Black Americans. Though it only lasted 14 years, it was marked by the significant emergence of America’s first historically Black institutions, including churches, businesses, one-room school houses, colleges and theological seminaries. The abrupt end of the Reconstruction Era was marked by a radical period of state sanctioned segregation along with vigilante racial aggression often referred to as Jim Crow. Southern legislatures begin implementing new laws, which systematically dismantled the civil rights of Black citizens and effectively eliminated their ability to vote, hold office, or access public services for the next 100 years. The hard-won battles for civil and human rights in the form of amendments to the constitution, were an important legacy of the Reconstruction Era, which lay the foundation for the modern Civil Rights Era.

In 1868, the Hampton Institute (later University), opened the first museum to formally collect art and artifacts focused on African and African American fine art. Its creation represented a very courageous effort to shift perceptions of African derived art, history, and

culture. By the 1880s, when Cora Mae Folsom became the museum curator, she began collecting historical objects for a different purpose: to promote self-knowledge among Black and Indigenous (Native American) students (Stewart & Ruffins, 1986). The museum established at Hampton Institute concentrated on the history of Blacks abroad, particularly under the influence of William Sheppard, who was fascinated with the continent of Africa (Horton & Crew, 1989).

As an American of African descent, William Henry Sheppard, born in 1865 at the end of the Civil War, worked as a renowned Presbyterian missionary (Austin, 2005). When he went to the Congo in 1890 to convert his "unenlightened brethren," instead he discovered a complex and sophisticated country in the early phases of European colonization (Stewart & Ruffins, 1986). He then returned to Hampton with new perspective, teaching that association with Africa was essential to constructing a positive Black identity. Working together with Folsom, Sheppard amassed a collection of historical and anthropological African objects, which challenged the ideology of self-improvement through Eurocentric assimilation (Stewart & Ruffins, 1986).

Pioneers of Black Preservation (1900–1949)

Although the notion of preserving historical memory is in no way new, the Hampton Museum signified a shift in progress toward Black cultural preservation because of the intentional collection and curation of African derived art and material culture. As William Henry Sheppard observed, the necessity of telling a fuller more accurate history to contrast the dominant narrative of white supremacy and to imbue African descendant people with a sense of identity, accomplishment, and cultural pride.

Hampton graduate, Booker T. Washington (famed historian, author, and HBCU founder), served as the spokesman for Black-produced displays featured in a racially segregated section of the 1895 Cotton States International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia (A. Burns, 2013;

Gates-Moresi, 2003). Five years later, in 1900, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (an HBCU graduate, scholar, historian, and the first African American to receive a PhD from Harvard University, circa 1895), curated a series of photographs for the "American Negro" exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

The "American Negro" was a first-of-its-kind exhibition representing the myriad dimensions of Black life in America. Du Bois' work for the American Negro exhibit was extensive and much praised. At the time, W. E. B. Du Bois was a professor of sociology at the historically Black, Atlanta University (later renamed Clark Atlanta University), committed to combating racism with empirical evidence of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of African Americans (Smith, 1999).

Although neither Washington nor Du Bois' exhibitions were exclusively designed for use within Black Museums, they each demonstrated the adaptive efforts undertaken by Black intellectuals, scholars, and educators during the Reconstruction Era to capture, commemorate, and preserve African American history and culture. By the turn of the 20th century, the relationship between these two pioneering leaders began to falter, and they became personal and ideological foes whose public battle would engulf the movement for Black liberation and equity, sparking an ongoing debate of the best methods for countering white supremacy.

Washington went on to publish his highly regarded autobiography, *Up from Slavery.* By 1906 he celebrated the 25-year anniversary of turning his idea for an educational institution for the prodigy of the formerly enslaved, into the thriving 2,000-acre campus of Tuskegee Institute with an enrollment of over 1,500 students (Tuskegee University Archives, 2018). Likewise, W. E. B. Du Bois went on to publish his groundbreaking novel, *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, and

helped to establish the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.

Despite their ideological differences, the impact of Washington and DuBois' leadership in establishing spaces for Black intellectual pursuits and pathbreaking literary publications is most evident in their shared impact on subsequent generations of Black scholars, educators, and cultural preservationists. Their achievements were consummately embodied by a new generation of pioneers that soon emerged famed historian Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, the second Black person to earn a PhD from Harvard, who is often referred to as the *Father of Black History*. However, unlike Du Bois, whose parents and ancestors had long been free (prior to his birth), Carter G. Woodson, born in 1875, was the only person who was the child of formerly enslaved people to earn a PhD from Harvard (Ruffins, 2018).

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, also born in 1875, was the 15th among 17 children born to formerly enslaved parents, who became an acclaimed educator, first Black female college president, activist, and trusted advisor to numerous American presidents (Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman). For more than 50 years, Bethune was at the vanguard of Black progress (Jones, 2020). Woodson wanted to use Negro history to combat white racism and build self-esteem (Stewart & Ruffins, 1986) among the masses of Black people in the United States. Much like their pioneering predecessors, Bethune and Woodson worked to advance social, educational, political, and economic opportunities for African Americans.

In 1915, Woodson established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). In January 1916, he also founded *The Journal of Negro History*, which became the leading scholarly publication on African American life and history and enjoyed the distinction of

publishing original scholarly articles on all aspects of the African American experience for more than two centuries (ASALH, 2018).

By November of 1918, Black soldiers who had fought valiantly in the first World War, and having proven their loyalty to the U.S., despite having been forced to fight under the French flag, returned home seeking a "double victory" with the intent to enjoy the rights of full citizenship in their own country. Arriving on the heels of World War I, the project of the New Negro Renaissance (as the Harlem Renaissance was then called), sought to achieve through artistic expression the equality which African Americans had been denied in the social, economic, and political realms (Wall, 2016).

"The New Negro: An Interpretation," written by Alain Locke (1925) insisted upon a briskly modern attitude which reveled in its eclecticism, as literature, music, scholarship, and art all jostled beside stately pronouncements by the race's patriarch, Du Bois. The anthology was meant to signal a gutting and remaking of the black collective spirit. Locke would feed and discipline that spirit, playing the critic, publicist, taskmaster, and impresario to the movement's most luminous figures (Haslett, 2018).

Even a century later, the Harlem Renaissance, or New Negro Movement, is still deemed one of the most significant events in African American cultural and historical existence. While best known for its impact on literature, it touched every aspect of Black cultural expression, including visual arts, musical theater, jazz and blues music, and critical writing from the end of World War I through the Great Depression (Wintz, 2015).

Carter G. Woodson subsequently created Negro History Week beginning in 1926, which was the precursor to Negro/Black History Month. Woodson and the Association essentially created a public mechanism for increased exposure among African Americans to more accurate

versions of American history, accounts where their presence and agency was documented and affirmed (Ruffins, 2018).

Although it is difficult to pinpoint beginnings and endings of movements, the end of the Renaissance was arguably marked by the race riot that devastated Harlem in 1935 and sealed Harlem's transformation from "promised land" to ghetto, a designation it carried for the rest of the century (Wintz, 2015). The creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935 coincided with the Harlem race riot, under Roosevelt's New Deal. Almost immediately, the WPA's Federal Writers' Project began collecting interviews with formerly enslaved persons in nearly 20 states, thereby providing employment for some Black scholars such as Zora Neale Hurston (Stewart & Ruffins, 1986). Over a career that spanned more than 30 years, Zora Neale Hurston became one of the most successful and most significant Black woman writers of the first half of the 20th century (Boyd, 2021).

Under the WPA, policy varied so much from place to place, that in some communities, African American actors, writers, and artists in such cities as New York and Chicago received support for their activities, while in other localities, it was virtually impossible for a Black person to secure any benefits from the Roosevelt-era relief agencies (Franklin & Higginbotham, 2011). In the years following the end of World War II, the civil rights challenges plaguing the United States, continued to playout on the international stage. World War II service undergirded a new militancy among African American men who fought for freedom abroad only to face a battle for freedom at home (Fleming, 2018).

The Jim Crow system went to great lengths to impress upon Blacks that they were a subordinate population by forcing them to live in a separate inferior society (A. D. Morris, 1984). The system was further compounded by the constant threat of racial violence by domestic

terrorist organizations. White supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camellia used intimidation, force, ostracism in business and society, bribery at the polls, arson, and even murder to accomplish their deeds (Franklin, 1967). Racial segregation was the linchpin of Jim Crow, for it was designed as a tripartite system of domination to control Blacks politically, socially, and to exploit them economically, while setting Blacks off from the rest of humanity, and labeling them as an inferior race (A. D. Morris, 1984).

Social justice activism persists throughout the latter nineteenth and the majority of the 20th century in opposition to state sanctioned apartheid, also referred to as the era of Jim Crow. African Americans did not give up the fight to secure their rights following Reconstruction, but without federal intervention, Southern states were free to construct and codify an oppressive Jim Crow system that severely curtailed Blacks' rights and opportunities during the decades that followed (Reaven & Wong, 2018). Often excluded from white social, educational, and political systems, African American scholars, historians, and cultural leaders seized every opportunity they could to advance the interest of their culture to the benefit of their communities. As new educational institutions promoted the study of Black history, the struggle for equality continued in a more formal and structured fashion (Fleming, 2018).

As Jim Crow segregation and racial violence intensified across the nation, African Americans formed new organizations to demand enforcement of the civil rights protections guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments (Reaven & Wong, 2018). In 1948, Thurgood Marshall wrote in his letter to the editors of *The Dallas Morning News*:

> I think that before this country takes up the position that I must demand complete equality of right of citizens of all other countries throughout the world, we must first demonstrate our good faith by showing that in this country our Negro Americans are recognized as full citizens with complete equality. (Marshall, 1948)

By the time the beloved historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson dies in 1950, the hard-fought battles toward racial equity for America's Black citizenry were approaching a turning point.

The Genesis of a Movement (1950–1969)

"In the 1950s we noticed, there was a group of us, teachers and people who were interested in Black history." This was how the late teacher, artist, poet, and activist, Dr. Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs, recalled her role in what would become Chicago's DuSable Museum of African American History (Rocksborough-Smith, 2011, p. 26). In 1941, Margaret Burroughs also helped form the South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, the largest federal art project supported by the WPA, which helped to transform a brownstone on Michigan Avenue into a space dedicated to the creative work of Black artists (A. Burns, 2013).

Similar to her contemporary Margaret Burroughs, Elma Ina Lewis was an artist, educator, and bridge leader activist (McClure, 2012), often serving as an intermediary between local grassroots, community-based organizations and larger mainstream institutions. The strength of Lewis's activism lay, most significantly in her capacity to build institutions, such as the Elma Lewis School of the Fine Arts (ELSFA), which she founded in 1950 and the National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA) in 1968. Likewise, World War II veteran, Icabod Flewellen, moved to Cleveland where he established the Afro-American Cultural and Historical Society Museum in 1953, having returned from the war with a new sense of what it meant to be Black (Fleming, 2018).

The early group of founders and founding directors of African American museums also included people like: Margaret Burroughs, who founded the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art in 1961 (later renamed the DuSable Museum of African American History); Dr. Charles H. Wright, founder of the International Afro-American Museum in Detroit (later renamed the

Charles Wright Museum of African American History), John Kinard (Anacostia Museum), Joan Maynard (Society for the Preservation of Weeksville), demonstrating the strong and determined leadership in the life and journey of their institutions (Moore, 2018).

These institutions grew out of a desire to preserve what African Americans deem valuable by upholding the [generative] griot tradition and functioning as modern-day keepers of the culture (Fleming, 1994). These institutions were often organized without large donated collections, like many of their mainstream counterparts. They often did not have formal museum backgrounds, but they did have a deep, personal commitment to African American history and culture (Ruffins & Ruffins, 2007). They were named "museums" not for what they were but for what they aspired to be, much like Black colleges of the 19th century (Fleming, 2018).

> Perhaps, in the future, there was be some African history to teach. But at present there is none: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely, like the history of pre-Columbian America, darkness. And darkness is not a subject for history. I do not deny that men existed even in dark countries and dark centuries … but history, I believe, is essentially a form of movement, and purposive movement too … History, or rather the study of history, has a purpose. We study it … in order to discover how we came to where we are. And the present world has been shaped by European ideas and European technology which have shaken the non-European world out of its past—out of barbarism in Africa. (Fuglestad, 1992, pp. 309–311)

This quote from eminent historian Hugh Trevor-Roper's 1963 lecture series at the University of Sussex, was transmitted by BBC Television and later published as a book entitled, *The Rise of Christian Europe*, in which he proclaimed that at least precolonial Black Africa had no history (Fuglestad, 1992). The sentiment demonstrates the widely held belief, among the dominant culture and particularly within the academy, that people of African descent were a people without history. Many sites were established in defiance of western social ideologies and national narratives that actively undermined their purpose: to protect and preserve Black culture.

In 1969, leaders of these museums met for the first time in Detroit and began sharing resources and a network to support each other's efforts (A. Burns, 2013). By this time, there

were roughly a half-dozen Black Museums operating in cities across the U.S., such as Boston, Harlem, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. All of which were located in metropolitan cities that experienced a surge in their Black population during the first half of the 20th century due to the Great Migration. By the late 1960s, urban enclaves throughout the U.S. were erupting in civil unrests, though met with police violence, social activists demonstrated to amplify the need for systematic change because mere civil rights were not enough. The late 20th century Vietnam War served as a catalyst for mobilizing individuals who were opposed to the U.S. involvement in the destruction of Vietnamese communities abroad, while overlooking the needs of its own marginalized citizens.

A Black Museums Movement emerged among many of these cultural organizations in the 1960s and later that are, by intention, engaged in the practice of "participatory history" and culture (Mack, 2018). Participatory in this sense, meaning to be actively engaged in historic endeavors while engaged in the process of capturing and preserving the under-told or lesser-known histories Black people and historic Black enclaves. Many of the historic Black neighborhoods and community members which were permanently displaced or destroyed by the racially targeted urban renewal plans during the late 1960s. These spaces of African American memory were oftentimes saved from total erasure by Black Museum leaders and their persistent efforts to participate in the preservation of historic schools, businesses, cemeteries, and other sites.

Maintaining Momentum (1970–1999)

The Black Museum Movement emerged on the heels of the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Arts Movements, respectively, often out of necessity, to institutionalize, interpret, and share the complex history and cultural expressions of Black people. Though it seems astonishing

today, before about 1970, African Americans were simply missing from most official formulations of American history (Ruffins, 1998). The renaissance in Black history in the 1960s made the historic reality of the Afro-American experience more difficult to ignore totally (Horton & Crew, 1989).

What is often referred to as “African American or Black History” in a contemporary social context, was not viewed as historically relevant or worthy of inclusion in the academy by many Western and/or mainstream scholars, historians, or preservationists. Informed by the activism of the 20th century Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Arts movements, Black Museum founders were activists in local and national causes (Ruffins, 2018). The emphasis was no longer focused on integration, but Black Power, Black control, self-determination, and Black liberation (Fleming, 2018).

A number of Black Museum leaders also worked as visual and performing artists, poets, or art instructors before subsequently establishing cultural spaces, in some instances their own homes, for showcasing their creations and the work of other dynamic artists within the Black Arts community. Artists involved in the Black Arts Movement were adamant in their aim to reveal the particularities—struggles, strengths, and celebrations of African Americans through the creation of poetry, novels, visual art, and theater (Frederick, 2016).

The impact of these movements on the founders and directors of Black Museums cannot be understated. The African American museums that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s challenged and re-created new national memories and identities that incorporated the ideas, events, objects, and places tied to black history (A. Burns, 2013). Unfortunately, many museums have minimized the experience of Afro-Americans and their centrality to American history (Horton & Crew, 1989). The same issues that drove so many others in that time forged their

brand of leadership: the concern for the self-worth and education of the Black community, especially children (Moore, 2018).

By the late 1970s, there existed sufficient numbers of Black Museums that the early founders of these museums decided to develop a formal structure to serve the needs of these emerging institutions (Fleming, 2018). The founders and early members of what became the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) also created new realities out of the opportunities generated by the modern Civil Rights Movement, the urban rebellions and the political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s (Ruffins, 2018). These leaders remained responsive to the needs of their local communities and highly adaptive to the need for increased representation of Black people at all levels of the cultural sector.

By 1978, this network was formerly chartered as the African American Museums Association (AAMA). AAMA was originally housed at the Roxbury, Massachusetts, Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists under the association's first president, Barry Gaither (Fleming, 2018). Founding generations of Black Museum leaders recognized the need for collective effort and voice, collective strategic planning and imagining a collective future (Mack, 2018).

The change agents leading the Black Museum Movement deployed collaborative networks, strategic alliances, and grassroots efforts to empower disenfranchised individuals and alter oppressive systems. Our understanding of cultural traditions nurtures their continuity (Dickerson, 1988). In 1998, the AAMA underwent a restructuring and name change to the Association of African American Museums (AAAM), recently celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2018 and boasting over 360 members throughout the U.S. and Caribbean.

Over time, the Black Museum Movement induced mainstream institutions to integrate African American history and culture into their own exhibits and educational programs (A. Burns, 2013). The Black Museum leaders, who were the first to integrate all white spaces in the late 20th century, often endured the challenges of racial exclusion economic inequality, and even having their work regarded as culturally irrelevant. The changes wrought by the Civil Rights Movement stimulated historically white museums to reach out to the Black community by hiring Black professionals, collecting and exhibiting Black history and culture (Fleming, 2018). Their social activism subsequently resulted in the gradual integration of mainstream spaces, particularly those receiving public or taxpayer funding, to take steps toward diversifying their staff, oftentimes under duress or the threat of legal action.

The vast majority of mainstream museums in the U.S. and abroad were founded as repositories for the art and material culture collections of wealthy elites, boasting endowments that ensured more than adequate resources to maintain their collections and staff, yet missing a critical connection to their audience the visiting public and the surrounding communities they are uniquely positioned to serve. Whereas, many of the first Black Museums founded in the United States were established without any collections, they instead remained committed to community empowerment through historical knowledge sharing. The African American museums that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s challenged and re-created new national memories and identities that incorporated the ideas, events, objects, and places tied to Black history (A. Burns, 2013). The Black community has come to learn and appreciate that museums are rewarding spaces for understanding who we are as a people, repositories for what we wish to remember about our past, and the values we hope to pass on to our descendants (Fleming, 2018).

Museums for a New Century (2000 and beyond)

Black Museums emerged within predominately Black neighborhoods as a result of individual leaders who saw a need for change and responded by catalyzing the preservation of positive cultural narratives in spaces that were conducive for creative expression and positive identity formation. The tangible evidence of a culture is seen in its values and beliefs, revealing its potential for further development (Dickerson, 1988). Much of the pioneering achievements of these leaders helped to chart a path toward greater opportunity for subsequent generations of Black Museum practitioners.

Nonetheless, an on-going debate within the ranks of AAMA (later AAAM) unfolded over whether it was an association for Black museums and Black Museum professionals, or whether it was an organization serving all museums and museum professionals who had an interest in preserving and exhibiting Black history and culture (Fleming, 2018). Although chartered 40 years ago, AAAM's core mission remains to serve as the voice of the Black Museum Movement through the sharing of best practices, and collective advocacy for equitable resource distribution.

In 1916, a group of African American leaders organized a not-for-profit corporation that would endeavor to construct a National Memorial Building dedicated as a tribute to the Negro's contribution to the achievements of America (Wilkins, 2016). The opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in 2016 represented the fulfillment of a legislative policy initiative initially proposed to Congress a century prior, in 1916. Veteran civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis, D-GA., introduced legislation every year for 15 years in Congress, since 1988, to create the museum, but in every session, for one reason or another, the measure failed in the House or Senate (Hammer, 2003).

The landmark legislation known as the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act (2003) not only mandated the creation of a new Smithsonian Museum to be constructed on America's front lawn—the National Mall—in Washington, D.C., it included a first-of-its-kind federal funding mechanism. The bill also called for the museum to establish scholarships to assist individuals pursuing a career in the study of African American life, art, history, and culture; for the establishment of a grant program in cooperation with other museums, historical societies and educational institutions (Hammer, 2003).

Back in the 1980s, John Kinard and Rowena Stewart suggested that Congress establish a $50 million endowment to fund preexisting Black Museums, but the commission did not include the AAMA recommendation for an endowment in the final bill (Fleming, 2018). However, the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act (2003) authorized up to 15 million dollars in federal funding targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities, museums, libraries, archives, historical societies, and institutions with a demonstrated commitment to African American educational, cultural, historical, or artistic preservation, to be administered through the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) using a competitive application process called the African American History and Culture annual grant program.

According to a 2004 Report on African American History & Culture Museums, *Strategic Crossroads and New Opportunities,* the establishment of funding criteria for the African American History and Culture grant program in 2006 directly resulted from a convening of 40 Black Museum leaders and practitioners selected from among AAAM members and practitioners. Contrary to what some feared, the museum has taken a proactive approach to working with African American museums around the country supporting workshops, seminars, and internships for Black Museum professionals (Fleming, 2018). The passage of the watershed

legislation was essential to creating pathways for emerging museum practitioners to seize employment opportunities within Black Museums, while developing a pipeline of Black cultural practitioners through organizations like AAAM and informal networks of annual recipients of the new grant.

A 2016 publication by Robert L. Wilkins entitled, *Long Road to Hard Truth: The 100 Year Mission to Create the National Museum of African American History and Culture,* details the heroic efforts of countless African American leaders and White allies to navigate legislative obstacles and ultimately gain passage of the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act (2003). *Long Road to Hard Truth* concludes that the only reason this museum finally became a reality is that an unlikely, bipartisan coalition of political leaders had the courage and wisdom to declare that America could not, and should not, continue to evade the hard truth (Wilkins, 2016).

However, the publication provided minimal references to the Black Museum leaders who worked for decades in service to the Black Museum field to gain substantial federal funding ensuring the enactment of this meaningful legislation. Instead, the author focused on the roles of notable figures, such as James Baldwin, Hank Aaron, Cicely Tyson, and other more recognizable history makers. But concentration on exceptional Black people ignores the lesser-known but no less significant makers of Afro-American and American history (Horton & Crew, 1989). Therefore, I was left with a desire for much more insight on the role of leaders whose footsteps I desired to emulate through my work as both a museum practitioner and researcher.

Equally important to the establishment of spaces of liberation for the benefit of African descendent communities are the strategic efforts undertaken by these leaders to forge relationships and subsequently a more formal alliance among Black Museum founders, directors,

and practitioners. For over 40 years, AAAM has provided a refuge where Black Museum practitioners find collegial support in a non-competitive, team-oriented environment. The Association also serves a professional advocacy organization representing the interests of Black Museum founders, founding directors and pioneering practitioners within mainstream and/or historically white organizations, including the Smithsonian Institution.

On September 24, 2016, museum practitioners across the globe celebrated the opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D. C. The nation's nineteenth Smithsonian Institution opened with remarkable acclaim. Yet few realized it was the culmination of a 100-year effort to commemorate and accurately illustrate the significance of African descendent people to America's national historical narrative. If true diversity leadership is to exist within the administrative rankings at predominately White institutions, the conceptualization and inclusion of minority experiences must not only inform stakeholders but also shape the recruitment, retention, and assessment of minority representation (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Nonetheless, the museum field continues to grapple with the type of activism they must undertake to remain relevant spaces for reflecting societal change while sustaining historic collections, offering dynamic public programming, and places where history exploration occurs through a multitude of perspectives.

Applicability and Limitations of Literature

Following an in-depth review of literature related to Black Museum practitioners leading change through the establishment of museums, cultural institutions, and African American sites of memory, I found the vast majority of publications focused on the accomplishments of exceptional Black leaders like W.E.B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington, Carter G. Woodson, and Congressman John Lewis. Although their achievements are notable, much of what I read ignored

or diminished the role of women occupying similar positions and provided only minimal mention of contemporary Black Museum leaders, usually by name and institution.

A majority of literature reviewed for the study, focusing specifically on the experiences of Black Museum leaders, was obtained from two primary sources: the first publication, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* by Andrea Burns, (2013) and the second from a special edition of *The Public Historian*, a quarterly journal published by the National Council on Public History, Volume 40, *The State of Black Museums: Historiography Commemorating the Founding and Existence of Black Museums Over Four Decades* (2018).

Andrea Burns (2013) seminal research study tracing the public history of the Black Museum Movement provides rich context on the emergence of these first-of-their kind institutions. The first chapter provides a synopsis of the origin stories of three neighborhood museums established between 1961 and 1976 and led by African American directors. The second, third, and fourth chapters of the publication present an in-depth case study analysis of the African American Museum of Philadelphia (AAMP) while providing detailed insights as to the impact of community perception, municipal government policies, and the socioeconomic and political constraints placed upon the institution.

Burn's (2013) research provides a very helpful reference for the collective action which led to the establishment of these institutions, but it does not provide ample insight into the lived experiences of the respective museum leaders. In fact, the author places particular emphasis on the influence of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements, rather than the leaders responsible for mobilizing the subsequent creation of each museum themselves. The author approaches the Black Museum Movement by examining the origin stories of three prominent neighborhood

museums founded between 1961 and 1967: the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago; the International Afro-American Museum in Detroit; and the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in Washington, D.C.

> While single individuals, such as Margaret Burroughs in Chicago or Charles Wright in Detroit, may have spearheaded the creation of these museums, the institutions emerged as a culmination of the spaces carved out by generations of local black community organizations. Because of this, the stories of these museums must be considered in the context of the neighborhoods and cities in which they originated. (A. Burns, 2013, p. 11)

The publication concludes with a focus on the future of the Black Museum Movement through the lens of the potential impact of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, which had recently completed a ground-breaking ceremony to launch construction of the building in 2012, prior the debut of Burns' trailblazing publication in 2013. However, the qualitative case study analysis of the Black Museum Movement provided very limited insight on the leaders responsible for advancing the movement or their personal approach to accomplishing their organizational development efforts. In this way, her research took a macro-view of the movement, while the author utilized a micro or focused view of the AAMP, enabling the reader to better understand the social and political climate of the era.

The empirical contribution Andrea Burns (2013) made to the study of the Black Museum Movement is essential. It is important to note that her qualitative study made an important contribution to the museum field in that it has been adopted as requisite reading material for the vast majority of museum studies programs in the nation. Her publication undoubtedly nourished my curiosity by spawning countless questions that required additional research to answer, while providing insight into the intricate challenges faced in the establishment of the Black Museums she profiled. Burns (2013) qualitative research simultaneously contributed to our understanding of the Black Museum Movement, while its gaps indicate a need for further research. My research study aimed to fulfill this need by seeking to understand the role of leaders within the movement,

based upon their personal reflections and secondary source data about their professional contributions to the museum field.

The second prominently sourced publication, included in this study, debuted in 2018 to commemorate AAAM's 40th anniversary year. My departmental leader at NMAAHC, Dr. Deborah Mack, the Associate Director for the Office of Strategic Partnerships, edited the special issue, along with John S. Welch and James F. Brooks, and ultimately compiled one of the most thorough collections of reflective essays by eminent scholars, practitioners, and public historians who represented the foremost scholars in the contemporary museum field. The editors organized 15 leaders from the museum field and cultural sector to contribute essays which illuminated the 40-year progression of the Black Museum Movement. Although the special edition is one of the most comprehensive compilations of literature related to the history of Black Museums, it is not intended to emphasize the role of these leaders exclusively, rather it is organized to commemorate the progress of these institutions between 1978 and 2018.

There were three essays within the publication authored by Fath Davis Ruffins, Dr. John Fleming, and Juanita Moore, respectively, which anchored my study and are most frequently cited in this literature review, including: *The Impact of Social Movements on the Development of African American Museums* (Fleming, 2018); *Transitions in Time: Leadership and Governance in African American Museums* (Moore, 2018); and *Building Homes for Black History: Museum Founders, Founding Directors, and Pioneers, 1915–95* (Ruffins, 2018). John Fleming's (2018) essay, *The Impact of Social Movements on the Development of African American Museums,* examines how the Civil Rights, Black Power, Black Arts, and Black Studies movements helped advance social and political change, which in turn spurred the development of Black Museums as formal institutions for preserving Black culture. The author asserts that:

> We are now the keepers of our heritage knowledge, group identity, and cultural memory. We owe much gratitude to the early keepers of our cultural heritage who were spurred by the freedom struggles to preserve our past. All believed that it was up to African Americans to determine how we would remember the past, what values would be preserved, and that curating the past would transform the lives of generations to come. (John Fleming, 2018, p. 72)

Juanita Moore's (2018) essay, *Transitions in Time: Leadership and Governance in African American Museums,* focuses on leadership, succession, and governance in African American museums. The essay examines the myriad challenges faced by Black Museums leaders to establish, grow, and sustain cultural institutions. The author concludes that:

> Although the model for what Black museums can and should be has evolved over time, what has not changed is the need for strong leadership, at both the executive and board level, nor the need for the support of our community. Since we have a road map that shows some success, some missteps, some challenges, and some opportunities, we should use it. (Moore, 2018, p. 89)

Fath Davis Ruffins (2018) essay, *Building Homes for Black History: Museum Founders, Founding Directors, and Pioneers, 1915–95,* explores the cultural forces that shaped the development of the post 1945 founders, founding directors of African American museums, and the pioneers at historically white institutions, such as the Smithsonian. All shaped by the "Negro Canon" whose principal components were the African American political and cultural activists of the earlier 20th century and their exposure to the society of HBCUs (Ruffins, 2018, p. 13).

These experiences helped them creatively adapt to the rapidly shifting socio-political environment of the postwar era to change forever the cultural landscape of the U.S. The author affirms that:

> The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) probably would not exist without the forty years of struggle that these founders and pioneers performed. We should view these individuals and their museums as "crucial contributors" to the Black consciousness movement. These formidable individuals and their institutions provided permanent homes for Black history, chronicling African American culture in unprecedented fashion. (Ruffins, 2018, p. 42)

Much of their writing elevates the significant role of Black Museum movement pioneers such as Margaret Burroughs, Charles H. Wright, Rowena Stewart, Joan Maynard, and John Kinard, all of whom are deceased. These pioneers mentored them and their generational cohort during the late 1970s, 80s, and 90s, providing guidance as they emerged into their first executive leadership roles. Hence, the essays included in the 2018 special edition affirm the leadership legacy of these early pioneers to ensure they are never forgotten.

Fath Davis Ruffins, Dr. John Fleming, and Juanita Moore, along with several others from their generational cohort, represent some of the most astute thought-leaders in the museum field. In addition to being a celebrated scholar and author, Fath Davis Ruffins was among the first curators of color to be hired by the Smithsonian Institution. In addition to prolific curatorial work in exhibits across the country, she has authored numerous articles elevating the role of Black Museums and their leaders in the progression of public history. Dr. John Fleming is a former board president of AAAM and holds the distinction of having led three National Museums, including serving as the Director-in-Residence of the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville, Tennessee. Juanita Moore, having served the Black Museum movement for over 40 years, in addition to serving on the AAAM board of directors, also led four of the largest African American Museums in the country while simultaneously helping to train the next two generations of emerging Black Museum practitioners.

One of the major takeaways from this literature review so far has been the observation of the amount of literature that has been devoted to the early creation of Black Museum institutions, with an absence of focus on the persons and policies that are responsible for sustaining them, along with a dearth of literature about how they sustained their respective institutions. The founding directors of Black Museums are undoubtedly worthy of perpetual mention and

recognition as the first-generation leaders who brought about lasting change. However, the contributing authors to the 2018 *Public Historian* journal are among the second generation of leaders, all of whom are no less than 60-years of age, and their contributions deserve to be elevated even as they continue working, writing, and leading these institutions. Therefore, my research aims to address the dearth of literature to broaden narratives and provide a more nuanced understanding of the institution-building efforts of Black Museum leaders.

Given the dearth of existing literature, these two notable publications do not constitute a sufficient amount of information on the abundant contributions of Black Museum leaders, nor did they capture the full extent of context-rich experiences of these leaders in their own words. Given the combined expertise and 40 years of demonstrated competence in writing and contributing to the evolution of Black Museums, I think there is much to be gained from an investigation of their leadership approach and valuable lessons that can be drawn from their lived experiences.

Connecting Museum Activism to Social Movement Theory

Black Museum founders, directors, and leaders created new cultural and historical organizations through ongoing local, cultural, and historical activism. Leaders of the Black Museum Movement were not simply influenced by the social activism of the Black Freedom struggle, Black Museum were a by-product of these movements and inextricably linked to the cultural production of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements which spawned institutional activism to establish independent Black museums, galleries, and cultural sites, along with academic activism to implement Black Studies curriculum in institutions of higher education.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the struggle for racial equality inspired a movement within the Black community to create museums that would make history and culture of African America

more “public” (A. Burns, 2013). They often employed diverse strategies—social and professional acts of resistance—gleaned from prior social movements, which helped catalyze, mobilize, and inspire the establishment of spaces celebrating Black culture and achievement.

Social movements emerged as a result of the efforts of purposeful actors (individuals, organizations) to assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action (Rochon, 1998). Initiated in hopeful response to conditions adherents deem intolerable, social movement participants make moral claims based on renewed personal identities, collective identities, and public action (Ganz, 2010).

Social movements were theorized to be relatively spontaneous and unstructured, with participants often portrayed as nonrational actors functioning outside of normative constraints and propelled by high levels of strain (A. D. Morris, 1984) that were considered discontinuous with institutional and organizational behavior (A. D. Morris, 1999). Ultimately, Social Movement Theory (SMT) evolved due to the retrospective work of scholars who challenged the applicability of classical collective behavior theories when applied to the modern Civil Rights Movement. SMT scholars began challenging classical perspectives of collective behavior based on the organizational strategy, planning, and continuity employed by African Americans committed to dismantling racially oppressive systems.

Despite the relevant connection between leadership studies and sociology (Ganz, 2010), social movement scholars have, with few exceptions, avoided the work of engaging in comparative research projects to determine if synthesis between the two disciplines can be achieved (Barker et al., 2001; Ganz, 2000, 2010; Knoke & Prensky, 1984; A. D. Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). The role of leadership in social movements goes well beyond that of the

stereotypical charismatic public persona, with whom they are often identified, in some cases those who do leadership work are called organizers and sometimes they are simply called leaders (Ganz, 2010).

Leadership in Social Movements

This section explores the ways leadership is described in Social Movement Theory. I have reviewed material on Social Movement Theory and my sense is that it may not explain everything that emerges from the oral history interview data. However, it has provided me with useful guiderails and a theoretical framework to gain understanding of each of the interviewees' responses.

According to Ganz (2010), social movements are organized by identifying, recruiting, and developing leadership at all levels. This leadership forges a social movement community and mobilizes its resources, a primary source of social movement power (Ganz, 2014, p. 6). Social movements emerge as a result of purposeful actors (individuals, organizations) to assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action (Rochon, 1998).

Because social movements were dynamic, participatory, and organized primarily to celebrate collective identity and assert public voice, their structures of participation, decision making, and accountability are more like those of other civic associations that celebrate collective identity (churches, for example) or assert public voice (advocacy groups) than of those that produce goods or services (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Schiflett & Zey, 1990).

They interact with constituents, not customers or clients (Gecan, 2004). Authority rests on moral persuasion more than on economic or political coercion (Ganz, 2010). Outputs depend on the motivated, committed, and voluntary participation of members and supports (Knoke &

Prensky, 1984). Social movements have often served as incubators for the development of leaders in the same way that historically Black churches, student groups, and civic/community organization incubated the Civil Rights movement (McAdam, 1999; A. D. Morris, 1984). In a pathbreaking *Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement*, Aldon Morris (1999) asserted that:

> Prior the Civil Rights Movement, social movement scholars formulated collective behavior and related theories to explain what they assumed to be the spontaneous, non-rational, and unstructured characteristics of social movement phenomena. The Civil Rights Movement played a key role in generating a paradigmatic shift in SMT, relying on resource mobilization and political process theories to reconceptualize social movements by stressing their organized, rational, institutional, and political features. (A. D. Morris, 1999, p. 517)

As I conducted more focused research on the role of leaders within this theoretical framework, it became clear that SMT alone does not provide a sufficient theoretical lens by which to analyze or interpret the interview responses of leaders within the Black Museum Movement. However, what I found most instructive about Social Movement Theory literature was the useful roadmap or template it provided for the ways in which an existing theory can been challenged and ultimately changed to incorporate new understandings by expanding empirical studies of under-represented and marginalized voices.

Activism as Leadership

Following in the footsteps of earlier figures and movements, in the 1950s and 1960s, these Black Museum pioneers viewed art and music as valuable weapons to help fight social oppression and the internalized belief that Black people were intellectually inferior, with no significant history or culture (Ruffins, 2018). Black Museum leaders utilized informal networks and formal alliances in leveraging collective power and multi-institutional representation to influence policy formation and change within the broader American cultural sector.

Black Museum leaders emerge while demonstrating their adaptive capacity to succeed in institutionalizing visual art, intangible history, and cultural traditions which communicate the uniqueness of the African American experience in ways that were relatable and responsive to the needs of their communities. Often excluded from white social, educational, and political systems, African American scholars, historians, and thought leaders seized every opportunity to advance the interest of their culture to the benefit of their communities.

Although the segregationist policies of the 1870s remained in place for a century, by the mid-1960s, numerous legal challenges to the Voting Rights Act (1963) and the National Civil Rights Act (1964) made their way to the Supreme Court and finally began to serve as the basis for change in both federal and state policy, very slowly making their way into local policy and practice. Black Museum founders, directors, and curators challenged the dominant culture and oppressive systems at a time when their efforts echoed the objectives of the ongoing struggle for racial equity, articulated by the Black Freedom Movements of that era, resulting in their prolific work not being recognized or even considered by the organizational leadership theorists of their time.

It is important to note that the pioneering work these individuals contributed was not recognized as "leadership" at the time. The leadership styles they embodied and the organizations they established were considered an anti-American nuisance and were often opposed by the municipalities in which they emerge. As Alicia Garza, co-creator of the Black Lives Matter Global Network, shared in a recent interview:

> The thing to remember from that time is that these Movements that people valorize so much today were not valorized by people in the time when they were active. People did not *love* Martin Luther King back when Martin Luther King was talking about going to the top of the mountain. They killed him. He was not only assassinated, but for many people in our own communities, we were told that he was too radical or that he was stirring up trouble. (Jackson, 2021)

Nevertheless, these leaders forged ahead, opening Black museums with what few resources were available. As it was for the founders and the leaders who followed, for many people, the work they performed in African American museums was more than a job—it was a commitment to a cause, it was their calling, to impact people and the community (Moore, 2018).

Unlike the evolutionary journey of historically white institutions, the creation of Black institutions to preserve African American culture originated in and found sustenance in the struggle for freedom and equality (Fleming, 2018). Despite the constraints of institution-building in a segregated society, Black Museum leaders persisted by channeling the momentum of extant social movements into institutions promoting Black art, history, culture to provide counternarratives and encourage positive identity formation in opposition to dominant narratives and oppressive social systems.

Limitations of Leadership Literature

During my doctoral journey, I was introduced to a leadership theory which I believed might help to shed light on how organizational change was accomplished by the Black Museum leaders functioning within challenging social, political, and economic contexts. Complexity science suggested a different paradigm for leadership—one that framed leadership as a complex interactive dynamic from which adaptive outcomes (e.g., learning, innovation, and adaptability) emerge (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Complexity Leadership Theory (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) is grounded in the notion that leadership is an emergent event or an outcome of relational interactions among individuals or groups of individuals, who resonate through sharing common interests, knowledge and/or goals, due to their history of interaction and sharing of worldviews (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

One distinct characteristic of CLT is based on the concept of a Complex Adaptive System (CAS), wherein leadership is seen not only as one holding position and authority, but also as an emergent, interactive dynamic—a complex interplay from which a collective impetus for action [occurs] (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Leaders of the Black Museum Movement clearly demonstrate their understanding of the complex interplay between multiple leadership approaches, requisite in the disruption or transformation of any social system. The CAS framework includes three entangled leadership roles (i.e., adaptive leadership, administrative leadership, and enabling leadership) that reflected a dynamic relationship between the bureaucratic, administrative functions of the organization and the emergent, informal dynamics of complex adaptive systems (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

According to Cilliers (1998), Complex Adaptive Systems are different from systems that are merely complicated. If the Black Museum Movement could be described in terms of individual museums, or even those sites that were established during a significant historical era of social activism (Abolitionists Era, Reconstruction Era, Civil Rights Era, etc.), then it would simply be considered complicated. If a system can be described in terms of its individual constituents (even if there are a huge number of constituents), it is merely complicated; if the interactions among the constituents of the system, and the interaction between the system and its environment, are of such a nature that the system as a whole cannot be fully understood simply by analyzing its components, it is complex (Cilliers, 1998; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

The establishment of Black Museums during an era of state-sanctioned racial apartheid and the social, economic, political, and systemic consequences of racially oppressive policies, reveal an environment and system which cannot be described simply by an analysis of its components, thereby making it complex. Hence, it would seem possible that the Black Museum

Movement may have functioned as a Complex Adaptive System (CAS). Those individuals who advanced the Black Museum Movement also may have deployed collaborative networks, strategic alliances, and grassroots efforts to empower disenfranchised individuals and alter oppressive systems, which may have necessitated the use of certain enabling, administrative, or adaptive leadership skills.

But the courageous actions taken by individuals during significant eras of social activism and racial justice movements within the United States, were not characterized as leadership by mainstream society or the white-male dominated environment of academe. Instead, they were often viewed as radicals, disrupters, or militants, and their institutions did not receive equitable funding support from local or state government sources, like their mainstream counterparts.

> These folks who were always leaders but who have been erased from the popular sanitized history, and their real focus on community and the forming of relationships and the maintaining of relationships, and even community joy and fun alongside the activism and radicalism. (Jackson, 2021, p.12)

Leadership studies research and theorizing on organizational development and more contemporary theories of complexity science have yet to identify the process or enabling conditions which account for the prolific work of these leaders and their institution-building efforts that resulted in the establishment of Black Museums. This gap in leadership studies literature reflects a deficit in empirical data on the organizational impact of community-focused institutions that emerge as a result of social activism, while producing, preserving, or promoting services which balance the advancement of intrinsic value and collective social good rather than a hierarchical focus on follower output and business profitability.

Although CLT provides a new foundation for explaining the constructive process of collective action as well as the influential “behaviors” of collective actors (Lichtenstein et al., 2006), and it redirects emphasis away from the individual as leader without diminishing the

importance of leadership as an organizational phenomenon (Hazy 2007; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Uhl-Bien, 2003; Uhl-Bien et al., 2004), leaders of the Black Museum Movement were embodying a form of leadership in the mid-20th century, with a keen awareness of the complexities of navigating racially oppressive systems while collaborating formally and informally, long before these contemporary theories of leadership existed.

While an abundance of literature exists on the contributions of African Americans to society, a dearth of empirical data, industry publications, case studies, and other literature exists on the contributions of Black Museum leaders and their organizational development efforts to establish cultural institutions. My study addresses this omission by centering the context-rich of Black leaders based on their personal accounts of leading path-breaking cultural institutions. It sought to unearth and explicate strategies employed by Black leaders, which pre-dated any "modern" conceptualizations of leadership as a complex or highly collaborative activity.

My desire to situate my research within an existing theoretical framework led me to investigate multi-disciplinary theories of the intersection of race and leadership. Not satisfied with complexity leadership theory (CLT) or social movement theory (SMT), I continued searching for a lens by which to critically analyze the leadership experiences of museum founders and executives who were not esteemed as leaders, in conventional terms, due to the racial hierarchy that dominated all U.S. social systems throughout the 20th century.

Given the fact that Black Museum leaders were engaged in subversive efforts of activism at a time when the federal government sought to quell such overt actions, advancing a pro-Black historical literacy was deemed incendiary and continued to be aggressively suppressed or surveilled by those with more power. Therefore, it was necessary for me to continue searching in order to strike a delicate balance between theoretical and analytical frameworks that would not

oversimplify the impact of racial hierarchies on leadership nor ignore the influence of Black leaders whose professional experiences and voices are often missing, or worse yet, mischaracterized within leadership and organizational development studies.

Race and Ethnicity in Leadership Literature

Ospina and Foldy's (2009) groundbreaking work entitled, *A Critical Review of Race and Ethnicity in the Leadership Literature: Surfacing Context, Power, and the Collective Dimensions of Leadership,* highlights the scant amount of leadership studies literature focusing on race and offers recommendations for addressing these research gaps. The authors illuminate concepts of race-ethnicity in relation to theories of leadership, while simultaneously considering its constraining and liberating capacity. The meta-analysis commences with an acknowledgment of the fact that it was published in the same year that the U.S. inaugurated its first African American president. Consequently, it stresses the need for a review of research on leadership and race-ethnicity.

The article specifies that the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world in this society (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). Due to how significantly race-ethnicity informs individuals, communities, and society, then leadership must be informed by race as well (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). For the very first time in my doctoral journey, I finally experienced a critique of leadership that fully captured the breath of my consternation with trying to situate my research interests and dissertation study into an existing leadership theoretical framework.

Without addressing context, our theories of leadership remain incomplete, making it more difficult to offer practical guidelines to address the leadership demands of changing

organizations in contemporary society (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). It was refreshing to learn that I was not alone in my concerns about the deficiencies within leadership studies literature.

Yet it was shocking to learn how far behind the leadership studies discipline is in the equitable representation of racially diverse voices to challenge and refute the vestiges of scholars still advancing explanations that are reminiscent of pseudo-scientific eugenics arguments. For instance, Ospina and Foldy's (2009) cite the highly problematic assertions made by prominent leadership scholar, Bernard M. Bass, whose *Handbook of Leadership* (2008), is advertised as the indispensable bible for every serious student of leadership. The existence of this type of literature further amplifies the need for a critical approach to empirical discourse that contextualizes race-ethnicity and leadership.

> Bass begins by noting, without citation or comment, that only a small percentage of Blacks score high on IQ tests, compared with a large percentage of whites. He goes on to say that "more intellectually demanding jobs tend to employ proportionately fewer Blacks" as another data point apparently attesting to the lower intelligence of African Americans. He also posited that one final reason for lower evaluations of African American leaders were their purported lower cognitive ability as measured on IQ tests and the like. (Bass et al., 2008, p. 953)

Although long ignored, dismissed, or in the case of Bass (2008), derogatorily caste as lacking the intellectual aptitude to lead, African Americans persists in dismantling the systems of racial oppression that have been allowed to fester in and outside of academia. The organizational development and institution-building efforts of African American leaders are worthy of consideration and nuanced qualitative study. This is for no other reason than to challenge, confront, contrast, and ultimately change the cannon of leadership studies literature in a manner that advances equitable, fact-based representations of Black leader experiences and organizational acumen.

The article also includes a comprehensive literature review which takes a multi-disciplinary approach to examining the existence of leadership research that contextualizes race-ethnicity. The range of disciplines used in the analysis provided a variety of frameworks for examining the work of leadership (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). The summary of sources analyzed and cited in the article (Figure 2.1), which reflects the relevance of race-ethnicity and leadership in a variety of disciplines.

Figure 2.1

Summary of Sources Analyzed (Ospina & Foldy, 2009)

Empirical			Non-empirical		
	Analyzed	Cited		Analyzed	Cited
Qualitative	52	31	Theory building	76	54
Quantitative	14	9	Literature review	6	5
Discipline			**Discipline**		
Education studies	18	14	Education studies	15	8
Leadership studies	9	7	Leadership studies	24	21
Management and organizational development	8	7	Management and organizational development	3	3
Political science	13	5	Political science	8	0
Psychology	7	3	Psychology	13	12
Racial and ethnic studies	5	2	Racial and ethnic studies	14	11
Women's and gender studies	6	2	Women's and gender studies	5	4
Total empirical	66	40	Total non-empirical	82	59

Total number of sources analyzed: 148.
Total number of analyzed sources cited in article: 99.

Yet, Ospina and Foldy (2009) observed that as mainstream leadership work on race has plateaued, other interesting work on race and leadership is being done within other management domains outside of leadership studies, such as education, communication, and Black studies. This is similar to the way SMT, within the political science discipline, was challenged by new scholarship and more diverse investigations of social movements in order to subsequently reflect more inclusive interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement.

One of the most instructive aspects of the research were revealed by the use of three fundamental questions which guided the empirical review of literature, included:

1. How did the participant's race impact their executive leadership role?

2. How did participants engage in racial, social, or organizational activism efforts?
3. How did the participants share or receive knowledge across generational boundaries?

Ospina and Foldy's (2009) research included a deeply comprehensive review of 148 articles clustered within each of the fundamental questions and subsequent findings summarized within each respective question. It also provides an integrated framework for analyzing their complex findings to understand the associations between race-ethnicity and leadership. The research concludes with a detailed summary of findings, with particular emphasis on research gaps, important challenges requiring urgent attention, and implications for future research.

The suggestions offered by Ospina and Foldy (2009) as next steps which were most resonate for my study are as follows:

- Research designed to consider all three fundamental questions posed in their review could move the field forward considerably.
- There is value in continuing to support the use of multiple methodologies to study the relationship between race-ethnicity and leadership and that inconsistency in findings must be addressed methodologically;
- Consideration must be given for the use of mixed and hybrid methodologies that can incorporate context more explicitly;
- There is a need to develop a healthy pluralism that fosters much more cross fertilization among disciplines and among research perspectives; and
- They suggest four promising areas for future exploration (i.e., whiteness, intersectionality, race-ethnicity as a dependent variable in studies of leadership, and broadening the scope of social actors, contexts, and policy arenas used in empirical research on race-ethnicity leadership).

Among the literature reviewed throughout the preliminary research proposal process, Ospina and Foldy's (2009) is by far the most reaffirming, both as a means of pointing out the lack of leadership literature contextualizing race-ethnicity, and because of its critique of how to use ongoing empirical research to move leadership theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership. This comprehensive review provides evidence of need for further research to address deficiencies in empirical data emphasizing the role of Black leaders engaged in organizational development, leadership and leader development of cross-disciplinary institutions.

As a result of this research gap, my dissertation study focused on Black Museum leaders to inform the development of emerging professionals with the requisite leadership skills needed to serve the full breadth of organizations that now make up the nearly 400 African American and African diaspora focused cultural institutions in the United States. An identification of leadership biographies can provide a rich contextual framework for contemporary leaders, as well as the organizations that continue this meaningful work. Motivated by the desire to gain an in-depth understanding of what constitutes leadership, where it originates, and how these lessons can inform and improve my area of practice, I embarked on this comprehensive examination of relevant literature about Black Museum leaders and practitioners.

Although an abundance of literature exists on the development of exhibitions and programs about the contributions of African Americans to society, a dearth of industry publications, case studies, empirical data, and other literature exists on the contributions of Black Museum leaders and practitioners. All organizations experience change, including museums, whether through the evolving organizational life cycle, implementing a change effort, or coping

with leadership change, managing these challenges is critical for a museum's success (M. Morris, 2018).

Exploring the tactics and strategies employed by Black Museum leaders may provide valuable insight as to the content-rich experiences that emerge from investigating personal accounts of their professional lives. A broadened awareness of the context-rich experiences of Black Museum leaders could also enable greater appreciation of the strategies and approaches they used to catalyze organizational change. I desire an expanded approach to museum development steeped in diverse culture, identity, and equity. Ultimately, this study contributed to a more diverse, representative body of theoretical leadership literature which has proven relevant to the museum and historic preservation fields of practice.

This assessment of Black Museum leaders and practitioners may ultimately help in addressing the dire need for leader development among the next generation of museum professionals, who are most impacted by our ability to recognize and successfully employ relevant leadership approaches. As Alicia Garza proclaimed in a recent interview:

> Right now, I think what we see in communities across the country is that those two paradigms are in a battle for power; and frankly this new paradigm says that leadership can not only look different but it can have a different substance, where it is actually grounded in communities: communities that have been pushed to the margins, communities that have been pushed underground, communities who've been robbed of our rights and of our dignity—that the new paradigm is that those communities have leadership to offer and that we need to accept it. (Jackson, 2021)

As an emerging leader in the museum field, I want the work that I am privileged to do on behalf of Black Museums to successively build upon the accomplishments of our founding generation of leaders. The dissertation study aimed to broaden the understanding of how past and present Black Museum leaders have influenced the ability of their institutions to engage

community, sustain funding, build capacity, retain leaders, and prepare or rebound from organizational change.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

> *Where ever African peoples find themselves in the Diaspora, they're bringing with them ways of knowing, frames of reference, cognitive schemes to make sense of the world.*
>
> *– Eddie Glaude, Jr., Begin Again*

Throughout this study, I endeavored to determine how individuals were able to establish museums during an era when civil rights activism, racial parity, and positive Black cultural identity were considered subversive acts. I examined the first-hand accounts of six leaders' institution-building efforts and revealed the approaches they used. This included operationalizing social movements through the establishment of public-facing institutions and balancing the demands of growing museums with and for the benefit of the Black communities from which they arose.

This chapter provides a more in-depth discussion of the methodology and analytical framework I used to make meaning of archival oral history interview data. Provenance of the interviews was established by Dr. John E. Fleming and Mr. Wayne Coleman, who conducted the interviews as members of the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) board of directors between 2005 and 2017. The oral history interview video recordings were entrusted to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) for digitization and archival preservation, where they remain on file in video, audio, and text format.

Research Question

The dissertation study endeavored to answer one principal research question: *How might the context-rich experiences of Black leaders challenge, change, or extend Leadership Theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership?*

This question was designed to provide a broad exploration of the central phenomenon of the study without limiting the views of participants. Based on the goals of the study, a qualitative

research method was deemed most appropriate, given the flexibility it enables in the use of different approaches and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Epistemology

Given my desire to understand the impact of a socially constructed racial identity on the leadership roles undertaken by study participants, I favored an interpretivist epistemological view to govern my approach to the research study. Interpretivism integrates human interest into a study and assumes that access to reality is achieved through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments (Myers, 2008). According to the interpretivist approach, it is important for the researcher as a social actor to appreciate differences between people (Saunders & Thornhill, 2012).

As articulated in Chapter II, the dissertation study contextualized race and leadership from the point of view of the leader. Based on the objectives of my dissertation study, I wanted to understand how interviewees made meaning of their professional roles, what their experiences meant to them, and how they came to view certain actions as "leadership" or related to their "social activism" efforts. Additionally, the study helped me to reframe which individuals were typically viewed as leaders, by society or within a social system, and how racialized identities within America's racial caste system may have impacted leader experiences.

I interpreted the contextual meaning of interview data to understand how those experiences impacted each respondent and looked into the reasons and meanings those actions held for them (Marsh, 2002). According to the interpretivist paradigm, objectivity is not possible, but being critically subjective is—this involved, striving to recognize my own positionality while interpreting the interview data (Ladkin, 2021). The aim of interpretivist approaches is gaining

understanding of the subjective experiences of those being studied, how they think and feel and how they act in their natural contexts (Johnson, 2006; Marsh, 2002).

Research Methodology

Guided by an interpretivist epistemology, my central research question, *How might the context-rich experiences of Black leaders challenge, change, or extend Leadership Theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership,* led me to select a qualitative methodology by which I conducted a narrative analysis of oral history interview data.

Qualitative analysis proceeds from the central assumption that there is an essence to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Narrative analysis can also have an emancipatory purpose when stories are produced and politicized as counternarratives (Chase, 2005). My qualitative study was best situated as a narrative analysis using overlapping critical genres to focus on issues of power, marginalization, and uneven resource distribution, with emancipatory goals to democratize empirical research. I applied an interpretivist epistemology complimented by a critical orientation to my study. As researchers, we develop, debate, and rely on methodological guidance to ensure our studies can bring critical insights about social inequality to light and can support positive social change (Ziskin, 2019). The critically positioned researcher purposefully adopts an action agenda for the purpose of empowering people and transforming political and social realities (Creswell, 2013).

Research Population

Participant narratives were acquired through in-depth, oral history interviews conducted by video in multiple iterations, beginning in 2005 and concluding in 2017, by members of the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) board of directors. In addition to founding or directing first-of-their-kind museums, the interviewees also demonstrated a shared

commitment to advancing the Black Museum Movement through their service and/or contributions to AAAM.

The first phase of interviews, conducted between 2005 and 2007, included "founding generation" AAAM members who formally chartered the Association in 1978, several of whom are now deceased. The second phase of interviews, conducted between 2015 and 2017, included "second generation" AAAM board members who identify as Baby-Boomers and were often mentored by the elder AAAM founders early in their careers, and subsequently stepped in to lead or sustain many of the institutions founded by the elder generation. Many of the "second generation" AAAM board members have served as executive leaders of the largest Black Museums in the United States, some of whom have recently retired, while others have announced plans of retiring in or about 2025.

Research Design

The study explored the lived experiences of Black Museum founders and executive directors to gain insight on how these individuals successfully navigated the challenges of establishing, funding, and sustaining community-based cultural institutions amid the vestiges of a racial caste system. I hope the findings will positively contribute to the canon of empirical data related to Black leader experiences from their own point of view. The study involved a narrative analysis of six oral history transcripts among a collection of 17 oral history interviews currently archived at NMAAHC.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I emphasized leaders who were instrumental in advancing the Black Museum Movement and whose interview transcripts represented diverse generational cohorts, detailed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Oral History Interviewees

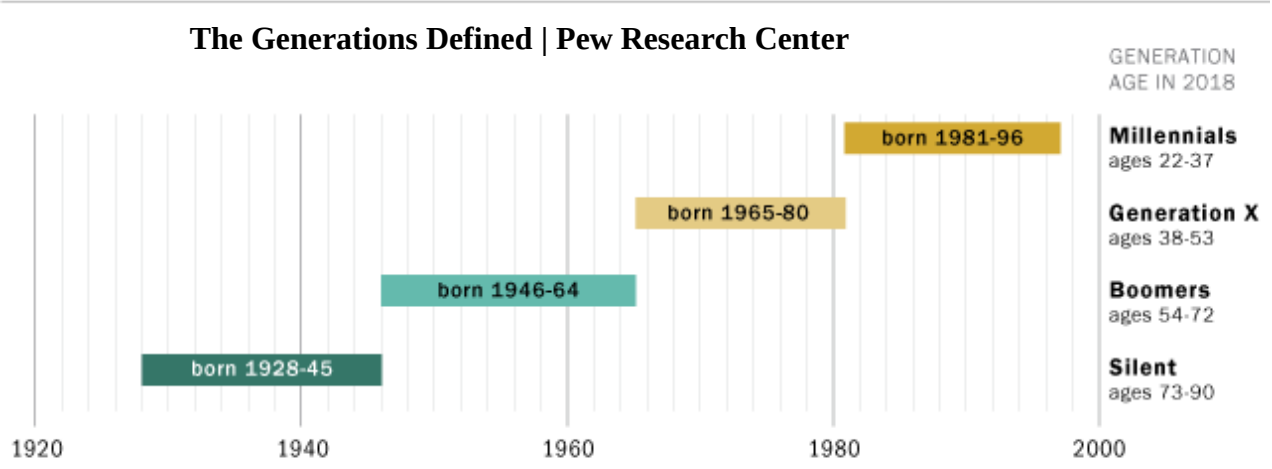
Participant Name | Title	**Generational Cohort**	**Institution Name | Location | Year Opened**
Margaret T. Burroughs, Founding Director	Greatest (Traditionalist) Generation	The Ebony Museum (1961), renamed the DuSable Museum (1968) *Chicago, IL*
Juanita Moore, CEO/Executive Director	Baby Boomer Generation	International Afro-American Museum (1965), renamed Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and Culture (1997) *Detroit, MI*
Edmond Barry Gaither Founding and Executive Director	Silent Generation	National Center of Afro-American Artists (1968) *Boston, MA*
Kinshasha Holman Conwill Deputy Director CEO/Executive Director	Baby Boomer Generation	Studio Museum of Harlem (1968) *Harlem, NY*
Dr. Harry Robinson Founding and Executive Director	Silent Generation	Dallas African American Museum (1974) *Dallas, TX*
Rowena Stewart Founding and Executive Director Affectionally known as the *"Mother of Black Museums"*	Silent Generation	Rhode Island Black Heritage Society (1975 to 1985) *Providence, RI* Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum (1985 to 1992) *Philadelphia, PA* Motown Historical Museum (1992–1995) *Detroit, MI* American Jazz Museum (1995–2002) *Kansas City, MO* A.L. Lewis Historical Society (2002–2015) *Jacksonville, FL* American Beach Community Center and Museum (2002–2015) *Amelia Island, FL*

According to the Pew Research Center (2019), generations provide the opportunity to look at Americans both by their place in the life cycle and by their membership in a cohort of individuals who were born at a similar time.

The definition of generations, based on birth year used by the Pew Research Center proved beneficial in this study to inform the range of perspectives echoed throughout the interviews and experiences shared among generational cohorts. The significance of this generational categorization, along with the rationale for how generational cohorts are defined, will be explained in more detail in Chapter IV.

Figure 3.1

Generations Defined by the Pew Research Center



Of note to this dissertation, was the fact that to date, no other scholarly research has endeavored to analyze or interpret the context-rich responses contained in these interviews. Between 2005 and 2017, leaders of the AAAM board of directors conducted a total of 17 interviews. Though there were certainly more than 17 Black Museums in operation in the United States by the time the oral history initiative began, not every leader responsible for founding or leading some of the nation's first Black Museums between 1961 and 1975 was still alive by the

time the oral history initiative launched. The collection of 17 interviews and representative sample of six interview transcripts for this study do not constitute an exhaustive list of every African American museum or museum leader in the United States. One of the primary goals of the oral history initiative was to compile a collection of personal and professional reflections from first and second-generation leaders during their lifetimes.

The significance of this collection of oral histories and the context-rich information shared by interviewees, particularly those who have subsequently passed away, becomes more valuable with time. Chapter II provided a more acute description of the emergence of Black Museums throughout the 20th century, while connecting the late 19th century influences and subsequent impact of the Black Museums Movement on 21st century museum practice. The interview question protocol (Appendix A) used in the study was derived from the oral history interview project initiated by AAAM board members and conducted between 2005 and 2017.

The interview participants (Appendix B) were comprised of persons who were instrumental in advancing the Black Museums Movement. In addition to examining the principal research question, the study explored the following qualitative questions:

1. How did the participant's race impact their executive leadership role?
2. How did participants engage in racial, social, or organizational activism efforts?
3. How did the participants share or receive knowledge across generational boundaries?

Source Material

Sources are the artifacts for any historical study, including written or oral records that were purposively or inadvertently left for future generations and typically fall into the categories of primary or secondary sources (Frey, 2018). In addition to the primary source material

provided by the interview transcripts, in undertaking the study, I thoroughly investigated secondary sources.

The secondary source material was collected in relation to the six museum leaders and included, but is not limited to: public documents (autobiographies, biographies, or poetry), organizational documents (official memos, strategic plans, or annual reports), digital and audiovisual materials (conference presentations, video interviews, photographs, artwork, or curated exhibitions) reflecting professional accomplishments during their respective careers.

I recognize that people are complex in the ways in which they express themselves—orally and physically—which is why it was necessary to draw from multiple sources and other ways of gaining knowledge of an individual's point of view to try and arrive at a more wholistic representation of the interview participant. Thus, the secondary source data used in this analysis was able to broaden understandings of participants' voice, identity, representation, and points of view.

The use of secondary source material that is culturally textured in its embodiment of personal expression is also connected to the notion of creating counternarratives by resisting prevailing notions of knowledge or communication prescribed by oppressive systems. The racial underpinnings of leadership studies, psychology, sociology, and many other academic disciplines were inherently designed to reinforce Euro-centric ways of knowing based on notions of the supremacy of whiteness or the dominance of the white experience, which relies on the systematic subjugation of the Black experience.

As president of Rollins College, Grant Cornwell (2021), recently stated: "The history of academia is that most of these higher education institutions were created first for white males for

the central purpose of producing leaders. These institutions were also historically used to uphold the racial caste system" (Cornwell & Wilkerson, 2021).

Dr. Cornwell's statement reflects the too oft overlooked reality of how education systems in the United States were systematically used to disenfranchise certain margins of the population, based on race, for the majority of the country's history. In the history of the United States, Black Americans were the only group for whom it was ever illegal to learn to read or write (Jones, 2019). Thus, access to formal education by Americans of African descent has only been legal for 156 years of this country's 245-year existence. Moreover, America's racial caste system, compounded by Jim Crow policies of forced segregation, severely limited the ability of African Americans to gain access to professional degree programs in academia.

The racialized history of academia is tremendously relevant to the study due to its critical approach to analysis and emancipatory goals to democratize empirical research. The dearth of empirical data contextualizing the impact of race on leaders is directly linked to the lack of diversity of experiences reflected in existing qualitative leadership studies. Treating race like all other demographics reinforces the status quo and undermines efforts to bring about change inside and outside of the academy. Mainstream theorizing on leadership overlooks the important insights from research on race and leadership and underestimates the value of the experience of leaders of color (Ospina & Foldy, 2009).

Black Museums were birthed out of the disposition of resistance and determination to subvert the dominant culture. The cultural revolution that coincided with Black Freedom Movements is really about the idea of creating and/or altering the cultural understanding of Black people. That revolutionary reframing of understandings is essential to the ability of these museums to begin aggregating Black cultural awareness, accomplishments, and expressions of

identity within an institution for the purpose of distributing that knowledge to the masses. The strategy for analyzing secondary source material was described in further detail below.

Data Analysis

Through detailed analysis of the interview transcripts, the study aimed to reveal how the interview participants engaged with the complexities of funding, leading, and sustaining Black Museums amid the social and economic constraints of racial segregation and systematic racism. The coding and analysis of interview transcripts were focused on life as lived by interview participants through first-hand accounts of their personal and professional leadership experiences. The analysis of interview data may provide valuable insight into the ways in which leaders accomplished their organizational advancement efforts despite the many social, political, and economic obstacles they faced during and after the modern Civil Rights era (1961–1975).

According to Patton (2002), qualitative analysis transforms data into findings, yet no formula exists for that transformation; guidance yes, but no recipe. Therefore, I investigated a variety of analytical frameworks in which to situate my study while actively resisting the temptation to subjectively select a leadership theory that could align with subsequent findings. I employed an approach to the search for a methodological model that would not favor one theoretical leadership lens over another. I found the hybrid analytical approach described by Ziskin (2019) to be particularly useful in resolving this dilemma. The hybrid analytical approach is described in more detail below.

Analytic Strategy: Primary Sources

The narrative analysis used oral history interviews and overlapping critical genres to understand participant experiences. Critical narrative analysis seeks to describe the meaning of

experiences for those who are frequently socially marginalized or oppressed, as they construct stories or narratives about their lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

As critical qualitative researchers, we examine everyday interactions to shed light on how social structures—especially those defined by racialized, gendered, and economic privilege and oppression—shape lived experiences (Ziskin, 2019). The hybridity of critical genres available under the umbrella of qualitive inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) allows for the most comprehensive examination of my data set. The overlapping critical genres that were used in the analysis of oral history interview data include: (a) critical narrative analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), (b) critical qualitative research (Carspecken, 1996), and (c) aspects of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

This approach combines Carspecken's (1996, 2003, 2012) critical qualitative methodological framework with the conceptual resources of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as framed by Fairclough (2003, 2012, 2016), while remaining mindful of the need to ensure validity, one of the primary criteria for interpretivist epistemology. The strength of this critical qualitative hybrid method is that it emphasizes the importance of context, setting, and participants' perspectives.

Carspecken (1996) considered critical ethnography to be a form of social activism but prefers the term critical qualitative research (CQR) over critical ethnography, as he believes the ethnographic approach should not take precedence over other qualitative approaches (Carspecken, 2003). Similarly, I did not personally conduct the oral history interviews, as an ethnographer typically would. Therefore, the use of a hybrid analytic strategy helped illuminate my understanding of life from the view point of those being studied, while remaining systematic in my research design.

Likewise, my study utilized existing oral history transcripts and did not involve conducting new interviews with study participants. Oral history, with its combination of methods drawn from history and sociology, places emphasis on the significance of temporal context and memory by interviewing people about their past life experience (Bornat, 2012). Oral histories draw on individual accounts of past experience as sources for understanding change and continuities in society across time and within generations and eras (Thompson, 2000).

A critical qualitative analysis of oral history data was focused on life as lived by interview participants to allow for a dialogic consideration of responses, among those with similar involvement in the development and operation of Black Museums. In beginning my analysis, I listened to the shared dialogue by interviewees and read interview transcripts to observe implied meaning of words uttered by the speaker during interaction with the interviewer to make meaning of their individual and collective leadership experiences.

The analytical strategy illuminated the connection between sociopolitical power and culture by introducing the content of validity claims into analysis of discourse. This may often be expressed through the rhetoric, shape, or tone of what is being said, using a combination of Carspecken's (1996, 2003, 2012) critical qualitative methodological framework with the conceptual resources of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as framed by Fairclough and colleagues (2003, 2012, 2016).

The procedures used in the analysis of the primary source material are guided by the phases of analysis specified in Ziskin's (2019) *Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Qualitative Inquiry: Data Analysis Strategies for Enhanced Understanding of Inference and Meaning*, which helped to situate my study. Ziskin's (2019) research was also instructive in providing a more nuanced argument for the use of overlapping critical research genres, in a

manner that is (a) methodologically rigorous; (b) grounded in social theory; and (c) practically feasible.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the theory of communicative action (TCA) can help researchers to analyze and draw conclusions about implicit meanings, which is particularly important for critical readings of racial/ethnic inequity and socioeconomic inequality because these aspects of our society are often not discussed explicitly, or on the surface (Ziskin, 2019). These inequities are often assumed, backgrounded, or implicit, even when they are important to an exchange or debate (Pollock, 2004; Ziskin, 2019).

In his earlier work outlining a similar approach, Carspecken (1996) warned that even though the method is presented as a five-stage approach, it should be interpreted as comprising loosely cyclical stages, or even portions of stages, depending on the aim of the research (Hardcastle et al., 2006). Rather than employing CDA in its entirety or all five-stages of Carspecken's CQR framework, Ziskin (2019) provides one consolidated approach to data analysis. Ziskin's (2019) hybrid approach combines CDA and TCA into a method that supports the aims and priorities of each respective approach in a process that entails a total of five steps, which are outlined below.

Step 1*: Low-inference thematic coding and selection*. This process involved reading through the interview transcripts multiple times and iteratively coding excerpts, consistent with Carspecken's (1996) guidance, with very literal tags and descriptions of meaningful segments of speech or text. I used Quirkos software to code the primary source data. This step culminated in the identification and selection of important sections of data for further analysis. This process resulted in a sizeable, but focused and manageable subset of material that focused the remaining advanced-stage steps in the analysis.

Step 2*: Preliminary reconstruction of validity claims.* One linked "validity claim" memo was created for each excerpt, and in it, selected validity claims of all types were listed (objective, subjective, normative-evaluative, and identity). Spontaneous examples and notes on foregrounding and backgrounding were included, since the validity claims memos were revised and refined throughout this process.

Step 3*: CDA memos and annotations*. This step involved linking CDA memos with the relevant excerpt, just as the validity claims memos were in Step 2. CDA memos were used to quickly record thoughts about what discursive resources or other forms of interdiscursivity used in each passage. The goal in this step was to take down thoughts about styles, genres, discourses, or other forms of interdiscursivity in informal analytic memos.

Step 4*: Focused coding using new CDA-oriented codes*. This step involved bringing the CDA concepts into the analysis of validity claims. A subsequent task involved focused coding of a selected data set and used the newly developed CDA-oriented codes. This process resulted in a grounded and accountable record of analyses, which included attention to explicit content, implicit content, and pragmatic structures (Appendix C). This step in the analytical method was intended to capture subtle points and took into account the multiple layers of meaning, pragmatic structures, inference, and indeterminacy communication. Having an accountable record like the one produced by this process supported me in forming and conveying critical interpretations, convincingly, reflexively, and with care.

Step 5*: Narrative reconstructions of selected examples*. This final step involved a review of the validity claim memos with results of the focused CDA coding also in mind, as I worked through each of the selected examples, and sketched out a reconstruction of complex meanings in narrative paragraphs. This fifth step involved connecting paragraphs and sentences together to

form an argument or narrative summary. These narrative summaries focused on the most important findings from steps 2 through 4, and in the written phase of the project, served as raw material for the results section. This description was followed with an overview of genres, discourses, and styles that were apparent, and a brief explanation of how these informed the meaning of the findings, based on my knowledge of the data and the cultural contexts in which they were situated.

Each phase of qualitative analysis involved "data reduction" or breaking the collected data into manageable chunks and "interpretations" which brought meaning to the words and acts of the study participants. The credibility of the study was achieved through my prolonged engagement, sharing of interpretations, and triangulation of data collected from multiple sources and using multiple theoretical lenses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Analytic Strategy: Secondary Sources

The procedures used in the analysis of secondary source material are guided by the phases of analysis described in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 5th Edition* (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which aided in positioning additional qualitative materials for my study. Drawing on multiple sources of qualitative data to make interpretations about a research problem resulted in useful information that interviews and observations may not have addressed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Once I collected the secondary source data, the following 8-step process of analysis was applied:

Step 1*: Prepare the data for analysis.* I used Quirkos software to code the secondary source data. This first step was completed by importing (uploading) relevant images, documents, or digital material into the platform.

Step 2: *Coding the images*. I utilized the coding software to tag areas of the uploaded secondary source image and document files and assigning code labels. Some codes involved including meta-details regarding the item.

Step 3: *Compiling data.* All the code labels assigned to the uploaded image and document files were aggregated on separate sheets (screens) within the Quirkos platform.

Step 4*: Reviewing the codes*. I thoroughly reviewed the codes to eliminate redundancy and overlap. This step also began to reduce the codes into potential themes.

Step 5*: Grouping the codes*. I grouped codes into themes that represented a common idea.

Step 6*: Assigning the codes/themes*. I assigned the themed codes to one of three groups: (a) expected codes/themes; (b) surprising codes/themes; and (c) unusual codes/themes. This step ensured the qualitative "findings" represented diverse perspectives.

Step 7*: Arraying the codes/themes*. I arranged the codes/themes into a conceptual map that shows the flow of ideas in the "findings" section. The flow might illustrate the themes from a more general picture to a more specific picture.

Step 8*: Writing the narrative*. I wrote the narrative summary for each theme that would subsequently go into the "findings" section of the study (Creswell, 2016, pp. 169–170).

I subsequently linked the themes from the secondary source material to the findings from the oral history interviews by identifying instances in which an interviewee personally articulated a notable reflection or experience that aligned with a presumptive code. Of note for this study, were the numerous secondary source materials that captured published media interviews and archival data containing audio recordings and written transcripts of interviews the participant conducted prior or subsequent to their AAAM oral history interview. Locating this type of secondary source material helped to confirm, authenticate, or reiterate specific details of their

professional experience and personal reflections, which enhanced the context of the data collected.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved an analysis of existing oral history interview data. There are a total of 17 existing oral history transcripts archived by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). In addition to being a member of the NMAAHC staff, I also served as Vice-President of the AAAM board of directors, which meant holding dual responsibilities in the stewardship of archival data and preservation of institutional histories for both AAAM and NMAAHC. Although my current professional roles involve protection of this archival data, I conducted the dissertation as an Antioch student, and therefore needed to complete an Ethics Application, attaching a letter from the "holder and owner" of the archival material detailing their permission to use the data for my doctoral research study. The archival data is not currently in the public domain and belongs to the Association (owner), while being held on AAAM's behalf by the museum for subsequent accessioning into NMAAHC's digital archive.

In Summary

The study endeavored to answer one central research question: *How might the context-rich experiences of Black leaders challenge, change, or extend Leadership Theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership?* This question was designed to provide a broad exploration of the central phenomenon of the study without limiting the views of participants. Based on the goals of the study, a qualitative research method was deemed most appropriate, given the flexibility it enables in the use of different approaches and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The narrative analysis employed overlapping critical genres to examine an understudied and under-told history of African American leaders, while challenging dominant narratives through the use of critical qualitative methods and analytical strategies. An empirical analysis of the lived experiences of six Black Museum leaders sought to reveal the leadership practices used to establish, operate, and sustain institutions within a racially suppressive social context. The integration of primary and secondary source data, presumptive codes used, and resulting themes that arose are described in more detail in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

> *The fact of the matter is that life happens one day at a time, and only in the retelling does it come together into remarkable, exciting, or insightful stories. In other words, you live your life not knowing the end of the story, and retell it only as if you knew what the outcome would be.*
>
> *– Ursula Burns, Where You Are is not Who You Are: A Memoir*

Overview

This study explored the lived experiences of six museum leaders (Margaret Burroughs, Kinshasha Holman-Conwill, Edmond Barry Gaither, Juanita Moore, Harry Robinson, and Rowena Stewart) in order to expand leadership narratives and reframe the traditional concept of what constitutes an organizational leader. The context-rich experiences of African American executives were studied using critical narrative analysis and overlapping qualitative genres to illuminate the understudied organizational development efforts of independent cultural institution-builders whose racial identities and leadership legacies challenge the predominant narrative of white-male centric leadership studies literature.

The fundamental research question addressed by this study is: *How might the context-rich experiences of Black Leaders challenge, change, or extend Leadership Theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership*? The qualitative questions guiding this critical narrative analysis of interview transcripts included the following:

1. *How did the participant's race impact their executive leadership role?*
2. *How did participants engage in racial, social, or organizational activism efforts?*
3. *How did the participants share or receive knowledge across generational boundaries?*

My empirical research was anchored by historical narratives captured in the reflections of Black executives whose oral histories contextualize the impact of race on their leadership

experiences. This study centered the personal reflections and professional milestones of six oral history interviewees who contributed to the advancement of the Black Museum Movement that began in the mid-20th century and continues on today. The persons included in the study were responsible for establishing or sustaining some of the nation's earliest independent museums solely focused on the preservation of Black art, history and culture, amid the challenges and vestiges of the Jim Crow era.

Oral history transcripts served as primary source material for this study and detail the personal and professional experiences of executive leaders from their point of view. Given the travel limitations imposed by the Covid-19 global pandemic, secondary source data were obtained through web-based research and access to digital media and archival material. The six individuals profiled herein provided executive leadership to some of the first independent African American art, history, and cultural institutions ever established in the United States, all of which remain in operation today. Of note to this dissertation was the use of qualifying criteria in the selection of participants for inclusion in the study. Each of the interview participants met no less than three, and in some cases all four, of the following criteria:

1. Current or former contributor to the formation, creation or leadership of the African American Museum Association (AAMA) or the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) between 1960 and 2020;
2. Current or former executive leader within an African American museum, archive, library, gallery, or cultural institution;
3. Current or former contributor to the formation, passage or funding of the National Museum of African American History & Culture Act of 2003;

4. Current or former contributor to the formation or leadership of the National Museum of African American History & Culture.

Generational Diversity of Interviewees

In addition to the criteria listed above, I prioritized generational diversity among leaders included in the AAAM oral history collection. Of vital importance to this study was an analytical approach that would reveal instances of generativity or generational transfer across cohorts. As previously referenced in Chapter II, generativity is defined as a concern for and commitment to the next generation, as expressed through parenting, teaching, mentoring leadership, and a host of other activities that aim to leave a positive legacy of the self for the future (McAdams & de St. Augin, 1992).

This definition of generativity builds upon the research of Erik Erikson (1950), who set forth a theory of the human life journey which profoundly impacted the social sciences and continues to influence present day psychological research and scholarship (Erikson, 1980; Erikson & Erikson, 1997; McAdams & de St. Augin, 1992). Central to this meaning is having an impact on others that persists into the future (Kotre, 1984, 1999).

For the purposes of this study, generativity was explored as a vehicle or method of knowledge transfer from an elder generational cohort member who endeavored to nurture, guide, and contribute to a younger generational cohort. Generative adults seek to pass on the most valued traditions of a culture, to teach the most valued skills and outlooks, to impart wisdom, to foster the realization of human potential in future generations (Kotre, 2004). Therefore, leadership transcripts were selected and subsequently assigned to a corresponding generational cohort, in an effort to discover any reference or reflection on leader experiences, concepts, or

approaches which may have been shared across generational boundaries, to be determined through a narrative analysis.

Generational Boundaries

According to the Pew Research Center (2019), the starting and ending points among generational cohorts are not exact and should be viewed as tools for analysis. Generations provide the opportunity to look at Americans both by their place in the life cycle and by their membership in a cohort of individuals who were born at a similar time (Pew, 2019). The definition of generations, based on birth year used by the Pew Research Center proved beneficial in this study to inform the range of perspectives echoed throughout the interviews and experiences shared among generational cohorts. Yet, generational boundaries are not arbitrary, even if there is no agreed upon formula for how long a generational span of time should be (Pew, 2019).

An age cohort spanning 15–20 years will necessarily include a diverse assortment of people—and there are often changes in political circumstances, societal mores and economic conditions over this time span that can lead to people within a cohort having different formative experiences (Pew, 2015). The ways in which the generational boundaries are drawn helped to inform my aggregation of interviewees into generational cohorts. Generational diversity notwithstanding, the categorization of cohorts allowed for further contextual relevance to be examined on the basis of race, due in large part to the impact of race on each interviewee and how that context shifted, evolved, or remained constant across cohort members leadership experiences.

Founding Generation of Black Museum Leaders are a cohort of individuals belonging to the *Greatest* generation and are generally defined as those persons born between 1901 and

1927, many of whom fought in World War II, and now represent approximately 2% of the adult population (Pew, 2015). Members of the *Greatest* generation who are still alive today, may already be or will become centenarians in less than a decade. For the purposes of this study, these leaders are characterized by having grandparents who were enslaved and emancipated, or whose parents were among the first free-born citizens of African descent within the United States. This means that they represented a generation of people who as children, may have interacted with formerly enslaved relatives or community elders, while being afforded educational and professional opportunities that prior generations of African Americans were legally prohibited from, or in many cases violently penalized for attempting to access for themselves.

Persons such as Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950), heralded as the "Father of Black History Month" and Mary McLeod Bethune (1875–1955), heralded as the "Mother of the early civil and women's rights movements" each typify the First-Generation of Black leaders born to formerly enslaved persons and were referenced in detail in Chapter II. For the purposes of this study, persons born in the decade following the end of the Civil War (1865–1875), along with those born before 1900 are considered forbearers to the generation of artisans, entrepreneurs, early educators, and creatives which comprise this study. This group includes those who influenced the renaissance of the early 20th century, also known as the *New Negro* movement, such as Alain Locke (1885–1954) and Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960), previously referenced in Chapter II. In the 1920s, the Great Migration of Black Americans from the rural South to the urban North sparked an African American cultural renaissance that took its name from the New York City neighborhood of Harlem, but became a widespread movement throughout (Onion et al., 2018).

The *Greatest/Founding* generational cohort of leaders were born after the turn of the 20th century, lived through the Great Depression, and many tended to be parents of the Baby Boomer generation. Of note to this study was *Greatest/Founding* generation leader, Margaret T. Burroughs (1917–2010), who completed an oral history interview in November 2005 and was referenced throughout the study. Equally noteworthy members of this generational cohort were museum leaders, Icabod Flewellen (1916–2001) and Dr. Charles H. Wright (1918–2002), both of whom were deceased when the AAAM oral history project began in 2005.

Flewellen founded the Afro-American Cultural & Historical Society Museum in 1953, which was originally established inside his home at 8716 Harkness Avenue, then subsequently relocated in 1968 and again in 1983, when it was renamed the African American Museum of Cleveland (Mack & Flewellyn, 2021). Wright was an accomplished Detroit physician and founded the International Afro-American Museum inside his office space in 1965, a facility it outgrew and was subsequently relocated in 1987 and again in 1997, to its current 125,000-sq.ft. facility, and later renamed the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in honor of its founder (Detroit Historical Society, 2021).

First-Generation Black Museum Leaders are a cohort of individuals belonging to the *Silent* generation, who were also called Traditionalist. The *Silent* generation describes adults born between 1928 and 1945 who were directly impacted by the Great Depression and World War II, labeled as “Silent” in reference to their conformity and civic-mindedness (Pew, 2015). For the purpose of this study, these so-called *Silent/First-Generation* Museum leaders are characterized by: (a) having attended racially segregated schools by law, (b) having been mentored by the *Greatest/Founding* generational cohort of leaders early in their professional

careers, and (c) having been pivotal to chartering the African American Museums Association (or AAMA), later renamed the Association of African American Museums (AAAM).

Notable for this dissertation are *Silent/First-Generation* leaders whose oral history interviews are contained in this study, such as: Rowena Stewart (1932–2015), Harry Robinson (1941–present) and Edmond Barry Gaither (1944–present), and all of whom were among the earliest participants in the AAAM oral history project and interviewed when it began in 2005. Two prominent members of this *Silent/First* generational cohort of leaders referenced numerous times throughout the interview transcripts, but not profiled within this study, are: Reverend John Kinard (1936–1989) and Dr. John E. Fleming (1944–present).

The beloved Reverend John Kinard was a standard-bearer among his generational cohort, but had passed on before the start of the AAAM oral history project. Kinard holds the distinction of being the first African American executive director within the Smithsonian Institution, who led the Anacostia Community Museum from its founding in 1967 through1989, and whose guidance, curatorial acumen, civic activism, and unyielding institutional advocacy paved the way for the establishment of NMAAHC.

Likewise, Dr. John E. Fleming is a highly regarded trail-blazer throughout the museum field. Dr. Fleming served as the founding director of the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, OH, which opened in 1988. He also served as director of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati (1998–2001) and the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville (2015–2020). Dr. Fleming holds the distinction of being appointed by George W. Bush to serve on the Presidential Commission to the National Museum of African American History and Culture's Plan for Action, which worked for over a decade to establish NMAAHC.

This is noteworthy not only for the essential role he played in NMAAHC's existence, but because he did so while simultaneously serving three 2-year terms as President of AAAM. Dr. Fleming was pivotal to the creation of a historical record for the Association both during and after his tenure on the AAAM board, having served as the primary researcher and in some cases the interviewer for some of the oral histories, all of which contributed to making this research study possible.

Throughout his distinguished 40-year career, he not only ensured the construction, completion, and successful opening of four national Black Museums, he also served as president of the Ohio Museums Association, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and most recently, concluded his term as Chair of the American Association for State and Local History. Having been born near the end of the *Silent* generation age cohort makes Dr. Fleming's role and influence over the next three generational cohorts quite significant.

Second-Generation Black Museum Leaders are among the largest cohort of individuals belonging to the *Baby Boomer* generation. *Baby Boomer* describes adults born between 1946 and 1964, following the spike in fertility that began right after the end of World War II and shortly before a significant decline in fertility that occurred after the birth control pill first went on the market (Pew, 2015). For the purpose of this study, these so-called *Baby Boomer/ Second-Generation* museum leaders are characterized by: (a) being among the first to attend recently integrated secondary schools and/or colleges during the Civil Rights era, (b) being mentored by the *Silent/First* generational cohort of leaders throughout their professional careers, and (c) being the cohort of leaders who were among the first African Americas to integrate formerly all-white mainstream institutions or professional association, while simultaneously leading a Black Museum previously led by a member of the *Greatest/Founding* generational

cohort. Notable for this dissertation are *Baby Boomer/Second-Generation* leaders whose oral history interviews are contained in this study, such as: Kinshasha Holman Conwill (1951–present) and Juanita Moore (1952–present).

Third-Generation Black Museum Leaders are among the *Generation-X* cohort which is sandwiched between two of the largest generational cohorts in American history. *Generation-X* describes adults born beginning in 1965 through 1980, typically defined by the relatively low birth rates compared with the *Baby Boomer* generation that preceded them and the *Millennial* generation that followed them (Pew, 2015). For the purposes of this study, this so-called *Generation-X (or Third-Generation)* of museum leaders are characterized by: (a) being impacted by the concurrent effects of the crack cocaine epidemic, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the advent of the internet/digital age, (b) being impacted by the post-Civil Rights era while receiving professional mentorship from members of both the *Silent/First-Generation* and the *Baby Boomer/Second* generational cohorts, and (c) being impacted by the dual effects of sustaining the work of two prior generations, while acting as a bridge or translator for emerging generational cohorts (i.e., *Generation-Y/Millennials, Generation-Z,* and *Generation Alpha*). Although *Generation-X* is the generational cohort to which I belong, no members of the *Third* generation of museum leaders were included in the AAAM oral history interview project, hence, there are none included in this study.

Next-Generation Black Museum Leaders are comprised of the next three generational cohorts, which are made up of Generations Y, Z, and Alpha. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), anyone born between 1981 and 1996 is considered a *Millennial* (*previously known as Generation-Y*), anyone born between 1997 and 2012 is considered a member of *Generation-Z,* and persons born in 2013 or later are currently referred to as *Generation Alpha*.

However, there is currently no broadly agreed upon cutoff date for the youngest of these three generational cohorts. Because generations are analytical constructs, it takes time for popular and expert consensus to develop as to the precise boundaries that demarcate one generation from another (Pew, 2020). Of note for this dissertation is that no members of the *Next-Generation* cohort were involved in the AAAM oral history interview project, hence, there are none included in this study.

For the purpose of this study, Table 4.1 details the generational cohort assignments, which were utilized and explored more fully in the interpretation of findings related to the leadership approaches articulated in the participants oral history interview responses.

Table 4.1

Generational Cohort Assignments

Founding Generation (born 1901–1927)	**First-Generation (born 1928–1945)**	**Second-Generation (born 1946–1964)**	**Third-Generation (born 1965–1980)**	**Next-Generation(s)**
Icabod Flewellen* (1916–2001) Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs (1917–2010) Dr. Charles H. Wright* (1918–2002)	Rowena Stewart (1932–2015) Rev. John Kinard* (1936–1989) Harry Robinson (1941–present) E. Barry Gaither (1944–present) Dr. John Fleming* (1944–present)	Spencer Crew* (1949–present) Kinshasha H. Conwill (1951–present) Juanita Moore (1952–present) Lonnie G. Bunch, III* (1952–present) Amina J. Dickerson* (1954–present)	*Generation-X describes persons born between (1965–1980)* *Example:* Marion McGee* (1978–present)	*Millennial or Gen-Y persons born between (1981– 1996)* *Gen-Z persons born between (1997–2012)* *Generation Alpha persons born in (2013 or later)*

*Leaders not profiled in the current Dissertation Research Study

Explication of Presumptive Codes and Data Analysis

The data analysis process was streamlined through the use of three presumptive themes which were applied to maintain a focused distribution of thematic groupings during the coding process. Having not read the oral history transcripts prior to beginning the empirical research, I found it most helpful to identify a framework for nourishing my curiosity and interests in the impact of race the leadership experiences of study participants.

Although I had no way of knowing if these themes would emerge from the data, or not, I elected to use presumptive codes that would focus the data analysis on content that aligned with my qualitative research questions, which also helped mitigate the possibility of getting lost in an abundance of rich content when I conducted the research analysis.

The presumptive code themes were primarily informed by the three qualitative questions which guided the study and developed to serve as guardrails to assist in maintaining a clear focus throughout the coding and data analysis process. The presumptive code themes are also based on the information I was most curious about, but I had no way of knowing, for certain, if any of them would be revealed in the transcripts, until I immersed myself in the words and reflections articulated by each respondent. The use of the presumptive coding framework enabled me to remain focused on specific aspects of interview participant experiences throughout the analysis of both primary and secondary source data, while mitigating the risk or temptation of examining aspects of their responses that did not address the primary research questions.

Theme I: Intersection of race and leadership, was formulated in an attempt to determine what role, if any, racial identity may have played in leadership experiences which awakened or triggered participants' awareness of the way in which race impacted their external and/or internal view of their own leadership ability.

Theme 2: Intersection of race and activism, was framed in an attempt to identify any instance(s) in which the respondent's knowledge and/or organizational development efforts were perceived or expressed in active opposition to status quo or to influence social change.

Theme 3: Intersection of race, leadership, and generativity, was designed to illuminate the constellation of factors, actions, or approaches undertaken by respondents with the goal or intention of providing for existing, emergent, and subsequent generational cohorts.

Although some data did not align with one of the three presumptive codes, I was able to capture it in the "outliers" thematic code, which subsequently formed the basis for the unanticipated findings that ultimately emerged and are further analyzed in Chapter V of this study. The presumptive coding framework is summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Summary of Presumptive Codes Alignment

Theme I: **Intersection of race and LEADERSHIP**	**Theme II:** **Intersection of race and ACTIVISM**	**Theme III:** **Intersection of race, leadership, and GENERATIVITY**	**Theme IV:** **OUTLIERS**
The 1st thematic code captured respondents' experiences of "leading while Black" as expressed through a dual awareness or knowledge of the impact of race and racial identity may have played in a given leadership role.	The 2nd thematic code captured respondents' engagement in "knowledge and/or organizational activism," expressed as an act of resistance to mainstream praxis or an effort undertaken to effect change.	The 3rd thematic code captured respondents' "generative approach to leadership" as expressed through inter-generational knowledge transfer and/or information exchange that emphasizes equipping a subsequent generation.	Noteworthy observations and significant experiences as articulated by the respondents that do not fit the other 3 coding themes.

Organization of Findings

The remainder of this chapter is organized into six leader profiles which provide a summary of the findings related to each interviewee. Each profile offers an in-depth narrative analysis of the participant's oral history interview transcript, which comprised the primary source data for the study. The leader profiles were organized into two distinct categories: (a) *Dimensions of Place* and (b) *Dimensions of Leadership* to provide a clear contextual framework for the narrative analysis findings and to center the reflections expressed by each respondent. A dimension is defined as the size of something; or a part of a situation, especially when it influences the way you think about the situation; or the degree to which a situation is difficult or serious (Macmillan, 2021).

Dimensions of Place

The descriptor "Dimensions of Place" was used to capture the significance and salience of situational reflections shared by each respondent and to make sense of the data being analyzed. The leaders profiled herein were not only forthcoming about the places they were born and the memories their hometowns held, they also shared reflections of their academic, and professional journeys and the changes that resulted from both individual and institutional movement, relocation, and placemaking.

I framed each leader's reflections in this way to explore the complexity and impact of their race in relation to a physical place or geographic region of the country, as well as their place within a broader socio-economic spectrum, which was designed to effectively marginalize Americans based on their racial identity, through the government-sanctioned laws of the era, also known as the Jim Crow caste system (Wilkerson, 2021). A sense of place along with the stories emerging from all corners of the country, has deeply shaped Black history and culture and

ultimately reflects the resiliency of overcoming challenges, while revealing stories as diverse as the landscape itself (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2021).

Dimensions of Leadership

The descriptor "Dimensions of Leadership" was used to identify experiences shared by respondents that aligned with the three qualitative questions and presumptive code themes guiding the narrative analysis. I categorized each leader's responses as a dimension of leadership to understand how they made meaning of the intersection of race and leadership, activism, and generativity in both an individual and institutional context. For the purpose of this study, the dimensions of leadership captured the contextual relevance of each respondent's leadership experiences through the spectrum of: (a) racial identity or awareness of race while leading, (b) organizational or social activism contributing to change, and (c) generative approach to knowledge exchange with an emphasis on the next generation.

This aspect of the leader profiles reflected the parallels between respondents' experiences and the presumptive code themes, which then provided the data needed to identify salient connections among the research participants, which ultimately contributed to a more robust portrait of each leader. Findings are further substantiated through the inclusion of secondary source material, which were used to authenticate and expound upon respondents' interview transcript data. A narrative analysis conducted among participants whose experiences were thematically, chronologically, and regionally diverse, offered a meaningful view of organizational leadership through an African American lens.

Leader Profile 1: Margaret T. Burroughs (November 1, 1917–November 21, 2010)

Founding Generation Leader, Margaret Taylor Burroughs was an esteemed artist, educator, poet, activist and institution-builder. She was born in 1917, the same year that the

Harlem Renaissance began and the year that famed activist, Marcus Garvey, established the American branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Harlem, New York. Dr. Burroughs entered the world during the height of the first World War, only months after the U.S. declared war on Germany, at a time when African American soldiers, like her uncle, were relegated to servile roles in segregated regiments. The prevailing sentiment at that time among many white Americans and military leaders, was an unfounded belief that Black Americans lacked the intelligence and courage to fight (Burger, 2017). Throughout American history, the military served as a prism through which to view larger social concepts, and the First World War was no exception (Margis, 2017). By 1918, four Black regiments were assigned to fight in combat under the French Army, ultimately proving skeptics wrong by valiantly securing their place in history (Burger, 2017).

Dimensions of Place

Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs was born on November 1, 1917 in a small Louisiana town located right along the banks of the Mississippi River, approximately 25 miles west of New Orleans, known as Saint Rose. The town of Saint Rose derived its name from Saint Rose Plantation, which were colonized by German settlers in the late-eighteenth century (St. Charles Parish Museum & Historical Association, 2021), and precipitated by the Louisiana Purchase during the Antebellum period. The land of her birth was among the first half-dozen states to secede from the U.S. and remains an area that presently depicts the "Lost Cause" narrative of the Civil War, in referencing the "devastation caused by the end of slavery and the chaos of Reconstruction" as currently interpreted in an exhibition and pictorial history of the region (St. Charles Parish Museum & Historical Association, 2021). Reconstruction ended in 1877 and the

protections that the federal government attempted to put into place to protect the newly freed ceased (Harris, 2011).

The end of Reconstruction led to the imposition of a series of Jim Crow laws in the South that required the segregation of persons, based on race (Harris, 2011). Due to the realities of Jim Crow laws, legal segregation, and general racist attitudes, African American citizens across the nation—especially in the American South—had little access to high-paying jobs, educational opportunities, and suffered from disenfranchisement (Margis, 2017). For many in the South, the rights won by the war disappeared slowly into bleak lives of hardscrabble subsistence farming (Harris, 2011).

Margaret Burroughs reflected on her southern roots in this way:

> My father was a farmer, and my mother did domestic work cleaning up the white ladies' homes around there. And so, they began to save up money to get us to Chicago, because I have two sisters, I being the youngest, and I remember specifically that my parents were in the little shotgun house that we lived in.

The wave of white terrorism that followed the Civil War offers lessons on the price of revolutionary change (Coates, 2017). Living in Jim Crow Louisiana just 52 years after the Civil War, not only meant the Taylor family lived amid the vestiges of slavery, such as the plantation land where their ancestors were held in bondage, it also meant being relegated to disparate treatment and little to no protection under state or federal law, based solely on their racialized identity. Across the South, someone was hanged or burned alive every four days from 1889 to 1929, according to the book, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Raper, 1933).

The Taylor family were among the first wave of African Americans living in southern states to join the mass exodus to the North that continued throughout most of the 20th century. As Dr. Burroughs recounted in her 2005 oral history interview:

> I think I would like to tell you about the fact that even though I was born in Louisiana, that is not where I grew up, because my family came to Chicago in the first Great Migrations of our people from the South that happened in the middle '20s, and I was about five years old. And the reason why we joined the Migration is because one of my uncles had been in the war, and when he came back from the war, he settled in Chicago, and he wrote back to my parents telling them that there were jobs there and wonderful conditions and everything like that, and also educational opportunities. So, my parents started saving money.

During the Great Migration, the Black pilgrims did not journey north simply seeking better wages and work, or bright lights and big adventures; they were fleeing the acquisitive warlords of the south and seeking the protection of the law (Coates, 2017). Between 1916 and 1918 alone, almost 400,000 African Americans—almost 500 a day—stepped out onto dusty roads, with one tenth of the Black population of the country having moved to the North by 1925 (Harris, 2011).

The story of the Great Migration is among the most dramatic and compelling in all chapters of American history (Harrison, 1991). The Great Migration was not a haphazard unfurling of lost souls but a calculable and fairly ordered resettlement of people along the most direct route to what they perceived as freedom, based on railroad and bus lines, marked by unabated outflows of Black emigres that lasted roughly from 1915 to 1975 (Wilkerson, 2010).

> But anyhow, so we moved up, we caught the Illinois Central train that was going north and came to Chicago, but it was the middle 20s. And I remember, it was wonderful because now I was able to go to a real school, because down in St. Louis there was not any school for the Black children. We had to go to school in the back room of a church. But I was able to go to a school, you know, that had desks and everything like that, and, so, I guess you could say that I was really raised in Chicago.

By the turn of the 20th century, Chicago's burgeoning South Side community began to take on the characteristics of a small city-within-a-city due to the concentration of more than 300,000 Black residents at its peak, which became known as "Bronzeville" or the "Black Metropolis" from the 1920s through the 1950s (Spencer & Silva, 2021). By the time Dr.

Burroughs and her family arrive in the mid-1920s, Chicago had already elected the first African American Congressman, since Reconstruction, Oscar Depriest, to represent the First Congressional District of Illinois. (National Parks Service, 2020)

Although she was only a young girl when Congressman Depriest took office in 1928, she lived long enough to witness the nation's first Black president, Barack Hussein Obama, emerge from Chicago's South Side community. Dr. Burroughs was also still an active member of AAAM when the Association celebrated its 30th anniversary milestone in 2008, hosted by Chicago's DuSable Museum, which featured a key note address by the future First Lady, Michelle Obama, a Chicagoan whose grandparents were part of the Great Migration.

> The Migration peaked during the war years, swept a good portion of all the Black people alive in the United States at the time into a river that carried them to all points north and west. So, too, rose the language and music of urban America that sprang from the blues that came with the migrants; so too came the people who might not have existed, or become who they did, had there been no Great Migration (Wilkerson, 2010).

Dimensions of Leadership

An activist from birth, she changed the order of her names because she did not like the sound of "Victoria" (Fleming & Burroughs, 1999) and preferred using her middle name instead.

> My name is Victoria Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs. I was named, at birth, Victoria Margaret. Victoria after my grandmother on my mother's side and Margaret after my father's oldest sister. However, growing up, I just didn't like the sound of Victoria, so I sort of changed it around to Margaret Victoria.

Dr. Margaret Burroughs' experiences of catalyzing change are epitomized in her candid responses framed through the spectrum of (a) Leading while Black, (b) Organizational activism, and (c) Inter-generational knowledge transfer. One of Dr. Margaret Burroughs' earliest accounts of leading while Black was the differential treatment, she received during an unforgettable incident involving her first-grade teacher, shortly after being enrolled in a Chicago school.

> And I remember about that incident where my mother had taught me my ABCs, I could count up to 100 and when we went to this [new] school, all the teachers were white. And I was in this class. And the teacher had us all to stand up by the board and she was gonna teach us how to write the alphabet. My mother had taught me how to write the alphabet all the way to Z. So, I took my piece of chalk and I started writing and I got all up to about M, and she said, "Margaret, you stop that, you're disobeying me. You're supposed to go slowly with the rest of the people." I couldn't understand why I should be scolded for performing.

Her first experience in elementary school, where her teacher placed a dunce cap on her head for showing that she already knew the alphabet, gave her strength of character which allowed her to challenge racial barriers (Fleming & Burroughs, 1999) throughout her life. As she recounted in a 1999 interview with Dr. John E. Fleming:

> I couldn't quite understand that for a long time, because here I was doing something, showing that I knew it, and I was being punished for it. It was only years afterward when I became a teacher myself that I found that the role of many of the racist white teachers that we had was to discourage African Americans. Luckily, that did not scare me or stop me, because I kept on going and learning (Fleming & Burroughs, 1999).

Dr. Margaret Taylor Burroughs earned her Bachelor's degree in Art Education in 1946 and received her Master's in Art Education in 1948. Yet, she was already making the first of her many contributions to African American arts and culture when she founded the South Side Community Art Center in 1941, a community organization that still serves as a gallery and workshop studio for artists and students 80 years after its founding.

Renowned artist David Driskell, in *Two Centuries of African American Art,* described her as "one of the most versatile and distinguished Black women in American Art" (Driskell, 1976). Margaret Burroughs' exceptional skill as a printmaker earned her featured placement in art galleries and shows, in addition to illustrating many books including, *What Shall I Tell My Children Who are Black?* (1968), and publishing several volumes of poetry (Burroughs, 2000). Margaret Burroughs was equally heralded as a visual artist for having exhibited widely in major galleries throughout the U.S. as well as overseas, subsequently serving as a founding member of

the National Conference of Artists, one of the oldest professional organizations of Black artists in the country (Fleming & Burroughs, 1999).

During the mid-1950s Margaret Taylor married Charles Gordon Burroughs, poet and founder of the Associated Negro Press. His organization, modeled on the Associated Press, played an important role in the coordination of African American newspapers throughout the United States. Together, the Burroughs founded the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art on the ground floor of their Chicago brownstone in 1961. In 1968, the museum was renamed for Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, the Haitian-born trader credited with founding Chicago in the 1780s (Chicago Tribune, 2014), following a series of strategic and highly decisive efforts undertaken by Dr. Burroughs and her team to expand the institution's footprint while securing support from then mayor Richard J. Daley.

By 1973, the museum had completely outgrown its original location and moved to its own, fully renovated building, in Chicago's Washington Park. An activist at heart, Mrs. Burroughs recalled the organizational activism required to move the museum to its new location:

> We wrote letters, petitions, we wrote letters to the mayor, and letters to the head of the park district asking that since the other parks had education institutions or museums in there why couldn't they give us this building to move the DuSable Museum into? And so, the park board, they finally got so many letters that they called me down to make a presentation to the board, which I did, and I had gotten an architect who drew up the plans. The Park Commission decided that we could move into that building, as long as we continued to conduct a museum, a high-quality museum.
>
> And so, then, that's how we moved from my house. We renovated, room by room, by raising the money, until finally, we got it all straight. And then we found that there was a state statute that said any time a group of citizens who start a museum which is on state owned land, they are entitled to support from the tax levy. All the other museums in the parks, the white museums in the parks, were getting this money regularly. And so, we got in on that too, and that helped quite a bit.

Founding Generation Leader, Margaret Burroughs focus on inter-generational knowledge transfer was a foundational principle demonstrated throughout her 60+ year career in the museum field. As she recounted in her 2005 oral history interview:

> Well, then, at that time, in the Chicago Schools there was very little taught to the African American children about our own positive contributions to American history, or world history for that matter. And so, it seems like one time, several of us African American teachers sort of got together and started talking about this matter. And we decided we ought to do something about it. And so, we were talking about it, and so, we said, "well if you got all those other ethnic museums why can't we have a Black history museum?"
>
> So, we agreed on that, and then we remembered something that Booker T. Washington had given us, our people. He said, "put down your buckets where you are." So, we're in the living room, looked all around, we put our buckets down there. We took whatever pictures, anything related to Black history we had, put up on the wall. At that time, this was in 1961, we put a sign in the window saying "Black History Museum. Once we started, people began to bring us things from many places.

Today, the DuSable Museum also hosts various educational programs, houses a permanent collection of thousands of artifacts, artworks and books, and has become an internationally recognized resource for African American art (DuSable, 2021). The essential takeaway I observed from examining Dr. Burroughs context-rich leadership experiences was her keen ability to strategically balance a commitment of echoing and exhorting across generations.

Through her work as an artist, educator, administrator, disruptor, and founder, she echoed the progress of her generational predecessors while simultaneously exhorting leaders of the First- and Second-Generations to continue the work of institution-building, organizational activism and cultural preservation that she and her contemporaries helped to advance.

This "echoing" of leadership progress and organizational principles was not unique to Dr. Burroughs or just to her Founding generational cohort. This echoing of past by present leaders to influence and empower future generations was an unanticipated finding that initially emerged during the coding and analysis of Dr. Burrough's interview transcript, which I would

subsequently discover was a salient factor across all three generational cohorts included in this study. African Americans found the past a particularly useful resource for thinking about whether they could make a difference in the world, constructing narratives in an effort to understand how and why things change and how they could themselves effect change (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998).

Leader Profile 2: Rowena Stewart (March 6, 1932–September 19, 2015)

First-Generation Leader, Rowena Stewart, was born in 1932, just a few years after the stock market crash of 1929 which precipitated the economic devastation of America's decade-long Great Depression (1929–1939). She was the only child of her parents Essie Brozle Gilmore and Oliver Rhodes and fondly recalled the enduring influences of both her maternal grandmother, Katie Brozle, (whose biological father, Spicer Christopher, was an established slave owner in Jacksonville) and her paternal grandmother, Irene Brill, who enthusiastically supplemented her granddaughter's racially degrading elementary school curricula with vivid lessons and lectures about Black history and culture.

> Our roots are from the Kingsley Plantation. And, so, we were part of the slaves that settled outside of what is now Jacksonville proper. But my grandmother was a teacher that they had sent down when all of the islands were required to have a public-school teacher. And so that's how my mother met my father.

Dimensions of Place

It was in Jacksonville where poet James Weldon Johnson had written "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in 1900 for President Lincoln's birthday celebration at the Edwin M. Stanton School, then a segregated elementary school, where he served as principal of the school (Bearor, 2020). Johnson's popular poem was subsequently set to music by his brother Rosamond, a beloved composer and playwright of the early 20th century.

By 1919, the NAACP, along with many other historically Black institutions and civic groups adopted "Lift Every Voice and Sing" as the Black National anthem. Stewart would later attend and graduate from the same school where James Weldon Johnson had once served as principal at the turn of the 20th century. By the time Rowena Stewart graduated in 1949, Stanton had become a college-preparatory high school for students hailing from Jacksonville's all-Black enclaves of Durkeeville, La'Villa, and the surrounding region. The personal significance of Jacksonville was best articulated in Ms. Stewart's own words:

> Jacksonville had a very rich African American business history. Most people don't know that Jacksonville has the largest Black population, always has, for the state of Florida, since the very beginning. Jacksonville is very unique. This is the city James Weldon Johnson came out of. This is also the city where we elected more public officials than any city in the South up until the 20th century. And so, it's a remarkable kind of history that is often ignored. The other thing is, Jacksonville produced two of the Black millionaires that existed in this country: A.L. Lewis and Thomas Fortune. Think about that. It's at the gateway of the community. It's where the community is being revived.

Upon graduating from Stanton High School in 1949, Stewart enrolled at Claflin College in South Carolina, where she was harassed by the Ku Klux Klan (Stewart, 2006b). She ultimately left Claflin and subsequently finished her degree at another historically Black institution, Edward Waters College, located a little closer to home.

First-Generation Leader, Rowena Stewart, who was affectionately called the "Mother of Black museums," led over half-a-dozen different African American historic sites, cultural organizations, and museums. Stewart began her museum career at Boston's Harriet Tubman House before relocating to Rhode Island, where she subsequently formed the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, which she directed until 1985 (Stewart, 2006a).

> By the time I got to Rhode Island, I just fell in love with this first Rhode Island Regiment, and I was working for the Martin Luther King Center as the director of their settlement house, and I would spend my time in the library researching those Black soldiers of the Revolutionary War. I was just so elated over what I could find out about Blacks that I knew nobody else knew about, that I had gone through school and nobody told me about

> the Regiment to me, was just very, very important. What we did in Rhode Island was to research every city, every town.
>
> You could call me from any place in the country and I could tell you if your roots were there. We thought it was important because Rhode Island was the major slave port where people came in even though they went south because all the great slave merchants had homes in Rhode Island, we had all these incredible slave logs and all that kind of stuff Rhode Island was small enough for us to put our arms around it and be able to do thorough research.

This experience led her to become the second director of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in Philadelphia, from 1985 to 1992, after the retirement of its founding director, historian Charles H. Wesley (Stewart, 2006a).

> Philadelphia was great because it was the first time that I'd ever worked in urban history, real urban history, where people really cared about that history, and they were psyched up about it. I mean, you know, you could have a book review, you could have an author, and the auditorium would be packed. People love their history in Philly.
>
> It was a great place. In terms of the field itself, nobody supported Black museums. That's why Philadelphia was such a big thing. You know, here was a city who had put up two million dollars to build a site. It was unheard of that you would even think that you would get money from a city or a county to help you with your history.

She transformed what was a rather static museum into one that was interactive. In 1992, Stewart moved to Detroit to head the Motown Historical Museum, which was originally established by Berry Gordy and his wife Esther Gordy.

> Detroit was a wonderful, wonderful city that never—it still is—that never got its due for what it really is. It is a wonderful Black city. Perhaps the closest thing that I have witnessed to what Africa is–what Africa means to African people. It's a place where Black people truly respect their sense of being Black. I mean it is. When I went to Detroit, I was 60 years old. I don't remember ever being in a town where a whole hospital system—the best system—was run by Black doctors. I don't ever remember being in a town where there were generations of Black lawyers. And it was that kind of wealth that existed in Detroit. And it often got overlooked because of sporadic violence that occurred there. But Detroit was a wonderful city.

In 1995, Ms. Stewart was recruited to Kansas City, Missouri where she oversaw the development of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and the American Jazz Museum. While there, she also created the Blue Room, a nightclub for local musicians within the jazz museum,

and designed exhibits about the city's music scene, then subsequently became its founding executive director in 1997 (Stewart, 2006a) after completion of construction of the multi-site historic district.

Dimensions of Leadership

Rowena Stewart's experiences of catalyzing change are epitomized in her personal reflections, which are herein framed through the spectrum of: (a) Leading while Black, (b) Organizational activism, and (c) Inter-generational knowledge transfer. One of the personal reflections Ms. Stewart shared, which illustrated her awareness of leading while Black was the approach, she embarked upon to learn the business of preservation, by first volunteering her service in an all-white institution, with a clear focus on establishing a Black historical society within the same community.

> I asked G. William Miller, if he would assist me. He asked me what did I need and I said, "I don't need anything to do this, all I need is a place to learn." I didn't want them to give me money, I wanted to learn how to do the business. He hooked me up with the Rhode Island Historical Society. I worked without pay for two years. I mean without a dime. But what it was for me was an opportunity for me to learn the business.
>
> That was the amazing thing. The other side of that, though, was that I realized there were two worlds in this museum business. One that had a lot to do with the white community and how the Euro-community felt about our history.
>
> And Al Klyberg was constantly reminding me all the time, "Remember, they only care about their history, it's not about your history. You've got to make sure that it's your history." Cause I could do their history as good as I could do mine, but they couldn't do mine as good as I could do it.
>
> He would pull me back and say, "Now, think about what you're doing now. You're here to develop the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, and you make sure you do that." And I sometimes got a little offended, because I thought he was trying to talk me out of it, but what he was teaching me to do was to balance and to make sure I was steady.
>
> He would say things like, "I could use you forever, but you would never have the position you would have if you were doing this for your own people but you could do yours so much better." So, you know, I kind of resented it at first, but it really got through to me.

Ms. Stewart also embodied the organizational activism required to move the very first institution that she founded to a location that made it more accessible to members of the African American community, while designing public programs that centered community engagement and garnered the trust and support of local residents. As she recalled during her 2005 oral history interview:

> Kansas City was the greatest piece that I've ever worked on. Kansas City was the one thing in my museum career, the one-time where I had the money, I had the staff, and I had the people that it needed to put that project together. It was to build the building that now houses both the American Jazz Museum and the Negro Leagues Museum.
>
> It was to restore a theater, the Gem Theater, which was across the street, which was the old Black theater. It was a nine-block area, and we were a pivotal part of a revitalization of that area. It was the American Jazz Museum, which really focused on the jazz history in this country and we were the only one, in the country, that was a pure jazz museum, that's all we did.
>
> I think we also gave a group of musicians, who had fought for ten years against this museum being in existence because they said there would never be a place for them. As a result, I created a club called the Blue Room, in the museum, where they were the ones who were the performers in it. So, musicians who could not often work in town got a chance to work in their club, in their neighborhood, on a regular basis, and they still do.

First-Generation Leader, Rowena Stewart's commitment to inter-generational knowledge transfer was evident throughout her celebrated career and articulated in myriad actions she took to uphold the standard demonstrated by her professional elders, such as Margaret Burroughs and John Kinard, while identifying opportunities for the next generation of emerging leaders. In 2002, Stewart retired to her hometown and continued to work with Jacksonville's Ritz Theatre and Museum and the American Beach Community Center and Museum in Amelia Island, FL until her passing in September of 2015, just one year prior to the opening of NMAAHC, which she strongly advocated for during her 40+ year career.

The essential takeaway I observed from examining Ms. Stewart's context-rich leadership experiences was her ability to learn while leading, as exemplified by the following quote:

> I entered the museum field in 1974. It was interesting. I had been in social work for about 15 years, but my love was always for history, and my degree was in history, and my husband was in the navy, and so we started moving from town to town, and the way I kept myself stable was to try to find as much as I could about the history of my people in that particular town.

Despite having no formal training as a museum administrator, her humility in being willing to learn and seek the guidance of others greatly informed her approach, while never diminishing her leadership acumen. She embodied a sincere passion for "her people's history" while implementing strategies that addressed both the needs of the institution and the local communities they served. The social order of the time, uniqueness of locations, juxtaposed with the notion of unearthing hidden histories, make Ms. Stewart's leadership narrative as prolific as the historic spaces she helped to preserve, all of which are still in operation today. Therefore, she remains a standard-bearer in the advancement of the Black Museum Movement, commitment to activism, and unyielding advocacy for the collective.

Leader Profile 3: Harry Robinson (born in 1941)

First-Generation Leader, Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr. was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in the fall of 1941, a few months before the United States entered the Second World War, which lasted from 1939 until 1945. It brought to the forefront contradictions between America's ideals of spreading democracy abroad while actively denying equality to its own citizens based on race. During this time, African Americans became more assertive in their demands for equality to highlight the paradoxical experience of fighting for democracy overseas while being treated like second-class citizens by their own country (Clark, 2020).

Dr. Robinson exemplifies the self-reliant generation of Black Americans born during the second World War, who witnessed an era of significant progress resulting from persistent social activism. Including, but not limited to, notable figures such as: Marian Anderson who became the first African American soloist to perform at New York's Metropolitan Opera House

(Fessenden, 2015); college founder Mary McLeod Bethune and union founder A. Philip Randolph, who collaborated in their activism to ban discrimination in federal government and defense industry employment; Jackie Robinson who broke the color barrier in major league baseball (Onion, Sullivan, & Mullen, 2018) and author and institutional founder, deemed the "Father of Black history" Carter G. Woodson, who exhorted Robinson's generation "to collect the records of the Negro and treat them scientifically in order that the race may not become a negligible factor in the thought of the world" (Dagbovie, 2012, p. 5).

Dimensions of Place

Dr. Robinson hailed from the same home state as Margaret Taylor Burroughs and was born the same year that his Founding Generation predecessor established her first institution in Chicago. However, Dr. Robinson's parents did not join the second wave of the Great Migration, opting instead to bravely endure the harsh realities of the nationwide Jim Crow social order in Louisiana.

> Well, I was born in New Orleans at Charity Hospital, and came up on the countryside in Lafourche Parish, Raceland and Thibodaux, Louisiana. I left Thibodaux to go to college. I went to Southern University in Baton Rouge, and got my Bachelor's from Southern. Left Southern, went to Atlanta University, got a Master's in Library Science, and from there I went to Kentucky State, that was my first job, as a cataloguer.
>
> Both of my parents were born in Raceland, Louisiana, which is the lower end of Lafourche Parish. And my mother was a third grader; my dad never went to school a day in his life. But worked all of his life, made a good living, took care of us, and he had a variety of jobs. Well, when we were in the country, he worked in the sugar cane field, he had worked on construction jobs, he helped to build the highway between New Orleans and Des Allemandes. He worked at the Avondale Ship Yard. He worked on the railroad, laying spikes and what have you.
>
> My mother was a domestic, but before she became a domestic when we moved to Thibodaux, she worked in the sugar cane field. But she did it for a good while to help my dad get us through school and feed us.

As the 19th century came to an end and segregation took ever stronger hold in the South, many African Americans saw self-improvement, especially through education, as the single

greatest opportunity to escape the indignities they suffered (Onion et al., 2018). Robinson attended graduate school at Atlanta University where he obtained his Master's degree in Library Science in 1965, after researching volumes of African American history, and later returned to Southern University to continue his work as an archivist (Robinson, 2006a). Unlike many of his generational predecessors, he not only attended college in the south, he also returned to the south after completing doctoral studies in Illinois.

In 1968, he had the honor of meeting civil rights activist Ralph Bunche at Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s funeral on the Atlanta University campus. Then, Robinson worked at Prairie View A&M, College of Texas, and Alabama State University, before becoming a museum director at Bishop College in Dallas, TX (Robinson, 2006b). By 1974, Robinson had established himself as a respected archivist and museum executive and subsequently joined Bishop College as librarian and director of its newly conceived Southwest Research Center and Museum. Under his leadership the new museum became an independent, community-based institution, with an expanded art collection, and built a new facility in Dallas' Fair Park neighborhood (Robinson, 2006a).

> I guess I really got into this in a formal way when I was working at Alabama State. I was Dean of Learning Resources, and in that position, I was able to do museum-type work because special collections were in our area, and Alabama State, too, like several of the other predominantly Black colleges, had a large and extensive collection of African American materials ... rare, out-of-print books, Phyllis Wheatley's poems, all kinds of stuff. So, we were able to develop a unit of special collection material at Alabama State, and we had a series of activities that were museum-related.
>
> And, so I left and came to Dallas as the museum director and librarian at Bishop College for a museum that didn't exist, and we had to develop it. So that's pretty much how I got started in this field.

Dimensions of Leadership

Dr. Robinson's context-rich experiences of catalyzing change are epitomized in his candid responses framed through the spectrum of (a) Leading while Black, (b) Organizational

activism, and (c) Inter-generational knowledge transfer. One of the most instructive aspects of Dr. Robinson's leadership narrative, was the emphasis placed on educational attainment and service to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which included Clark Atlanta, Southern, South Carolina State, Prairie View A&M, Alabama State, and Bishop College.

It was Dr. Robinson's work within HBCUs that ultimately led to him working in the museum field, which also illustrated his awareness of leading while Black involved the decision to work within historically Black educational institutions, despite receiving a variety of other employment opportunities:

> I had several job offers when I came to Dallas. And I chose Bishop because it was a church-related school—I'm a Baptist—and I had always talked about my commitment to Black higher education, but I had always worked in public institutions, never taken a risk, and something said to me that, you know, I need to test my will to live up to what I believed in, and that was, I should help, you know, in my denomination's school.
>
> Long story short, I decided to come to Bishop to make my contribution, and the president impressed me because he brought me in primarily as a librarian, but he wanted to know what I was going to do to help the college make a contribution to the community. And, you know, I had in mind this museum and research center, and what have you, and the president supported it.

Although Robinson initially housed the Museum of African-American Life and Culture at Bishop College in Dallas, he later moved the museum after discovering structural problems in the building on campus (Robinson, 2006a). Despite Robinson's commitment to Bishop College, he courageously acted to protect the museum from being negatively impacted by the school's growing financial distress and ongoing lack of fiscal accountability. In 1979, the museum became independent, and Robinson began raising funds for a new location. He vividly recalled the organizational activism required to move the museum to its new location:

> So, we started off with the library and the museum running simultaneously, and in 1978/79, the college began to experience financial difficulty. And there was keen interest in the museum. So, I went to the president and talked with him about making the museum a separate entity. He agreed and we became incorporated as a 501(c)(3).

> But, as we continued to raise the money, the college started running into problems. Getting bad publicity. And it was one thing after another that was not favorable. So, I thought about that long and hard, that our leaving the campus was not going hurt the campus. So, we decided to find an offsite location.
>
> Then, there was a city bond election so they called us and asked us if we would be interested in moving to Fair Park and they would help us get on the bond issue. Well, we said yes. And I knew what was going on. They needed us because there was some bad blood between Fair Park and the neighborhood, because some property had been taken in previous years from people in the neighborhood. So, the African American community was leery of anything that had to do with the expansion of Fair Park. So, they needed us to, I guess, neutralize, or soften the African American community. So, we had to think through that. But we wanted this location. We wanted to come into Fair Park because in 1936 there was a Hall of Negro Life, which was a museum, and we felt that we needed to come back to where we started.

First-Generation Leader, Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr. maintained an unwavering emphasis on inter-generational knowledge transfer as an essential standard. This was demonstrated through his own professional narrative and pivotal apprenticeships with trailblazing professors and academicians across the HBCU landscape, as well as through his own decisive leadership within the museum field. Dr. Robinson served as both a board member and was subsequently elected president of the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) board, in addition to his 40+ year career in the museum field. During his 2006 oral history interview, he brilliantly articulated the generative intent of the Association in utilizing its annual convenings to create space for inter-generational knowledge sharing, along with his personal commitment to seeing it continue:

> But AAAM did an excellent job in preparing or providing training opportunities for us. And then there was a forum for us to network. We were able to network with each other, and we shared our ideas with each other. And that was a place that we can go to that was not intimidating or overwhelming, because the people with whom we were working for the most part, were our colleagues and people who were having some of the similar problems, challenges and experiences that we were having.
>
> And we were narrowly focused, because we were primarily concerned with African American museums. I think the future is bright, because I'm committed to getting us bac to where we were, or at least surpassing where we were. It was so heartening to see some of the older members come back, even some who were retired, and gladly participated on panels and were willing to share their experience and knowledge with

> other people. And the younger professionals are so open, and were just there ready to gobble up whatever the elders had to contribute. It was a wonderful experience, and I was encouraged.

Today the African American Museum of Dallas is the only one of its kind in the Southwestern Region of the country devoted to the preservation and exhibition of African American artistic, cultural, and historical materials, boasting one of the largest African American Folk-Art collections in the United States. First-Generation Leader, Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr. still serves as the institution's founding and executive director, while maintaining active participation in AAAM.

The essential takeaway drawn from Dr. Harry Robinson's context-rich leadership experiences was his profound aptitude for balancing scholarship and activism. He not only prioritized the preservation of history and cultural traditions, but also institutional knowledge for the benefit of emerging and future generations. Through his work as an educator and museum founder, he echoed the progress of prior generations while equipping the leaders and practitioners of the future.

In keeping with the commitment to the advancement of the Black Museum Movement modeled by his generational predecessors, such as Margaret Burroughs, Charles H. Wright, and Icabod Flewellen, he also positioned the African American Museum of Dallas to remain culturally conscious and responsive to the needs of the surrounding Black community.

> I was talking with someone the other day that in Dallas, to my knowledge, we're the only institution that's providing lectures, and discussions, or forums, on African American issues in the city where the public is involved. We have an academic program where we teach a course in African American history. We teach a course in African American art. We have developed a new course on African American culture. And these are six-month programs where we have some of the best people in the field to come in and teach.

Leader Profile 4: Edmond Barry Gaither (born in 1944)

First-Generation Leader, Edmond Barry Gaither was born near the end of World War II, exactly four months after the war's most celebrated D-day, when western allied countries invaded northern France (Britannica, 2021). Similar to his contemporary, Harry Robinson, he came of age at a time when many African Americans were lauded for historic first-time accomplishments, resulting from the unrelenting social activism of prior generations. During World War II, many African Americans were ready to fight for what President Franklin Roosevelt called the "Four Freedoms"—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear—even while they themselves lacked those freedoms at home (Onion et al., 2018). Exasperated Black servicemen and their Black female counterparts on the home front, known as Black Rosies (Randle, 2020), were forced to combat racism even as they sought to further U.S. war aims. This concerted effort became known as the "Double V" strategy, indicative of the two victories they sought to win both abroad and back home in the U.S.

Dimensions of Place

E. Barry Gaither was born in Great Falls, South Carolina (40 miles north of Columbia, SC and 50 miles south of Charlotte, NC), as the fourth child, among his parents five children. He fondly shared reflections of his family roots during his 2005 oral history interview:

> My parents were both South Carolinians. My father's hometown, Great Falls, is where I grew up. My mother was born in Anderson, SC, which was a little bit to the west, and Anderson at that time was a big city for the South. It was a city big enough to have had street cars, which I suppose is a marker of size in the Old South.
>
> I went to [a] one teacher school, under my mother, through 4th grade at Pleasant Grove AME Zion School. All of that was during a period when segregation still prevailed in South Carolina public schools.
>
> My father held a bachelor's degree. My mother held what would be an associate's degree nowadays. My mother and father had both met at Friendship Junior College in Rock Hill, SC, and my father continued study after that at Benedict College in Columbia, SC.

In a 2001 interview, conducted by the HistoryMakers Archives, Gaither reflected on having grown up in a small town with no access to visual art or museums to nourish his devout interest in the arts. Nonetheless, attending Morehouse College proved to be very influential to his growth as a person, as it was the first time that he had the opportunity to live with and appreciate paintings and sculptures first-hand (Gaither, 2001). Attending Morehouse proved to be a fortuitous experience, which fueled his curiosity and formal understanding and training in the visual arts and art history.

> I attended Morehouse College in Atlanta. I went to Morehouse in 1962 and I graduated in 1966. Unlike some students at Morehouse, I did not get there because I had any previous relationship, or knew anyone who had. My two brothers and my sister had all gone to college at Claflin University in Orangeburg, and my one real decision was that I didn't want to go where two brothers and a sister had gone.
>
> I didn't write Morehouse actually; I wrote Atlanta University because I didn't understand that was only graduate work. They sent my inquiry to Morehouse and in the end that's where I went. One of the great fortunate decisions of my life.
>
> Perhaps one of the most important things to come out of my years in Atlanta was my first opportunity to live with and fully appreciate paintings and sculpture. When I came to Atlanta I met the paintings of Lois Mailou Jones, of John [Woodrow] Wilson, of John Biggers, of really the great names in African American art. And not only did I just meet them but I saw them daily.

Gaither graduated from Morehouse in 1966 with a B.A. degree and went on to obtain a M.F.A. from Brown University in 1968 (Gaither, 2001). Since 1969, Gaither has been the founding director and curator of the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists ("NCAAA") in Roxbury, Massachusetts. He is also a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Using the Museum of Fine Arts as his base, he has developed the National Center's permanent collection and organized many exhibitions. His work has established the National Center as a vital cultural presence for African American art in Boston and the nation (Gaither, 2001).

He would subsequently receive multiple honorary doctorates throughout his storied career for his tremendous contributions to the museum field and cultural sector, writ large. Among these distinctions are: Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Northeastern University, l984; Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Framingham State College, l993; and Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts, Rhode Island College, 1994 (National Center of Afro-American Artists, 2021).

Dimensions of Leadership

Since 1969, Edmund Barry Gaither has been Director and Curator of the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists and Special Consultant at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (National Center of Afro-American Artists, 2021). Dr. Gaither's leadership experiences are exemplified in a personal reflection shared during his 2005 oral history interview, which illuminated not only his approach to leading while Black, but also the intentionality of his work on behalf of Black institutions nationwide:

> At the beginning of the 70s, in fact through the mid-70s coming up to the birth of the African American Museums Association, we were like a field of saplings. We had a lot of young organizations that were very energetic, very aspiring, and some were beginning to take solid form, but we were really without any oaks.

In 1988, Gaither collaborated with other museum leaders and board members to identify the funding resources needed to launch a nationwide study in conjunction with the American Association for State and Local History entitled: *Profile of Black Museums: A Survey Commissioned by the African American Museums Association* (AAMA, 1988). He candidly recalled the organizational activism required to move forward with such a considerable undertaking:

> One of the first things we identified as an association was that in order for us to be a useful instrument for the interest of this growing number of museums, we needed a way to quantify our impact—to say who we were, how many we were, where we were, what

> we represented in employees—and we could not answer that question except in an anecdotal way.
>
> So, one of the very important early projects of the AAMA was commissioning a statistical survey of the national community of Black museums. We were the very first to do that, and the importance of that survey was that it gave us an instrument which allowed us to say "this is who we represent."

First-Generation Leader, Dr. E. Barry Gaither's entire career demonstrates a firm commitment to inter-generational knowledge transfer. This was demonstrated through the reflections shared about his formative years as a college student and how that experience informed his perspective of the art and cultural sector, along with the tremendous opportunities it afforded him. In addition to being a direct beneficiary of great artists, scholars and educators during his time at Morehouse College, Gaither worked alongside another prolific Founding Generation leader, Elma Lewis (1921–2004) in Boston.

> Responding to needs identified at a conference of Black creative intellectuals convened in Chicago, Illinois, in 1967, Elma Lewis conceived the National Center of Afro-American Artists and incorporated it in 1968. It subsumed the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts which she had launched in 1950, thereby creating a teaching, performing and visual arts institution which would emphasize artistic excellence and the contribution of the arts to wholesome human development. For the visual arts, Ms. Lewis enlisted the help of Barry Gaither in developing and sustaining the NCAAA's Museum. (NCAAA, 2021)

For the National Center of Afro-American Artists, he developed the Museum from a concept to an institution with collections exceeding three thousand objects and a 32-year history of exhibitions celebrating the visual arts heritage of Black people worldwide (NCAAA, 2021). Dr. E. Barry Gaither still serves as the institution's executive director, while curating exhibitions and numerous ground-breaking shows.

His First-Generation leadership narrative is accentuated by three significant historical factors: (a) he was born and raised in the south during the Jim Crow era, amid the very real threats that state-sanctioned segregation and racial degradation posed to he and his family; (b) he

and his four siblings makeup a second-generation of college attendees within their generational cohort, having two parents with college degrees who modeled the generative balance between professional achievement and community stewardship; and (c) he was among the third wave of African Americans who joined the Great Migration upon relocating to Boston, Massachusetts in 1969.

The essential takeaway drawn from his context-rich leadership experiences were the transformative leadership, institution-building, and organizational development efforts he undertook, due to his passion for Black art, history and culture. Marked by an authentic embrace of his own racial identity, as well as his prioritization of the perspectives of Black artists, Gaither effectively sustained the work of his professional mentor, Elma Lewis, while forming organizational networks that have proven essential in the advancement of the Black Museum Movement.

This was further illustrated throughout Dr. Gaither's oral history, which included his pivotal contributions and continued leadership within the museum field for the past 50+ years. As he reflected on the generational impact of his work, he articulated the highly collaborative approach taken and collective impact he helped to achieve:

> On African American museums, I think we stimulated the growth, and we made clear that our growth involved constant improvement in our service and in our credentialing. So, I think that we supported the professionalism of our sector of the museum field.
>
> It mattered for us at a point when it really didn't matter for others, because many of our institutions were too small, too weak, too isolated. They were not visible from the general American museum landscape. They were only visible to us. And we were trying to say "how do we make a network that will include you, that will help you to grow and become"

Leader Profile 5: Kinshasha Holman Conwill (born in 1951)

Second-Generation Leader, Kinshasa Holman Conwill was born in the spring of 1951, at a time when non-violent civil protests were galvanizing spirited young people across the country,

and particularly in the south. By 1951, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was challenging segregation laws in public schools, and had filed lawsuits on behalf of plaintiffs in states such as South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and the case that would soon become among the most famous, a plaintiff named Oliver Brown filed a class-action suit against the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, after his daughter, Linda Brown, was denied entrance to Topeka's all-white elementary schools (Onion, et al., 2009).

Dimensions of Place

Kinshasa Holman Conwill was the middle child born to Moses Carol Holman and Mariella Ukina Ama Holman in Atlanta, Georgia. Although her celebrated career would later take her from Louisville, KY to Los Angeles, CA then to Harlem, NY and ultimately to Washington, DC, she fondly reflected on her foundational years during a 2017 oral history interview:

> I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and I grew up there until I was twelve, when my family moved to Washington, DC. So, a good part of my formative years were in Atlanta. So, my mother ended up going to Lab[oratory] High [School] at Atlanta University and went to Spelman. My father got a bachelor's degree from Lincoln, and a master's degree from University of Chicago, and an MFA from Yale.
>
> My father was born in Minter—very small city in the state of Mississippi. His family did not stay there very long, though. When he was still quite young his parents, Moses and Mamie Holman, moved to St. Louis. My mother was born in Philadelphia ... she actually spent a number of years of her youth off and on in Atlanta ... because my grandmother had siblings there.

Ms. Conwill's narrative is accentuated by several significant factors, which are similar to her generational predecessor, E. Barry Gaither. As a Second-Generation leader, she likewise: (a) was raised in a racially segregated community environment, gaining the perspective of spending a portion of her formative years in the progressive Black enclaves of Atlanta, GA and Washington, DC; (b) she and her siblings constituted a second-generation of college attendees within her family, having parents who met while working as educators on the Hampton

University campus, while modeling the generative balance between professional achievement and community stewardship; and (c) she was among the third wave of African Americans to join the Great Migration of the early 1970s, upon relocating from Louisville, KY to Los Angeles, CA. She reflected on the places that influenced her early development:

> When I grew up in Atlanta, it was still segregated, so my life was really in the Black community. My father was a poet, in addition to being a professor of humanities, and years later I found out that a poem he wrote called "Picnic Deliberator" was based on an annual July Fourth picnic that we went to at a place called Pine Acres, which was, again, a segregated place where, evidently, Black folk could go. And so, it was an interesting thing. The Black community was one community. Everybody was all in the same place.
>
> My family had moved in August of '63, at the time of the March on Washington, which my parents wouldn't let me and my younger brother attend but my older brother attended and just one note on that: people see the great speech of Dr. King, and of others, but what I don't think people always also realize is that that period of '63 was a very violent time, the year of the Birmingham bombing and other signal moments in the Movement—very violent, very fearful—so people had been told "don't let young children come to this march" because you don't know what's going to happen.
>
> The first year [of college] I went to Mount Holyoke on an early admission and I got there and realized "this is not where I wanted to be," but met a lot of great people, and so then came back to town and went back to Howard [University]and entered what was then the College of Fine Arts and it was remarkable.
>
> In retrospect, it's even more remarkable than I realized, because, when your life becomes history you think, "oh my, that's what that was." So, you had this group of people and all the folks who were—who are now considered some of the leaders. And that's where I met Houston Conwill, and we got married in 1971.

In Los Angeles, Conwill worked as an arts educator and activities coordinator for the Frank Lloyd Wright Hollyhock House for several years. In 1980, Conwill became the Deputy Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and served in that position for eleven years before becoming the museum's Executive Director for the next ten years. She then served as exhibit coordinator for the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian in New York City and also worked as project director for the New York City Creative Communities program of LINC (Leveraging Investments in Creativity), project director and managing editor for Culture Counts: Strategies for a More Vibrant Cultural Life for New York City, and project manager for Creative

Downtown: The Role of Culture in Rebuilding Lower Manhattan through the New York City Arts Coalition (Conwill, 2017).

Since 2005, Conwill has served as Deputy Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. In this role, she successfully engaged in multi-million-dollar fundraising campaigns, expanded the museum's collections and developed exhibits, while providing editorial supervision for all the museum's signature publications.

Dimensions of Leadership

Ms. Conwill's leadership experiences are epitomized in her candid reflections which are framed through the spectrum of (a) Leading while Black, (b) Organizational activism, and (c) Inter-generational knowledge transfer. One of the memories she shared, which illustrated her commitment to courageously leading while Black involved her awareness of both the ambiguous and overtly racist tactics used to marginalize people of color, while ultimately choosing to maximize her proverbial seat at the table:

> I think that after coming from a place like Atlanta, where racial barriers were really clear–you cannot come in this store, you cannot get on this bus—what happened when my family moved 'up North' is that you ran into the more subtle barriers. And some of them weren't terribly subtle, I wasn't as aware of them as a child, but what I came to see as I grew older is that they really were a more sophisticated racism—a notion that it was never assumed that you could be in the room, it was never assumed that you could get the scholarship or the fellowship or the job.
>
> And then its counterpoint: that the standard—and I found this on panels—that the standard for a white artist, say, being selected for a grant was [different] I remember one time I was just really furious. My ongoing goal to educate my colleagues about Black artists was continuing, and we were showing slides of artists for whatever this grant was, and someone said, when this white artist came up, "well we don't need to see the slides," and I said, "Oh, we absolutely do" I said, "This is a peer process, the playing field is supposed to be equal, so there shouldn't be an assumption that we all know this artist."

In addition to her keen awareness of how her race influenced her leadership in the museum field, Ms. Conwill's narrative epitomized a commitment to organizational activism that

increased opportunities for African Americans representation. Her role in advancing the Black Museum Movement was further articulated in her 2017 oral history interview:

> And, so, the persons in those rooms didn't wear Klan robes, and it wasn't Lester Maddox in my hometown of Atlanta, you know, kind of barring people with a pickaxe, but there was a barrier, and so much so that as the 80s and 90s progressed, and one had these discussions about multiculturalism and diversity.
>
> I found myself, along with a number of other colleagues, in rooms where we're saying "the proof is in the pudding." There are no Black staff in your museum, Black board members at your institution, Black artists in your exhibition. So, whatever you're doing, you may not think of yourself as racist, but the result, the outcome, is like my hometown. It is lily-white, and that is not acceptable.

Second-Generation Leader, Kinshasa Holman Conwill currently serves as Deputy Director of NMAAHC and was recently elected to the American Academy for Arts and Sciences whose members are world leaders in the arts, sciences, business, philanthropy and public affairs. Elected members join with other experts to explore challenges facing society, identify solutions and promote nonpartisan recommendations that advance the public good, while celebrating the excellence of its members and leaders from across disciplines, professions and perspectives to address significant challenges (NMAAHC, 2021). Throughout her storied career, she consistently demonstrated a keen focus on inter-generational knowledge transfer was a foundational principle exhibited throughout her 40+ year career in the museum field. As she recounted in her 2017 oral history interview:

> But in those early days, again, making sure that wherever there was art, Black artists were there. Being on National Endowment for the Arts panels, I was young then, so I could [laughs] exhaust myself being in these rooms, because I just became convinced that being in the room to represent was essential.
>
> Because I tried to think if I and others weren't in the room when a proposal came across the table, nobody would know who the artists were, and then of course I got a chance to make my great speeches to my colleagues about how poorly they'd been trained, that I knew, quote unquote, "their artists," but they didn't know, quote unquote, "my artists"

The essential takeaway drawn from Kinshasha Holman Conwill's context-rich leadership experiences was the importance of her capacity to advocate change on both the macro- and micro-scale of organizational development. Similar to others within her generational cohort, she had the benefit of a blueprint to follow in leading and sustaining Black cultural institutions for the benefit of the local Black community, as well as the keen ability to advocate for instrumental change on the macro-scale of the broader museum field.

Through her tireless effort as an arts advocate, museum administrator, and unapologetic disruptor, she echoed the priorities of her generational predecessors while simultaneously leading, writing, and contributing to the funding, policy development, and long-term support of Black Museums. This commitment is demonstrated in the following quote:

> The key is securing the legacy, building on the reputation, and gathering new resources. But it is on the upturn. It is getting better and better, its leadership standing on the shoulders of some of its great originators. Its leadership is stronger than ever, and something that's been made clear is Black culture is here to stay, and there are more people who know about our museums, our artists, our cultural contributions than ever.

Leader Profile 6: Juanita Moore (born in 1952)

Second-Generation Leader, Juanita Moore was born in 1952, the same year that Ralph Ellison published his critically acclaimed masterpiece, *Invisible Man,* which addressed what it means to be an African American in a world hostile to the rights of a minority, on the cusp of the emerging civil rights movement (Library of Congress, 2021). The early 1950s would prove to be a critical juncture in the strategic buildup to the contemporary Civil Rights Movement, which reached a critical inflection point when 14-year-old Emmett Till was brutally murdered on August 28, 1955. International outrage over the crime and the verdict helped fuel the civil rights movement: just three months after Till's body was found, and a month after a Mississippi grand

jury refused to indict his murderers on kidnapping charges, a citywide bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama would begin the movement in earnest (Onion, et al., 2018).

Dimensions of Place

Juanita Moore was the oldest of nine children born into a large family in Nash County, North Carolina, about 50 miles outside of Raleigh in the early 1950s. Ms. Moore described her upbringing as follows:

> I was born in Wilson, NC, so I'm a Southern girl. There were nine of us. I had six brothers and two sisters, so, lots of siblings. My father couldn't read or write. He was amazing, one of the smartest people I know; He could read a map, he could take a car apart and put it back together, he made our furniture, so he could do measurements and all of that, but he didn't read or write. And my mom, she did read and write, but my mom went to the 8th grade, but sporadically, because they were sharecroppers and so, when she was growing up, they went to school sporadically.
>
> So, they would start and go first day, a couple of days, then they would stop and, you know, be working in the fields, and share-cropping, and working on the farm, and then they would go back, you know, when the crops were in, so although she went to the 8th grade, it was not like consistently going to school.

Being the eldest child in her family, she learned to be a role model and cultivated her management skills at an early age. While in college, she discovered an unexpected love for history, which compelled her to ultimately change her major from Mathematics to History instead. After graduating college, she moved to Ohio to begin her career. She candidly reflected on the moments when preparation ultimately met opportunity:

> Grade school, actually, 1st through 7th grade, I went to segregated schools in Wilson. Our schools were still segregated, and then in junior high I went to integrated school. There were like seven of us taken out of our elementary and ultimately there were probably about 30 of us altogether that integrated the junior high school. Then I went to an integrated high school. I went to North Carolina Central University for college.
>
> Of course, I had gone to a historically Black college, so I had professors who [were] very passionate. In fact, I was a math major until I took a history class my junior year, and was so blown away by Corbett Jones, and he so mesmerized me talking about African history that my senior year of college I took thirty hours of history. I ended up in Columbus, OH because my then-husband was in graduate school at Ohio State, working on a Ph.D. in the math department, and at that time, you know, Ohio State was

> recruiting—many of those schools recruiting heavily from Historically Black Colleges—for the students to go to their graduate schools.

Dimensions of Leadership

Ms. Juanita Moore's place in the Second-Generation Leadership cohort, juxtaposed with the social order of the time, make her leadership narrative enlightening, as one who entered the museum field in the mid-1970s, giving her the unique ability to observe the institution-building efforts of founding- and first-generation museum leaders, while modeling executive leadership for future generations. Her experiences of catalyzing change are characterized in reflections, which are herein framed through the spectrum of: (a) Leading while Black, (b) Organizational activism, and (c) Inter-generational knowledge transfer.

One of the professional reflections Ms. Moore shared, which illustrated her awareness of leading while Black upon entering the museum field:

> It was actually a fluke. I didn't know what I was doing ... it wasn't like I was really looking to go into the museum field. And the first couple of years I was there I worked teaching with the Ohio state Department of Education, and then I started my first job at the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus. I was their first Black curator, and from there I was fortunate enough, during that period, to develop an African American museum.

Ms. Moore spent several years planning and subsequently opened the National African American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, OH. As a senior member of the planning team, she was pivotal in developing a strategy and concept for building a nationally donated collection. She candidly recalled the organizational activism required to move forward with such a considerable undertaking, and the need to build consensus among supporters and opponents alike.

> Well, the idea initially was to build a national African American museum, and they were getting some support from the congressman [John Lewis] there who was constantly submitting this bill in the Congress to build this museum, and then a Black legislator, who happened to head up the appropriations committee for the Ohio state legislature, actually ended up getting about 3.5 million dollars appropriated to build the museum in Wilberforce, and that project was assigned to the Ohio Historical Society ... Therefore,

> me being the only Black curator there, got assigned to that project. So, I was very fortunate to be involved in work on that project from the beginning.

Ms. Moore also served as founding Executive Director of the National Civil Rights Museum (NCRM) in Memphis, TN, where oversaw the construction and opening of the museum located at the historic Lorraine Motel, site of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (NCRM, 2021).

> I was very fortunate to get the job at the National Civil Rights Museum. I was the first director at that museum, and it was my job to get that museum completed, get the building completed, get construction completed, and get it up and open. And, I got an opportunity to do that and I was there for seven years.
>
> Then the Kansas City was building the American Jazz Museum, and Rowena Stewart, a friend and a colleague, invited me to come and help her, so I began working there at the opening of that museum. And [I] went there before it opened to help get some stuff done and stayed there and ultimately became the director of that museum and I was there for nine years.

Second-Generation Leader, Juanita Moore's entire career demonstrates a firm commitment to inter-generational knowledge transfer. In 2002, Juanita Moore sat down for an interview with Jazz Ambassador Magazine to discuss her new appointment as Interim Director of the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City, MO in which she discussed the leadership of outgoing founding director Rowena Stewart, and her vision for the future. Juanita's comments embody the generational transfer that this study endeavored to unearth:

> By every measurement that I know, Dr. Stewart is counted as a giant in this work. I would describe her career: a heroic journey where strong leadership, passion and a total clarity about what she believes in proved to be the main ingredients in the formula for success. Because of her tireless commitment to the work, 18th & Vine exists to become all that dreams will allow.
>
> Our styles will be different because, essentially, we have different jobs. Metaphorically speaking, Dr. Stewart had to birth a baby—a baby that it was often times thought would never come. I have an institution that is 5 years old, and like any 5-year-old, it has had growing pains. It is now ready to strike out to make new friends, meet bigger challenges and dream of bigger successes.

Equally as significant as Juanita Moore's professional narrative, are the historic spaces she helped to preserve during her 40+ year career, all of which are still in operation today. Most recently Moore served as the President/CEO the 120,000 square-foot. Charles H. Wright Museum located in Detroit, Michigan until her retirement in 2018. During her 12-year tenure, Moore led the city-owned museum, through Detroit's toughest economic depression and more than doubled its programs and community partnerships, substantially increasing membership, attendance and operating capital.

The essential takeaway drawn from Ms. Moore's context-rich leadership experiences was her acute awareness and preparedness to pick up the proverbial torch that had been passed down from the generations that preceded her. As she candidly recalled her interactions with Founding- and First-Generation leaders:

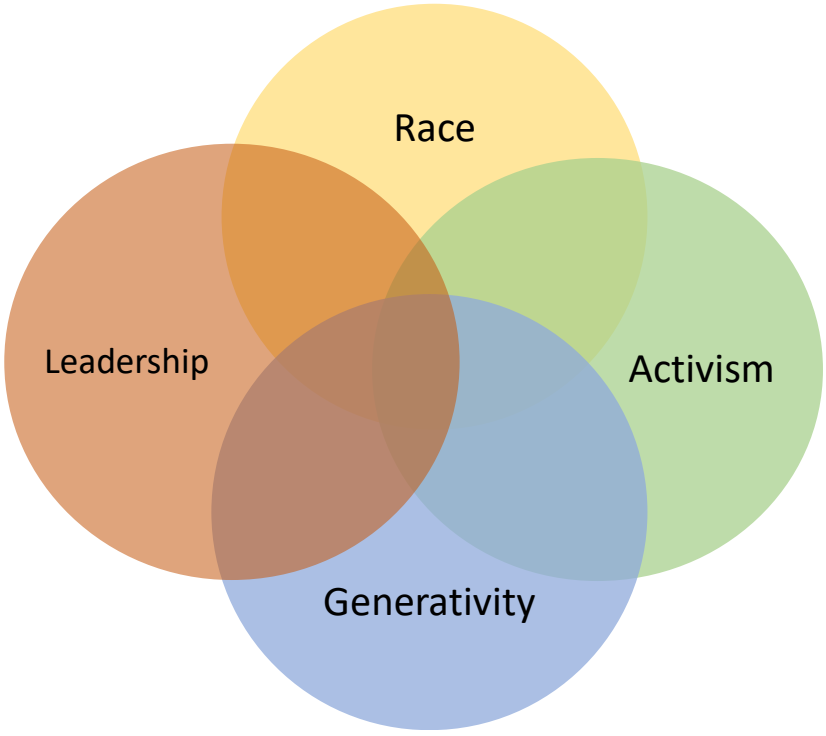
> It was just awesome to see. And Barry Gaither, he was an amazing speaker, he was very precise and very formal voice, and you couldn't help but listen. He commanded everybody's attention when he spoke. And so, it was always wonderful as a young person to see these people, not just speaking at AAAM, but speaking at these larger museum settings on the behalf of AAAM. I think that that brought so much to the field.
>
> And then you had Harry Robinson sounding like an old Baptist preacher [laughs], you know, all of these people standing up for African American museums when it counted. And themselves running institutions and working hard to make sure that we had a voice in the field, all over the country. It was really, really important, and that was great for me to see, and it led the way for a number of us, and positioned a number of us to be able to step in and have the voice that we have now.

Moore's mindfulness in continuing the work of the Founding- and First-Generations of museum leaders, was instructive because it was not approached in a self-centered manner; but was instead carried out in a way that exhibited great deference for her generational elders, cooperation with her generational peers, and guidance for the Third- and Future-Generational cohorts that followed her lead.

In many ways her professional narrative echoed the exhortations of past generations, while providing space for emerging leaders and practitioners to grow as leaders in many of the same ways that she experienced—leading through learning. Through her work as a strategic planner, educator, institution-builder, and consummate fundraiser, she has contributed significantly to the advancement of the Black Museum Movement.

Figure 4.1

Alignment of Presumptive Code Framework and Findings Alignment



Alignment of Research Findings

The six individuals profiled herein led six of the first independent African American art, history, and culture museums ever established in the United States, all of which remain in operation today. Ultimately, the study sought to answer a fundamental question: *How might the context-rich experiences of Black Leaders challenge, change or extend Leadership Theory*

toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership? The findings from the narrative analysis provided meaningful insight in response to this primary research question through the organic alignment of interview responses within the method of inquiry. Using the presumptive codes (illustrated in Figure 4.1), the interview participants articulated the ways in which their race and/or racial identity intersected with their leadership experiences, organizational activism, and generative approaches.

The analysis of participant narratives indicated a salience of responses in relation to the three qualitative questions that guided the study, all of which are further summarized below.

Q1: Significance of Race and Leadership

Thematic coding of interview responses based on the intersection of race and leadership revealed that each participant recalled an experience in which their racial identity was a factor in their leadership role or attempt to assert themselves in a leadership capacity. The importance of this finding was not simply the memory or reflection of a particular incident, but more importantly, indication of the individuals' nuanced understanding of how to navigate situations despite the treatment or perception projected upon them, as expressed through a dual awareness or knowledge of the impact of race and racial identity may have played in a given leadership role. For instance, the following reflection from Kinshasha Holman Conwill demonstrates this type of self-awareness:

> I always made sure that I was involved in those city and state gatherings around funding and around connections. I joined a couple of boards having to do with funding public education. I saw my tenure on those kinds of boards as relevant to the museum and not just advancing me but advancing the museum, those kinds of relationships.
>
> And that's what I've tried to carry through in all the work I do, is to, kind of, come into those rooms, sometimes pushing into them, where something can be done for Black people and for Black artists. Being involved with AAAM was part of that too, because that web of African American museums was as important as the web of non-African American museums.

The participants' articulation of managing instances in which race influenced their leadership, or how a leadership experience was impacted by their race, generated deeply honest responses and reflected a strong leadership aptitude and solutions orientation among the entire group. For example, the quote below by Dr. E. Barry Gaither, illustrates the perspective shared among Black Museum leaders within his generational cohort:

> Some of us, John Kinard and I in particular, had been interested in having the Association push for a national trust for Black museums. And we felt that in order to create such a trust we needed to have an instrument that we could take to the Congressional Black Caucus and say "use this instrument on behalf of all of these organizations, some of which surely fall into your constituency." So that idea was one that we were interested in and we thought the survey would give us a tool that would allow us to address that concern.
>
> At about the same time, this notion of a Black trust–of a trust for Black museums was being formulated, we were also engaged in the early round of discussions about the establishment of a Black Museum within the Smithsonian that would be national in character. As an association, we were interested to know what that might mean for us.
>
> Because given our history in the nation, we were all at some level suspicious that, if there is a national entity that the government feels is representative, it might decide just to simply give what pittance it was going to give to all of us now to that one place and short-circuit the kind of development as a field which we felt really mattered.

The responses shared above, by both Ms. Conwill and Mr. Gaither, reflect a dual awareness of the impact of their race in relation to the importance of their individual presence and willingness to lead in ways that were vital to representing the interests of other Black leaders and Black institutions, rather than allowing for a tokenization of their participation or presence in spaces that could have solely served their own self-interests. The aggregate of responses to the oral history interview protocol proved meaningful in addressing the fundamental research question and to challenge or extend current Leadership Theory and practice toward a more integrated framework.

None of the participants interpreted their experiences (or in some cases micro-aggressions) as an internal deficiency of their own, instead they all utilized strategic approaches for coping with the intersections of race and leadership in their professional lives. This is

evidenced, for instance, in the following candid response shared by Ms. Rowena Stewart during her 2005 oral history interview:

> The thing that got me the most though, [is] I went to speak at a little school, and this [white] teacher said, "I wanted these children to hear you, because, you know, so many of these [black] kids have no history, and it is so good for you to come and talk about history because they don't have any history. Not like 'our people' have [American] history." And a lot of people felt that only Black people didn't have history. But those were the kinds of things that all of the Black Museum professionals faced.
>
> I mean, we were going to schools where Black kids were scared cause, they didn't know what we were going to say about them. They didn't know if we were going to jump out with Sambo, or whether we were going to jump out with slave papers, and they didn't know how to deal with it. I've gone to schools where you'd have to put your hand on the kid just to calm him down so he'd understand that you're not there to embarrass him.
>
> And I think all Black Museums had that challenge. But one of the things that we did know was that every time we went there was like this living ritual where Black people knew that we were kind of special keepers of their story, we are really very special to them.

The fact that race or racial identity was not only pivotal to their lives, but pivotal to the experiences of their parents was even more meaningful than I realized. In each case, the six participants were born in southern cities where their parents' generation were forced to navigate a rigid subordinate caste system which presented them with a far greater likelihood of being lynched than they did of becoming educated.

Even more than four decades post-Emancipation, the Founding, First- and Second-Generation leaders were born into families that emerged from a region of the United States where a Black person was lynched every four days for some breach, large or small, for not submitting to the humiliations of the social order, knowing that any slipup could cost them their lives (Wilkerson, 2021). Despite the challenges placed upon their families' social, economic, and physical well-being, all six respondents, esteemed their parents' dignity and determination, irrespective of their occupation; they acknowledged their work-ethic and sacrifices of their family elders which allowed them opportunities they otherwise could not have grasped.

> When I grew up in Atlanta, it was still segregated, so my life was really in the Black community. It was centered around my family, and my parents' friends and colleagues, and our neighborhoods. We were very closely attached to Atlanta University. My father taught humanities at Clark and my mother taught French at Booker T. Washington High School. I went to Spelman Nursery School. Spelman and AU and Clark had played a big role in our lives. It was a wonderful life. It was marked by a lot of family and community events. And so, it was an interesting thing.
>
> The black community was one community. I really grew up in a time where while in the outside world there were terrible things happening, you know, there were disappearances of black people, murders of black children, and black civil rights workers, my home life felt very secure, and the family and the community was very close.

Whether choosing to flee the Jim Crow south in pursuit of new possibilities in northern cities, as in the case of Margaret Taylor Burroughs, Rowena Stewart and Kinshasha Holman Conwill; or pursuing educational opportunities in Historically Black Colleges throughout the south, as in the case of Edmond Barry Gaither, Harry Robinson, and Juanita Moore; none of the respondents articulated a sense of limitation or deficit due to their racial identity, but instead were eager to ascertain more about Black ancestry, history, and artistry as a vehicle for empowerment of self and others.

After examining the responses, I became much more interested in what the interviewees said about the significance of where they grew up and how that may have informed the decision to leave their respective hometowns to pursue a college education or other professional opportunity. For most, it was the departure from familiar surroundings or being welcomed into a space of intellectual curiosity, where they were affirmed in the possibility of leading change on an individual or institutional level. As Dr. Harry Robinson recalled:

> Barry [Gaither] was the founding president of the Association, but, you know, everything came full circle. … When I was elected, we had fewer formally trained people in the field. Most of us got on the job training and then took formal courses and workshops. For instance, a number of us, including yourself, went to MMI, the Museum Management Institute.
>
> John Fleming and I were the first two African Americans selected for the Institute in 1983. But you know, that was the Cadillac of museum training programs. Well, I think the future is bright for African American museums. I think we will be as accepted in our

> community as important institutions as were the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In many cases, now we are serving in that role. There are some cities that don't have HBCUs, and the museum is sort of filling that void with cultural programs, educational programs.

Likewise, as Dr. E. Barry Gaither candidly recalled:

> My feeling in a firsthand way for the possibilities of visual art, or what happens when you actually confront a work in real space, with texture and light and effects that you see when you come nearer and go away. All of that opportunity to form a personal relationship to art happened for me in Atlanta in the years that I was at Morehouse.
>
> Also, all of my formal understanding about art and art making happened there because I had never taken an art class before I went there. And I took a lot of studio courses because I was so interested in knowing not just how to appreciate the work but what kinds of issues were raised around actually making work.

The above commentary from First-Generation leaders, Drs. Gaither and Robinson indicates a common awareness of the power of cultivating a positive racial identity to ensure more diverse dialogue and engagement occurs within this predominately-white professional sector, while simultaneously advancing opportunities for other leaders of color to bring the fulness of their identities, experiences, and abilities into their professional collaborations. The significance of the commentary shared by respondents reflected a positive orientation to the impact of their race and leadership experiences.

Moreover, the participants shared experiences of career navigation based on what they were actively learning or gaining new exposure to, as pivotal to their approach to leading. In such ways, they de-emphasized their individual or intellectual superiority and centered their own curiosity and appreciative inquiry to inform professional praxis, which ultimately took the form of building or sustaining cultural institutions that served as centers of enrichment for the distribution and elevation of knowledge as a means of leading change.

Q2: Significance of Race and Activism

Thematic coding of interview responses revealed a variety of fervent responses expressing how each participant engaged in organizational activism to advance their institutional objectives. In some cases, the mere existence of their institution was considered a subversive act based on the social order of the time period that their organization emerged. This is demonstrated in the following comment from Second-Generation leader Juanita Moore:

> It's really helped all museums. It forced all museums to really open themselves up to telling a much more complete story of African American history. Providing a much more complete story of African American—the visual arts, and the performing arts, and sciences—everything, if you will. And [to] be much more welcoming to people in their community who didn't look like them. I think that all of that happened in large part because of the African American Museums really pushing them, and being right there in front of them, and demanding a presence, and saying, "That's ok, we're going to create our own."

The participants' responses to Question 2 about their individual activism efforts were notable and instructive for other practitioners while also addressing the fundamental research question. This type of organizational activism was evident in the following reflection from AAAM founding president, Dr. E. Barry Gaither:

> This idea had been developed because our observation was that almost all of our museums were so fragile, that if we were able to aggregate a body of money from federal and non-federal sources that could be regranted to institutions in our community, especially institutions that chose to work collaboratively with each other, that we could strengthen the overall community.

The salience among the participants was not only the memory or reflection of a particular occasion which compelled them to action in the form of organizational activism, but more importantly, their intimate understanding of how taking action would impact the perception of their institutions as well as other individuals who identified as Black. This dual awareness or knowledge of the impact of race and activism was reflected in a variety of ways. For instance, as Juanita Moore shared:

> I remember Rowena Stewart, you know, just standing and saying that African American museums brought something to the table, they weren't coming begging. They were bringing something to the table, and they were important institutions in our cultural landscape and in the historical landscape of this country.
>
> And she would say that so fierce, and with such pride, and Rowena, you know, she always seemed like a statuesque sort of tall person, and she always dressed very, very well, and she would wear these hats and capes, and she would sling her cape around and stand with you know, all of the dignity that you would expect in a Prentice Polk picture of folks from Tuskegee, AL.

The commentary shared by Dr. E. Barry Gaither and Ms. Juanita Moore, indicate a mutual understanding that the whole was greater than the sum of its parts, or in this instance, that their institution building and activism-minded leadership efforts not only made their respective institutions more viable community anchors, but strength was gained for both by working collaboratively through a national member-based association.

Their collective organizational activism efforts afforded them a platform by which to move the traditionally Eurocentric-museum field towards greater responsibility for historically accurate representations of race and racialized histories, while asserting the power of their institutions to tell stories and advance narratives that only Black Museums could tell. All six of the study participants shared experiences in which their racial identity intersected with their activism efforts and generated candid responses that indicated the activism needed to build, advance, and maintain organizations that continue to serve as Black cultural repositories where historic challenges and triumphs can be explored.

The following quote from First-Generation leader, Rowena Stewart (2006a), demonstrates how Black Museum leaders worked collaboratively to provide their fellow institutions, even those attempting to establish themselves as brand new organizations, with fundamental organizing resources, industry best practices, and most importantly training and professional development at little-to-no cost.

> We had determined [on]our own, that we were going to offer training, and we were very, very concerned about each and every one of our members. We developed a relationship with those young, budding organizations where they could call on us at any time and we would serve as their consultants. If they had to go before city council, we would go with them. If they had to go to NEH, we would go with them.
>
> If we went to National Endowment, we made sure that they knew that our membership needed support. We did the kind of earthy stuff and we tried to make sure that they were solidly grounded. Like, they got their bylaws, they got their incorporation papers, and their 501(c)3, all the things they needed to do, we tried to make sure they did that.

Additionally, the following remark from Second-Generation leader, Juanita Moore, expresses how vitally important this approach to organizational activism was to the both the individual and institutional landscape of Black Museums:

> Because many of the people that were involved in AAAM were people who were had founded African American museums, they had put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into getting the movement—very grassroots—going, and they had institutions that they were working on, and at that time there was not any federal support, or very little federal support.

As a Third-Generation leader, I can attest to the fact that this type of organizational activism mutual advocacy, and a growing community of practice focused on the needs of Black Museum practitioners has remained a primary focus of the Association's efforts to strengthen the Black Museum field, writ large. Moreover, I learned to fully appreciate how vitally important the collective activism among Black Museum leaders was at the very beginning of my museum career, seeing firsthand the notable difference working collaboratively with fellow institutions made in generating much more favorable outcomes with local, state, and federal funding sources.

I saw first-hand how quickly a singular institution with a small operating budget could be dismissed or overlooked when vying for public funding, private donors, audience members, staff capacity, or other resources that are essential to managing and growing a nonprofit organization. Whereas, having the ability to leverage our national footprint and institutional collaboration with the nation's only professional trade association for Black Museums afforded us greater

credibility as an institution, while benefiting from the collective strength gained by viewing other Black Museums as allies, rather than competitors, which is counter to the ways in which the mainstream museum field operates.

The activism efforts articulated by the six Black Museum leaders within this study demonstrated a shared understanding of the need to work in community with their fellow Black Museum institutions, in both formal and informal ways, while also employing the social and organizational activism necessary to provide an intrinsic and instrumental benefit to the physical communities their institutions occupied. African American Museums place very high importance on the relationship of the institution with its audience (Dickerson, 1988).

In the same manner that Founding Generation leader, Margaret Burroughs, leveraged her role as a charter member of AAAM along with her relationships throughout the city of Chicago to advocated for a larger building footprint; First-Generation leader, Harry Robinson, recognized the legitimacy a Black cultural institution afforded him in order to mobilize members of the predominately Black Fair Park community to successfully secure city funding for the Dallas African American Museum; and Third-Generation leader, Kinshasha Holman Conwill continues to use her individual and institutional presence to advocate for increased funding for Black cultural institutions and greater visibility and artistic opportunities for Black creatives, as she articulated in the following reflection from her 2017 oral history interview:

> So, I think there was a much more so-called "sophisticated" racism, bigotry, and ignorance, and so a lot of it didn't seem to be calculated to obstruct or deny, but at the end of the day if it did, to me, that was really just as bad because one of the things I remember saying to a group: "If the amount of time it takes to finally get Black artists in this collection or this exhibition continues to expand, we'll be looking at generational delay."
>
> I would say, "I've been saying this for 5 years, I've been saying this for 10 years." So, I've hit the 25-year mark of saying this: Enough is enough, let's get this together. And don't pretend that it's about anything that's objective, and don't pretend that these Black artists are any less than their white counterparts."

To this end, the leadership experiences and organizational activism that were undertaken to effect change were also expressed as an act of resistance to mainstream museum praxis. This notion is further demonstrated in the following quote by Dr. E. Barry Gaither, who candidly observed that: “The community gives us our legitimacy ... our presence informs and reforms our neighborhoods. We are building our institutions in the Black community and they belong to that community (Austin, 1982, pp. 30–32).

Q3: Salience of Race and Generativity

Thematic coding of interview responses based on the intersections of race and generativity revealed that all six participants experienced inter-generational knowledge exchange and fostered generative organizational cultures within their respective institutions and among the collective institutions represented by the Black Museum Association they established in service to the broader museum field. Their reflections emphasized experiences in which they were direct beneficiaries of knowledge shared by their generational predecessors. For example, Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr. candidly recalled his introduction to archival praxis:

> I guess I got bitten by the bug for this kind of work when I was in college. I worked in the university library for all of my college career, and had an opportunity to work with an old fellow who was dean of the university. Of course, I didn’t know what it was then. And I never remember him telling me it was archival work, but I was just helping him to box things, sort out material, a lot of old material, and I had much interest in that.

The study participants also shared experiences that confirmed their commitment to the sharing, learning, and exchange of ideas across multiple generational perspectives. As the Second-Generation leader, Kinshasha Holman Conwill observed:

> And one of the things I like about Millennials, is when it comes to issues like race, a whole group of them don’t even see [it]. They’re not perfect of course, because they’re so young but they don’t even see why do we even question whether something is of value based on the race of the culture or the race of the person? Is it good or not?”

The commentary shared by both First-Generation leader, Dr. Harry Robinson, and Second-Generation leader, Ms. Kinshasha Holman Conwill, reflect a shared understanding across generational cohorts which continued the generative approach of echoing the work of their generational predecessors while esteeming the ability of current and future generational cohorts to make a meaningful contribution of their own both to the museum field and among their generational peers, by building upon the lessons, approaches, and institutional knowledge passed down by the generations represented in this study. The salience among the participants was not simply a series of memories or experiences, but more importantly, their responses revealed how much they prioritized the sharing or exchange of knowledge to benefit others.

Conclusion

This dissertation study allowed for an in-depth analysis of each museum leader's personal and professional experiences and most importantly, the impact of those experiences from their vantage point. As I reflected back on the findings that emerged, I realized a need to engage in further analysis to fully make meaning of the overlaps and intersections in data findings in ways that the presumptive codes and primary research questions did not capture.

The more immersed I became in reading each respondent's perspectives, the more significance I began to observe in the data which intersected and overlapped in deeply interesting ways. Therefore, a second level of analysis was needed to fully describe and make sense of the unexpected findings. The discoveries that emerged indicated even greater salience among respondents than anticipated and are presented in Chapter V of the study.

CHAPTER V: UNANTICIPATED FINDINGS

> *The Black Power Movement, which is also the beginning of the creation of many African American Museums is a signature point in our history. Some of us, lived through it, came of age during it, and we also have found in our leadership that it is highly generational. Many of us who came through the 60s and the 70s were so profoundly changed by that, that it has impacted our trajectories in terms of the work that we do, how we do it, the values that we bring to it, and in many respects, as with Lonnie Bunch, the activism that we bring to it. We try to pass that on, not only in our walk that we do, but also in the concrete lessons that we convey in our mission and values and practice in the museum.*
>
> *– Deborah L. Mack, Keynote Address for the Ontario Museum Association*

The quote above is indicative of the robust amount of content that emerged from the narrative analysis of oral history transcripts which captured the firsthand experiences of 6 leaders who were vital to the Black Museum Movement. Those profiled in the study represent persons responsible for advancing institutions that were among the nation's earliest independent museums established to elevate and preserve Black art, history and culture, between 1950 and 1975, amid the vicious policies and vestiges of the Jim Crow era.

In this manner, Black Museums emerge as one of the trusted places within Black communities, immediately following the Civil War and continued throughout the Jim Crow era, spawning a movement to advance liberating Black cultural spaces which continues to this day, where patrons were encouraged to bring their full selves to the experience. The major purpose of this research was to expand leadership narratives and reframe the traditional concept of what constitutes an organizational leader by considering the storied endeavors of people responsible for creating an entirely new genre of museology, which proved vital to sustaining and advancing the work of museums, historic preservation, and the future development of Black Museum leaders.

This chapter explores the unexpected results and discoveries made during the data analysis process. I conclude this chapter by advancing an integrative framework of knowledge

about race and leadership. The unanticipated findings that emerged from the presumptive coding process were equally as fascinating as the process of excavating each oral history transcript. Of note to this dissertation study and subsequent findings, are the context-rich experiences explored from the vantage point of six Black Museum leaders and the extent to which their cities of origin, educational pursuits, coming of age narratives and early career development amid periods of massive social unrest, informed their approach to leading cultural institutions. The analysis of salient findings that follows was used to capture noteworthy observations that did not fit the three primary presumptive codes, which are summarized in Table 5.1 and were further detailed in Chapter IV.

Table 5.1

Summary of Presumptive Codes Alignment

Theme I:	**Theme II:**	**Theme III:**	**Theme IV:**
Intersection of race and LEADERSHIP	**Intersection of race and ACTIVISM**	**Intersection of race, leadership, and GENERATIVITY**	**OUTLIERS**
The 1st thematic code captured respondents' experiences of "leading while Black" as expressed through a dual awareness or knowledge of the impact of race and racial identity may have played in a given leadership role.	The 2nd thematic code captured respondents' engagement in "knowledge and/or organizational activism," expressed as an act of resistance to mainstream praxis or an effort undertaken to effect change.	The 3rd thematic code captured respondents' "generative approach to leadership" as expressed through inter-generational knowledge transfer and/or information exchange that emphasizes equipping a subsequent generation.	Noteworthy observations and significant experiences as articulated by the respondents that do not fit the other 3 coding themes.

The individual responses to Questions 1, 2, and 3 were summarized in the previous Chapter, to capture the nuanced experiences of race and leadership from each participant's own perspective. Once the individual responses were analyzed and compared to one another, two

unexpected theme/outlier emerged. In the case of Question 1, all six responses reflected an awareness of the impact of race on the perception of their leadership capacity and/or the capacity of their institutions.

The ability to operate in a such a manner that benefits the nationwide or sector-wide perception of Black cultural institutions and the persons that lead them was notable in that it was articulated in some manner across 6 participants representing 3 different generational cohorts. I posit that the unanticipated findings which emerged from the data included meaning making through a sense of (a) Collective Identity and (b) Generative Identity which further demonstrate the need for an integrative framework for understanding the relationship between racial identity and leadership.

Salient Discoveries

The leaders profiled offered descriptions of organizational strategies, public interactions, and the importance of diverse representation. Yet, the six respondents did not speak from a posture of fatigue or the weight or burden of blackness, but they operated and spoke with an anti-deficit mentality. The noticeable recurring refrain was to do what was in the best interest of the collective, or the beloved community. The respondents' commentary was markedly generative in nature, which framed their professional experiences from a position of strength, while retaining a keen sense of dignity and profound sense of self. This can be seen, for instance, in the way Dr. E. Barry Gaither vividly recalled an experience that shaped his perspective of Black art, even amid a white-dominated art sector of the museum field:

> Most of my friends who worked in art history came to African American work after having come to other works. And for them it was a "discovery" that they made against the background of this larger tradition. But it was exactly the opposite for me.
>
> I came to these works first and then I went to see the other works with these works as my [only] point of reference. The first murals that I really got to know, were the murals that Hale Woodruff executed in 1949 in the rotunda of Atlanta University.

> And when I met Hale Woodruff that was all made manifest. For me it would have been like meeting Leonardo [da Vinci] under the Sistine Chapel [Rome] because here was the person [artist] and here was the work; and the work was every day feeding eyes and feeding souls that were meeting beneath it, to develop and build their lives. (Gaither, 2005)

The more I began to review their responses from the standpoint of the coded data, which were thematically aggregated, the more I began to realize that even though they were interviewed at different points over a 12-year period (2005–2017), their responses reflected a similar refrain that proved meaningful for understanding their leadership approach. This is was also noticeable because the six Black Museum leaders represent three different generational cohorts, whose institution-building efforts extend over a 60-year time period. Yet, their responses commonly included references to the collective needs of the Black Museum community and expressions that reflected a consistently generative intent to empower current and future generations.

Collective Identity

The first unexpected outcome of this line of narrative inquiry was a consistent emphasis, among all six participants, on the needs of the "collective" rather than the "individual." For instance, as the following comments from First-Generation leaders reflect:

> This idea had been developed because our observation was that almost all of our museums were so fragile, that if we were able to aggregate a body of money from federal and non-federal sources that could be regranted to institutions in our community, especially institutions that chose to work collaboratively with each other, that we could strengthen the overall community. (Gaither, 2005)

> But it was also the museum that had the music of my people. You see, we didn't have large collections, but we had taught our people how to interpret what they had so that when they made presentations it was as if they had huge collections. (Stewart, 2006a)

> And in keeping with our tradition—our African tradition—we don't compartmentalize our culture. Most of our museums are multi-subjects. Art, history, the performing arts, the whole nine yards. (Robinson, 2006a)

This surprising factor remained true as it related to the impact of race on the perception of the individual as well as the institution. Throughout the narrative analysis, I noticed references all six interviewees made to "our people" and "our community" along with references to that which was created "for us" and "about us." The participants frequent use of phrases like "us" and "ours" was indicative of a colloquialism commonly used within and among groups of persons who share a common heritage or ancestry, the African American being no exception. For instance, museum founder and institution-builder, Rowena Stewart, recounted the significance of her first institution being solely funded by the Black community in her oral history interview:

> The other interesting thing about this is I didn't ask anybody for any money for the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society until the Black community supported it itself. That was a different kind of concept. I just felt that I couldn't go to another foundation and ask them to do anything for our organization [unless] the Black community was not interested in it. So, I got a hundred people in Rhode Island to agree to give me a thousand dollars apiece and that was how I funded it. I got support from my community, and I had the respect of the business community, plus the Historical Society was on my side.
>
> So, it was like it just flowed together. And we did a lot of good things. We erected the monument to the Rhode Island Black Regiment; we sent these kids all over the country. We did a lot of great stuff. We put together a way to take public forums into the community, so that Black people could have a chance, now, to tell their side of the story. And it was really exciting. (Stewart 2006a)

Likewise, Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr. candidly recalled:

> Nobody else had the sensitivities or the insight on dealing with needs that were peculiar to a group of institutions like ours. You've got to remember, that our institutions, unlike the so-called "major institutions," were begun in response to an expressed need of our community. We were mostly educational institutions. Some of us were in storefronts, basements, old theaters, and what have you. Collections came later for most of us, and some of us still work in that collection business. (Robinson, 2006a)

The phraseology of collective identity was so frequently used among respondents that I ultimately began assigning sentiments related to "our people" its own code. Moreover, the frequency of the reference, particularly in relation to the role of race in leadership, activism, and

generativity that it compelled me to investigate where notions of collective identity may have previously emerged in social science scholarship.

According to McDonald (2002), throughout the 1980s collective identity became established as one of the orthodoxies of the sociology of social movements. Collective identity entered the social movements literature as an early recognition of the importance of meaning-making in shaping movement participants and influencing movement actions (Holland et al., 2008). As previously referenced in Chapter II, Social Movement Theory emerged as a result of the efforts of purposeful actors to assert new public values, form new relationships, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action (Rochon, 1998).

Initiated in hopeful response to conditions adherents deem intolerable, social movement participants make moral claims based on renewed personal identities, collective identities, and public action (Ganz, 2010). Whereas, an individualist cultural orientation emphasizes an individual's goals and rights, a collectivist orientation emphasizes group goals, what is best for the collective group, and personal relationships. This can be seen, for instance, in the way Dr. Margaret Burroughs reflected on the mutual respect and support shown to the local collective of artisans among cultural institution leaders in Chicago:

> We believed that the purpose of art was to record the times. As young Black artists, we looked around and recorded in our various media what we saw. It was not from our imagination that we painted slums and ghettos, or sad, hollow-eyed Black men, women and children. They were the people around us. We were part of them. They were us. (Burroughs, 2005)

Similarly, this collective focus can be seen in Kinshasha Holman Conwill's recollection in a 2018 interview commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Studio Museum of Harlem:

> I think that the Studio Museum, from the earliest days, was a place that Harlem owned. Surely by the time I arrived, in 1980, there was a sense that "This is our museum." And

> we opened our doors to community; we wanted to be a meeting ground. We always commemorated World AIDS Day. We brought our programs right out into the street. We actually had information about safe sex. There were some people who thought, "You're a museum, why are you doing this?" But we often did it with artists. The thought was that this [space] is for everyone, but it starts first with being for Harlem. While it was a challenge to be as audacious as the Museum was—as it still is—at the core of Harlem is a beating heart of, an embrace of, culture. (Gwinn, 2018)

The collective intent that emerged from the data was articulated across the entire group of respondents as a tool, strategy, and approach for navigating moments of intolerance as well as acceptance in order to chart a course toward better perceptions of Black culture writ large. This collective intent was supported in the data findings, which were evidenced by the following candid response from Dr. E. Barry Gaither:

> AAAM did for the African American museum what nobody else could do, because the organization was designed specifically for us ... We were convinced that there needed to be ways for other museums to continue to be viable, and that that viability had to have a relationship to federal financing and purposes.
>
> Because part of the reason our museums did not have money is because we didn't have those rich donors. And part of the reason we didn't have those rich donors was because we spent such a long time in this country being capital for somebody else. And we emerged from being capital for somebody else into an environment where we were habitually undercapitalized.
>
> In a very real sense, the disparity in our national history that robbed us of the economic foundation for the museum enterprises that we were trying to put forward were things that belonged to our national history. (Gaither, 2005)

The cognizance of their intentions and collective identity proved to be powerfully informative and instructive. Even when asked explicitly about their individual contribution to the movement to propagate Black cultural institutions, they still focused the accomplishments on the collective. This is in stark contrast to leaders who are much more inclined to point out how brilliant and well-prepared they are to advance an idea, or to lead a group of people, while never acknowledging the ways in which the contributions of others largely determined their individual or institutional success.

For instance, as the following quote demonstrates, First-Generation leader, Rowena Stewart recounted the significance of her generational cohort working collectively within the African American Museums Association ("AAMA) to advance change:

> AAMA proved that it was a need for these Black Museums. Black Museums under AAMA challenged the federal government for us not being included in major exhibitions. This is often forgotten. We testified on [Capitol] Hill for that. We wanted to make sure that we were included in these major exhibits. They did it.
>
> So, in a sense, AAMA really gave us our pioneers, fought for the kinds of programs that would allow us to have some kind of equal parity—some kind, not necessarily all of it. It gave us a core group of professional scholars, now, who can really speak for this stuff and do the kinds of things that need to be done, in terms of interpreting our past. (Stewart, 2006a)

Generative Cultural Identity

The second unexpected outcome that the research findings revealed, following the analysis of the aggregated responses, was a consistent emphasis on generative cultural identities. The indicators of generative identity were not only evidenced by commentary shared among respondents, but their commentary aligned with the findings of the study, and their first-hand observations affirmed the generative approach which characterized the study participants cultural identities. For instance, as Second-Generation leader, Juanita Moore recalled:

> It was amazing to see all of these really educated, intellectual, very seasoned people really fighting for African American history and fighting to have a voice, to see all these people who had museums. They were starting museums, they were working in museums, and they were talking about the importance of it. Preserving our history and our culture, and the importance of our voice to tell our story. (Moore, 2014)

My introduction to empirical studies of generativity and leadership was through the impactful work of Atim Eneida George (2020), whose pathbreaking research examined the power of story and the Iroquois Great Law of Peace, which teaches that leaders shall consider the impact of their decisions for seven generations (George, 2020, p. 171). Both Erikson (1963, p. 263) and McAdams (1985, p. 247) made it clear that generative identity needs what Erikson

called an “ideological outlook” and McAdams termed an “ideological setting” both of which Kotre (1999, p. 40) regarded as parallels of culture. Kotre (1984) attempted to construct a coherent account of generativity, extending Erikson’s initial focus by adding two more, related, forms of generativity to his typology: *technical*–teaching skills and larger cultural traditions and *cultural*–tending, modifying, and conserving culture (Cohler et al., 1998, pp. 273–274).

Kotre (1999) explored the notion of generative identity and the impact of culture, asking whether cultures themselves are, or can be, generative, theorizing how certain kinds of stories can inspire generative desire and how certain kinds of people can embody cultural values. Kotre’s (1999) research ultimately posited that in order to spark desire, generativity required something particular *in* culture that shaped its meaning in certain ways, which took the form of three types of living people (or figures). Of note to this dissertation, are the types of people or figures that Kotre (1999) posited as having the power to ignite generative desire, which ultimately led to the formation of a generative identity. Table 5.2 summarizes the three types of people or figures Kotre (1999) theorized were essential to the “cultural forms” which produce generative identities.

Founding Generation leader, Margaret T. Burroughs, who, like others within her founding generational cohort, was considered as a living legend during her lifetime could be seen to exemplify Kotre’s (1999) Keeper of Meaning identity form. This was evidenced in a 1999 interview, as she shared the following comment on how she would like to be remembered:

> I will be remembered for having helped start the DuSable Museum. And that’s enough. I would like for some of my poems to be remembered. And I think they will be, especially, “What Should I Tell My Children Who Are Black.” That sort of explains why the museum got started in the first place. I think that every human being should have a legacy. Something for the next generation. Just as people like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman were the bridges for us to cross over on, we should have something for the next generation to cross over on. (Fleming & Burroughs, 1999, p. 55)

Table 2.2

Three Types of People who Catalyze Generative Desire

TYPES OF PEOPLE	CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE
The Keeper of Meaning	Concerned with preserving a culture's traditions; including people who become "Living Legends" in their own time (Kotre, 1999)
The Mentor	A practical guide; a host who welcomes an initiate into a new world; an exemplar who provides a model for emulation; a teacher who passes on skills; a counselor who provides guidance and moral support; a sponsor who facilitates a protege's advancement; and, above all, someone who believes in a young person's dream (Levinson et al., 1978)
The Intergenerational Buffer	One who in a larger context might simply be called a reformer. This is a person who has firsthand knowledge of a culture's destructive tendencies and stands in the way of them, absorbing the damage and protecting future generations from their impact (Kotre & Kotre, 1998)

Kotre's (1999) Mentor identity form was evidenced by the following reflections shared by Ms. Rowena Stewart and Dr. E. Barry Gaither, which illustrate the significance of mentors from the point of view of the study participants:

> John Kinard and I met in the fall of 1969, and I must say, he was, more than anybody else, a mentor for me in entering this field. And he was the person who helped keep very clear for me that black museums were really about things black. So, he provided a fundamental grounding that was, I think, crucial for my work. But John was involved. We had, at the beginning of the series of six meetings we had decided that these meetings would lead to the formation of an organization. (Gaither, 2005)

Kotre's (1999) Intergenerational Buffer emerged in several instances throughout the research findings. A case for support could be made asserting how all six interviewees served as buffers within their respective generational cohorts, particularly considering the historical context and progress towards more equitable societal norms from one generation of leaders to the next. Yet, the reflection below shared by First-Generation Museum leader, Rowena Stewart,

captured the ways in which the leaders included in this study, along with persons honorably mentioned by all six participants, incapsulate the impact of the intergenerational buffers who acted as change agents, protecting future generations from the impact of destructive tendencies from the past.

> What has changed is—and this is John Kinard's contribution to us—is the fact that Smithsonian has so many Blacks. That is the most amazing thing. When I look at major institutions and see Blacks who work there. And I can remember when John [Kinard] would stand up in every opening meeting and talk about the racism that existed with Smithsonian, that Blacks only worked there if they were maintenance or guards. And I look at them now, and I see them there, and I look at Lonnie [Bunch], and I realize that we've come a long way in the field. (Stewart, 2006a)

As the candid reflection indicates, both Rev. John Kinard and Lonnie Bunch exemplify characteristics of intergenerational buffers. As previously noted in Chapter IV, Rev. John Kinard holds the distinction of being the first African American director of a Smithsonian Institution (Kinard, 1987). In so doing, he reformed an institutional practice which previously barred African Americans from serving in executive leadership positions in the Smithsonian's 121-year history (1846–1967) and worked to chart pathways for the second generation of Black Museum executives that followed, as both a professional mentor and intergenerational buffer.

The importance of the sentiments shared by Rowena Stewart's in her 2006 oral history interview cannot be overstated because they reflect the impact intergenerational buffers can have within an institution and the broader museum field. Her comment was in reference to the newly announced appointment of Lonnie G. Bunch as founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) in 2005. Sadly, neither Ms. Stewart nor Rev. Kinard lived to see the opening of NMAAHC in 2016.

However, Lonnie Bunch, who later became the first African American and 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, recounted the impact of the aforementioned keepers of meaning,

mentors, and intergenerational buffers in his memoir, *A Fool's Errand: Creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture in the Age of Bush, Obama, and Trump*:

> The pioneering work of the Charles H. Wright Museum in Detroit, Margaret Burroughs's efforts at the DuSable Museum in Chicago, John Kinard's labors to transform the Smithsonian through the Anacostia Museum, Rowena Stewart's work in Rhode Island and Kansas City, and Harry Robinson's creativity in Dallas, Texas, are the institutional and personal shoulders on which NMAAHC stands. (Bunch, 2019, p. 30)

What I found most instructive about Kotre's influence on the study of generative cultures as a means of producing generative identity, was the emphasis placed on the role of narratives (stories) and figures (living people) and how these factors contributed to meaning making. According to Kotre (1999), stories and living people help to inspire generative desire among future generations. This notion of generative cultural identities went beyond *cultural absolutism,* which has led to terrible assaults on many of the world's indigenous cultures, and instead is a view of cultures contributing their ideas, their stories, and even their living representatives to something larger (Kotre, 1999). The cognizance the six interviewees displayed a "generative intent" in their shared awareness that "this work is not just about you" was remarkable, but made even more notable because it was articulated across all the respondents.

What I found to be equally as meaningful in reviewing the aggregated narrative responses of study participants was the congruence of their sentiments with relationship to other empirical studies which examined meaning making among African Americans with regard to the value placed on inter-generational exchanges.

For instance, in the spring of 1989, historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen (1998) embarked upon an empirical study that investigated how Americans understood and used the past, which ultimately provided a highly complex perspective on what later became known as the culture and history wars. Although the multi-disciplinary study involved a representative sample

of American citizens from myriad demographic backgrounds, Rosenzweig and Thelen's findings were congruent with findings from my study, with respect to the generative cultural identity formation and perspectives shared by my respondents.

> Stories about the past of a particular family become stories about the history of African Americans; and both sets of narratives offer guidance for living in the present. At family gatherings, African Americans transmit "wisdom," as one respondent put it, from one generation to the next.
>
> All Americans use the past to build and affirm primary relationships; African Americans and Indigenous American (Indians) also use the past to affirm and build ties to their communities. They not only see themselves as sharing a collective past, they sometimes use these collective pasts to construct the sort of progressive narratives. (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998, pp. 147–149)

This commitment, for instance, is demonstrated in the following quote from Second-Generation leader, Kinshasha Holman Conwill:

> The key is securing the legacy, building on the reputation, and gathering new resources. But it is on the upturn. It is getting better and better, its leadership standing on the shoulders of some of its great originators. Its leadership is stronger than ever, and I think this is also a moment for Black culture. Something that's been made clear is Black culture is here to stay, and there are more people who know about our museums, our artists, our cultural contributions than ever. (Conwill, 2017)

The findings from the national survey were subsequently published in *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998).

> The Black Americans we interviewed tended to blur the "I" and the "we." Black respondents peppered their answers with collective pronouns that intended broad meanings. The respondent's answers painted a clear picture of how African Americans use a shared set of historical events, figures, commemorations, sites, and even sources. Although we did not hear a unified "black" narrative, African American respondents described patterns and drew on historical references that distinctly set them apart. (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998, p. 150)

Alignment of findings from the national survey detailed in *The Presence of the Past* (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998) are also illustrated in the following remarks from This collective

intent was supported in the data findings, which were evidenced by the following candid response from First-Generation leader, Dr. E. Barry Gaither:

> We were asking museums in the general [white/mainstream] museum community to look again at their missions and to try to be more truthful in the exhibitions that they presented, whether they were art museums or history museums.
>
> Whereas it was clear to us that we needed to be our own subject in places which were our own places, we were at one and the same time part of the whole, and anybody presuming to tell the story of the whole had to also include us in their story as well. I think we helped lay the foundation on which they were built. So, I think our contribution to Black museums has been fundamental and elemental. (Gaither, 2005)

The excerpt above is an example of a generative phenomenon articulated by the survey respondents which reflects the significance of narrative stories passed down by living people who preserved cultural traditions and meaning, mentored, or served as intergenerational buffers within their family or community. Such a view is also apparent in the following quote from Rosenzweig and Thelen's study:

> For many African Americans this orally transmitted history—as well as particular, trusted books, films, and museums—competes with an "official" version of the past that is often distrusted. African Americans judged high school and college teachers, museums, and books as significantly less trustworthy than did white Americans; but they more favorably evaluated accounts from eyewitnesses and relatives. Many African Americans criticized the history taught in school, which they said "ignored, distorted, or even lied" about the Black experience. (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998, p. 156)

Moreover, the notion and impact of producing a generative cultural identity is further reinforced by some of the participant reflections which emerged from the narrative analysis of Black Museum leaders. This can be seen, for example, in the way Dr. Margaret Burroughs expressed her view of the commitment Black leaders must be willing to fulfill with respect to future generations, during her 2005 oral history interview:

> I think the main idea is that every one of us of African descent should do something to live as a legacy that helps our people in one way or the other. That's the main thing. So that your life counts for something. You weren't just born, you lived, and you collected money, and you died, and forget it, you know. But make something of your life, do something that helps somebody. You help, say in Birmingham, you help build the

> Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and keep it going. That's the responsibility. (Burroughs, 2005)

Of note in this dissertation study are the references each respondent made to the role and unified interests in both institutional and individual collaboration through their engagement in the Association of African American Museums. This organization initially served as an informal network of peer institutions (1960–1978) before enacting a formal organizational charter in February of 1978. From inception, the Association was a space for cultivating intergenerational dialogue, mentorship, and fluent exchange of knowledge from one generation to another.

The discovery of common response data across all six oral history interview participants provided meaningful insight into their generative cultural identities and desires to empower, improve, and advance Black cultural institutions; not simply for their own sakes, or in a self-serving manner, but for the benefit of the individuals their institutions were designed to serve and the perspicacious contribution they deliberately made to the broader museum sector. For instance, First-Generation Museum leader, Dr. E. Barry Gaither, described the importance of Black Museums working collectively to strengthen peer institutions and accomplish shared interests in his 2005 oral history interview in this way:

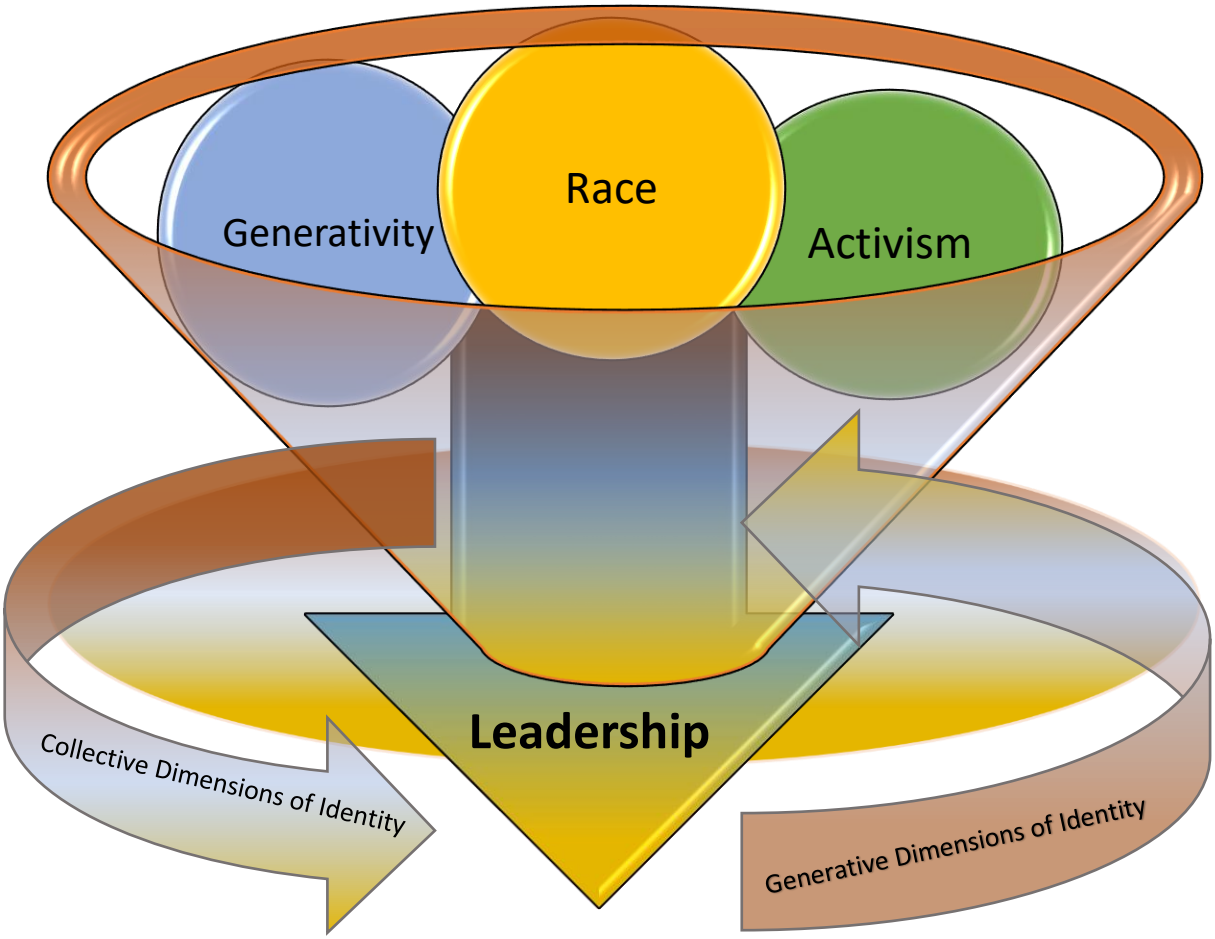
> So, we didn't want to have some kind of either-or proposition. We were seeing the world as a world where the best evidence of American genius is that things are simultaneously both, not either-or. It was simply another piece of the totality of our involvement in the overall project of what museums do in the country. And it was a recognition that we had special sets of problems which we could address more effectively by focusing our attention on them and creating a vehicle to address them.
>
> That is some sense of the complexity of ideas that we were wrestling with, and some sense of our notion of reciprocity, of give and take between what we were trying to do as an association, what the needs of our members were, and what the general condition of the museum community at large was perceived to be from our vantage point. (Gaither, 2005)

The unanticipated findings which emerged from the current study signify a persistent need or void in both museum leader development and leadership studies literature. I posit my

findings as an approach to addressing this need for more counternarratives which challenge the lack of inclusion of Black executive leader perspectives in the pedagogy of leadership studies.

Figure 5.1

Integrative Framework of the Relationship between Race and Leadership



The research findings support an approach that reframes the narrative of leadership through the African American lens and reinforces the need for a "both-and" approach to understand how and why the generative and collective dimensions of leadership reflect a multitude of identity configurations, all of which indicates the importance of developing an integrative framework for understanding the relationship between race and leadership.

Figure 5.1 illustrates an emerging framework for considering the context-rich experiences of leaders whose narratives have been too narrowly defined and remained understudied and under-told for far too long.

Conclusion

The findings of this study led me to conclude that the Black executives profiled herein employed both generative and collective dimensions of leadership to establish, advance, and sustain community-centered cultural institutions. Considering the similarities between the candid responses referenced in the empirical research conducted by Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998), along with the types of narrative stories and living people Kotre (1999) affirmed had the power to ignite generative desire and identity. These findings provide a framework and potential method for addressing key questions posed in Ospina and Foldy's (2009) critical review of leadership studies literature. The research findings and integrative framework are useful in addressing the following:

> How does race-ethnicity affect perceptions of leadership? How does it affect the ways leadership is enacted? And how do leaders grapple with the social reality of race-ethnicity? (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 877)

Of note to this study is the fact that I am not asserting this as a theory of leadership, but as a framework for understanding the relationship between race and leadership and how the specific context of leadership, activism, and generativity intersect with an individual's race.

The findings indicate that leader identities are not strictly informed by race, but that "both" race "and" leadership can inform a leader's collective and generative orientation. In this way, the findings complicate, contrast, and challenge singular identity assumptions and traditional leadership theories about Black people in executive leadership positions. The research

implications, contributions to the leadership practice, and potential for further study of this proposed framework are summarized in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUDING CHAPTER

> *We can wake the sleeping giant and take back our future again if we learn the lessons of our past ... When we take leadership from the margins, things change.*
>
> *– Kemberle' Williams Crenshaw, The Marginalization of Harriet's Daughters*

Narratives matter, particularly the stories we tell ourselves to inform our sense of place and purpose in the world. Origin narratives form the vital core of a people's unifying identity and of the values that guide them (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015). Narratives can be used to preserve culture through the oral tradition and passing along of stories. Historic narratives can be used to fill gaps through time and to reflect changes in social customs. Even national narratives are employed by governmental systems and institutions to convey national pride at best, or worse, to indoctrinate, deceive or effectively diminish the role or contributions of those whose perspectives are often silenced or ignored. The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism–the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015).

> A new generation of historians who were intellectually and politically shaped by the civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. This new generation advocates a "new" kind of history–one that explores the long-neglected subjects like women, Blacks, peasants, and workers; one that critically reexamines the centers of power and authority around the world; one that reaches beyond the confines of academe. (Benson et al., 1986, p. xi)

Stories are equally as important to the origin narrative as are the points of view of the narrator. As novelist, Chinua Achebe (1994) affirmed, until the story of the hunt is told by the lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. Yet, the myth of settler colonialism persists, not for a lack of free speech or poverty of information, but rather for an absence of motivation to ask questions that challenge the core of scripted narrative of the origin story (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015).

This study challenges dominant narratives by posing questions that complicate traditional leadership studies pedagogy in an effort to move empirical research toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and a broader understanding of identity impact leadership.

Overview of the Study

My research builds upon the intrepid work of Ospina and Foldy (2009), who boldly posited a critical review of race and ethnicity in leadership studies literature and substantiated the need for greater empirical insights related to the context, power, and collective dimensions of leadership among people of color.

This dissertation study involved a thorough examination of context-rich professional milestones, personal reflections, and leadership legacies of six African-American Museum executives (Margaret Burroughs, Kinshasha Holman-Conwill, Edmond Barry Gaither, Juanita Moore, Harry Robinson, and Rowena Stewart). All of these individuals contributed to the advancement of the Black Museum Movement beginning in the mid-twentieth through the early 21st century. The dissertation explored the leadership practices they used to proliferate Black Museums and centered experiences that confront the lack of inclusion of racially diverse executive leader perspectives in the pedagogy of leadership studies.

By means of a critical narrative discourse analysis, the empirical research interrogated a historical narrative of Black executives whose leadership acumen remains under-represented and under-studied within the social sciences, broadly, and within leadership studies, specifically. The research is purposed to expand leadership narratives centering the context-rich experiences of Black executives ultimately contributing to a more diverse canon of leadership exemplars while inviting the field to reexamine conventional theories and explore new approaches that contrast conventional notions of what constitutes or characterizes an organizational leader. To this end,

my study foregrounds the first-hand accounts and leadership acumen of Black executives within the museum field as the starting point of inquiry.

This chapter begins with an overview of the purpose and relevance of the study, including relevant leadership studies literature previously referenced in Chapter II, and a brief reflection on the methodological approach previously detailed in Chapter III. Key findings from the study are provided, along with implications for theory and practice, followed by research contributions, limitations, and recommendations for further study. The chapter concludes with a reflective statement from the researcher regarding the personal impact of the empirical research experience.

The fundamental research question that undergirded the dissertation study was: How might the context-rich experiences of Black leaders challenge, change, or extend Leadership Theory toward a more integrated framework of knowledge about race and leadership? The additional qualitive questions that guided the narrative analysis included the following: (a) How did the participant's race impact their executive leadership role? (b) How did participants engage in racial, social, or organizational activism efforts? (c) How did the participants share or receive knowledge across generational boundaries?

I also endeavored to honor the lives and leadership legacies of persons who previously joined the ancestral realm prior to the publication of this dissertation. To some extent this study endeavors to remain true to the mission I inherited from the generations of leaders that proceeded me, including those profiled herein by challenging the status quo by advancing understudied and under-told historic narratives. This narrative inquiry was also undertaken to protect these Black leadership narratives from being lost in the annals of time or to the gross negligence of academe, in its failure to expand, change, or advance more inclusive practices. Ultimately, I endeavored to

challenge leadership narratives by centering the context-rich experiences of Black executives, with the goal of building a more diverse canon of leadership exemplars.

Key Findings

Study findings indicated remarkable alignment in museum leaders' conscientious approach to leading Black cultural institutions, while engaging in organizational activism, and advancing inter-generational knowledge transfer. The unanticipated findings which emerged from the data analysis included meaning making through a sense of (a) Collective Identity and (b) Generative Identity. These were brought together in an integrative framework for understanding the relationship between racial identity and leadership. This framework contrasts singular notions of racial identity by positing the multiple dimensions and factors influencing one's racial identity to expand understanding of how various dimensions of identity (i.e., race, generativity, and activism) can inform executive leadership roles.

One of the most instructive aspects of the research findings were the highly generative and vastly collective approaches to leadership by unapologetically Black executives who built, sustained, and advanced cultural institutions for the direct benefit of African American communities. Of note for the contributions of this study are the opportunities it provides for ongoing research and learning both within the academe and in the area of museum practice. The research findings can serve as a tool for expanding the historical narrative of leadership and challenge the underrepresentation of Black executives within the leadership studies literature.

Research Contributions

My research contributes to leadership studies scholarship by foregrounding past, present, and emerging Black Museum Leaders through the use of memory as an act of resistance to reframe narratives and challenge dominant cultural perspectives of what constitutes a leader.

Organizational development perspectives centered around increased profitability or augmenting capitalistic societies have been commonly associated with Western (or *Euro-centric*) viewpoints.

Solely focusing on profitability as the primary metric of success can greatly limit other ways of constructing organizations or quantifying value when knowledge of African American historical perspectives is not readily available or generally accepted as valid within an organizational development context. Given the lack of context-rich leadership narratives within extant literature, this study was designed to amplify the impact of race and ethnicity on leadership relative to the proliferation of Black Museums, while exploring the practical implications for increased representation of Black executive narratives within leadership studies literature.

Ospina and Foldy's (2009) research suggests that even as many Black leaders and other leaders of color thrive—in part by drawing on their racial and ethnic identity—they continue to face profound obstacles to their leadership. On its own, this contradiction suggested that an exploration of the intersecting territories of race and leadership would be productive (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Hence, some of the most meaningful contributions this study can make to the field of leadership studies is the reframing of leadership narratives through the African American lens.

This reframing is intended to dispel persistent myths and disrupt anti-blackness in the organizational leadership studies literature by providing contrasted perspectives of the multiple dimensional leader identities from a person of color's perspective.

Myth #1: Leadership acumen among African Americans is not a new phenomenon or something that occurred as a result of being ostensibly integrated into majority white spaces. In fact, this study demonstrates the autonomy of multiple generations of Black leaders—even those who preceded the Founding Generational cohort (born prior to 1900)—whom embodied a

determination and resolve to lead change in local municipalities and across the cultural sector of museums, galleries, and archives, rather than waiting to be invited to occupy all-white spaces. Despite the threat of social, physical, or economic reprisal, Black Museum leaders remained resolute in charting their own destinies, building institutions for the benefit of their communities, establishing organizational standards of activism and collective engagement, and transferring institutional knowledge from one generation to the next.

Myth #2: The impact of Jim Crow era policies, practices, and social norms did not cease with the passage of amendments to the U.S. Constitution; therefore, the residue of America's racial caste system persists. Grounding leadership narratives in historical context, through a consideration of the social order of the time period, and the reality of how race continues to impact leadership experiences of people of color is vital to organizational sustainability within a multi-racial society. The addition of context-rich professional experiences as recounted by Black executives, in both formal and informal settings, informs the relational dimensions of individual and institutional leader development.

Myth #3: Black people are not an ethnic monolith, hence their experiences and potential outcomes should not be generalized or narrowly interpreted through a Western, white-dominant cultural lens. Incorporating counternarratives in conventional leadership studies literature can provide a greater dimension of nuance, critique, and restorative approach to the formulation of theoretical concepts connected to race and racial identity. By adding new voices and perspectives to the crucial conversation started by scholars Ospina and Foldy (2009), this study can address the urgency of expanding first-hand accounts of organizational leadership narratives, while broadening the scope of disciplines which can benefit from increased empirical research about the intersections of race and leadership. The congruence of research content and findings invites

the exploration of new approaches and modalities towards the "co-creation" of expanded theoretical constructs reflective of more diverse approaches to organizational leadership.

Research Implications

An important implication of this research is the meaningful reframing of narratives which more accurately reflect the organizational relevance and institutional histories of African American leaders and their impact on contemporary organizational praxis. The goal of this research study was the reframing of narratives of what leadership "looks like" in both a figurative and literal sense of the word. When white maleness is used as a synonym for leader it centers race/gender as a qualifier for authority, while simultaneously de-centering the ability of non-cisgender white men as qualified leaders.

This research study illuminated new narratives which can contribute to an increase in leadership studies literature involving the first-hand experiences of African American leaders. The research findings may also inform the recruitment, retention, and sustained representation of African Americans in the historic preservation field. Although the leaders profiled shared a common profession, the study demonstrated the rich diversity of their individual experiences, early influences, and institutional acumen.

Implications for Leadership Literature

This empirical study continues the scholarly conversation and supports the findings of Ospina and Foldy's (2009) pivotal work on the need for racially diverse perspectives in leadership studies literature. The mere presence of racially diverse individuals within organizations is not enough, particularly if their experiences are retold through the lens of someone else's professional context, or interpreted under the white gaze. As Omi and Winant

(1994) suggest, social actors are inserted in a structure permeated with racial meanings that affect how we comprehend, explain, and act in the world.

For the purpose of this study, prior research by Bernard Bass (2008) was used to represent a persistent problem in the leadership studies discipline and within academe, a projection of superiority and presumed expertise about the leadership experiences of people of color as interpreted through a Westernized white-patriarchal lens, absent historical context, or centering of voice and narratives from the vantage point of leaders of color. According to Riggio (2008), the leadership theory offered by Bernard M. Bass (2008), has been one of the most widely used and cited references in the study of leadership.

However, reading certain aspects of the work, such as the sole chapter devoted to "Minorities as Leaders and Followers," in his final *Handbook of Leadership*, Bass (2008), demonstrated the fallacy of non-contextualized leadership studies literature and common misconceptions regarding the emergence of African American leaders, or lack thereof. For instance, in that chapter he wrote:

> Whatever the reason, Blacks score lower on tests of general cognitive ability. Although more than 30% of whites score in the 108 to 134 IQ range, only 3.3% of Blacks do the same. Blacks with the same amount of education as whites who apply for the same jobs or admission to the same colleges score considerably lower in general cognitive abilities, and these black-white differences are resistant to change. (Gottfredson, 1986 as cited in Bass, 2008, p. 953)

> More intellectually demanding jobs tend to employ proportionately fewer blacks. The lower scores of blacks than whites are not due to test biases. In fact, if anything, the job performance of blacks has been overestimated based on their test results. (Bass, 2008, p. 953)

The context-rich experiences and professional narratives of non-white leaders remains understudied and under-told. Despite its uncertainties and contradictions, the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world (Omi &

Winant, 1994, p. 55; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Now, more than ever, it is time for other stories to start being told and for other career experiences to be explored, as it is a source of guidance on how to support and assist employees across dimensions of diversity in building effective career narratives (Roberts et al., 2019).

Implications for Leadership Theory

This research study was initially guided by Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT). However, after subsequently aligning my research with critical realism epistemology, I gained a better understanding of how I could go about substantiating, modifying, or even rejecting the Complexity Leadership theoretical framework to more thoroughly contextualize the experiences of Black leaders.

However, the findings that emerged from the study demonstrated the complexity of leader identities, which resulted in the development of a framework for deeper engagement with the generative and collective dimensions of leader identities. This offers a deeper understanding of the role racial identity, particularly in relation to its collective and generative dimensions, plays in the enactment of leadership.

The collective and generative identity related findings provided by this study contribute a much-needed dimension of context to this area of scholarly research. As the predominately white-male narratives of leadership are expanded to include the first-hand accounts of leaders of color, a more nuanced discussion of race and leadership can ensue. I posit the findings of this study as my contribution to the work of creating greater racial equity, using a restorative justice approach to ensure that the multidimensional experiences of Black executives are included in scholarly discussions of race and leadership.

Centering lesser-known leadership narratives is important for demonstrating the decades long efforts of executives of color who used organizational activism to mitigate the persistent impact of systemic racism. Creating space for narratives told from the point of view of persons whose leadership experiences have historically been ignored, helps to amplify new voices without exploiting racialized or professional trauma, but instead acknowledges the dignity, resilience and strategic approaches used to advance organizational change.

This research can serve as a launching point for expanding the historical narrative of leadership and challenging the underrepresentation of Black executives within the leadership studies literature. This includes, but is not limited to, extending the narrative of race and leadership beyond the oft-repeated presumptions of inferiority versus superiority and challenging Leadership Studies scholars to reach beyond the acknowledgment of systematic racism, identification of discriminatory practices and ongoing micro-aggressions.

The study endeavored to expand current leadership theory and research presented primarily from an empirical psychological and historical perspective, as well as contributions from social movement theory, sociology, and African American studies. To be commensurate with the broad scope of influences of personal narratives, the research included the dimensions of place and dimensions of leadership which contributed to the formation of self-concepts and meaning making among the Black Museum leaders profiled within the study.

Taken together, the interdisciplinary nature of the research and its stellar list of oral history interview participants provide new explanatory concepts to advance a more integrative framework of relevant leader characteristics and organizational development conceptualizations from the perspective of African American executives. Expanding leadership theory by

effectively making the case for a new leadership logic that honors and elevates the lived experiences of Black Museum movement leaders reinforced the need for the research study.

Implications for Museum Praxis

Even within the mainstream museum field, the persons responsible for advancing the Black Museum Movement are not widely known and the impact of their organizational leadership has not been adequately researched or contextualized in extant literature. The study offered an opportunity to add nuance and much needed contrast to the leadership studies literature by investigating the context-rich experiences from the viewpoint of Black leaders. It is hoped that the understandings revealed by this study can positively inform theoretical perspectives in leadership studies and illustrate the impact of race and ethnicity on leadership.

The cultural sector broadly and the museum field specifically are fraught with traditional views of museum leadership that center dominant perspectives while silencing or ignoring marginalized experiences are insufficient for understanding the experiences of Black Museum leaders. Knowledge creation is made better when there is a complex interplay of ideas; particularly ideas which challenge or contrast one another and coming to see the world more truthfully is the realm in which true activism can develop (Cromwell, 2021). The study attempted to elucidate strategies that are applicable to the recruitment, retention, and sustained representation of African Americans in executive leadership roles.

This research study can provide context and historical perspective that challenge the lack of inclusion of Black executive leader perspectives in both the museum field and larger cultural sector. To date, no other scholarly research has endeavored to analyze or interpret the context-rich responses contained in these interviews. Although the study comprised a representative sample of six oral history interviews, I have maintained a desire to analyze the

remaining archived transcripts, to engage with the original interview participants and conduct new interviews during my post-doctoral research.

There are a number of other Black Museum leaders who were not included in the prior oral history initiative whom I would like to interview, such as:

- *Lonnie G. Bunch, III*: Founding Director of NMAAHC and first African American Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC);
- *Spencer Crew, PhD*: First African American Director of the National Museum of American History (Washington, DC), CEO/President of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (Cincinnati, Oh) and Former Interim Director of NMAAHC (Washington, DC);
- *Priscilla Hancock Cooper*: Founding Director of the Alabama Civil Rights Heritage Site Consortium and Former CEO and Deputy Director of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (Birmingham, AL);
- *Alferdteen Harrison*: Founding Director of the Smith-Robertson Museum of African American History (Jackson, MS); and
- *John E. Fleming, PhD*: Founding Director of the National Afro-American Museum of History (Wilberforce, OH) and Director in Residence, National Museum of African American Music (Nashville, TN).

Given my current role within NMAAHC and the privilege of serving under the first African American Secretary in the Smithsonian's 175-year history, I would like to conduct research on the intersection of race and leadership among the Smithsonian's second and third generational cohort members to understand the impact and context in which their opportunities to serve as the first people of color in executive leadership emerged. Empirical findings from this

type of research can contribute much needed context and diverse leadership data to the museum field, which is overwhelmingly dominated by institutional leaders who by default center the white/Euro-centric perspective above all else, and have continued to struggle with implementing culturally and racially diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices into their organizations.

The dissertation study gave voice to the lived experiences of leaders who generously shared firsthand accounts of lessons, challenges, and triumphs of establishing the first museums in American cities to positively reflect Black cultural traditions and accomplishments. The strength and purpose of this qualitative study is illustrated by the pathbreaking leadership experiences captured in the personal reflections of individuals whose leadership and institution-building approaches potentially hold tremendous value for organizational development practice.

The study can also provide value-added contributions to the scholarship, practice, and policies impacting programming and funding support for museums, archives, galleries, and institutions focused on the preservation of African American history and culture. Given the subjective nature of qualitative inquiry, the researcher employed transparency in the use of conceptual and empirical literatures (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), along with elements that reflect personal credibility to ensure that interpretations of the data and subsequent findings of the study are viewed as trustworthy and sound.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this qualitative research study directly informed the prospective opportunities for further research. Firstly, the lack of generalizability presented a limitation. Qualitative studies are not generalizable in the probabilistic sense (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Yet, the findings proved transferable across generational cohorts. This is especially true given

the continual proliferation of Black Museums and the intergenerational makeup of the current workforce. Another limitation of the proposed study is the use of primary source data that was not collected by the primary researcher. This is reflected in uncontrolled variables of the interview data collection procedure, which included the inability to determine the comfort level of each interview participant in sharing detailed responses, and any follow-up questions the primary researcher may have been more inclined to ask. This limitation may have also been evident in the interviewer's inability to understand, interpret, or respond to various elements of the conversational interview.

Another limitation of the study was the use of primary source data that was not collected by the primary researcher. Qualitive interviews often depend on building trust between the interviewer and interviewee. Although the interview participants did have a collegial relationship with the interviewer, who was a fellow AAAM board member and museum practitioner, the researcher was not involved in conducting or obtaining the candid interview responses from each participant.

Additional limitations resulted from uncontrolled variables of the interview data collection procedure. This includes the lack of ability to determine the willingness or comfort level of each interview participant in sharing in detail all that the interviewer may have hoped to explore during the semi-structured interview. Some of the questions posed may not have evoked long narratives from participants because of a lack of emotional intelligence or fluency in self-expression or the interviewer may not have been able to understand, interpret, or respond sensitively to various elements of the conversation. Nevertheless, the study has the potential to contribute to expanding perspectives and approaches to leadership theory and social science research in museology specifically.

Lastly, the limitations presented by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted travel to any archive for in-person review of materials as well as any possibility of meeting with leaders belonging to a more vulnerable population. Therefore, a commitment to incorporating a rigorous amount of secondary source material (articles, interviews, published works authored by interviewees) was determined to be the best course of action to ensure the leaders profiled herein were represented by a robust amount of primary and secondary source data to inform and uphold the integrity of research findings.

Recommendations and the Role of Advocacy

Findings from this empirical study on the context-rich experiences of Black Museum executives have several implications. Prior to a discussion of these, three distinct points bear mentioning. First, the institution-building and preservation efforts of Black Museum leaders began nearly a half-century prior to the creation of theoretical constructs typically associated with socially-conscience or courageous leaders, such as: servant, relational, or complexity leadership theory.

Second, the use of organizational activism and strategic advocacy has long been a staple of community-centered leaders committed to building institutions which address the wholistic needs of the communities they serve, particularly those designed to address the needs of vulnerable and socially-marginalized individuals.

Third, the principle of Ubuntu, “I am because you are” is embodied by leaders whose identities were expressed in relation to a larger community, both the collective of residents and individuals served by the institution, as well as the professional community of practice forged by founders of Black Museums.

A common theme throughout the research study which emerged in the findings was the significant role of advocacy in the organizational praxis of each Black Museum leader. But this advocacy was not undertaken with a singular focus on the needs of the leader's own institution. Both institutional and collective advocacy efforts were consistently demonstrated across each interview participant's professional reflections.

In sharp contrast to prevailing leadership theoretical approaches, this study illustrates unmistakable acts of collective consciousness, reflected in each of the study participants demonstrated competency and commitments to the best interest of the collective. This type of collective advocacy provides an opportunity to codify and share strategies used by a group of institutional leaders, in both formal and informal networks, to strengthen their collective case for support, on the local, state, and federal level.

The modeling or transferring of this sense of collective consciousness across institutions has historically been sustained through the inter-generational exchange that the annual Association of African American Museums conference has provided to practitioners of color for over 40 years. Yet, in the advent of COVID-19, the ability to safely gather not only impeded large in-person convenings, such as national conferences, it was further compounded by the aging population of first- and second-generation leaders who are not only the holders of much of the institutional knowledge, but arguably some of the most impactful practitioners of organizational advocacy too.

Broadly sharing advocacy strategies requires an intentional exchange of strategy to equip future generations with tools for continuing efforts that benefit of a group of institutions working collectively. For instance, during my AAAM board service, I had the opportunity to create a *Leadership Legacy Summit* which featured charter members of the Association in conversation

with second- and third-generation leaders. The 2017 summit provided a learning opportunity for AAAM conference participants to gain insight on the Black Museum Movement alongside contemporary efforts to advance museum activism. The summit was also filmed by C-SPAN and rebroadcast in subsequent years, in addition to being archived on the AAAM website for future access. Likewise, a similar meeting of inter-generational minds can be repeated in upcoming conferences or annual meetings to promote continued intergenerational dialogue and strategic advocacy discussions. Yet, the convening limitations imposed by a global pandemic, necessitates an intentional exchange of strategy to equip future generations with tools for continuing organizational advocacy efforts that benefit of a group of institutions working collectively to strengthen their case for support.

Adapting to a "new normal" of hybrid (in-person and virtual) engagement, revealed the benefit of increased engagement and access across geographic and generational boundaries. Sharing organizational advocacy strategies can and should involve integrative media through digital modalities, such as: Podcasts, Vlogs, Insta-Stories, Facebook Reels, YouTube Playlists, and other platforms designed for professional engagement (i.e., LinkedIn, Slack, etc.). Although conventional methods of information exchange (i.e., case studies, conference presentations, blogs) remain valid, a "both-and" approach to expanding how advocacy strategies are shared can further empower emerging leaders, while codifying the wisdom and insights of elder generational leaders.

The organizational activism and strategic advocacy articulated by interviewees could and should be operationalized by existing and emerging institutional leaders, who are often faced with similar challenges in building and sustaining their organizations. A museum leadership advocacy toolkit could include both a practical guide to advocacy on a local, municipal, and

regional basis, along with the underpinnings of working through statewide networks and national membership-based associations towards collective advocacy efforts that benefit the broader field of like-minded institutions when vying for local, state, regional, or federal funding.

Opportunities for Further Study

The findings of this study provide several promising opportunities for further research. The relevance of the research and multidisciplinary nature of the study topic bode well for a digital exhibition which provides an array of modalities for sharing the research in public history settings, as well as limitless possibilities for the integration of digital humanities technologies that democratize the research data by making it more accessible.

Secondly, the generational cohorts represented by study participants and anticipated retirement of many respected elders within the Black Museum field, present a timely opportunity for a focus-group study and follow-up interviews with living leaders who are referenced throughout the study. The context-rich narratives of Black Museum leaders could be further enhanced by a semi-structured interview with the four remaining study participants.

Another promising area for future exploration of the research topic includes the development of dialogue groups to encourage semi-structured, recorded conversations between multi-generational cohorts of museum leaders. These dialogue groups would also be designed to elevate the pioneering work of Black Museum founders/leaders to be more broadly understood and used as a model for the museum field. Sophisticated knowledge systems, promoting cross cultural collaboration and networks have never been more urgently needed.

This study was designed to amplify unheard voices through a critical narrative analysis of African Americans who served as executive leaders of museums and explore the intersection of leadership, race, and social activism within an organizational development context. I ultimately

desire to use my research to broaden the understanding of how governmental policy impacts the ability of African American museums to build capacity, retain leaders, and prepare or rebound from organizational change.

Personal Reflection

The purposeful preservation of Black culture was essential to the establishment of African American Museums. Institutions founded for the purpose of illuminating, elevating, and preserving African American art, history, and culture were charged with striking a delicate balance between centering the needs of people or the diverse audiences they served, while also providing relevant resources for knowledge production. The museum's place and impact on the cultural landscape of a community (also referred to as a collective sense of place) perpetuates a shared identity or sense of belonging or ownership among the patrons and inhabitants of the space.

By advancing vital cultural repositories, these leaders created safe spaces for engagement with local patrons by strategically locating within historic community enclaves, wherein Black people from all aspects of the socio-economic spectrum could see themselves represented in a positive manner, without being subjected to undignified treatment based on their skin color.

Although First-Generation founder, Margaret Taylor Burroughs, was deceased before I ever had the pleasure of making her acquaintance, the enduring relevance of her leadership is reflected in the tangible evidence of the blueprint she provided for successive generations of institution-builders who followed. The impact of her life's work on successive generations was evidenced in the intentionality of her collective commitment to advancing historical knowledge among Black children. As one of countless youths who passed through the corridors of the spaces she cultivated in Chicago, I can still recall my first experience inside the DuSable

Museum and the permanent imprint engaging with vivid Black artwork, artifacts and ephemera made on my 10-year-old brain by illuminating a cultural perspective I had never before encountered until stepping foot inside the DuSable's hallowed halls in the summer of 1988.

Although there is no way I could have known or valued the persons responsible for conceiving the need for such transformative cultural spaces at a time when their efforts were often deemed subversive or incendiary, I am a direct beneficiary of their collective commitment to leading institutional change. Moreover, Dr. Burroughs acclaim as a visual artist, poet, museum founder and charter member of the African American Museum Association was already legendary when I entered the museum field, just a year after she joined the ancestors, she remained a highly regarded figure in the museum, visual art, and preservation fields.

Dr. Margaret Burroughs commitment to empowering future generations is also illustrated by the poem Dr. Burroughs shared during the conclusion of her 2005 oral history interview:

> I would like to read this poem, which I think sort of explains the whole idea about the museum and why we have a museum and what people ought to be doing about it, ok? And the title of this poem, which I wrote February 28th, '05, is *What Will Your Legacy Be*?
> Legacy? Legacy. Do you know what the word "Legacy" means?
> Well, if you don't know, let me tell you what the dictionary says it means.
> Legacy: property or money left to someone by a will; something handed down from those who have gone before; a legacy of honor, our legacy, of freedom. In this poem, I'm not referring to material things like property or money, either of honor or of freedom. I am referring to what a person has done with this life that God has given to him or her.
> Yes, I want to know what will your legacy be?
> This is a question that I would like to put to each and every one of you.
> What will your legacy be?
> What will your legacy be when you have finally cut off these mortal coils?
> When you have crossed the great divide?
> When you can no longer run life's race. When you no longer have a place; when you have at last completed the circle round and when an escape is no longer to be found.
> What will your legacy be?
> What will it be when you walk into the unknown all by yourself and alone?
> Now stop for a moment and listen to me and answer this question if you can.
> What will your legacy be?

> Will it be the fact that you helped somebody along the way, during the time while you were here on earth?
> Will it be that you helped to improve the conditions of life for those in your time and those coming after and those who are still here? Will it be similar to the legacies left to our generation by people like Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Ida B. Wells, Mary Bethune and so many others who made of their lives a bridge for us to cross over on?
> And their lives were an inspiration for us of today.
> Our lives should be an inspiration.
> Today we should make our lives today bridges for a future generation to cross over on.
> What will your legacy be?
> Legacy!
> Legacy!
> (Burroughs, 2005, 2014)

The legacy poem is a sage reminder of the importance of holding space for the twin virtues of growth and remembrance, the past and the future, what those two things will always mean in Black lives, and the ways they charge all generations, to keep our covenant with one another (O'Neal, 2021). Engaging in this research afforded me an opportunity to think deeply about the impact of the Black Museum Movement and the indelible mark the six leaders made on the museum field and broader cultural sector. The six Black executives profiled herein serve as standard-bearers within their generational cohorts and their narratives are representative of an expansive field of leaders, scholars, and practitioners, who have established and advanced myriad institutions.

Given the significant role African American Museum leaders played in leading the formation of institutions, governmental policies, and equitable financial practices within the cultural sector, I am committed to ensuring their contributions not be overlooked or leadership legacies forgotten.

Engaging in the excavation of these remarkable oral history transcripts and pouring over countless supplementary publications and secondary source material reaffirmed the profound

impact each leader's contributions have had on me and my generational cohort. As a museum practitioner and member of Generation-X, I am tasked with being a bridge between elders and young-folks. Meaning that members of the Silent and Boomer generational cohorts look to members of my generational cohort to translate or bring understanding to the unique idiosyncrasies of Millennials, Gen-Z's, and Generation-Alpha. Likewise, the young and emerging generations look to my generational cohort to clarify the meaning and intentions of customs, traditions, and language of past generations. In both cases, the goal remains the same, making a value-added contribution to the harmonious legacy of those that came before us, while making things better for those generations, yet unborn, who will follow our lead.

I desire to use this research to amplify the voices of Black Museum leaders, while preserving the legacy of institutional pioneers. I also greatly value wisdom gleaned through experience, particularly when intentionally transferred from an individual seeking to empower another. Therefore, one of the most rewarding aspects of my dissertation journey was gaining insight on the collective dimensions of leadership through the experiences of individuals who ascribed equal valued to making community impact while demonstrating subject-matter expertise. The need for more leaders who are not dissuaded by self-fulfillment is paramount, especially those that choose to lead in ways that bring about lasting change and positive impact. This includes centering the voices of those who are too often marginalized and utilizing the resources at our disposal for the benefit of others.

One of the lasting takeaways of this exceptional doctoral program and dissertation process afforded me, was one of self-discovery. I did not realize that the process of obtaining a PhD in leadership and change would literally require me to change in order to effectively lead. This involved not only reckoning with theoretical concepts of organizational development, but I

also learned how to grapple with, manage, and ultimately implement of host of changes in my personal and professional life.

I could not simply appreciate leadership theory for its relevance within an organizational context, without taking the necessary steps to embrace change and lead from a place of authenticity. Which involved and recognizing my own vulnerabilities as strengths and gaining an understanding of the value of interdependence among fellow scholars within our academic community as well as fellow museum practitioners within the cultural sector. This was an experience that challenged my preconceptions and forever changed my way of engaging with new ideas, subject matter, and people and proved pivotal to my personal and professional growth.

Time and again this beautiful journey affirmed the richness and relevance of the Ubuntu principle, an ancient African term used among the Zulu people meaning, “I am who I am because of who we all are.” This cultural principle guided both my approach to honoring the leadership legacies of those who came before and illuminated the interdependency of persons involved in the liberation of others through social movements of the past, as well as in the ongoing struggles for social, economic, or political parity based on an understanding of our shared humanity. This doctoral journey solidified the fact that being a leader who influences lasting change is a continual process of becoming a better, more authentic version of one’s self, while remaining committed to advocating and acting in the best interest of others within the beloved community.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Question Protocol

Interview Questions

Personal Biography

1. Tell us about your early history. Where were you born, and where did you grow up?

2. What neighborhood did you grow up in?

3. Tell us about your parents, their background, their history, their occupation.

4. Did your parents have roots in the South?

5. What was the education level of your parents?

6. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

7. Tell us about your education, beginning with public school and then college.

Museum Experience

8. Let's talk a little bit about the museum field. When did you enter the museum field?

9. Tell us about the places that you've worked in the museum field. Over your career, what museum institutions have you been affiliated with?

10. In those early years, what were the variety of positions that you held in your career?

AAAM History

11. What role or capacity did you serve in on the AAAM board?

12. How would you characterize the status of the Association ("AAAM") as an organization during your board tenure?

13. What were some of the significant things that happened to the Association while you were actively involved?

14. Do you recall what year that the AAMA organization became AAAM?

15. Administratively, were there any differences between how the business of the organization was conducted after it became AAAM?

16. In your opinion, does the present structural operation of the organization – has it made it a stronger organization, a better organization, as AAAM?

Future Outlook

17. What do you recall was the status of the African American museum field when you were elected to office the first time?

18. How would you assess the overall status and health of African American museums during that period?

19. How would you characterize your contribution to the Association?

20. What do you see as the future of the Association, and in particular, of the African American museum field, in the 21st century?

APPENDIX B

Matrix of AAAM Oral History Interviews (Conducted between 2005–2017)

Subject's Name	Year of Interview	Status/Area(s) of Expertise
1. Amina Dickerson	2016	Currently: Museum Consultant Former AAAM Board Member Former Director of the DuSable Museum (Chicago, IL) 1961
2. Beverly Robertson	2016	Currently: President of the Memphis Chamber of Commerce Former AAAM Board Member Former Director of the National Civil Rights Museum (Memphis, TN) 1991
3. Bill Billingsley	2017	Currently: Deceased Former AAAM Board Member Former Director of the National Afro-American Museum (Wilberforce, OH)
4. Fath Davis Ruffins	2016	Currently: Curator, Smithsonian Museum of American History Former AAAM Board Member
5. Edmund Barry Gaither	2005	Currently: Director, National Center of Afro-American Artists 1968 http://ncaaa.org/staff/edmund-barry-gaither/ Former AAAM Board Member
6. Harry Robinson	2005	Currently: Director, Dallas African American Museum Former AAAM Board Member 1974
7. Howard Dodson	2016	Currently: Director of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and Howard University Libraries Former Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York, NY)
8. James Davis	2016	Currently: Museum Security Consultant Former AAAM Board Member Former Inspector General, Smithsonian Institution
9. Jocelyn Robinson	2016	Currently: Retired Former AAAM Board Member
10. John Fleming	2007	Currently: Founding Director, National Museum of African American Music Former AAAM Board President Former Director, National Afro-American Museum in Wilberforce, OH 1988 https://www.ohiohistory.org/visit/museum-and-site-locator/national-afro-american-museum
11. Joy Ford Austin	2016	Currently: President of the DC Humanities Council Former AAAM Board Member Former Founding Director, California African American Museum 1977/1984 https://caamuseum.org/about/mission-and-history-of-caam
12. Juanita Moore	2014	Currently: Retired Former AAAM Board President Former Director, Charles H. Wright Museum 1965 Founding Director, National Civil Rights Museum 1991 Former Director, the American Jazz Museum 1998
13. Kinshasha Holman Conwill	2016	Currently: Deputy Director, NMAAHC Former Director, Studio Museum of Harlem 1968 https://studiomuseum.org/timeline
14. Margaret T. Burroughs	2005	Currently: Deceased Former AAAM Board Member

		Former Founding Director, The Ebony Museum 1961 (later renamed DuSable Museum)
15. Nona Martin	2017	Currently: Retired Former AAAM Board Member
16. Rowena Stewart	2005	Currently: Deceased Former AAAM Board Member Founding Director, The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, Philadelphia's Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum 1976, the Motown Museum in Detroit, the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City and the Ritz Museum
17. Samuel Black	2016	Currently: Curator, Heinz History Center & Museum Former AAAM Board Member

APPENDIX C

Thematic Coding Sample