11-22-2017

The Impact of Ethics and Faith on the Leadership Styles of Black Women in Higher Education

Emetrude Lewis
North Carolina A & T State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/jri

🎯 Part of the Community College Leadership Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Educational Methods Commons, and the Higher Education Administration Commons

The Impact of Ethics and Faith on the Leadership Styles of Black Women in Higher Education

About the Author(s)
Dr. Emetrude Lewis received her Ph.D., in Leadership Studies from the Department of Leadership Studies and Adult Education at North Carolina A & T State University. She is an Adjunct Professor and Budget and Personnel Manager at North Carolina A & T State University.

THE IMPACT OF ETHICS AND FAITH ON THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF BLACK WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Emetrude Lewis, North Carolina A & T State University

Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the connection between ethics and faith as well as the impact that such connection has on the leadership styles of Black women in institution of public education. For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participants and to protect their privacy. Multiple data collection and analytical methods were utilized to document the experiences and voices of the participants. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the role and impact of ethics and faith on the leadership styles of Black women in higher education. The major goals of the research are: 1) to explore the role that ethics play on the leadership styles of Black women. 2) to examine the role that faith plays on the leadership styles of Black women and 3) to illuminate how Black women in higher education employ both ethics and faith in their leadership styles.

The findings of the study begin a research agenda to study ethics, faith and leadership, particularly in settings of public institutions of higher education. One research recommendation from the study was further research, as well as the need for additional participants using rigorous qualitative and quantitative methods and analysis. The findings of this study outlined how ethics connect to faith and how these participants employ that connection to their leadership styles. Practical implications for women leaders are include.

Introduction

While research indicates that women in leadership have made achievement gains in the workplace, there are still considerable disparities between men and women (Taneja, Pryor, & Oyler, 2012). Phenomena such as the "glass ceiling" provide evidence of this fact (Christo-Baker, Roberts, & Rogalin, 2012). It describes the effect that in part accounts for the discrepancy between numbers of men and women and ethnic minorities in organizational leadership positions (Christo-Baker, Roberts, & Rogalin, 2012). Although this metaphor has existed since the 1990s (Christo-Baker, Roberts, & Rogalin, 2012), barriers still exist to the ascent of women to leadership positions in organizations.

Women's ways of leading and expressing faith have similar characteristics, including relational characteristics, ethical, value-laden actions and beliefs, and service to others first (Adams & Csiernik, 2002; Coleman, 2003; Dehler & Welsh, 1994; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2003; Lewis & Geroy, 2000; Love & Talbot, 1999; Neiman, 1998; Tisdell, 2001; Young, 2004). However, there are currently few studies that show connections between the concepts of leadership and faith. Though the concepts have similar characteristics, current research does not examine if a connection exists between leadership and faith nor does current research examine how these concepts may appear in practice in the workplace (Lynn, Naughton, & Veen, 2010; Burke R., 2006; Khan, Khan, & Chaudhry, 2015).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the connection between ethics and faith and the impact this connection may have on the leadership styles of Black women in higher education.

The central research questions that this interpretivistic qualitative study aims to answer are:

1. What impact does the connection of ethics have on the leadership styles of Black women in higher education?
2. What impact does the connection of faith have on the leadership styles of Black women in higher education?
3. How do Black women in higher education employ ethics and faith in their leadership styles?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this qualitative study was derived from the Theory of that of Alice Walker's (1983) Womanism as a spinoff of critical race theory (CRT). This theory is of specific significance to the focus of this study as a result of Walkers outline of the particular mode in which Black women have been at the bottom of every social hierarchy created by man, particularly during the four centuries of the modern era, and multiply some, based on the interaction of race, class, and gender hierarchies and systems of identity.

Methodological Approach

In this study, a phenomenological qualitative research approach was utilized to explore the lived experiences of Black women leaders in the institutions of public education the Northeastern and Southeastern region of the United States. This methodology was selected because it is most commonly used in exploring the lived experiences of individuals through their own perspective (Creswell, 2013).

The goal of this research was to examine the connection between ethics and faith and the impact of this interconnectivity on the leadership styles of Black women at public institutions of higher education. The implementation of a qualitative approach is appropriate for this investigation because it allows a story to be told or gives the ability to generate an understanding of the meaning of an experience (Patton, 2003).

Phenomenological Strategy of Inquiry

The specific design of phenomenology that is used for this study is transcendental phenomenology. Laverty, (2003) indicates that phenomenology is essentially the study of lived experience or the life world. Its emphasis is on the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person. This inquiry asks "What is this experience like?" as it attempts to unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence. Like phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology is concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived. The focus is toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Creswell, (2013) asserted transcendental phenomenology focuses on the descriptions of the experiences given by the participants and less on the interpretations of the researcher. For this style, the investigators are led by the charge to set aside his/her own experiences and basically bracket himself/herself out of the procedure in order to acquire a freshly formed perspective of the phenomenon founded exclusively on the experiences of the participants.

Participant Selection

For this study, the researcher purposely began the selection process by identifying a convenience sample of three Black women in leadership roles in institutions of higher education in the Southeastern region of the U.S. With the assistance of these three participants, the researcher employed a snowball sampling strategy in which the initial participants identified other potential participants for the study (Creswell, 2013). This strategy broadened the horizon of participants to the Northeastern region of the United States. The participants ranged from 45 to 75 years of age. The professional makeup of the participants included current or former presidents/ chancellors, deans, and department chairpersons within an institution of higher education.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for this study entailed a series of three semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews as well as critical incident reports, completed by each participant. Interviews were digitally recorded in the participant's natural settings to capture their words and garner a full understanding of their lived experiences. The individual interviews were guided by three broad questions which sought to explore the following experiences: "What impact does the connection of ethics have on the leadership styles of Black women in higher education"; "What impact does the connection of faith have on the leadership styles of Black women in higher education"; and "How do Black women in higher education employ ethics and faith in their leadership styles?" Each participant was assigned a non-identifiable variable—a combination of specific letters and numbers for the purpose of confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The researcher used the meaning of analysis context as the unit of analysis for coding and also looked for description. This means that the data are not coded sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, but coded for meaning. The data were categorized and coded. Data coding and analysis inductively built from particulars to general theme that allows making interpretation of the meaning of collected information (Creswell, 2014).

To analyze the data, the researcher used Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data. The data collected through the individual interviews went through an initial process of horizonalization. This process allowed the researcher to build on data from the first and second research questions, transcribed all of the data from the individual interviews and searched the transcripts to highlight significant statements, sentences or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants experience the phenomenon. Significant statements that appeared consistent across each of the participants' interviews was highlighted and marked for further examination.

Key Findings

By utilizing Walker's (1983) conceptual research model to define and guide understandings about spirituality, and definitions of leadership styles and practices (Burns, 1978), several themes emerged. The six themes emerging from the data include: (a) Religiosity at Core of Identity, (b) Personal Core and Core in Work Life, (c) Actions of Service and Ethics, (d) Connection for Leadership Performance, (e) Core Emotions, and (f) Institutional Challenges.

The data revealed that there was not a broad umbrella of spirituality; rather, the participants' faith was identical to their religious beliefs and those religious beliefs for all of the ten participants centered squarely on their belief in God. The women do not wish to isolate the connection between their ethics and faith from their leadership styles. In fact, the participants saw ethics and faith as one and the same.

Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The data and findings have relevance for women leaders in the field of higher education, particularly for those employed in public institutions of higher education. Examining the interconnectedness between ethics, faith and leadership provides a valuable insight into leader rationale, motivation, retention, ethics, and performance. The area of research into integrating ethics, faith and leadership is just beginning to emerge, so much of the knowledge that has been gained has been scattered in different streams located in the fields of business, psychology, communication, human resources, religious studies, and medicine (Reave, 2005). Further data gathering, analysis, and consolidation of the findings in these diverse fields will provide a broad empirical base upon which to build theory and explore interdisciplinary approaches.

Based on this study and other scholars' perspectives, it is critical that the institution of public education system works to intentionally foster interconnectedness in women leaders in order to help them better appreciate the importance of harmonious coexistence, explore the meaning and purpose in life, and cultivate infinite potential in each person.

References

Adams, D., & Csiernik, R. (2002). Seeking the lost spirit: Understanding spirituality and restoring it in the workplace. *Employee Assistance Quarterly, 4*, 31-44.

Burke, R. J.(2006). Leadership and spirituality. *Emeral Group Publishing Limited, 8*, 14-25. doi:10.1108/14636680610712504

Burns, J. M. (1978). Leadership. New York: Harper Torch Books.

Christo-Baker, E. A., Roberts, C., & Rogalin, C. L. (2012). Spirituality as a vehicle for passing through the stained glass ceiling: Perspectives on African American women's leadership in US organization. *The Journal of Pan African Studies, 5*, 2.

Coleman, M. (2003). Gender and the orthodoxies of leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 325-339.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* Thosand Oaks; CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publication.

Dehler, G., & Welsh, M. (1994). Spirituality and organizational transformation: Implications for the new management paradigm. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 17-26.

Eagly, A., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. (2003). Leadership styles matters: The small, but important style differences between male and female leaders. Handbook on Women Business and Management, 279-303.

Khan, K., Khan, S., & Chaudhry, A. (2015). Impact of servant leadership on workplace spirituality: Moderating role of involvement culture. *Pakistan Journal of Science, 67*.

Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermenentic Phenomenology: A compasison of historical and methodological consideration. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*, 100-103.

Lewis, J.S. & Geroy, G.D. (2000). Employee spirituality in the workplace: A cross-cultural view for the management of spiritual employees. *Journal of Management Education*, *24*(5), 682-694.

Love, P. & Talbot, D. (1999). Defining spiritual development: A missing consideration for student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, *37*(1), 361-375.

Lynn, M. L., Naughton, M. J., & Veen, S. V. (2010). Connecting religion and work: Patterns and influences of work-faith integration. pp. 675-701. doi:10.1177/0018726710386396

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Neiman, A. (1998). Tales from the front: Reflections of a catholic university administrator on spirituality and leadership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice, 2*(1), 69–81.

Patton, M. (2003). Qualitative checklist. *The Evaluation Center*.

Reave, L. (2005). Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*, 655-687.

Taneja, S., Pryor, M. G., & Oyler, J. (2012). Empowerment and gender equality: The retention and promotion of women in the workforce. *Journal of Business Diversity, 12*, 43-53.

Tisdell, E. (2001). Spirituality in adult and higher education. *ERIC Digest*, available from: http://www.ericacve.org/pubs.asp

Walker, A. G. (2013). The relationship between the integration of faith and work with life and job outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 453-461. doi:DOI 10.1007/s10551-012-1271-0

Wilson, H., & Hutchinson, S. (1991). Triangulation of qualitative methods: Heideggerian hermeneutics and grounded theory. Qualitative Health Research, 1, 263-276.

Young, P. (2004). Leadership and gender in higher education: A case study. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 28*(1), 95–106.