Spirituality as a Vehicle for Passing through the Stained Glass Ceiling:
Perspectives on African American Women's Leadership in US Organizations

by

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Abstract

The glass ceiling describes the effect that accounts for the discrepancy between numbers of men and women and ethnic minorities in organizational leadership positions. The authors begin by exploring the evolution of leadership thought and then specifically focus on gender and leadership in organizations. Role congruity theory is used as a vehicle for analyzing genderized characterizations of leadership and ensuing glass-ceiling effects. Because effective leadership is contextually and culturally dependent, a discourse on the interaction of leadership, gender, race, and ethnicity follows. Specifically, leadership from the perspective of African American women in US institutions is addressed with the purpose of finding a general framework for analysis. The focus of the discussion shifts to spirituality in organizations and the possibility of leveraging spirituality as a vehicle for creating passages through the stained glass ceiling.

Introduction

Less than 10 percent of Fortune 500 companies are managed by women (Rowley 2010) and black women hold a meager one percent of corporate officer positions (Stanley 2009) indicating a lack of female organizational leaders and particularly of Black female organizational leaders. Despite legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its 1991 amendments, which have been successful in removing some of the barriers against upward mobility of women in organizations, it has been estimated that at the current rate of progress it will take approximately 47 years for women to achieve equivalent levels of leadership participation in corporate America (Catalyst 2007). Discrepancies also exist among various groups of women. According to Catalyst (2006), women occupy 14.7 % of board seats of Fortune 500 companies. Of those, white women held 79% of the seats and women of color held 21 % Given the significant gap in the leadership positions held by white women compared to black women, we posit that it will take black women much longer than white women to attain equality with white men. Clearly, one may argue that the current models have limited effectiveness and that there is a need for exploring other strategies for breaking through the glass ceiling, particularly for women of color. In this paper, the authors argue that, rather than creating new models, the current theoretical perspectives need to be expanded to take into consideration the differences between women, rather than assuming that all women are the same. While we are not the first to make this claim (Ayman and Korabik 2010; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis 2010), we reexamine and expand on their discussions as well as offer additional solutions.

The glass ceiling describes the effect that accounts for the discrepancy between numbers of men and women and ethnic minorities in organizational leadership positions. Although the metaphor has been in use since the 1990s (Ayman and Korabik 2010), barriers still exist to the ascent of women to leadership positions in organizations. The authors begin by exploring the evolution of leadership thought and then specifically focus on gender and leadership in organizations.

Role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002) is then used as a vehicle for analyzing genderized characterizations of leadership and ensuing glass-ceiling effects. Because effective leadership is contextually and culturally dependent, a discourse on the interaction of leadership, gender, race, and ethnicity follows. Specifically, leadership from the perspective of African American women in US institutions is addressed with the purpose of finding a general framework for analysis. A recurrent theme that appeared in reviewing the literature was one of spirituality in corporate and other non-religious settings. As such, the focus of the discussion shifts to spirituality in organizations and the possibility of leveraging spirituality as a vehicle for creating passages through the stained glass ceiling.

Though generally used in reference to barriers faced by women in religious organizations, the multi-faceted nature of glass ceiling in non-religious organizations has prompted the authors to adopt the term "stained glass ceiling" (Sullins 2000) to represent the complexity of the issues in a manner that considers each component discretely as well as part of a larger whole, much like a stained glass mosaic. This concept encompasses all of the issues that African American women may face – not only gender but also issues surrounding race, role expectations, ethnicity, and socialization. Indeed, though these organizations may differ structurally from churches and other religious organizations, the barriers faced by women span both religious and non-religious organizations. As such, even though the current discussion is focused on non-religious organizations, it has implications for churches and religious organizations. Each element of the mosaic is addressed in turn.

Evolution of Leadership Thought

The study of leadership enjoys considerable history, and over time, has evolved from the focus of a singular agent to one that includes the work of the entire community. In the early 19th and 20th centuries, the predominant mode of thought focused on "Great Man" theories, which suggested that leaders were born with the "right stuff" and that a certain set of characteristics contributed to their effectiveness. A plethora of studies into the characteristics of leaders resulted in a host of trait-associated theories that attempted to define "the right stuff" necessary for effectiveness (Stogdill 1948; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1991; Judge, Bono et al. 2002). Judge and colleagues (2002), using the five factor model of personality, further explored the importance of traits and found that certain traits (extroversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) were consistently associated with both leadership emergence and effectiveness. Although certain traits affected leadership emergence, however, it was found that their predictive ability was still moderated by the situation.

The notion of leadership was further expanded to include more contingency based or situational approaches (Chemers 1995; Fiedler 1967; Hersey and Blanchard 1977). Focus also shifted to not only the leader in a particular group, but the followers as well. Burns (1978) in his seminal work concerning transactional and transformational leadership, firmly implants the notion of engagement of both leader and follower, and ties leadership effectiveness to the quality of the interactions between leader and follower.

The "transformational" leader was defined as one who is inspirational, motivational, and human relations-oriented. The "transactional leader" on the other hand, was characterized as goal-oriented, rule-oriented, and interested in maintenance of the status quo. Burns suggested that transformational leaders effected true change much more readily; further, he noted that an individual did not necessarily need the title or positional power to lead others but could cause change merely on the basis of the nature of the relationship and influential ability.

The actual relationship between leader and follower itself also emerges as an additional perspective of study as represented in the leader-member exchange theory (Graen, Novak, and Sommerkamp 1982), which emphasizes the mutual process between both leader and follower. Although the theory itself has been refined over time (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser 1999), it still enjoys considerable attention and study (Sparrowe, Soetjipto, and Kraimer 2006).

Rost (1991) further shifted the attention from leader to follower by emphasizing the role of followers in which followers and leaders "do leadership" by working together in a relationship of mutual influence. Others have also provided supportive evidence of the collective, highlighting the impact of followership on the relationship (Aktouf 1992; Kelley 1988; Manz and Sims 1991). Models such as Servant Leadership and "leader as steward" completely invert the hierarchal scheme by defining effective leadership as putting the needs of others first, building community and fostering the development of members (Greenleaf 1970; Davis, Schoorman, and Donaldson 1997).

As organizations and the environment in which they operate continue to change and increase in complexity, Wheatley (2005) argues that the notion of a "heroic" singular leader has become obsolete and that effective leadership should be considered a result of the social construction of the entire group, which happens as an emergent process within a network or community (Barker 2001; Drath 2001). Complexity leadership (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001), suggests that leaders *enable* organizational effectiveness, rather than *guide* it, by fostering and building networks. Leadership is enacted through "distributed intelligence," and is considered a form of social capital that enables the organization to adapt to unspecified future states, allows for the emergence of innovation, and provides for shared decision-making from the bottom-up rather than the top-down.

Raelin (2003) describes the *leaderful organization*, in which all members contribute to the growth of a community both independently and interdependently. His four tenets of "leaderful" practice suggest that leadership is concurrent (power and influence are shared), collective (the process is enacted by multiple members), collaborative (open to multiple viewpoints), and compassionate (values dignity of all). Others suggest that leadership lies not in the qualities of the actor but in the relationships connecting individuals and the social capital it produces (Balkundi and Kilduff 2005).

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Ancona (2005) suggests an integrated framework for thinking about leadership as a capacity rather than as the function of any one individual. The framework is built on the assumption that leadership is distributed throughout all levels of the organization, involves a process that creates change over time, and enacted in a very personal manner such that one capitalizes on personal strengths but continues to develop. Change is effected through a repeating cycle that includes visioning, sensemaking, relating, and inventing.

Preferred leadership characteristics also vary from culture to culture (Koopman et al. 1999; Javidan, et al. 2006) and correlate with Hofstede's (1993) original dimensions of culture which include power distance, masculinity and femininity, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and time orientation. For example, individuals from cultures having higher power distance scores expect their leaders to be more authoritarian and status conscious; those having lower power distance scores prefer leaders who are more egalitarian and democratic. Followers from collectivistic cultures prefer team-oriented leaders, etc.

Leadership and Gender

Effective leadership has a long history of development along gender lines and historically, leadership has been construed as primarily a masculine enterprise. Masculine traits, such as drive, achievement, self-confidence, influence, and authority, are considered key indicators of effectiveness (Eagly and Carli 2003; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1991; Madsen and Hammond 2005). However, societal expectations for women to be nurturing, deferential, communal, and concerned with the emotional well-being of others seem to be in direct conflict with the behavioral expectations associated with effective leadership. Even in light of more contemporary notions of leadership, which suggest a move to a more collaborative and communal process, there is still a paucity of women in key leadership positions. For example, only 14.4 percent of Executive Officer positions in Fortune 500 companies were held by women as of 2010 (Catalyst 2010).

Starting in the 1970s, research by Schein (1973, 1975) identified a phenomenon that she labeled, "think manager, think male" to explain why women were not well represented in management positions. She argued that gender stereotyping[1] is a significant barrier to women's advancement in positions of power. Research since the 1970s has consistently found support for this, "think manager, think male" phenomenon among male respondents but not among female respondents (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, Schein 1989; Schein, Mueller, Jacobson 1989). Other research has shown further support for this gender-typing of management positions (see Dueher and Bono 2006; Martell, Parker, Emrich, and Crawford 1998; Powell, Butterfield, and Parent 2002).

This phenomenon has also been found in cross-cultural research by Schein and colleagues (Schein and Davidson 1993; Schein and Mueller 1992; Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, and Liu 1996). Though there may be some variability in certain settings, people still tend to associate masculine characteristics with a leader's identity (Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly and Carli 2007). Role congruity theory, a social psychological theory, has been offered to provide rationale for this phenomenon. This theory is briefly described below.

Role Congruity Theory

Role congruity theory (Eagly 2003; Eagly and Karau 2002) draws on social role theory (Eagly 1987) and can help explain why women are under-represented in leadership positions. Role congruity theory asserts that women leaders experience prejudice because people tend to perceive incongruity (or discrepancy) between the female gender role and the leader role (Eagly 2003; Eagly and Karau 2002). This discrepancy between the female gender role and the leader role is referred to as the role incongruity principle (Ritter and Yoder 2004). Specifically, female leaders experience two distinct forms of prejudice:(1) women are viewed as less qualified for leadership than men are and (2) women tend to receive more negative evaluations when enacting leadership behaviors than men do.

The first form of prejudice arises from the descriptive norms of the female gender role. The second form of prejudice arises from the injunctive norms of the female gender role. Descriptive norms (which are also known as descriptive stereotypes) describe how people are believed to *actually* be while injunctive norms (also referred to as prescriptive stereotypes) describe beliefs about how a certain kind of person *ought to be* (Cialdini and Trost 1998). For example, women are believed to be concerned with the emotional well-being of others (descriptive norm). It is also desirable or appropriate for them as well (injunctive norm). When behaviors are consistent with injunctive norms, these behaviors are likely to elicit approval from others when enacted, but disapproval when they deviate. Gender norms encompass characteristics that are believed to be both typical *and* desirable for women and men in our society. Thus, people engage in gender appropriate behaviors because others expect them to do so. Behavior consistent with gender norms will be rewarded, while inconsistencies will result in penalties (or sanctions).

Within the United States, different expectations exist for the roles of men and women (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz 1972; Diekman and Eagly 2000). Specifically, women are expected to adhere to communal norms and characteristics, such as concern for the welfare of others, being helpful, affectionate, kind, sympathetic, nurturing, and gentle. On the other hand, men are expected to adhere to agentic norms and characteristics such as assertiveness, confidence, self-sufficiency, ambition, independence, forcefulness, and a tendency to behave as a leader (Eagly 1987; Eagly and Karau 2002). In addition, people tend to agree that men and women should, and actually do, behave in ways consistent with these characteristics (Wood, Christensen, Hebl, and Rothgerber 1997).

Since deviations from injunctive norms elicit disapproval (Cialdini and Trost 1998), it appears that behavior typical of the leader role is in direct conflict with the injunctive norms of the female gender role. For example, leaders are expected to be assertive and dominant. Women who behave assertively are often thought of negatively (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, Pascale 1975; Rudman and Glick 2001). Rudman and Glick (2001) point out those female leaders are caught in a catch-22. Women who behave agentically are behaving in ways that violate the injunctive norm that women should behave communally. If females behave agentically, they may be rated as equally competent as men, but they suffer a backlash effect not identically experienced by men (Glick, Zion, and Nelson 1988). Violation of the injunctive norm expecting women to be communal and "nice" results in their not being liked nor respected. Men can also experience a backlash effect if they make an effort to appear communal. They are viewed as nice yet they are perceived as less competent (and employable) than agentic men (Rudman and Glick 1999, 2001).

The disjuncture between leadership expectations and injunctive norms of the female gender role are costly for women in terms of social approval. When competent women are compared to competent men, the former tend to be viewed as undesirable as group members (Hagen and Kahn 1975) and even elicit cues of negative affect (Butler and Geis 1990; Koch 2005) from interaction partners. Hagen and Kahn (1975) found that both females and males are more likely to exclude competent females than competent males from their groups. They are also more likely to *include* incompetent females than incompetent males. Butler and Geis (1990) argue that there is an implicit assumption, or expectation, that women will defer to men and when women violate this expectation, it causes the display of negative affect from others. Koch (2005), in a slightly modified replication of Butler and Geis (1990), found that female leaders received more negative affect than male leaders even though there was not a gender difference in competence ratings.

Status characteristics theory researchers (Berger, Cohen and Zelditch 1972; Berger, Fisek, Norman and Zelditch 1977; Webster and Foschi 1988), documenting similar patterns across a variety of contexts and settings, found that people presume that women are less competent than men and that they are less worthy to hold positions of leadership (Ridgeway 2001). Heilman (2001) argues that gender stereotypes are the cause for the biased evaluations that women receive because the evaluations have a masculine bias, describing a good manager as someone who has primarily masculine attributes (Heilman, Block, Martell, and Simon 1989; Schein 2001).

Heilman (1995, 2001) describes a lack of fit model, which is based on the idea that the expectations for success or failure of a specific person in a specific job are the driving force underlying personnel decisions. Performance expectations are based on the perceived fit (or "lack-of-fit") between a person's attributes and the requirements of the job. If the perceived fit is good then a person is expected to succeed; if the perceived fit is bad then the person is expected to fail. If the requirements deemed necessary to perform at male-typed jobs (or roles) do not fit with the attributes expected of women, then this produces the expectation of failure when women perform those jobs.

When women are successful at male-typed jobs, the prescriptive-based bias is revealed and induces disapproval (Cialdini and Trost 1998). Furthermore, when women are perceived to have the traits necessary to do their job successfully (competent, assertive), they are rejected socially for not behaving like a woman should (Heilman 2001).

These two forms of prejudice result in: (1) decreased access to leadership positions for women and (2) once in a position of leadership, more obstacles to overcome to be successful. As a result and, unsurprisingly, research has consistently supported the assertion that females are less likely to emerge as leaders (Carbonell 1984; Eagly and Karau 1991; Eagly, Makhijani, Klonsky 1992; Mergargee 1969; Ritter and Yoder 2004; Wentworth and Anderson 1984).

In a meta-analysis of studies investigating the emergence of leaders in initially leaderless groups, males were more likely to emerge as leaders compared to females, reflecting the first form of prejudice toward female leaders suggested by role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002). Furthermore, the context of the group influenced who was more likely to emerge as leader. Males were more likely to emerge in groups that were short-lived and did not require complex social interaction, while females were more likely to emerge in groups that were long-lived and required complex social interaction. Eagly and Karau (1991) argued that this difference in context is supportive of social role theory. [2]

In a meta-analysis of experiments focusing on the evaluation of leaders, Eagly et al. (1992) found that participants negatively evaluate female leaders more than male leaders. While this effect was relatively small overall, there were larger differences when females held leadership positions in masculine-typed roles (incongruent with their gender role) and when the evaluators were male. This finding illustrates the second form of prejudice that female leaders encounter suggested by role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002). Further empirical support for role congruity theory has been demonstrated by subsequent studies (cf. Ritter and Yoder 2004; Boyce and Heard 2003; Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra 2006; Garcia-Retamero and López-Zara 2009). Studies by Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006, 2009) demonstrate cross-cultural support for this theory using samples from Spain and Germany.

Leadership, Gender, Race and Ethnicity

Much of the research on leadership has been carried out using white men as subjects (Ayman and Korabik 2010). Although early studies of leadership primarily focused on white men, there has been more work accomplished in the past two decades around the role of gender on effectiveness. However, the issue of race and ethnicity has largely been ignored. Much of the research on women in organizations has been largely in the context of predominantly white organizations (Stanley 2009) and has focused largely on the experience of white women.

There is a dearth of research and theoretical perspectives on African women's leadership in business and corporate settings (Stanley 2009; Parker and ogilvie 1996) and on their daily experiences within predominantly white organizations (Stanley 2009). Existing models on gender and leadership, which have been largely formulated around white women, may not be applicable to women of color. Much of the research on gender and leadership has been "ethnocentrically skewed toward the western world" (Rowley, Hossain and Barry 2010).If one considers that national culture significantly shapes the environment in which leaders find themselves and organizational cultures tend to be reflective of the values of the prevailing national culture (Rowley, Hossain and Barry 2010), it would be expected that the culture of most organizations in the US is shaped by the dominant Anglo culture. Moreover, gender is a social construction (Stanley 2009) and gender roles and expectations encompass social class, race and ethnicity (Stanley 2009). As such, one would expect that the experiences of African American women in organizations would differ from those of white women. In addition, different paths of socialization may lead African American women to express leadership very differently from white women.

Women of color not only must bear the brunt of gender stereotypes, but racial ones as well (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). Because of multiple stereotypes at play, it is difficult for African American women to develop informal networks of influence because they are too different from white women to benefit from their shared gendered status and too different from black men to benefit from their shared racial status (Combs 2003). In fact, white women have been shown to align more with white men rather than black women (Bell and Nkomo 2001). In addition, there is the added burden of African American women to conform not only to gendered expectations related to leadership but to European American prototypes as well. Parker and ogilvie (1996) upon reviewing several studies indicated that African American women share some traits, behaviors, and styles in common with white women. Yet there is some divergence as they also have traits and exhibit behaviors and styles that are more consistent with white men. They offered that African American women are *socialized differently than white women and are encouraged to develop egalitarian relationships,* assertiveness, independence, self-confidence, and resistance to standards of the dominant culture. These attributes may be viewed negatively due to role incongruity and inconsistency with white female expectations of deference, gentleness, and communal. Consequently, through the parallel (Ayman and Korabik 2010) and intersecting (Sanchez- Hucles and Davis 2010) dynamics of gender and culture African American women experience more complex barriers than do white women. Bell and Nkomo (2001) suggest that the "concrete wall" prohibits the progression of African American women up the hierarchy due to a role expectation of subservience working in lesser positions. Merely establishing legitimacy as a leader is a significant issue for African American Women.

Further complexity is added when one examines leadership style from different cultural perspectives. Leadership and femininity as enacted in one culture can be perceived very differently in another (Hofstede 1993; Javidan, Dorfman et al. 2006). If one considers race, women of color may come from a variety of cultures such as African, Caribbean, Spanish, or African American, and speak a variety of languages. Few distinctions if any are made as to cultural differences between women from various sectors of the Africa Diaspora. Although an "African American woman is one who self-identifies as Black and whose national origin of birth is the United States of America (US)" (Stanley 2009, 552), in US organizations, few distinctions if any, are made by either researchers or the culture between Black women of different national and ethnic origins. Race is used as the primary lens through which they are all viewed. Visible physical characteristics are used to categorize individuals into cultural groups and serve as the basis of ascribing stereotypes (Ayman and Korabik 2010). These women are socialized very differently and as such have varying cultural expectations of gender roles, leadership, and women as leaders. On the other hand, due to common ancestry, it may be possible to find some threads that unite certain values and behavioral expectations. Green and King (2001) posit that in the "Africentric" perspective, some essential elements of African life and values exist in varying degrees among people of African descent in the US and other countries. The Africentric perspective acknowledges and validates African "culture… beliefs, values, institutions, and behavior" (160). This approach places emphasis on communalism, cooperation, and spirituality as vehicles for addressing leadership development of Black females.

Breaking the Organizational Stained Glass Ceiling – One Piece at a Time

Although the notion of leadership has been construed as a primarily masculine enterprise, more recent literature, has suggested that a more feminine view of leadership, characterized as inclusive, egalitarian, participative, and flexible more effectively meets the challenges associated with global collaboration and overwhelming complexity prevalent today (Helgeson 1995; Kark 2004; Madsen and Hammond 2005; Morgan 1997; Rosener 1990). As the workplace becomes more participative, a more democratic style of leadership is needed as defined by empowerment, distribution of responsibility, inclusiveness, collaboration, and egalitarianism. This section offers hope that the stained glass ceiling may be cracking as well as offer strategies to expedite the process.

Changing Organizational Cultures and the Feminine Advantage

From an organizational perspective, cultures shaped around traditional "female" values are more likely to balance and integrate rational analytic behavior with intuitive, empathic, organic behavior (Morgan 1997; Martin, et. al. 1998). Hierarchy is de-emphasized, leadership is shared, and decision-making occurs in a more egalitarian manner. This style results in a flatter, more networked and flexible organization able to more readily cope with and adapt to environmental turbulence, complexity, and global collaboration (Kaczmarski and Cooperrider 1999).

Margaret Wheatley (Madsen and Hammond 2005; Wheatley 2005) claims that the notion of the masculine archetype of leadership, based on certain traits, heroism, "make-it-happen" attitude, and command and control is dead. Her concept of emergent, life-affirming leadership is based on a more feminine archetype in which leadership is based not on one's position but on one's experience and willingness to step forward and contribute. Her notion of leadership is characterized by a belief in the value and competence of others, reflection and learning, and the engagement of others in anything that affects them. Women leaders appear to have more transformational characteristics than their male counterparts, which can result in higher levels of group, individual, and organizational effectiveness (Bass and Avolio 1994; Eagly and Carli 2003).

Does it follow then, that a more feminine approach to leadership creates an advantage for women leaders? Rosener (1990) suggested that women practice "interactive leadership," a process that facilitates inclusion and participation, shares power and knowledge, enhances the self-worth of others, and energizes and motivates. Women leaders tend to focus on the ecology of leadership rather than the position itself, as evidenced by a larger vision of making a difference extending beyond personal boundaries to society as a whole, and sharing information in a more networked rather than hierarchal pattern (Adler 1999; Helgeson 1995). In contrast to masculine views of leadership at the top, female leaders actually see themselves in the center, reaching out, not down, connecting to others much like the delicate threads of a web:

> "Emphasizing interrelationships, working to tighten them, building up strength, knitting loose ends in to the fabric, it is a strategy that honors the feminist principles of inclusion, connection…" (Helgeson 1995, 58)
> "…the orb and radial lines bind the whole together; every point of contact is a point of connection…the principle…is inclusion. You can't break a web into single lines or individual components without tearing the fabric, injuring the whole." (Helgeson 1995, 49)

Although recent work by Eagly and Carli (2007) provides evidence that the stereotypes and prejudices still favor men in leadership positions, this may be changing. Duehr and Bono's (2006) study suggests that women stereotypes are changing more favorably to include confidence, ambition, and assertiveness. There is still a difference in perception of their effectiveness as leaders, but the gap is less than in studies performed two-three decades ago.

The organization itself may influence the notion of masculinity and femininity and may play a role in redefining roles in the future (Ely and Padavic 2007). Further work to explore how organizational policy can impact perceptions of gender and race as they are embodied in leadership is needed. Currently, status and power influences leadership emergence and explicit consideration of how these are enacted in an organization will bring greater awareness to how development initiatives are managed going forward.

Although some movement towards equalizing the disparity between role expectations of leader, gender and race through education, increasing awareness, reducing the subjectivity of performance evaluations, and restructuring work-life balance may be occurring, it is too early to tell if there has been a significant impact. On a more macro level, contemporary social constructions of masculinity and femininity may be changing as the men's role as caretaker expands (Cullen and Grossman 2007).

As noted earlier, the "feminine approach" appears to be primarily a white female approach to leadership. Consequently, this raises the question of whether African American women would benefit from adopting a more "feminine approach" especially in areas where such an approach would conflict with their preferred modes of leadership. The answer to this question may be deduced from some previous research. Thomas and Ravlin 1995 (as cited in Ayman and Korabik 2010) found that when a Japanese American leader behaved more like an American leader, Americans were more distrustful of him. Ayman and Korabik (2010) posited that when people deviate from the implicit stereotypes of leadership associated with their gender or ethnicity they face higher levels of scrutiny and their legitimacy is questioned. Further, Parker and ogilvie (1996) suggested that going against feminine and racial conventions could have negative consequences. As such, one would expect that African American women might not necessarily benefit from adopting more "white" modes of leadership. If as these studies suggested, adopting a whiter or more feminine approach to leadership might not necessarily be advantageous for African American women leaders, we put forward the notion that they should leverage strategies from their unique perspectives that would be viewed as being authentically theirs without being in conflict with the dominant culture. Accordingly, we propose that there should be further investigation of leadership approaches adopted by African American Women. According to Parker and ogilvie (1996), the two competing strategies adopted by African American Women in response to dominant corporate culture are an avoidance model and a confrontation model. Neither of these models is likely to produce the desired passage through the glass ceiling; avoidance tends not to challenge the status quo while confrontation is likely to meet with resistance. The authors offer an alternative mechanism for passage through the stained glass ceiling – that of spirituality.

Spirituality and African American Women's Leadership

Spirituality has been viewed as a legitimate vehicle for promoting organizational commitment and performance (Fry, et. al. 2011; Karakas 2009). Spirituality in the workplace is not about emotionality. Spirituality has to do with meaning, purpose and sense of community (Karakas 2009). It is embodied in the experiences of individuals and encompasses notions of interconnectedness and trust (Marques 2008). According to Marques (2008), spirituality is an external manifestation of internal drive and requires emotional intelligence.

These are not new concepts and may be found in the Africentric values advanced by Green and King (2001) and are likely to be viewed as authentic expressions of leadership for African American women. Bass (2009) also notes that spirituality is "a strong tradition that runs deep within the African American community" (627) and is employed particularly by African American women in various spheres of their lives including leadership.

Sherman (2002) identified spirituality and spiritual advice as the "fundamental weapon in the arsenal" of African American women for surviving corporate culture. Likewise, Bacchus and Holley (2004) found that African American professional women use spirituality as a coping mechanism to address stressors and stress resulting from stained glass ceiling effects of discrimination, denied opportunities, and exclusion from informal networks in the workplace. The women in the study considered spirituality to be an effective coping mechanism. Spirituality was used not as an escape mechanism but as a vehicle for directly confronting the realities of their situations. This focus on spirituality has also been echoed in other studies on African American women (Bass 2009). Though spirituality appears to be an underlying construct in the discussion of African American women's leadership in organizations, there is an apparent lack of rigorous investigation into the origins or components of spirituality as enacted by African American women. This suggests an area for further research. Karakas (2010) conducted a study of managers in Turkey and identified nine spiritual anchors (or paths) they pursued. Similar research to identify the typology of spirituality and paths utilized by African American women may be of value in formulating models of leadership unique to African American women.
Spirituality may also offer an avenue for transporting African American Women through the stained glass ceiling. Over the last decade, there has been renewed interest in spirituality in the workplace and in the academic literature in the field of leadership (Fry 2005) as is evidenced by the fact that in 2005, *The Leadership Quarterly* devoted an entire issue to the topic. Karakas (2010) in reviewing the literature on spirituality in the workplace also found an apparent shift in organizational thinking with spirituality gaining wider acceptance. This may be a reflection of shifts in the broader culture where religion was formerly a taboo topic in the workplace has become the topic of workplace diversity programs; this is in turn an offshoot of the CRA 1964 and subsequent amendments that protect religious expression, as well as diversity programs that foster cultures of religious tolerance. In discussing spirituality especially in non-religious organizations, however, one should make a distinction between religion and spirituality. Fry et al. (2011) make this distinction by noting that "religion is concerned with theological systems of belief rites and formalized practice whereas spirituality is concerned with matters of the human spirit" (260).

Despite its promises, spirituality should be seen as one among possibly numerous other approaches. For as Marques (2008) cautions, this trend may not find acceptance everywhere. She postulates that workplace challenges include being taken advantage of, mistrust and lack of understanding may result in some environments. In a 1999 survey, Mitroff and Denton found that most respondents considered spirituality as being a relevant topic for the workplace. On the other hand, most respondents were neutral regarding the appropriateness/inappropriateness of spirituality, indicating some level of cognitive dissonance in positions on spirituality. Therefore, a multifaceted approach is advocated, as is the utilization of models and perspectives.

A Multi-Faceted Approach

Parker and ogilvie (1996) offered a comprehensive model of leadership that included Anglo-male and female leadership models as well as a distinctly African-American female approach. Attributes contributing to effectiveness include creativity and behavioral complexity, defined as the ability to manage multiple, sometimes competing roles. Effective leaders must be able to flex between confrontation and avoidance based on the situation at hand. Parker and ogilvie (1996) also included the notion of biculturalism - the ability to manage the tensions between two worlds, which are shaped by vastly different socio-historical conditions. This capability is facilitated through divergent thinking, risk-taking, and boundary spanning. As previously noted, African American women share leadership attributes with white women. From a gendered perspective, we propose that they may also utilize the "feminine" advantage. We offer that African American women leaders may employ spirituality in concert with other attributes that draw from their socialization experiences that may be integrated into the mainstream while maintaining their unique identities.

Conclusion

The authors have elucidated several forces at play, which impede the progression of African American women to positions of leadership. The term "glass ceiling" implies that there is one solution to the problem and that issues are consistent without regard. While examining individual social, cultural, or organizational perspectives separately is necessary, the entire picture does not emerge until one steps back to consider how the various elements are connected, much like viewing a beautiful stained glass mosaic: Each element is important in its own right but also contributes to a larger picture. Further research identifying leadership strategies employed by African American women is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of leadership in modern organizations. Additionally, the utility and effectiveness of the strategies should be investigated with the objective of developing models and programs as tools for shattering the glass ceiling. Although there are many issues to consider, the future appears hopeful as role expectations change over time, organizational cultures evolve to include the role of spirituality, and the workplace becomes more diverse.

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[1] In this research, Schein uses the term sex-role stereotypes. In the early 1970s there had yet to be a distinction between sex and gender. Even in current research (e.g., Schein 2001), she continues to use the concept "sex-role stereotypes" for consistency. In this paper, however, we will refer to sex-role stereotypes as gender stereotypes for consistency within existing research.

[2] Eagly and Karau (2002), in their initial presentation of role congruity theory, use this meta-analysis as support for the first form of prejudice experienced by female leaders.