Human Capital Advantage from Fortitude, Resilience, and Perseverance of Minority CEOs in STEM Organizations: A Phenomenological Study

Torin Mordel Malone
Human Capital Advantage from Fortitude, Resilience, and Perseverance of Minority CEOs in
STEM Organizations: A Phenomenological Study

by

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**Abstract**

Title: Human Capital Advantage from Fortitude, Resilience, and Perseverance of Minority CEOs in STEM Organizations: A Phenomenological Study

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Advisor: Robert Schaller, Ph.D.

Keywords: human capital advantage, minority CEOs, leadership, communication, fortitude, resilience, perseverance, organizational behavior, organizational culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

This research study explored how the inherent lived experiences of minorities can foster the attributes of strength and stamina, collectively referred to as the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance (FRP) of minority executive-level leadership. Specifically, this research considered the lived experiences of ten minority CEOs and assessed the influence of how they lead and communicate within their organizations. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover if and how the attributes of FRP could distinctively serve as a human capital advantage for organizations to consider with regard to utilizing minority executive-level leadership. The implication is that the greater understanding and awareness of this human capital advantage, the more mainstream the notion of minority leaders serving in executive-level positions. Initiatives for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) would be driven by minority capability and capacity as opposed to quantifying a quota; thereby, facilitating the versatility of majority- and minority-run organizations. The implication for majority organizations regarding having more diversity in the room and being more inclusive of “other” views and ideas for innovation and solutions for problems exposes the genuine intent of DEI initiatives. If the notion of diversity, equity, and inclusion is only given quantifiable consideration, the human capacity component loses its opportunity to qualify its human capital potential. The findings from this study convey that the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs are collectively a positive competitive advantage for organizations. The conclusion drawn from this research contends that minorities of ethnicity and gender provide invaluable leadership traits through the attributes fortified by unique lived experiences that they exude as executive leaders. The business application and human capital advantage of these attributes can pay dividends toward organizational identity, culture, and sustainability.
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To my mentor, Dr. Andrea Cunningham, thank you for your support – you told me it would be worth it and it was. To my AAMU family, thanks for cheering me on.

I would like to thank my family (Mom, Dad, and Brothers) and extended family and church for your prayers and encouragement. Most importantly, I would like to thank my girls. Taylen, my oldest daughter, your stamina taught me fortitude; Tori, my youngest daughter, your tenacity taught me resilience; and my wife, Kimberly, your dedication taught me perseverance. You all sacrificed so much, while I was on this journey. To my girls, “Daddy owes you,” to my wife, “WE DID IT!” I LOVE YOU ALL.
Dedication

This is dedicated to past loved ones and ancestors who paved the way, current travelers on this journey, and the future leaders of a new dawn.

"I AM WHAT I AM"
by torin m.

The reward of your labor is here,
Through Jesus Christ the Lamb, . . .
Knowing you labored not in vain and can say,
"I am what I am."

College graduate, computer specialist,
Lawyer, doctor, business achiever;
But by the grace of God, I am . . .
First and foremost, a believer.

I commit my service to God first
And then to my fellow man;
So let there be no question that,
I am, what I am.

In my goals and aspirations,
I sow a mighty spiritual seed,
Knowing in due season by faith,
I'll reap and by faith I'll achieve.

I'll make my way boldly, in this world
With a Holy Spiritual rod, . . .
Knowing surely and sho'nuFF,
I am, what I am, . . .
I AM A CHILD OF GOD.

inspired by I Corinthians 15:10

"But by the grace of God I am what I am:
and His grace which was bestowed upon me was
not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than
they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which
was with me."
Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Fortune Magazine pointed out, “in the history of the Fortune 500 list, there have been only 19 Black Chief Executive Officers out of 1800” (“Fortune 500 Companies 2020: Who Made the List,” 2020). The magazine further enquired, “why, after so many years of awareness of this problem, is that number still so stubbornly low?” The answer may lie in the understanding of the problem and how the problem, namely diversity and inclusion has been addressed. Robertson (2004) investigated the meaning of diversity and inclusion in organizations. Her results endorsed the argument that diversity in organizations may be supported by sets of practices to manage fair treatment issues, increase stakeholder diversity, and demonstrate leadership commitment to diversity. Inclusion, on the other hand, may be supported by practices to integrate diversity into organizational systems and processes, and encourage the full participation and contribution of all employees (Visagie and Linde, 2010). Robertson (2004) commented that scholarly literature on definitions of diversity primarily focused on heterogeneity and the demographic composition of groups or organizations, while definitions of inclusion focus on employee involvement and the integration of diversity into organizational systems and processes. Robertson (2004) believed that diversity and inclusion ‘encapsulate’ the discrimination and fairness, and integration and learning diversity paradigms suggested by Thomas and Ely (1996). The conclusions of these research studies along with numerous research articles that cite the lack of management track opportunities, too few inclusion initiatives, and the lack of corporate diversity awareness campaigns – individually or collectively, may be part of the problem.
While opportunity, inclusion, and diversity initiatives may be warranted, the benefits and advantages of what minority CEOs may genuinely and arguably contribute uniquely as leaders within an organization may be overlooked, because attention has been given solely to the issue of diversity, as opposed to exploring the significant attributes that minority CEOs possess. Leadership traits ascertained through unique phenomenal experiences may be considered assets to many organizations. Illuminating the attributes of minority leaders and bringing attention to intrinsic, invaluable characteristics may help destigmatize the notions of the inability of minority leaders and help to deviate from the seemingly common practice of simply “filling a slot” to incorporate diversity and inclusion efforts within organizations. This research study focused beyond the issue of “what’s needed is more diversity and inclusion,” and explored the deeper “why minority leadership” is advantageous and beneficial to organizations and organizational culture. This research study initially sought to explore insights for the attributes of fortitude and resilience among minority CEOs. Through the development of the research process, perseverance emerged as a succinct complementary component for this study. One conclusion of this study is that collectively the components of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance can help to substantiate the capacity and capability of what makes a good CEO. Further, the notion of what makes a great CEO can be encapsulated in the drive, motivation, and influencers of minority CEOs.

The terms fortitude, resilience, and perseverance (FRP) were used interchangeably within this research study, and reimagined and redefined from the perspective of the research participants. Collectively, these terms evoked traits and actions of strength, courage, grit, stamina, determination, and endurance. Leaders may be lauded for possessing such attributes in business. The literature is clear that minority business leaders, specifically in fields where they
are significantly underrepresented, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries, require a considerable amount of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance to withstand negative stereotypes, perceptions, and preconceived notions questioning their ability to lead. The sustainability of organizations can benefit heavily from the attributes acquired through the lived experiences of minority leaders. As disclosed in the literature, minority leaders are afforded opportunity sometimes under the guise of the laudable cause of inclusion and diversity (Thomas, 1990). While commendable, “checking the box” for inclusion and diversity by industries and the corporate culture at large, can minimize the value that FRP can bring to an organization by minority leaders. Inclusion and diversity have become “hot topics” in corporate America (Thomas and Ely, 1996), and these terms may garner favorable reputations for “fair” and responsible best practices for organizations in the name of progress, evolution, and change. Undoubtedly, though the notion of the capability and capacity of minority leaders is undermined by the question of what true, tangible value is gained by a minority leader’s presence.

The attributes of minority leaders and their respective communication styles may serve as strong influencers in helping to shape a company’s organizational identity. Leadership style has immense impact on employees to perform and grow, and can lead to positive attitudes toward achieving organizational goals (Mohiuddin, 2017). Company leaders use varying leadership approaches to elicit the best effort from their employees to maximize productivity and efficiency. The motivations and influences of minority leaders may stem from notably different elements than that of majority leaders. “Minority” is used in the statistical sense to denote people who in terms of race, gender, or ethnicity are not in the majority in their respective communities of participation, including industries, corporations, and organizations. Minority leaders face workplace issues not experienced by majority white leaders including lack of support,
discrimination, racism, and stereotyping (Flores and Matkin, 2014). This research study aimed to provide insight as to how minority leaders employ FRP to withstand the challenges and obstacles that they may face, and to identify the main contributors to a minority leader’s fortitude, resilience, and perseverance which (s)he uses to influence their organizations through effective communication and leadership.

The ability to lead and communicate effectively is paramount for minority leaders for reasons of respectability and confidence, not only for organizational sustainability but also for their company’s ability to thrive within their respective industries. The FRP of minority CEOs is influenced by factors that shape business leadership and communication, which help to establish respect, admiration, and to operationalize an organization’s reputation. The influences of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance among minority CEOs lied at the crux of this research study. With the credibility, capability, and capacity of minority CEOs being in question, the influences on the business leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs warranted exploration and consideration.

The accounts cited in this research study provided authentic and personal views from the perspectives of minority CEOs in STEM industries. The challenges of prejudices and negative stereotypes that minority leaders face when they attempted to enter industries where they were underrepresented required “extra” motivation to succeed.

Minority leaders are inherently faced with issues of validation and a question of purpose. This study examined questions such as the following. Why does a person choose to lead in an environment where she or he is traditionally labeled “the minority”? What motivates a minority to not just be a part of an organization, but to become a leader? What influences impact how
minority leaders communicate within their respective industry – with employees and clients? Leading and communicating for minorities in a CEO role can require additional effort or extra measures to instill a required level of trust and credence. The aforementioned questions and assertions were posed to research participants, who helped reveal the issues minority leaders faced in their leadership journey.

This study used an in-depth personal inquiry approach by providing first-hand accounts of the motivations that ignited the business endeavors and drove the success stories of minority leaders. This study explored what motivated the drive of minority CEOs by recounting their prevailing interests, behaviors, and passions amid extenuating circumstances and challenges. By describing and assessing the experiences of minority leaders, the research discovered specific motivations that helped substantiate overarching reasons to cultivate diversity and inclusion in business leadership. This study provides insightful information, and is a resource for both minority and majority organizations seeking leadership substantiated by the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs.

Background

My Journey and Origins of Fortitude

This study began with testing an assumption that I have experienced as a minority leader and as a son of a minority business owner. I have owned and operated a website and graphic design business and watched my dad navigate through the perils of operating a business in the field of telecommunications. Establishing a business is one endeavor; however, sustaining and thriving in business is an anomaly, especially for a minority in a majority-dominated industry. Considering the made-up term of “thriveability” to describe the sustainability of my business for
over fifteen years and how my dad was able to thrive in business for over thirty-five years, I initially chose the term fortitude for this study.

As a researcher I pondered several questions. What is this attribute called fortitude? Where does it come from? How does fortitude factor as an essential component for business success? Is the fortitude of executive leaders an applicable and advantageous human capital advantage for business? Beyond the bottom-line, what drives minority executives to excel in industries where they are underrepresented? How is fortitude manufactured in leaders? Is it fortitude or something more that undergirds the success of minority CEOs?

The origins of the inference of fortitude date back to 1893, when John S. Farmer published, “Slang and Its Analogues: Past and Present.” During this time, fortitude was considered an indecent term. “Guts” had developed with a metaphoric meaning: “a spirit; a quality; a force, energy, or fire from within.” The politer and more accepted term, “innards” derived as an expression describing the innermost drive of a person’s being and will. This inner drive carried the intrinsic meaning of “tough, spirited, and courageous.” In a 1955 article in the journal, American Speech, Tom Burns Haber reported that the phrase “intestinal fortitude” was coined as an alternative to the courageous kind of “guts” by John Wilce, a professor of clinical medicine at Ohio State University (OSU). Wilce coached the Ohio State University Buckeyes football team beginning in 1913 and came up with the phrase while lecturing his football squad. In 1916, Coach Wilce said he used intestinal fortitude in a speech at a banquet celebrating OSU’s undefeated season and first-ever conference championship. The newly minted term spread quickly, as it began appearing in national newspapers within five years of Wilce’s speech. Intestinal fortitude, meaning stamina and courage took on a militant connotation during war
times and became a staple term in sports commentary to describe the physical and mental resilience of athletes.

**Fortitude: From Intestinal to Emotional – A CEO Business Application**

From the athletes on the playing field to the business leaders in the board room, one’s ability to withstand the stressors of events and circumstances is considered a major component and vital attribute in leading executives. Research suggests that Olympic gold medalists and CEOs share several personality characteristics, including openness to new experiences, conscientiousness, being innovative, emotional stability, optimism, and being proactive (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). For both groups, these traits influence and support the mechanisms of stress appraisal and metacognition. Metacognition refers to awareness of one’s own knowledge—what one does and doesn’t know—and one’s ability to understand, control, and manipulate one’s cognitive processes (Meichenbaum, 1985). It includes knowing when and where to use particular strategies for learning and problem solving as well as how and why to use specific strategies. Metacognition is the ability to use prior knowledge to plan a strategy for approaching a learning task, take necessary steps to problem solve, reflect on and evaluate results, and modify one’s approach as needed.

Developing emotional and intellectual fortitude is considered an essential element for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to be effective. In the article, “Emotional fortitude: The inner work of the CEO,” the authors explain, “emotional fortitude may be the most challenging to adopt—but simultaneously is perhaps the most important. For it is emotional fortitude, the willingness to undergo self-examination, and put the lessons thus learned to use, that can allow a CEO to become more resilient to the stressors of decision-making under pressure and harness his
or her emotions for the good of the enterprise” (Finzi, Lipton, & Lu, 2021, Embracing section, para. 3). CEOs approach stressors as opportunities for growth, development, and mastery, particularly in the face of adversity. The most acclaimed CEOs may be categorized as an elite group of people who should be able to face periods of self-doubt and yet still perform under enormous pressure while maintaining phenomenal levels of resilience. As described in the article, (Finzi, Lipton, & Lu, 2021):

Emotional fortitude can improve a CEO’s resilience to the stressors of decision-making and lead to better decision outcomes. Making decisions while staring disruption in the face may be the most grueling element of being a CEO. Data feels insufficient. Assumptions feel tenuous. Options feel constrained. Timing feels rushed. Outcomes feel binary: The decision either takes the organization in the right direction or the wrong one. Yet CEOs are expected to be the most qualified people in their organization to make decisions. CEOs, perhaps more than those in any other executive role, feel enormous pressure to get it “right.” Even the most level-headed CEO is apt to experience sleepless nights and personal doubts about the choices they make and the consequences that result. If the decision ultimately proves to be a poor one, there is no one else to blame. (Emotional section, para. 1)

Additionally, asserted in the article, Emotional fortitude, “the ways CEOs experience the process (and process the experience) of making big decisions may be determined by their emotional fortitude.” Emotional fortitude truly represents the “inner work” that effective CEOs perform as they journey through the decision-making process and live with the consequences. How can CEOs increase their chances of making an optimal decision when all the alternatives may not be known, when time is not on their side, and when emotions play a central role before, during, and after the decision is made? (Finzi et al., 2021, Emotional section, para. 4)

Making critical decisions under conditions of extreme uncertainty may be considered a critical component of being a proficient CEO. Compounding these difficulties is the need to feel relatively confident that one has engaged in the most thorough “internal homework” to inform
one’s choice. Yet under conditions of high uncertainty, it is often unclear just how much thinking and analysis, not to mention research and data-gathering, is enough. CEOs may face several difficulties incorporating the “go with your gut” impulse in decision-making, either by seeking to reduce uncertainty and doubt or by refusing to consider information that may generate uncertainty and doubt (Finzi et al., 2021). For the most proficient CEO, what is most needed is to act decisively while taking the complexities of each decision into appropriate account. This need to tolerate uncertainty and remain cognizant of conflicts while still making timely decisions is what drives the need for emotional fortitude. Emotional fortitude is the art of examining one’s own thoughts and emotions surrounding a decision to consider those thoughts and emotions themselves as inputs to the decision-making process (Finzi et al., 2021). A central aspect of emotional fortitude is metacognition: being keenly conscious of the thoughts, intuitions, and feelings that arise when one faces a challenge (Meichenbaum, 1985).

The essence of emotional fortitude is the ability to stay clear-headed while exploring one’s reactions to these sources of tension. While the natural temptation may be to suppress the discomfort one feels under such circumstances, those with emotional fortitude not only allow themselves to feel that discomfort, but methodically assess and analyze their distress to see what they can learn from it (Finzi et al., 2021). They consciously inventory their thoughts and feelings while in the throes of the decision-making process. An adept CEO with emotional fortitude can “hold” these emotions at arm’s length and further examine them, which can prompt insights that guide appropriate action. A CEO responding to conditions of extreme uncertainty may even embrace the adrenaline-driven emotional intensity triggered by the awareness of a looming threat (and the awareness of the inadequacy of the current response plan) to unleash radically higher levels of creativity in generating options (Finzi et al., 2021). The choice of the term “emotional
fortitude” is intended to acknowledge the positive role that emotions play in decision-making. This idea runs counter to the still commonly held view that, not only should decision-making be a purely rational mental process without emotion, but emotions will actively disrupt and jeopardize this rational process.

Additionally, stated in the article, *Emotional fortitude*, “the ability to generate new options is generally associated with visualization, empathy, and even courage—attributes fueled by emotions” (Finzi et al., 2021, Intellectual section, para. 2). The ability to choose relies on an unpredictable mix of emotional and intellectual intelligence. Cognition and emotion are not separate, independent processes, but coexist in processing information and regulating behavior, especially for many types of challenging tasks. The science of decision research, going back to Nobel laureate Herbert Simon’s work from the 1970s, shows that emotions are vital to one’s ability to make decisions at all, let alone good ones (Simon & Newell, 1971). Effective decision-making is the appropriateness of the emotions associated with the decision — not the absence of emotion (Buchanan & O’Connell, 2006).

Emotional fortitude requires using the understanding gained from the awareness to properly assess the situation at hand. What helps CEOs to make good decisions, is the ability to gauge which thoughts and feelings may facilitate and which may debilitate the decision-making process, and why. Being willing to tolerate and examine one’s thoughts and feelings surrounding a decision can not only shed light on deficiencies in the process, but also help a CEO consider new options that may have never been envisioned or tested before (Finzi et al., 2021). Surprisingly, it may be negative emotions such as insecurity and self-doubt that can be the most useful to CEOs when making difficult decisions. As Galileo noted, self-doubt is actually “the
father of all invention.” He argued that, rather than becoming “a crippling experience,” self-doubt can and should generate creativity and serve as a powerful stimulus to further thought (BBC Radio, 2012). While allowing self-doubt to lead to indecision or inaction is ultimately self-defeating, harnessing self-doubt to spur exploration and learning can be empowering.

When faced with difficult decisions, CEOs may not consciously attempt to make their doubts disappear or cure their insecurity, but instead, use these emotions to mine their doubts for new information. A CEO’s strategy to making difficult decisions may lie in patience and astute observation. Instead of rushing to judgement, the experience of tactfully considering all the variables and waiting, allows skillful CEOs to act with informed purpose. The article, *Emotional fortitude*, stresses the importance of CEOs to continually scan the environment and interpret the meaning of what they see and hear (Finzi et al., 2021). CEOs may seek ways to make the best use of their emotions and find greater confidence in the decisions they eventually make. Even when a decision leads to unintended outcomes, CEOs can be resilient and learn from the experience. Ultimately, CEOs use emotions to their advantage, demonstrating that emotional fortitude can help CEOs strengthen trust within their organization and help them more clearly communicate the reasons for their decisions. When a leader presents an honest assessment of the thoughts and emotions behind a critical decision, others experience and appreciate the leader’s authenticity (Finzi et al., 2021).

**Statement of the Problem**

The lack of CEO diversity and inclusion is an acute and overarching problem in corporate America. The lesser credibility typically assigned to minorities in leadership (as outlined in sections of Chapter 2) continues to plague opportunities for executive roles in business. By
exploring the lived experiences of minority CEOs, the research discovered that the attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance may provide more insight into the advantages of having a minority leader. Debunking preconceived notions of the lack of ability by minority leaders was supported by hearing and understanding the narratives of minorities in leadership. The resilience of such leaders lends well for supporting diversity and inclusion efforts. Increasing awareness and adding context to research in this area may help to authenticate the capability and capacity of minority leaders. The human capital elements of the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority leaders may help address the problem of diversity and inclusion. Increased awareness breeds understanding, and understanding yields acceptance, and acceptance corresponds with authentication. The authentication of minority leaders can serve to strengthen the case for inclusion and diversity in business organizations.

Being an authentic leader may denote validity, realness, and dependability, but who or what establishes the measure for these criteria? What validates a leader’s ability? What is the justification or validation for authenticity when the question of “who should” and “who best can” lead an organization in the right direction is asked? Dependability may be a facet of authenticity; however, despite efforts for diversity and inclusion at the executive level in business, minority underrepresentation continues to be an unresolved reality in corporate America. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2015), there is an increasing gap between the number of minorities in the U.S. population and the number of minority leaders in executive-level positions of U.S. corporations. *American Experiences versus American Expectations*, a publication of the EEOC (2015) illustrated the significant changes to the United States workforce during the 50 years since the EEOC opened its doors in 1965. The EEOC document focused on changes in employment participation from 1966 to 2013 for African Americans and other
marginalized groups (Hispanics, Asian Americans, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, and women). The participation rate for officials and managers for African Americans and these marginalized groups is noted in Figure 1, Table 1, and Figure 2 show the participation rates of African American Executive/Senior and First/Mid-Level Officials and Managers from 1966 to 2013.

![Participation Rate For Officials & Managers 1966 - 2013](image)

*Figure 1. Participation Rate of Minority Officials & Managers*

*Table 1. Participation Rates of African American Executive and Mid-Level Managers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>18,121</td>
<td>2,085,422</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>73,965</td>
<td>3,135,469</td>
<td>2.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>148,909</td>
<td>3,980,123</td>
<td>3.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>193,857</td>
<td>4,427,754</td>
<td>4.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>257,122</td>
<td>4,978,689</td>
<td>5.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>298,068</td>
<td>5,141,658</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>405,766</td>
<td>5,919,471</td>
<td>6.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>481,912</td>
<td>6,943,429</td>
<td>6.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>475,392</td>
<td>7,020,839</td>
<td>6.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participation rate represents the percentage of workers from each demographic group that hold positions in a variety of categories reported in the EEO-1 survey. In 1966, African American Officials and Managers reported a participation rate of 0.87 percent. By 2002, the rate had increased to 6.85 percent. However, since then it decreased to 6.77 percent in 2013. Despite the fact that the minority population is on the rise in the U.S., the gap between the number and their presence in the leadership ranks of organizations appears to be increasing (EEOC, 2015). This gap is especially noticeable in the CEO role of Fortune 500 companies, for which, from 2010, fewer than 4 percent of these companies were led by a minority CEO (Diversity Inc., 2011). The CEO position was chosen as a focus because it “represents the epitome of leadership,” and is considered one of the most influential and powerful leadership roles in society (Porter & Nohria, 2010).

Authenticity, dependability, and legitimacy may lie at the crux of what makes a CEO the right fit for an organization; however, all too often race remains a factor in the hiring and promotion of minorities in executive level, CEO positions. The research found that fortitude, resilience and perseverance of minority candidates are overlooked assets that most organizations
do not pay close enough attention. The unfortunate reality is that despite credible candidates and
despite spending millions on corporate diversity efforts, U.S. companies are not retaining Black
professionals or promoting them to top positions. According to a report by the Center for Talent
Innovation (CTI, 2019), a workplace think tank in New York City, Black people account for
about 12% of the U.S. population, but only occupy 3.2% of the senior leadership roles at large
companies in the U.S., and just 0.8% of all Fortune 500 CEO positions. According to the
analysis of this study by the Center for Talent Innovation, lack of retention and promotion of
plausible minority personnel into senior level positions causes many of those workers to walk out
the doors in frustration. From where does this frustration derive? Conclusions drawn from the
survey (online and via telephone) of 3,700 participants found that about 65% of Blacks said they
must work harder to advance, compared with only 16% of white employees. “Working harder”
as the Black participants stated in this survey may serve as a well-suited asset for this group, as
an argument that may make them more “battle-tested,” resilient, and more prepared to take on
the multifaceted challenges of being a business CEO.

Patricia Fili-Krushel, former CEO of the Center for Talent Innovation, said in a
statement, "We hope that business leaders will respond to these findings by making a serious
assessment of their own workplaces and creating a comprehensive plan of action” (CTI, 2019,
p.2). Additionally, stated, "We are especially concerned about the lack of awareness we
discovered among white professionals" (CTI, 2019, p.2). Perhaps the best way to enhance career
opportunities for African Americans, the study suggests, is for more companies to introduce bias
training for managers, implement clear consistent standards for promotions, and hire decision-
makers who are committed to diversity.
Companies may also consider creating a diversity hiring strategy specifically for Black employees. The Center's study comes at a time when America continues to lose Black CEOs while companies are spending millions of dollars trying to diversify their staff, often to little avail. In 2012, there were six Black Fortune 500 CEOs. As of February 2022, there are three: Kenneth Frazier of Merck, Roger Ferguson of TIAA, and Marvin Ellison of home improvement giant Lowe's. Retired American Express CEO, Kenneth Chenault, an African American, expressed to the researchers behind the Center for Talent Innovation study, "It's embarrassing because there are thousands of Black people who are just as qualified or more qualified than I am who deserve the opportunity, but haven't been given the opportunity" (CTI, 2019, p. 3).

Although there is little research on how much companies spend on diversity recruitment in total, individual companies like Google and Intel report spending hundreds of millions annually to diversify their staff. Even with these efforts, one reason Black professionals are still struggling to scale the corporate ladder, according to the Center for Talent Innovation study, is the lack of face time with senior leaders. Not being able to establish career-altering relationships hinders building personal relationships with those within a company who oversee promotions. The Center for Talent Innovation study found that about 20% of Black respondents said they do not feel someone of their race could ever gain the top position at their company. The lack of promotions is one reason that Black employees change jobs more frequently as more than one-third of Black respondents said they plan to leave their company within two years, as opposed to 27% of whites. "Companies are missing out on amazing talent at the top of their organizations, and Black professionals are not given the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations," (CTI, 2019, p. 5) said Julia Kennedy, The Center for Talent Innovation’s executive vice president. The Center
for Talent Innovation study was funded by Disney, Pfizer, and other major corporate players (CTI, 2019).

**Purpose of the Study**

There are experiences and factors that contribute to the resolve and resilience of minority leaders; thereby, impacting how they lead and communicate. Minority leadership and communication styles are groomed by impediments – life experiences, societal perceptions, and industry barriers, which help to produce the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance necessary to influence diversity and inclusion efforts in business. This study explores the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs in STEM industries.

STEM industries were identified for this study due to the underrepresentation of people of color in these fields. Differential participation persists, disparities in level of achievement continue, and careers in STEM still extort a considerable personal and professional toll on minorities (Cantor, Mack, McDermott, and Taylor, 2014). The distressing situation regarding people of color in STEM has become one of alarming concern when looking at participation in STEM by race and gender and explore how these two primary identity dimensions privilege some and marginalize others within the academic and business environments (Alfred, 2017). Furthermore, STEM industries were utilized for this study due to the researcher’s interest in and access to executive-level minorities within this industry using available resources.

The intent of the research was to discover the phenomenological, lived experiences that particularly influence the leadership and communicative styles of minority CEOs. This study assessed the resiliency of minority CEOs and provides insight as to how the virtue of fortitude has attributed to the vitality and sustainability of their respective companies. This study, in
particular, considered from the CEOs’ perspective, what leadership styles and communication strategies lend well to an auspicious business culture and are received favorably from clients and stakeholders; and specifically, uncover how these minority CEOs use their leadership and communication approaches to counteract discriminatory acts, racial undertones, and stereotypical perceptions of adversarial entities within industries in the sometimes precarious racial climate of their respective regions. The use of the virtue of fortitude and the application of resilience and perseverance to overcome, maintain, and even thrive in industries where adversity is a constant, served as a backdrop of this research study. Minority CEOs face challenges that can stem from race, gender, and regional perceptions concerning capability, inadequacy, and systemic racism and/or gender bias and stereotypes. Many black males have grown up in a hostile world (Bacchus, 2005). Black males have been “bombarded with negative images and stereotypes of self” (Jones, 1994). Some other challenges facing minorities include the lack of proper mentoring relationships and specialized training. The research literature indicates that people are positively affected when they are engaged in meaningful and productive relationships and activities with good role models (Shea, 1994). Unfortunately, there is still little or no mentoring for blacks in the corporate top echelon (Smith, 2018; Cobbs & Turnock, 2003; Thomas, 2001). With all the challenges and barriers of minorities striving for and existing in leadership roles, what lies at the crux of minority CEO fortitude in business? What advantage does adversity serve in leading an organization, and can a particular type of adversity make a person even more suited for the role of CEO? These questions relate to the research questions of this study.
Research Questions

According to Rossman (2002), research questions serve two purposes. The first purpose is to guide the research. The second is to provide an outline for the presentation of data. In this study the research questions will serve both purposes.

This qualitative phenomenological study explored how the lived experiences of minority CEOs help to establish their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in business. The principal research questions (RQs) and subsequent questions RQ1a and RQ1b were developed to explore the phenomena shared by minority CEOs in developing their respective leadership and communication styles.

RQ1. What lived experiences reported by minority CEOs in STEM industries contribute to fortitude, resilience, and perseverance?

RQ1a. How does fortitude, resilience, and perseverance affect the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs?

RQ1b. How are these lived experiences of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance operationalized in decision-making practices by the minority CEO?

RQ2. What is the organizational impact of minority CEO fortitude, resilience, and perseverance with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability?

Answering the research questions uncovered how the lived experiences of minority CEOs instilled FRP, and subsequently impacted their respective leadership and communication styles. RQ1 explored what lived experiences contributed to minority CEO fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. Assessing RQ1a explained how the lived experiences contributing to fortitude, resilience, and perseverance molded the leadership and communication styles of the minority
CEOs. Exploring RQ1b explained how fortitude, resilience, and perseverance gained through lived experiences are applied in the decision-making practices of the minority CEO. Further still, RQ2 explored from the CEO’s perspective, the impact of the lived experiences on their respective organization’s identity, including the sustainability and the “success” of their business.

Definition of Terms

This section clarifies the terms used in this study. The terms clarified include acronyms, terms that have special meaning, and other common terms that have a particular meaning in the context of this study.

Chief Executive Officer: The chief executive officer (CEO) holds one of the most important and influential roles in an organization (Glick, 2011). The highest-ranking individual in a company or organization, the CEO is responsible for the overall success of a business entity or other organization and for making top-level managerial decisions. The CEO may ask for input on major decisions, but (s)he is the ultimate authority in making final decisions. There are other titles for the CEO, such as chief executive, president, and managing director (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022).

Communication: The Latin root of “communication” – communicare – means “to share” or “to be in relation with;” relating to the words “commune” and “community,” suggesting an act of “bringing together” (Cobley, 2008).

Communication styles: the characteristic way a person sends verbal and nonverbal signals during social interactions. Communication styles can be described using six main dimensions:
Expressiveness, Preciseness, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioningness, Emotionality, and Impression Manipulativeness (De Vries, 2015).

*Courage:* courage as acting intentionally in the face of risks, threats, or obstacles in the pursuit of morally worthy goals (Goud, 2005).

*Diversity & Inclusion (D&I):* Diversity is a collective mixture characterized by differences and similarities that are applied in pursuit of organizational objectives (Hubbard, 2004). Inclusion is the crust of a multicultural organization (Cox, 1993) where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds are integrated and accepted with their differences. Inclusion focuses on the degree of participation and belongingness of individuals into the daily work processes (Kuknor, 2020). Working in tandem, diversity and inclusion tap into the varied backgrounds, life experiences, and rich diversity of thought, ideas, and opinions of leaders and members of an organization (Smith & Angood, 2020).

*Dominant culture:* Organizations that are predominately controlled by European American males. They are large scale, hierarchical, European American, and male dominated; have their own set of norms, traditions, and values; and, in the extreme, are prototypes of the Anglo-Saxon tradition and Protestant Ethic (Bell, 1990).

*Emotional Fortitude:* The willingness to undergo self-examination, and put the lessons thus learned to use, that can allow a CEO to become more resilient to the stressors of decision-making under pressure and harness his or her emotions for the good of the enterprise (Finzi, Lipton, & Lu, 2021).
Emotional Intelligence: the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Ethnicity & Race: Ethnicity is assumed to be the cultural identity of a group within a nation state, while race is assumed to be the biological and/or cultural essentialization/naturalization of a group (Grosfoguel, 2004).

Fortitude/Resilience/Perseverance: Fortitude is a virtue that is especially valuable in times of crisis and is the ability to have the capacity to press on and persist despite enduring hardships (Bruni, 2015). Resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks, adapt well to change, and keep going in the face of adversity (Ovans, 2015). Perseverance means to keep going even when encountering setbacks. People who persevere often achieve success because they refuse to give up (Jon, 2022).

Leadership: a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2007). Leaders are generally thought of as having formal authority and managerial responsibility for a set of followers. Indeed, most leadership theories and empirical research are grounded in a context of supervisor–subordinate relationships whereby the supervisor is conceived of as the leader and the subordinate as the follower (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hosking & Morley, 1988; Hunt & Dodge, 2000).

Leadership styles: The social influence process a leader uses to acquire the participation of subordinates to reach organization goals (Omolayo, 2007). Leadership styles are used to delegate or influence others to act to carry out specified objectives (Mullins, 2007).
Minority: In the statistical sense, minority denotes people who in terms of race, gender, or ethnicity are not in the majority in their respective industries, corporations, or organizations (Flores and Matkin, 2014).

Mainstream organizations: Usually reflect the larger society’s racial and gender biases (Reid-Merritt, 1996). Mainstreaming is “the systematic, assimilative process of moving Blacks professionally, economically, politically, and educationally into the social fabric of American society” (Bell, 1990).

Organizational Culture: A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 2010).

Organizational Socialization: The process by which an individual gains the knowledge, jargon, social skills, and values to conform to the norms and roles required for integration into the work environment. In this way, the new employee 'learns the ropes' by becoming sensitive to the formal and informal power structure and the explicit and implicit rules of behavior (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Women of Color: Women of various races and ethnicities that have been marginalized in the United States to include, but not limited to, African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Indian American (technically Asian), Native American, etc. Blacks, Latinas, Asians, and American Indians are considered women of color because of their non-White or mixed racial backgrounds (Ortiz, 1994).
Workforce Diversity: Group and situational identities of the organization’s employees such as gender, race, and ethnicity, among other demographic descriptors (Hubbard, 2004).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it explored insights of what factors (lived experiences) influence the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs. This research adds to the body of knowledge of how minority CEOs, despite barriers and challenges, have been able to successfully obtain executive positions, survive the hardships, and thrive in STEM industries. The study also offers insights into what motivates these minority executives to succeed. By adding to the body of knowledge of how minorities have been able to successfully achieve executive status in corporate America (Bacchus, 2005; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999), this study helps to expand a portion of that inquiry by exploring the lived experiences contributing to their resilience. The insights gained from this study hope to help aid diversity and inclusion efforts by detailing the admirable wherewithal of minority CEOs “against all odds,” thereby increasing awareness and destigmatizing negative perceptions regarding the capability and the value-added attributes of minority CEOs.

A groundbreaking study released by Korn Ferry (2019) showed that senior Black profit and loss (P&L) leaders at Fortune 500 companies were some of the highest performing executives in corporate America (although currently, fewer than 10 percent of senior P&L leaders are Black). The study, *The Black P&L Leader: Insights and Lessons from Senior Black P&L Leaders in Corporate America*, examines the attributes and skills that differentiate these executives and the experiences that position them for success (Korn Ferry, 2019). Mike Hyter, managing partner of Korn Ferry stated, “The rapid decline in the number of Black CEOs is
alarming given the millions of dollars that companies have spent on diversity and inclusion programs” (Korn Ferry, 2019, p. 5). For things to change, organizations and the “powers that be” may need to take a closer look at the qualifying factors and the not so often considered attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance.

A goal of this research study was to expound, substantiate, and further test the findings of the Korn Ferry study by probing deeper into the lived experiences of minority leaders to assess if the phenomenon they experience in their respective leadership journeys yields fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. The Korn Ferry study (2019) was conducted in collaboration with The Executive Leadership Council (ELC), a national organization of more than 800 current and former Black CEOs, senior executives at Fortune 1000 and Global 500 companies, entrepreneurs at top-tier firms, and global thought leaders. Several insights emerged from The Black P&L Leader study to underscore that the participants are among the most driven executives in corporate America:

- Of the Black P&L leaders interviewed, 60 percent of them would never leave their career decisions to chance. They actively took highly strategic or analytical approaches to their professional development. They took the initiative to be accountable for their career progress.
- More than 80 percent were willing to take on more risk to garner influence in their organizations, and 50 percent intentionally sought tough projects with P&L responsibilities that would challenge them professionally and personally, and in turn give them greater visibility in their organizations.
• Nearly 60 percent of the Black P&L leaders reported having to work twice as hard and accomplish twice as much as their peers to counter misperceptions about their skills and results.

• More than 35 percent of the executives said they were assigned extremely tough projects that no one wanted to handle and had a high risk of failure. Many Black P&L leaders felt these assignments were given under the unspoken assumption that they need to prove their worth. Those leaders demonstrated tremendous fortitude and managed significant headwinds, setback and social exclusion to get ahead. (Korn Ferry, 2019, p. 1)

With the aforementioned findings and assertions, one can argue that minorities prove their worth through their persistence. With the notion of persistence, one may reason that the attributes of FRP could provide a significant human capital advantage in leadership within an organization. While persistence, likened to the studied attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance, may only be one piece to the leadership arsenal, it may be a considerable one. As Skip Spriggs, president and CEO of The ELC extrapolated, “I know that every leader has a few missing pieces that need to be developed, but when it comes to Black talent, there is an expectation that they have to have all the pieces in order to be considered” (Korn Ferry, 2019, p. 2). Even without “all the pieces,” this research study sought to discover that even “with the pieces they have,” minority CEOs may embody even more than what is necessary to lead because of their tried and tested virtues of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance.

To date, no studies have been developed to identify the profile of the successful Black male senior executive in corporate America (Bacchus, 2005). Therefore, the successful usage of the findings (insights) of this study hope to reduce the underrepresentation of Black male CEOs, as well as provide a general guide to improve the representation of other minorities and women
in top-level executive positions in corporate America. The findings of this study are informative and educational, and the analysis can serve entities and organizations with clarifying insight into the perspectives of an underrepresented, but worthy demographic. The experiences of these minority executives (participants) should help set the stage for other qualified minorities seeking to become senior executives and CEOs. The profiles of the minority executives participating in this study and the experiences of their journey to becoming a CEO could help provide a guide and serve as inspiration for other minorities in reaching this esteemed executive level in corporate America. This study can serve as motivation for other potential minority executives to remain vigilant to their aspirations. Additionally, this study may help to garner more attention, further research, and exploration regarding the human capital advantage of the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs in corporate America.

**Organization**

There are five chapters that comprise this dissertation research study. Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter one introduced the background components of the study, and identified the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the primary research questions that guided the research, the definition of key terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 consisted of a review of the literature that served as a backdrop and foundation setting the stage for relevant inferences of research studies and assertions that provided credence to the research study. Chapter 3 described the qualitative methodology that guided the research study. Chapter 3 included explanations of the research method, research design, research questions, an overview of the approach, participant information, and descriptions of procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 revealed the findings of the research. Chapter 4 consisted of data elements including the research participants’ perspectives, data process and analysis, the
findings and revelations, and concluded with a synthesis and summary of the data and how the findings could be used toward applied practice. Chapter 5 contained the researcher’s discussion, implications, and recommendations. Chapter 5 described contributions of the study, incorporated discussions on the issue of diversity and inclusion and how D&I could be influenced by the implementation of the themes derived from the study. Additionally, discussed in Chapter 5 were the research implications, limitations, areas for future study, and conclusion.

Summary

This study took an in-depth personal inquiry (phenomenological – lived experience) approach by providing first-hand accounts of the motivations that ignited the business endeavors and inspired the success stories of minority leaders. This study explored what motivates the drive (fortitude, resilience, and perseverance) of minority CEOs by recounting their prevailing interests, behaviors, and passions amid extenuating circumstances and challenges. By exploring the experiences of minority leaders, this study discovered specific motivations that fueled their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance which help to substantiate the overarching reasons to cultivate diversity and inclusion in business leadership. This study provides insights and is a resource for both minority and majority leaders and organizations seeking to embody these virtues in their organizations.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This research study sought understanding of phenomena that are intangible, yet essential to the development of human capital of minority managers, especially in the most senior position, the CEO, in STEM industries where there is significant underrepresentation. As such, there is very little extant literature that deals with the topic of fortitude and related attributes in this setting. One of the objectives of this study was to address this gap in the literature at a time when the topic of diversity & inclusion is broadly recognized and addressed. The approach to this literature review is to include scholarly and grey literature from a wide, yet relevant fields of study. This is done by starting with the human capital theory, supportive relevant theories, and a theoretical and conceptual framework that helped guide the research design of the research study. The unit of analysis, fortitude, resilience, and perseverance was described and subsequently broader topics of explanatory value and research interest including motivation, leadership, and communications. Additionally, coverage of women as a relevant (and overlapping) minority group is included where appropriate.

Questions that Guided the Research

The initial question which guided the research and scope of the literature review was: What lived experiences contribute to the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance (FRP) of minority CEO’s? Additionally, the respective questions that followed explored the leadership and communication approach of the minority CEOs and queried the application and the operationalization of the attribute of FRP.
RQ1. What lived experiences reported by minority CEOs in STEM industries contribute to FRP?
RQ1a. How does FRP affect the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs?
RQ1b. How are the lived experiences of FRP operationalized in decision-making practices by the minority CEO?
RQ2. What is the organizational impact of minority CEO FRP with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability?

The principal research question helped to guide the literature review regarding the constructs of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. The secondary questions broadened the scope of the literature by addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, barriers minority leaders face, and providing insight as to how minority leaders operationalize the attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance.

Method for Reviewing the Literature

The literature review was conducted using keyword searches and reference searches. In addition, keyword searches were used to uncover additional literature to help in the development of the research study. Articles were cataloged by subject with a source filing software. Multiple journals were used along with books, previous dissertations, and conference papers. Not all literature was found to be useful for this study; and subsequently was not included in the reference section of this study. The researcher discovered that recent literature was extremely lacking for the topic of minority fortitude leadership. Due to the lack of material covered, it was necessary to include older literature to supplement the current research available. The range of dates for the literature review emphasizes that more progress needs to be made to understand this
phenomenon. The literature search concluded when there was enough material to provide historical, theoretical, and conceptual frameworks for this study.

**Human Capital Theory**

The human capital theory associates prominent capacity with one’s intellectual capability. The human capital theory suggest that people can enhance their productive capacity through more training and education. Acquiring more education and increasing one’s skillset helps to garner the attainment of higher employment status/wages, executive level position and marketability is heightened for the individual. As minorities seek higher levels of education and position their skills for advanced career options, research has shown a relationship between diversity in leadership and organizational performance yielding favorable financial gains. The advocacy for minorities in senior leadership role for this study explores whether their fortitude attribute serves as an overlooked human capital advantage. This research is important as it provides a foundation for the organizational focus on human capital management. The positive impacts of diversity, anchored by the human capital virtue of fortitude (i.e., tenacity, dependability, and persistence) vote well for determined minority leaders. Schultz (1961) and Romer (1990) noted that, in the modern economy, human capital is one of the most important factors for economic growth, if not the most essential source of economic productivity. Further, Richard (2000) asserted that the strategic use of human capital offers a competitive advantage. The incorporation of diversity within the leadership ranks of companies contributes to a firm’s competitive advantage, as it fuels innovation and promotes an understanding of multiple viewpoints (Kochan et al., 2003).
Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual and theoretical framework model in Figure 3 displays how the phenomenology (lived experiences) of minority CEOs contributes to an organization’s human capital component; thereby influencing leadership and communication styles, which directly impacts the operationalization of the organization’s culture and identity.

A goal of this research study was to provide a means to uniquely and genuinely capture “the voice” or the lived experiences and personal journeys of minority CEOs. These lived experiences are gathered by placing the narratives of the CEO participants at the center of the research. This central placement enriched the authenticity of the study of minority CEOs. Historically, these experiences have been narrowly observed from study, theory, and development. This study anchored in the participants’ lived experiences and theorized a resilience perspective through the lens of a historically oppressed group. As Allen (1995) advocated, theories enable us to examine domination and oppression. Black Feminist Thought,
Co-Cultural, and Standpoint theories offer that. All three conceptual frameworks offered the participants an opportunity to give meaning to their own unique lived experiences.

James-Hughes (2003) asserted co-cultural theory speaks directly to the communication strategies that marginalized group members use to survive in dominant structures. Standpoint theory accepts a person’s social position. This theory helped the researcher understand that a minority CEO’s lived experiences (or vantage point) has a major impact on how they lead and communicate that leadership within their organizations (James-Hughes, 2003). Minority groups are often left in the boundaries of conventional scholarly work. The Black Feminist Thought acknowledges that race has an impact on a person’s social position and leadership development (James-Hughes, 2003). Black Feminist Thought, Co-Cultural and Standpoint theories offer a framework that supports an understanding of the communication strategies of marginalized groups. The conceptual framework for this study grounded the participants’ lived experiences. As Collins (1990) observed:

Because elite White men and their representatives control structures of knowledge validation, White male interests pervade the thematic content of traditional scholarship. As a result, Black women’s experiences with work, family, motherhood, political activism, and sexual politics have been routinely distorted in or excluded from traditional academic discourse. (Collins, 1990, p. 52)

These frameworks allowed the researcher to explore how the participants defined their leadership roles, incorporated their communication styles, and explained their assumed resilience to establish, survive, and even thrive in their industry. This research study used aspects of the Co-Cultural theory, the Standpoint theory, and the Black Feminist Thought theory. These three theories function as lenses that provided meaning to the lived experiences of minority CEOs.
**Co-Cultural Theory**

Co-cultural theory refers to interactions between the dominant and non-dominant group members (Orbe, 1998). It provides insight into how persons are traditionally marginalized in dominant society communicate in their everyday lives. According to Orbe (1998), this critical interpretive framework offers several strengths for studying the communicative experiences of minority executives who work in dominant culture organizational settings. These strengths include: (a) It is grounded in the communicative experiences of co-cultural group members and seeks to gain insight into communication processes from a vantage point often made invisible in existing communication theory and research; (b) It contains a framework that signifies the legitimacy, validation, and affirmation of a wide range of minority standpoints; and (c) Co-Cultural theory examines and identifies how co-cultural members select communicative practices when interacting in dominant society (Orbe, 1998). Orbe (1998) defines co-cultural theory as:

> Uniquely originating from the lived experiences of persons usually marginalized in traditional research and theory. The standpoint of co-cultural group members, reflecting their communicative experiences within a dominant society (“outsiders within”), gives scholars a new perspective from which to consider the communication processes. (Orbe, 1998, p. 51)

For the purposes of this exploratory study, co-cultural theory offered a lens that has several advantages for understanding the communicative experiences of minority CEOs who are employed in dominant culture organizational settings. Co-cultural theory directs researchers to identify practices of groups who are usually marginalized or muted in dominant societal structures (Orbe, 1998). Further, it centers the voices of the participants who have been traditionally marginalized or excluded from theory.
Standpoint Theory

The standpoint theory provided a framework for understanding how systems of power shape the way we communicate. Standpoint theory proposes that the experiences, knowledge, and communication of individuals are largely shaped by social groups in which they are members.

In the James-Hughes’ (2003) study, standpoint theory is described as unique in that it centers on women’s experiences while most theories have been rooted in the perspective of White, middle-class males. Traditional approaches have devalued and marginalized other standpoints. A person’s standpoint plays a significant role in how they communicate because their standpoint shapes how they understand their place in society (James-Hughes, 2003). This framework is based on knowledge generated from everyday life experiences and asserts that communication is shaped by the social groups of which a person is a member. James-Hughes (2003) further affirms that typically, those who share similar standpoints adopt similar styles of communicating; thus, communication is used to shape and transmit standpoints. Hartsock (1987) indicates that standpoints involve an awareness of a person’s location in the social structure as well as that location's relationship to the person's lived experience. Standpoint theory provides a framework for understanding systems of power and how they shape the way we communicate. It builds on the notion that the less-powerful members of society experience a different reality because of their oppression (Collins, 1989; Harding, 1991; Nielson, 1990).

Black Feminist Thought

Using Black Feminist Thought is appropriate to understanding the lived experiences of the African American females who participated in this study. By placing their voices as part of
this research it allowed those who are considered “outsiders” to be heard and provided a means to critically examine dominant beliefs embedded in corporate organizational settings (James-Hughes, 2003). The feminist lens allowed the researcher to examine gender and race. This theoretical perspective provided an understanding for the importance of gendering and racializing in organizations and uncovered and eradicated the interlocking matrix of race, class, and gender inequality (James-Hughes, 2003). Black feminist theory allowed an understanding of the African American females’ experiences and perspectives.

**The Constructs of Fortitude**

In a research study by Rahim (2007), the relationship between fortitude and the academic achievement of historically disadvantaged students is assessed. While this study addresses disadvantaged students, the parallel to the challenges faced by many minorities in the business is similar. Minorities have historically faced challenges and adversities common to their respective demographics, and although systems have improved tremendously, many minorities still suffer many difficulties, and the impact of oppressive systems should not be overlooked. The Rahim study employs a strength perspective, which means instead of the traditional deficits or pathology-based approach of focusing on weaknesses, the focus is on positive outcomes. Fortitude, more specifically, is the strength gained from appraising oneself, one’s family, and one’s social support, in a positive manner. This strength equips people to cope successfully in stressful situations. Fortitude as a construct in the strengths perspective gives insight into the success of individuals and the Rahim (2007) study investigates whether there is a link between fortitude and achievement.
The different viewpoint of the Rahim (2007) research study is not to look at the difficulties or where there is lack or deficiencies amongst the disadvantaged group, but rather to focus on the positive viewpoint of what ‘they have got going for them’. Pretorius (1998) proposes the construct of fortitude, also emanating from the strengths perspective. Fortitude is the strength gained from appraising oneself, one’s family, and one’s social support, in a positive manner. It is this strength, which equips people to cope with stress. The concepts related to the strengths perspective are resilience, positive psychology, hardiness, social support and fortitude (Rahim, 2007).

“Where does the strength come from?” In attempting to answer this question, Pretorius (1997) introduces the construct of fortitude. Fortitude is the strength obtained by appraising oneself and the world one lives in, in a positive manner. More specifically it is defined as the strength, gained from appraising oneself, one’s family, and one’s social support structure positively. It is this fortitude or strength, which enables the individual to cope with life’s stress and stay well (Pretorius, 1998). Fortitude thus consists of three domains: individual, family, and social support.

Not much research exists on the term fortitude itself. However, large bodies of research exist on the various constructs which appear to be central to fortitude (Gibson, 2001; Julius, 1999). These constructs include resilience (Cowen & Work, 1998; Dyer & McGuinness, 1996; Garmezy, 1993; Garmezy & Masten, 1986; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Rutter, 1981, 1985; Saleebey, 1996), potency (Ben-Sira, 1985), hardiness (Allred & Smith, 1989; Funk & Houston, 1987; Funk, 1992; Kobasa, 1979), and social support (Pretorius &
Diedericks, 1994). These concepts which are relevant to understanding how people deal with stress are discussed in the following sections.

**Resilience**

Resilience, as a concept, has been framed in the strengths rather than deficit model (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). While much work has been, and is being done to study resilience, there is not yet a consistent, agreed-upon definition for the construct (Kaplan, 1999; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). Generally, resilience is seen as the ability to bounce back from adversity (Mangham et al., 2000; Montgomery et al., 2000; Olsson et al., 2003; Rak & Patterson, 1996). Resilience can be defined as the “factors and processes that interrupt the trajectory from risk to problem behaviors or psychopathology and thereby result in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of adversity” (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994, p. 4).

While resilience has in the past been conceptualized as a constant which operates across a person’s life span, in different spheres, research has not borne this out (Monaghan-Blout, 1996; Rutter, 1987). Importantly, resilience is not a universal construct that applies to all life domains, all the time. Rather, one might be resilient to specific risk factors at certain periods of one’s life and less so at other times and vice versa (Rahim, 2007). Also, resilience is the result of individual as well as environmental factors (Rutter, 1985).

Dyer and McGuinness (1996, p. 277) identify four critical attributes of resilience: (1) rebounding, bouncing back and carrying on with life after adversity; (2) a sense of self, having enduring values; (3) determination, perseverance until the goal is achieved; and (4) a pro-social attitude, the ability to elicit support from others. Three main models of resiliency have been

The word ‘compensate’ means to counterbalance and within the *compensatory model*, what is meant is that one returns from the damage or loss. In the *challenge model*, a challenge refers to a demanding task, one that calls upon the use of one’s skill and strength. The experience of successfully dealing with a challenging yet manageable stressor (challenge) helps the individual cope with the next one successfully (Rahim, 2007). Rutter (1987) calls this “inoculation” or “steeling” as in strengthening the individual for future stressful situations. On the other hand, not meeting the challenge of a stressor means that the individual will be more vulnerable to risk (Rutter, 1987). This could be reflected by the individual not attempting a similar situation again or the loss of their ability to meet this challenging situation, due to the prior defeat. To protect oneself means to keep from harm or injury. This is what the *protective model* describes, in that individuals make use of protective factors to safeguard themselves. It is important to note that the three models described above are not mutually exclusive, and individuals may use a number of coping strategies at the same time, depending on the situation as well as the individuals’ preference of strategy/ies (Rahim, 2007).

Because of this, Kaplan (1999) argues that while resilience has been a useful concept, it may “be permitted to retire from the field gracefully and with honor” (p. 77). In its place he recommends developing “theoretical structures that take into account individual, environmental, and situational factors that influence each other and interact with each other to influence other variables in different ways” (Kaplan, 1999, p. 77). The concept of fortitude holds promise of satisfying these requirements.
Potency and Hardiness

Potency refers to an individual’s confidence in his/her own capacities. This confidence/potency influences the ability to cope with stressful situations (Ben-Sira, 1985). This research study assessed the confidence of the minority CEOs and explored the origins of that confidence.

Kobasa (1979) defines hardiness as the person’s ability to rise above challenges and turn them into opportunities for growth. Hardiness is a constellation of three psychological characteristics: commitment, control, and challenge (Kobasa, 1982). Commitment refers to the ability to involve oneself fully with the challenges of different spheres of life. Control is the belief that one can influence events, and challenge is the ability to embrace change and tolerate ambiguity (Funk & Houston, 1987). Hardy individuals tend to have higher positive self-beliefs in stress situations than those with low hardiness in similar stress situations (Allred & Smith, 1989).

Social Support

Social support in this instance is defined as the encouragement and help gained from individuals in one’s social sphere. Having social support is found to have an important positive effect on how people cope with stress (Pretorius & Diedericks, 1994). This access to available supportive others is important for personal satisfaction and ability to cope with different situations (Kiessling et al, 2004). Gender differences suggest that social support may work differently for males and females (Diedericks, 1991; Mallinekrodt & Frederick, 1992; Thomas, 1998). It has been found that there is a relationship between social support and other demographic variables (Diedericks, 1991).
This important background gives a more complete foundation of the notion of fortitude as defined in this study. Fortitude is the strength to manage stress and stay well, obtained from appraising one’s self, family support, and social support in a positive manner (Pretorius, 1998). “Strength or the absence thereof is derived from our construction of ourselves and our world” (Pretorius, 1998, p. 23). Fortitude is based within a theory of appraisal (Pretorius, 1998, p. 28). People with positive appraisals of the self, family and support will engage in more active coping behavior, while those with less positive appraisals of these factors would have less confidence in their ability and use less active coping strategies (Barends, 2004).

Pretorius (1998) argues that while it might well be true that certain dimensions of fortitude could be more important than others or that certain dimensions interact more significantly with each other, research has not confirmed this, and the concept should thus be treated in its entirety. As yet, there is very little research done on fortitude; however, from an appraisal perspective, fortitude holds much promise for insight into the study of strengths. Fortitude has thus been presented as a construct that could better explain how people maintain well-being in the context of stress.

The constructs discussed above denote strengths that apply to one or more of the domains namely the individual, family, and social/contextual factors. Research focusing on individual factors reveals traits and behaviors of achievers that are thought to be predictive of achievement. Additionally, having a supportive family is a strong predictor of achievement, even when individuals have to deal with much stress (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996; King, 1998). Arellano and Padilla (1996) as well as Walsh (1996) found that supportive families are important. Interpersonal relationships are also important in achievement. Goldman and Flake (1996) find
that being flexible with regards to others is related to academic achievement. Having supportive relationships is also related to greater achievement or resilience (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Nettles, Muchera & Jones, 2000).

**Minority Leadership: Perceptions, Barriers and Challenges**

Researchers suggest that there are three main barriers that minorities face as they move up the ranks of organizations: (a) prevalence of prejudice, (b) issues of comfort and risk-taking in career decisions, and (c) companies’ difficulty with identifying high-potential minorities for promotions and leadership positions (Bell & Nkomo, 2003; Braddock & McPartland, 1987; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). According to Erhardt et al. (2003), it is important to consider diversity within the leadership ranks of an organization, with a focus on boards and executive teams.

Mycroft (2012) states stereotypes and prejudice that exist in a systematic/institutionalized form create barriers for minorities to excel and rise to the top. She also insists that there is an importance of incorporating minorities into organizations. The implication that successful leadership demands a paradigm shift toward the inclusion of minorities is a notion of this research study. The exploration of the positive impacts of diversity are acknowledged in Mycroft’s research study. Mycroft cites that some studies have shown the connection between diversity and the bottom line of a corporation (Boxenbaum, 2006; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Robinson & Dechant, 1997; Ryan, Haslam, & Kulich 2010; Wheeler, 1995). One may surmise that the pool of competent CEOs is reduced by overlooking potential minority candidates. Additionally, the capabilities of minority CEOs may add credence to financial performance. Numerous studies have shown a strong relationship between the leadership capabilities of a CEO
and the overall performance of a firm (Guerra, 2009; Knotes, 2011; Shaw & Zhang, 2010; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2009). Mycroft references Joyce, Nohria, and Roberson (2004) noting that the choice of a CEO is as important to the bottom line as a company’s decision to remain in its current industry or move to another one. Even with acknowledgement of the importance of the choice of CEO, Mycroft (2012) states that the problem is minority underrepresentation at the executive level and that this may have a detrimental impact on a firm’s financial performance.

Women’s Plight

The issue of too few women at the top will not be resolved until there is a wider acceptance that female leaders can benefit their organizations and contribute to social and economic progress (Binder, Dworkin, Nae, Schipani, & Averianova, 2019). In addition to providing equal opportunity, promoting equality and inclusion of women in positions of leadership is believed to have positive effects on the financial performance of a company. National campaigns such as “2020 Women on Boards” in the U.S. is an example of an initiative that aims to increase female representation in boardrooms. These campaigns argue that the U. S. has historically seen low female representation in corporate leadership roles. Although female gains have been accelerating in recent years, women remain underrepresented on corporate boards.

Compared with corporate boards, management has historically seen more equal representation, with women holding nearly 40 percent of all managerial roles in the U.S. in 2018, (Catalyst, 2019) a figure largely unchanged since 2015 (U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, 2019). Women also have taken up the bulk of new management positions: of 4.5 million new management jobs created between 1980 and 2010, women took 2.6 million, or about 58 percent
The proportion of women falls, however, as one moves further up the managerial ladder: among S&P 500 companies, women make up 44.7 percent of the total workforce, 36.9 percent of line managers, 26.5 percent of senior level managers, and only five percent of CEOs (Catalyst, 2019). Women are so underrepresented in the executive suite that just six female CEOs leaving their firms in 2018 caused the total number of female CEOs among Fortune 500 companies to drop by 25 percent (Stewart, 2019).

A diverse literature has developed in recent decades to explain disparities between the success of women as compared to men in rising to positions of corporate leadership. Given the popularity of the term “glass ceiling” and its pervasiveness in contemporary popular discourse, it is worth clarifying what it means. One comprehensive study defines it as the phenomenon where “gender (or other) disadvantages are stronger at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels and that these disadvantages become worse later in a person’s career” (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman, 2001, p. 657). The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission defined it as “artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995, p.3). The first individual to have used the term, Marilyn Loden, has written that the glass ceiling consists of “the barriers to advancement [of women] that were cultural and not personal” (Loden, 2017, p. 13). Using more strictly defined empirical criteria, one study found strong evidence of a significant gender penalty among those later in their careers and higher up in their organization (Cotter et al., 2001).

Alongside the “glass ceiling,” the term “glass cliff” has become popular recently: it is a phenomenon where women CEOs disproportionately find themselves in charge of firms in imminent danger of failing (Ryan, & Haslam, 2007). Specifically, “women who break through
the glass ceiling into the upper echelons of management [tend] to be placed in more precarious leadership positions than men,” (Ryan, & Haslam, 2007, p. 552) which would account for the relatively poorer performance of female CEOs observed by some commentators (Judge, 2003). The phenomenon has received significant attention since it was first proposed in 2007, and a recent review of the growing literature found that a “decade of research into the glass cliff confirms that it is a robust and pervasive phenomenon and a significant feature of the organizational landscape for women who achieve high office” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 448). Therefore, many women in CEO positions within the U.S. face an additional challenge in maintaining the firm’s performance and their own reputation (Glass, & Cook, 2016).

Implicit biases that hold back women leaders have received more attention recently, particularly the role of stereotypes. Characteristics deemed important in leaders, and indeed, leadership in general, are culturally associated with masculinity within the United States, meaning that women in leadership positions are essentially in “gender-stereotype-incongruent” positions (Brescoll, Dawson, & Uhlmann, 2010). Women face the choice of displaying stereotypically masculine characteristics and being judged as cold or excessively argumentative, or, alternatively, of conforming to female stereotypes and being judged as too emotional or as poor leaders (Brescoll et al., 2010).

In addition, one study found that although greater power increased total amount of time spent talking for men, this effect did not appear for women (Brescoll, 2011) —indeed, women seem to suffer backlash from speaking up (APS, 2015). A similar strand of stereotype research has found that women face backlash when engaging in self-promotion (although they are not punished for peer-promoting) (Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2010). Self-promotion “violates
female gender stereotypes yet is necessary for professional success” (Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2010, p. 193). This conclusion is especially important for women to consider, as much popular literature advocates for women to engage in these more “masculine” behaviors to achieve career success, (Rigoglioso, 2011) without consideration of these backlash effects (Williams, 2011).

Research has also shown that, in general, women often face obstacles in developing credibility in the workplace (Rusaw, 1996). For example, women often need to bring a unique skill to the table to establish credibility. One study found that women contribute unique skills to the board, and that this is the main mechanism through which female board members add value in contrast to new male board members (Kim, & Starks, 2016). Other studies have found that female board members cultivate specialties like corporate social responsibility to bolster their credibility: “women independent directors can establish or improve their reputational standing within the organization through their expertise” in specialized areas like social responsibility, marketing, or human resources (Hyun, Yang, Jung, & Hong, 2016, p. 300). Women seeking corporate leadership positions thus face an additional challenge when seeking nomination.

Much of the discourse surrounding women in American corporate leadership centers on the “business case for [gender] diversity,” (Suk, 2012) rather than the moral or constitutional cases (Szydło, 2014). Considering the issue from the perspective of equality and fairness, additional research focuses on whether gender equality contributes to success as determined by financial metrics, and also considers the impact of diversity on corporate social responsibility, compliance with ethical and social standards, and environmental reporting (Binder et al., 2019).

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment based on certain protected characteristics. These protected characteristics include an individual’s “race,
color, religion, sex, or national origin.” Congress conceived of the Act to help minorities attain a level playing field in society, and Title VII of the Act was designed to do that in employment. Quotas are a form of affirmative action that mandate numbers such as the percentage of women or minorities that must be in certain positions. Quotas aim to address the underrepresentation of minority groups, and to speed up attainment of equality by mandating specific minimum numbers for representation.

In the late 1970s, companies, universities, and governmental institutions began to give preferences based on race to groups that traditionally suffered discrimination. Governmental racial preferences were challenged under the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution. Almost a decade later, affirmative action was extended to women. In Johnson v. Transportation Agency, the Court held that an affirmative action plan that considered being female to be a “plus factor” in the hiring process was valid when there was a “manifest imbalance” in terms of women’s representation.

The use of quotas in the United States to rectify racial and gender imbalances has a long and troubled history. At times, quotas were used to limit or prevent certain groups from emigrating to the U.S. Quotas have also been used in other sectors such as education for the same purpose. Quotas in the U. S. have been used to control a group that, at the time, was considered undesirable in some way.

Whether by filling quotas or passing laws, the goal of eradicating the glass ceiling for women in business will continue to be sought after via different mediums and methods. Progress for U. S. women in leadership positions and as corporate board members has mainly occurred through social pressure and the rising economic and political power of women. Unfortunately,
there is a tendency toward segregation. Women in management and on boards tend to be concentrated in “female-specialized” areas (Binder et al., 2019). Top-down measures and targets cannot resolve these issues without more understanding and acceptance of career women in all walks of life. Pressure to change will likely come from the necessity to utilize women's latent potential to further economic development. The more interaction between women on boards and in management with men in similar positions, the more women will be seen for their capabilities and contributions (Binder et al., 2019). Binder et al., (2019) suggest that a powerful way to create this environment is to provide a mentoring system and significant role models. These are more likely to happen as more organizations and leaders recognize the economic benefits that result from women on boards and in leadership positions (Binder et al., 2019). This, in turn, will help to contribute toward equality and fairness in business leadership representation for women and minorities.

African American Female Executives - Communicative Strategies

According to Bell (1990), an organizational behaviorist, African American female professionals perceive that they live in “two distinct cultural contexts, one Black and the other White” (Bell, 1990). Bell noted that the burden of assimilation in dominant culture organizational settings is placed on the African American. The participants in her study reported the struggles to maintain their Black identities while trying to assimilate in the White world. Bell referred to this phenomenon as biculturalism, which allows African Americans to hold onto their heritage without being totally assimilated into the dominant culture. One of the respondents from Bell’s (1990) study expounded on the complexity of living between two worlds. She explained:

The White world is where I feel most at risk. I show my White side here, which means I must be more strategic, not as spontaneous. My White side is precise and accurate. Plus, I
don’t want to share events from my Black experience in the White world. There are no other Blacks to legitimize my experiences. Most of the times I am not quick enough to put words to what I am feeling. That is what’s so frustrating on the White side—not having the words to tell them how you really feel. (p. 471)

African American female executives who work in dominant-culture (i.e., European American male controlled) organizational settings report adopting different communication styles, being left out of formal and informal networks that determine their career success (Allen 1995; Bell, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 2000), and being held to a higher set of standards in the workplace. When African American females move into roles traditionally reserved for European American males, they are in an alien culture (Betters-Reed & Moore, 1992; Bell, 2001). As cited by Allen (1995), "Race-ethnicity influences how organizational actors communicate with each other" (p.152).

The study, Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers Executive Summary, examined experiences of Asian, Hispanic, and African American female executives in corporate America. The study concluded that African American women were the most likely of the three groups to adjust their style to fit into the corporate environment (Catalyst, 1999). The three-year investigation conducted by Catalyst, a non-profit research and advisory organization working to promote the advancement of women, surveyed 1,735 women of color from 30 companies, and interviewed women of color and corporate staff from 16 Fortune 500 companies. Bell (1990) asserted:

Assimilation requires Blacks to conform to the traditions, values, and norms of the dominant White culture. Under these circumstances, Black professional women divest themselves of their culture of origin, the Black community. Instead, they attempt to fit into the dominant White community, where there are few models or images of Black womanhood. (p. 462)
When women and other minorities entered corporate America they brought their own styles of communicating, which eventually resulted in misunderstandings within the organizations (James-Hughes, 2003). Corporate leaders, realizing that misunderstandings may ultimately have an impact on the bottom line, are compelled to seek methods of solving internal communication problems. The report further concluded that a certain level of conformity is required in business as it is in larger society. Minorities interviewed for the James-Hughes (2003) study indicated that to succeed they had to follow White male rules in corporate America (James-Hughes, 2003).

Bell (1990) found that African American females living a bicultural life often contend with role stress. They have to know how to successfully teeter back and forth between two worlds. This notion of biculturalism raises questions about how African American women determine which communication strategies to effectively use when communicating in organizational settings that require they change like chameleons. Female executives who participated in the 1999 Catalyst study, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers*, stated that communicating well was critical to success in their organizations.

To understand the communication processes of African Americans, one must consider their history (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993), which includes slavery, segregation, migration North, and the struggle for civil rights. These historical movements in the United States played a critical role in shaping the African American experience; and unless one understands their impact on the African American community and society, one cannot understand how those in power shaped the African American experience. Historical events, such as Jim Crow laws that
imposed racial segregation mainly in the South, subjected African Americans to inferiority. Jim Crow laws set up a system of superiority and inferiority in America. Blacks have struggled through slavery, Jim Crow Laws, Segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement in this country (James-Hughes, 2003).

Factors that Affect the Success of Minorities in Corporate Culture

Understanding the culture of an organization is critical to an organizational member’s survival. Schein (1992) defines culture as: A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1992). According to Kotter (1996), understanding the culture of an organization is powerful because it influences human behavior, is hard to change, and is invisible. Understanding culture is important for people at all organizational levels. Kotter (1996) argues that culture is powerful because:

1. individuals are selected and indoctrinated so well;
2. culture exerts itself through the actions of hundreds or thousands of people.
3. this happens without much conscious intent and thus is difficult to challenge or even discuss (Kotter, 1996, p. 151).

Schein (1992) indicates that some of the things shared within an organization include group norms, rules of the game, climate, shared meanings, embedded skills, formal philosophy, espoused values, habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms.

Researchers Bell and Nkomo, (2001); Thomas and Gbarro, (1999); and Cobbs and Tumock, (2001) report that African Americans and other minorities have an extremely difficult
time “fitting into” corporate cultures. A U.S. Department of Labor study (1995) indicated that minorities have a difficult time adjusting to corporate America because their cultural values and practices do not mesh with those of the White males who run corporate America.

Cobbs and Turnock add that African American females have an extra layer of discrimination to manage because of their sex. Offering support to Cobbs and Turnock’s (1999) findings, a Thomas and Gabarro (1999) book titled, “Breaking Through: the Making of Minority Executives in Corporate America” examines the experiences of successful minority executives. They found that even when minorities reached the corporate suite through hard work, they could not expect to enter the same system as White employees. African Americans employed in dominant culture organizations feel they are held to a different set of standards from their White counterparts (James-Hughes, 2003).

Societal barriers manifest in conscious or unconscious beliefs and include stereotyping, prejudice, and bias related to gender, race and ethnicity. Internal and structural barriers include lack of mentoring, and lack of management training. As shown in Figure 4, Black executives have to contend with unconscious bias and unfair treatment that create undue barriers.
According to Buzzanell (1994), the concept of the glass ceiling needs to reach another level. Buzzanell asserts that when women enact feminist behavior in the workplace their contributions are devalued at the same time; however, when they enact non-feminist traits, there are negative consequences.

The glass ceiling takes on a whole new meaning for African American females in management who are seeking to reach the senior executive ranks. Bell, Denton and Nkomo
(1993) claim: The issue of women of color in management has been described as one of breaking a concrete ceiling that restricts their access to even middle management positions. Until we expand our knowledge toward fully understanding how both race and gender affect the experiences of women managers in organizations, we cannot hope to offer prescriptions for removing these ceilings and advancing their careers (Bell, Denton & Nkomo, 1993).

Black women perceived the glass ceiling as a concrete wall with a glass ceiling at the top. Bell and Nkomo’s (2001) study reported that this African American concrete wall manifests itself in various ways. One way is in the daily doses of racism that African Americans experience, which may include insults, racial jokes, and executives being asked to perform subservient tasks—such as delivering lunch. The concrete wall also is evidenced in performance evaluations, when Blacks are held to a higher standard than White colleagues. Sixty-one percent of the African American women who participated in Bell and Nkomo’s study (2001) believed they were held to higher standards than their White colleagues.

The respondents reported that they constantly had to fight stereotypes and had to mask their racial identity in a phenomenon labeled the invisibility vise. According to Hecht, Jackson, and Roseau (2003), because of racism, discrimination, and prejudice that they encounter in the United States, African Americans have adopted coping skills to manage their encounters in mainstream.

_African American Communication Styles and Communicative Strategies_

Houston (1997) asked both African American and Caucasian women to describe their communication style. African American women provided some of the following responses: standing behind what you say, not being afraid to speak your mind speaking with a strong sense
of self-esteem, speaking out about what is on your mind, getting down to the heart of the matter, speaking with authority, intelligence, and common sense, being very sure of oneself, being very distinguished and educated, reflecting Black experience as seen by a Black woman in a White patriarchal society (Houston, 1997). Orbe (1998) maintains:

Co-cultural group members' communicative experiences can be seen as responses to dominant societal structures that label them outsiders. A clear acknowledgment of how power dynamics are manifested in everyday life appears to exist among co-cultural group members, who recognize that societal power is largely in the hands of European American males. (Orbe, 1998, p. 52)

The passage above provides a context for understanding the communication challenges that African American females encounter in dominant culture organizational settings (James-Hughes, 2003). The Orbe (1993) study revealed the following six themes: (1) The importance of communicating with other African Americans because they share common problems and can relate better because non-African Americans have a hard time understanding; (2) Learning how to communicate with non-African American respondents learned from past mistakes and from others including family; (3) Keeping a safe distance due to historical injustices with most contact in workplace being limited and not real; (4) Playing the part (SNAP!); (5) Testing the sincerity of non-African Americans - it is difficult to find someone who has a genuine interest in understanding; and (6) Intense social responsibility the study revealed that African American males felt a responsibility to educate younger men how to communicate in a White-male-dominated society (Orbe, 1993, p. 293).

Style or code switching, as defined by Hecht, Jackson and Ribeau (2003), is “alterations of behavior to adapt to mainstream expectations” (Hecht et al., 2003). These alterations include switching from Black English to mainstream American English or vice versa.
Parker (2001) examined the leadership communicative strategies of 15 African American executives who work in dominant culture organizational settings. She gained insight into the executives’ communicative strategies. Five themes emerged describing the participants’ leadership communicative strategies:

1. Interactive communication was described as maintaining an open style of interaction with employees while still allowing them to maintain their autonomy. They were accessible and communicated knowledge about the business to their staff.

2. Empowerment through the challenge to produce results indicated that the executives empowered their employees by encouraging autonomy.

3. Openness in communication, as Parker explains, when associated with African American women is usually pejorative. However, Parker indicates that the executives and their staff who participated in this study identified directness as being positive and defined it as being open, making sure their voices were heard and not having hidden agendas.

4. Participative decision making through collaborative debate demonstrated the executives’ beliefs that there was diversity in viewpoints because they encouraged staff, if necessary, to have one-on one debate about issues of concern.

5. Leadership through boundary spanning which identifies how African American executives connected the organization to the African American community in positive ways (Parker, 2001, p. 62).

Minority Leadership Perceptions

Adams (1978) conducted a study considering subordinate perceptions of and attitudes toward minority managers. Black male and white female managers were perceived as exhibiting
more consideration behavior than white male managers (Adams, 1978). The recent admission of women and blacks into managerial positions has created a new dimension to the study of supervisory behavior, satisfaction with supervision, and leadership perceptions. Parker (1976), using the Bowers and Seashore (1966) four-dimensional measure of leadership behavior (managerial support, goal emphasis, work facilitation, and interaction facilitation), found that Blacks were seen as more effective leaders than whites in terms of all four leadership scales. Minority managers were perceived as exhibiting more consideration than majority managers (Adams, 1978). This notion is consistent with Parker's (1976) finding for Black males and results reported by Schein (1973) and Bartol and Butterfield (1976) for female managers.

In the Adams (1978) study, several explanations can account for subordinates perceiving more consideration behavior for minority managers. First, consideration behavior could be instrumental and effective for them as managers in handling supervisory responsibilities, such as a means of gaining approval or authority or even a means to avoid their minority status as being perceived negatively. Whether this behavior is learned before entering the organization or developed through organizational assimilation cannot be answered from the data from the study (Adams, 1978). A second explanation is that this organization may be selecting minority managers who not only have the necessary skills of majority managers but also the interpersonal skills included in the general leadership behavior of consideration. An observation by Parker (1976) found that subordinates in severe numerical minorities (i.e., number of Blacks, number of Whites) tend not to make unfavorable reports of supervisors that belong to the same minority. This can explain the low number of problems reported by Black subordinates of Black managers (females with Black managers reported few problems also).
Leadership Perspective - Black Women Executives

Although Black women are physically visible in that they are different from most of their colleagues, intersectional invisibility research suggests that they can be simultaneously invisible—easily overlooked or disregarded—because they are non-prototypical members of their gender and racial identity groups (Smith, Watkins, Ladge, & Carlton, 2019). In Smith et al. (2019) consideration is given toward how executive Black women (EBW) simultaneously experience opportunities and constraints associated with two forms of intersectional invisibility: benign and hostile. To manage both forms of intersectional invisibility, executive Black women adopt a number of critical strategies to gain credible visibility needed to ascend in their careers.

I was Black, they were White...I was female, they were all male...There was nothing that was an obvious similarity between us. I think I spent my early years trying to mask how different I really was...I would have spent the next 15 years trying to hide from them how different I was, but, when you do that, you miss where there are similarities and the ability to build a real relationship. I decided I’m going to have to take the risk here because nobody can accept and like me if they don’t know me. –Mabel, former Senior Vice President, Pharmaceuticals. (Smith et al., 2019, p. 1713)

As reflected in the above quotation, this complicated experience of being an outsider within another’s world resembles the unique situation of one of the most underrepresented groups in executive and senior leadership roles in organizations: Black women (Smith et al., 2019). As strangers in the predominantly male- and White-dominated upper echelons of organizations, on the one hand, they may be ignored, devalued, and misinterpreted (Bell, 1990), while, on the other hand, they may be seen as an intriguing anomaly with “bonus standing” (Nkomo & Cox, 1989).

Black women’s representation in the highest levels of the professional arena is persistently grim. Despite accounting for roughly 7% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census
Bureau, 2018), Black women represent only 1.3% of senior management and executive roles in S&P 500 firms, 2.2% of Fortune 500 boards of directors, and there is not a single Black female chief executive officer (CEO) in the S&P 500 (Catalyst, 2017; Deloitte, 2018; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). White women, despite being underrepresented themselves, far surpass Black women in terms of corporate representation. Comparatively, while being roughly 38% of the U.S. population, White women hold 29% of senior management and executive roles, 15.7% of Fortune 500 boards of directors, and 4.4% of S&P 500 CEO roles (Catalyst, 2019a, 2019b; Deloitte, 2018; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). Moreover, the gender pay gap is wider for Black women, who earn just 67.7% of White men’s average salary, compared to White women who earn 81.9% (Hegewisch, Phil, & Williams-Baro, 2017). These bleak figures suggest that the convergence of race and gender may result more in a double burden than a double advantage for Black women (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Nkomo & Cox, 1989).

Extant organizational research on women’s leadership tends to be drawn overwhelmingly from White women, with conclusions applied to all women (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Yet, the experience of Black women is likely to differ from that of White women due to the low status of both their gender and their race. Surprisingly, little research has extended or built on this groundbreaking work on Black women professionals, despite evidence of their strong desire to ascend the corporate ladder and become influential leaders (Travis, Thorpe-Moscon, & McCluney, 2016).

In Smith et al. (2019), the study explores new pathways to understanding and managing intersectionality by examining the lived experiences of executive Black women (EBW). Smith et
al. (2019) examine EBW specifically for three important reasons. First, as Black women, EBW reside at the intersection of two historically marginalized categories in the workplace. EBW must contend with living in two pervasive hierarchical societal structures: one gender-based hierarchy, where they are subordinate to men, and another race-based hierarchy, where they are subordinate to Whites (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Second, Black women are not merely Black or women, they are Black women, which is a unique status from either of their individual identity groups and opens them up to different experiences, both negative and positive (Crenshaw, 1989; Rosette et al., 2016). As expressed by one EBW, “It’s a three-edged sword...you’ve got to jump over all three of those hurdles before you’re really heard. Yes, I’m a minority, but you’re female...but you’re a minority female,” – Victoria, Retail Executive (Smith et al., 2019, p. 1715). This sentiment and previous research suggest that, as intersectional minorities, EBW contend with a unique set of experiences as compared to Black men and White women. Thus, we depart from previous literature by avoiding the trend of subsuming a variety of racial and gender groups under one common umbrella of “minority” or “women,” and thereby create the space for deeper understandings of intersectionality (Smith et al., 2019).

Third, as executives, EBW exist in an elite world ordinarily closed to most others. Many Black women come from communities and families that are not well represented among their high-status professional peers (Smith et al., 2019). One of Bell and Nkomo’s (2001) primary insights was that gender, race, and class conflict and combine as Black women experience their professional lives. That is, the executive (i.e., class) component of their identities, along with their educational and occupational achievements, may put EBW in a unique position relative to
Black women in other walks of life. Having surpassed the levels of educational, income, and occupational status commonly experienced by the vast majority of Black women in America, they defy stereotypical race- and gender-based expectations. Yet, they are simultaneously relative strangers among their largely White and male counterparts at work (Smith et al., 2019). Thus, EBW may experience “outsider within” status, whereby they are living in two worlds but never really at home in either (Bell & Nkomo, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1999, 2000).

Smith et al. (2019), in discussing the role of race and gender as a barrier, some EBW described the political and social networks from which they were excluded as outsiders. Beatrice (Divisional President, Consumer Products; T1) said:

I do think that this is a major barrier for me as an African American...Corporate America is very much like a chessboard and you’re going to play the game, and you’re going to figure out how to play it well or you’re not going to survive on the board. (Smith et al., 2019, p. 1715)

Minority Leadership – Dealing with the issue of race

A prevailing theme associated with the barriers and challenges faced by minorities in general and leaders in particular is racism. As has been documented in the aforementioned literature, the issue of racism prevails as a problem. As it relates to resilience and fortitude, some leaders (even minority leaders) in corporate society have offered suggestions for nullifying this problem. Prisock (2015) addresses the late Herman Cain, conservative business executive and former Republican presidential hopeful. In his autobiography, This Is Herman Cain, Herman Cain (2014) attributes his success to the hard work ethic and perseverance instilled in him by his father. Prisock (2015) further cites Cain assertions that possessing a positive mindset or as he states becoming “the CEO of Self” played a major role in his ability to transcend the various hurdles he faced as a young African American male growing up in the Deep South during the
civil rights era. Cain’s line of thinking fits within the paradigm of the American achievement ideology.

The assertion by Cain in his autobiography is challenged by Prisock (2015). Cain’s belief appears to minimize the impact of racism on ones’ ability to achieve and be successful. Cain alludes to racism being less of an issue in the America of today. According to an Associated Press survey, conducted a month before the 2012 election, racial prejudice among Americans had increased since President Obama was first elected and that anti-Black sentiment among Americans had also increased (USA Today, 2012). The combination of the American economic crisis that has made achieving and sustaining the American dream more difficult for many Americans, especially White Americans, the increasing migration of Latinos from Mexico and other Central American countries, and the projected shift from numerical majority to minority status for Whites by 2050 has produced anxiety among a segment of White Americans that they are “losing their country” (Prisock, 2015).

While the notion of minority to “majority” population shifts may fuel heightened senses of anxiety and produce current practices of race-related issues in America, by Cain’s own admission, these practices should not deter or have any influence on one’s own ability to succeed.

Prisock (2015) states, for Cain, the attitude of pushing forward and never letting life’s circumstances diminish his agency developed early in life, for instance, when he was in elementary school. In his autobiography, Cain (2014) recalls a time when a teacher told him and the other African American students that they were not getting the same quality education as their White peers. Instead of getting mad, the young future executive thought, “Okay, I know
that, but I’m still going to work as hard as I can to succeed, despite the fact that the white kids have better materials and better books” (Cain, 2014, p.23). Cain attributes getting his sense of urgency from his father who he states possessed an “innate self-determination” (Cain, 2014).

According to sociologist Jay Macleod (1987), the American achievement ideology upholds the belief that America is a society where success is determined more by an individual’s strengths (motivation, willingness to work, intelligence) and weaknesses (laziness, lack of confidence) than societal barriers. In short, as Macleod puts it, “Individuals do not inherit their social status - they attain it on their own” (Macleod, 1987, p.3). Prisock (2015) maintained, that what makes African American conservatives, such as Cain, so appealing to their White counterparts is their ability to simultaneously establish through their personal narratives that they, as African Americans, have experienced America’s racism first-hand but have succeeded in spite of it and refused to adopt a “victim mentality.” While, on the other hand, holding themselves out as examples of what other African Americans should do to take advantage of what American society has to offer and become successful, therefore becoming embodiments of the American achievement ideology and in a sense “model minorities.” This may be a false dichotomy because the path to success in America is more complex than maintaining a certain mindset. This research hopes to demonstrate what other research suggests: that success is derived from an individual’s starting point in life, overcoming the complex interaction between societal and individual barriers and the uncontrollable element known as luck or chance. Secondly, the moral and values foundation that Cain reports is similar to what many African Americans, including this researcher’s family have been taught. Journalist Cynthia Tucker aptly describes what is problematic with Cain’s presentation of his self:
Cain’s politics have obscured a fundamental truth: His upbringing, his resourcefulness and his self-reliance are common among the Black middle-class. His corporate success may be unusual, but the values that propelled him are not. (Tucker, 2011, para. 3)

Prisock writes, “For Cain, success can be boiled down to catchy vapid slogans such as being the “CEO of Self” (p. 184). As the CEO of Self, one must embrace the principles of ROI. According to Cain, ROI stands for R—remove barriers that prevent self-motivation to achieve goals. O—obtain the right results by working on the right problems. I—Inspiration, learn to inspire yourself” (Cain, 2014, p. 27). Furthermore, Prisock (2015) describes Cain’s version of what it takes to be successful in America is appealing because the components of his CEO-of-Self concept are often found in the narrative of American exceptionalism: praise and value of rugged individualism, rewards distributed through a meritocratic system, adamant belief in hard work and sacrifice, and the possession of an optimistic outlook that aids in the procurement of social mobility and material success.

Prisock (2015) acknowledges that Cain has been very successful in corporate America, thanks to his hard work, talent, and resolve, but that in itself only provides a small part of the explanation of how he was successful in climbing the corporate ladder. Before analyzing the factors that aided Cain in his journey up the corporate ladder, Prisock (2015) examines what the landscape looks like for African Americans in the professions: Roughly 1% of the nation’s Fortune 500 companies have African-American chief executives, 3.2% of senior executive positions are held by African-Americans, and about 5% of doctors and dentists in the nation are African-Americans, a number that has remained at this level for more than two decades (Schwartz and Cooper, 2013). The minuscule numbers of African Americans in the elite professions, especially at the top of the organizational hierarchy, cannot be explained with the
suggestion that African Americans do not have the intestinal fortitude that Cain portrays to succeed in corporate America as he has done (Prisock, 2015).

Prisock (2015) contends that the importance of pipelines cannot be stressed enough. By pipeline, Prisock is referring to the guidance and direction a potential aspirant receives towards a particular career by an individual in the field or individuals from an organization in a particular career that reaches out and aid hopefuls in their quest to enter the field. Additionally, Prisock (2015) acknowledges that social networks help in placing hopefuls in colleges and universities that provide training and into organizational positions within a particular field. The guidance and influence towards a particular field can start at the university level or even earlier. Prisock reveals himself as an example of how pipelines can work as his mentor recognized his potential as an academic and also provided him with support (Prisock, 2015).

Because Cain was so wedded to the notion as exemplar of the Horatio Alger’s pull-yourself-up-by-your- bootstraps narrative, and that racism is no longer a constraint in African-American advancement in American society, he fails to grasp the everyday realities and challenges African-Americans face (Prisock, 2015). The idiom “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” means to improve one's situation through hard work and self-determination, rather than getting assistance from someone else (Bootstraps). In an interview in 1967, Martin Luther King discussed the issue of White America understanding the impact of the legacy of slavery and segregation and the problem with the American Negro “picking oneself up, by one’s bootstraps.” King stated:

When white Americans tell the Negro to “lift himself by his own bootstraps,” they don’t look over the legacy of slavery and segregation. I believe we (African Americans) ought to do all we can and seek to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, but it’s a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps. Many
Negroes by the thousands and millions have been left bootless as a result of all of these years of oppression and as a result of a society that deliberately made his color a stigma and something worthless and degrading.” (NBC-King Interview, 1967, emphasis added).

Examples abound to illustrate the continuing presence of racism and racial inequality in society. For instance, the Great Recession of 2008 impacted Americans of all racial backgrounds but groups of color like African Americans were disproportionately affected. For instance, African Americans with equally strong credit records as their White counterparts were more likely to be granted riskier subprime home loans than prime loans (González-Rivera, 2009). African American communities were more often the victim of the practice known as “reverse red lining” where financial institutions target communities of color with predatory loaning practices. Data showed banks enacted foreclosure procedures on African American homeowners twice as often as their white counterparts (Gottesdiener, 2013). Race even had a role in the different types of bankruptcies granted to debtors, as African Americans were discovered to have higher rates than whites of receiving Chapter 13 bankruptcies versus Chapter 7 bankruptcies (Cohen and Lawless, 2012). The significance of the preferred Chapter 7 bankruptcy is that unlike Chapter 13 bankruptcy, Chapter 7 does not require a person to repay a portion of the assessed debt to creditors, while Chapter 13 bankruptcy (predominantly given to African Americans) stipulates for the debtor to pay creditors all disposable income – which includes total remaining income after monthly expenses (for three to five years). These and other circumstances not only helped to evaporate the wealth gains made by African Americans, but also expanded the racial wealth gap that greatly contributes to the inequality between African Americans and their White counterparts (Prisock, 2015).
Minority Leadership: Diversity and Inclusion

Does diversity and inclusion mean having to lower your hiring standards? In the cover story by Smith and Angood (2020), “Diversity & Inclusion: Tough Decisions, Rich Rewards,” Michellene Davis, an African American woman, serving as executive vice president and chief corporate affairs officer for RWJ Barnabas Health in West Orange, New Jersey, is referenced in being asked a similar question. The article asserted, “hiring based on gender and diversity does not mean settling for less-qualified candidates. It means hiring those who are most qualified and increasing an organization’s competitive edge through cognitive diversity,” (p. 20). Recently honored as one of the top 25 minority leaders by Modern Healthcare, Michellene Davis supports diversity and inclusion (D&I) not as an “either/or” proposition but as a “yes/and” opportunity to identify and hire female and diverse candidates who truly are the most qualified candidates for the job (p.21).

Smith and Angood (2020) pointed out that “It’s not a tradeoff. It’s a trade-up, and it has nothing to do with hiring diverse candidates for diversity’s sake. The first qualification is that the person is highly competent and the best candidate for the job” (p. 21). Furthermore, the selection might not match where one might think the diversity gaps are, but it’s not always about the identity of a specific gap; it’s more of a holistic approach to diversity. D&I bring great value to an organization, its people, its culture, its patients, and its standing in the community (Smith & Angood, 2020). To that end, it helps to understand what D&I is, why it is important, and how to implement and sustain D&I most efficiently.

Diversity and inclusion can be more effective when implemented concurrently and strategically. The true value of D&I comes not solely from diversity of staff but from leaders
soliciting and tapping into the varied backgrounds, life experiences, and rich diversity of thought, ideas, and opinions staff members bring to an organization, representing its varied community of stakeholders (Smith & Angood, 2020). Scott E. Page (2019), author of *The Diversity Bonus: How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*, calls this “cognitive diversity” — an expansion of thought — which is an extension of inclusion. “Diversity is important, but organizations are totally wrong when they deem that diversity is gender and race, and that by putting people of different races and genders together in an organization they have checked the diversity box and can move on” (Smith & Angood, 2020, p. 21). Mark Lester, MD, MBA, and chairman of the board of directors for the American Association for Physician Leadership, insists, “because the task in diversity is broader than identity alone. The idea of diversity is integrating diverse identities and ways of thinking, creating the ‘cognitive repertoire’ of scholar Scott Page. This cognitive repertoire brings much greater capacity and power than if an organization did not have diversity of thought,” (Smith & Angood, 2020, p. 21). Diversity and inclusion are complementary and essential, Lester continues, “because inclusion creates a culture where all of those diverse people can interact in a constructive and productive way, where everybody is an equal part of the team, where their contributions are recognized and respected and they can freely share them with each other. The real work comes in, where leaders must exercise intentionality, consistency, perseverance, culture-building, and team-building; where understanding the lifetime of implicit bias various diversity groups faced — whether gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion — can optimize an organization’s ability to resolve complex issues” (p. 21).

“It also has an equity side, which means we have to do what is right and fair. That requires leadership to acknowledge and rectify past practices of inequity, including, for example,
when an organization does not have in leadership those who represent the greater microcosm of society,” (Smith & Angood, 2020, p. 22). Michellene Davis added that such initiatives cannot be achieved with words alone. “As organizations strive to mirror the demographics of their communities, they accomplish little by hiring minorities simply to achieve diversity goals” (p. 22). Smith and Angood (2022) contend that when organizations have role-specific mandates to “check-the-box” they 1) insult the candidate that they were hoping to secure, and 2) set the candidate up for a difficult situation,” (p. 22). Cognitive diversity and inclusion advocate for organizations to make a choice not to choose someone who’s more qualified, but rather to choose among equally qualified candidates who fill a gap in representation.” (Smith & Angood, 2020).

*The Role and Nature of Workplace Leaders and Diversity*

The aim of the Visagie and Linde (2010) research study was to determine the kind of leadership style organizations need to develop to establish a positive experience of diversity management, to continue to be successful, and to conclude with a leadership competency model inclusive of diversity management competence. Leaders are responsible for aligning and integrating the efforts of employees with the goal expectations of the organization. House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004) suggested that the leader’s function consists of clarifying the goals for subordinates, the paths to these goals and facilitating both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for proper performance. The theoretical overview of leadership theory indicates that leadership involves the function of influence, goal attainment, vision and enablement.

A common understanding of the word ‘leader’ naturally implies that there are followers over whom the leader has to exert a degree of influence. Kellerman (2004) points out that the Harvard Business School leadership theorist group under Zelenzink started to draw a distinction
between leaders and managers: “A leader is an inspirational figure while the manager handles the more administrative tasks and maintains organizational discipline” (p. 40).

Kotter (1990) viewed leadership as provocative and persistent and suggested that leaders produce constructive and adaptive change through the processes of establishing direction through corporate vision, aligning people through communication and motivating and inspiring workers. Kotter (1999) identified three basic levels of leadership, namely executive leaders (CEOs), who are responsible for articulating the vision and direction of the organization, with little impact on the operation of the business.

Robertson (2004) investigated the meaning of diversity and inclusion in organizations. Her results endorsed the argument that diversity in organizations may be supported by sets of practices to manage fair treatment issues, increase stakeholder diversity and demonstrate leadership commitment to diversity, whereas inclusion on the other hand may be supported by practices to integrate diversity onto organizational systems and processes, and encourage the full participation and contribution of all employees. Robertson (2004) commented that scholarly literature on definitions of diversity primarily focused on heterogeneity and the demo-graphic composition of groups or organizations, while definitions of inclusion focus on employee involvement and the integration of diversity into organizational systems and processes. Robertson (2004) believed that diversity and inclusion ‘encapsulate’ the discrimination and fairness, and integration and learning diversity paradigms suggested by Thomas and Ely (1996).

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity is an increasingly important phenomenon that affects not only social and political harmony but also the cohesion and efficiency of organizations. The problems that
firms have with regard to managing cultural diversity have been abundantly studied in recent decades from the perspectives of management theory and moral philosophy (Lozano and Escrich, 2017). Managing cultural diversity in organizations is of prime importance because it involves harmonizing different values, beliefs, credos and customs, and, in essence, human identity. Taking into consideration these cultural differences and harmonizing them is a human rights issue (UNDP, Cultural liberty in today’s diverse world, 2015) and a central dimension of corporate social responsibility. Lozano and Escrich (2017) present a critical reflection on the ideology of tolerance, and also propose an ideology of respect for dealing with cultural diversity and reflect on the differences between “tolerance” and “respect” and identifying the practical implications for managing cultural diversity.

In recent decades, cultural diversity and its associated challenges have become increasingly important due to two fundamental changes in the phenomenon. First, increased population mobility and migration processes, whether forced or voluntary, have led to greater exposure to diversity and to increased contact with people from different cultures (Lozano and Escrich, 2017). Moreover, diversity in most societies has increased due, in part, to changes in values and the individualization of lifestyles (Franken, 2015). This growing interaction and the increased valuation of individual freedom have led to complex multiple identities. Effective management of cultural diversity in organizations requires rigorous dialogue and a willingness to understand and learn from the other (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2013).

Lozano and Escrich (2017) reflect on the ideology of respect, noting that it has some implications for the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in terms of theory and practice. Management of cultural diversity must be seen as an essential aspect of an
organization’s role in society. Moreover, cultural diversity is an essential trait of humankind, and it is a moral imperative to take into consideration when we coordinate people (Lozano and Escrich, 2017).

Tolerance

Tolerance has been the central idea organizing coexistence in plural societies. Understanding this process requires an analysis of the concept of tolerance and its evolution over the past centuries. Ideology something to be constructed, created or invented. Guess (1981) assessed that ideology is the recognition of the human need for meaning and identity. Ideology aims to determine the sociocultural system or vision of the world that would be most appropriate for satisfying aspirations, needs, and the interests of a group. John Rawls (1971, 1993) takes the side of tolerance, which is understood as equal respect for all beliefs. Rawls (1971) likens tolerance to the “duty of civility,” involving the duty to listen to other people, and equanimity to decide when it is reasonable to adapt to their points of view (Hernandez, 2010).

Respect

A person can tolerate something, but that does not mean that he or she feels respect for what is tolerated (Cortina, 1997). Kant (1785) recognized respect as a feeling that emerges instinctively from a concept of reason and is manifested in a willingness to comply with practical application. One of the initial features, differentiating tolerance from respect is that respect is an appreciation of something valuable. Respect is an attitude with a cognitive, affective, conative and evaluative dimension (Dillon, 2014). Respect is guided by reason, and, therefore, the logic of respect is the logic of objectivity and universality. Objectivity, in this case, means that respect is
not based on personal desire or interest but on the ‘‘object’’ itself as being worthy of respect (in fact, we can respect things we do not like or agree with).

This notion of respect is based on the human capacity for recognition of equal dignity. ‘‘Respect for rationality also involves acknowledging that people have a fundamental right to freedom or thought, conscience and religion’’ (Dillon, 2007, p. 73). Similarly, Cortina (1993, 1997, 2007) argues that intercultural dialogue should minimize issues of difference and reduce intolerance of diversity for any society that takes its own citizens and the citizens of the world seriously.

Respect requires the ability to judge and rational prudently. The ability to judge permits knowledge and understanding of differences (even if not shared), which leads to another important feature of respect, genuine recognition. Taylor (1992) states that false recognition or a lack of recognition can be a form of oppression that imprisons someone in a false, deformed, and simplistic way of being. For Taylor, a lack of recognition is a total lack of respect, as it is not a courtesy but a ‘‘vital human need’’ (Taylor, 1992).

Like Taylor, Sennett (2004) presents a concept of respect that is linked to recognition and its manifestations, such as ‘‘status,’’ ‘‘dignity’’ and ‘‘honor.’’ In his work, Respect in a World of Inequality, Sennett introduces a general and easily understandable definition of ‘‘respect’’ as ‘‘taking the needs of others seriously’’ (Sennett, 2004). Even though this definition lacks conceptual precision and a normative foundation, it has precise implications for managing diversity in society: ‘‘When there is lack of respect the other people are not insulted, but neither are they granted recognition; simply they are not seen as integral human beings whose presence is important’’ (Sennett, 2004, p. 51).
The difference between tolerance and respect has also been expressed in two different responses to cultural diversity (Lozano & Escrich, 2017). The first and most widespread has been the multiculturalism approach (Kymlicka, 1995), which is based on a traditional concept of tolerance and is intended to achieve pacific coexistence between different groups. The second is interculturalism, which aspires for positive interaction and creative life together, passing from mere coexistence (like passengers on a train) to positive interaction (Bartolome & Cabrera, 2003).

Cantle (2012) believes that interculturalism increases social cohesion, promotes dialogue and helps to change opinions and behaviors towards others. The intercultural model favors the development of a concept of mutual respect, promoting diversity by intensifying trust and understanding through interaction. From the interculturalism perspective, the basic traits of our concept of respect are the principles of equality, difference, and positive interaction. The key concept of the intercultural model is the “interaction” between different groups of people and ethnicities (Lozano & Escrich, 2017).

The Kantian tradition reformulated by the discursive approach has the following basic traits and practical implications:

**Sensitivity to emotions and sentiments** from the Kantian definition, respect is a feeling generated by reason (Kant, 1785). Respect includes an emotional dimension together with the rational one. To respect someone implies the emotional involvement of the person who acts and, in turn, considers of the feelings of others.

**Sincerity** and truthfulness is an implicit ethical principle in rational discourse and is an exercise in respect towards the other participants in the dialogue.
Equality respect is based on the idea that all people have equal dignity and that there are no first- and second-class citizens. No one can make decisions for others, and it is not acceptable to marginalize or ‘‘leave out’’ any person or group. This concept of equality must not be understood as an equality of minimums or the cancellation of differences. Rather ‘‘equal treatment demands that all citizens have equal opportunities to use equally distributed rights and freedoms to carry out their own life plans’’ (Habermas, 2005).

Willingness to listen and awareness of other people’s objectives and goals although, as already shown, we can identify the ideology of tolerance as ‘‘allowing to do,’’ respect represents a genuine interest in understanding those who are different.

Self-criticism and rational evaluation of cultural practices another manifestation of respect is the critical questioning of one’s own culture and the demand for reasons for the opinions and cultural practices of others.

Lozano and Escrich (2017) summarize the differences between tolerance and respect by saying that respect is not indifference but a positive attitude to others, it implies an active recognition of the differences, it involves rational reflection on cultural differences and the limits of acceptability, and finally, respect implies a critical attitude towards one’s own culture.

According to Thomas and Ely (1996, p.79), there are three paradigms for managing cultural diversity:

1) The ‘‘discrimination-and-fairness paradigm,’’ is the most dominant and widely used; it focuses on action for equal opportunities and equal treatment in the recruitment processes. The main limitation with this paradigm is the belief that ‘‘we are all equal’’ based on the principle of the assimilation of the dominant culture, whereby diversity is reduced, attempting to project the image of a company in which discrimination does not exist. This paradigm undermines the organization’s potential to learn, because it adopts the premise of ‘‘we all want the same thing’’ and the
company “should operate as if every person were of the same race, gender and nationality.”

2) The access-and-legitimacy paradigm celebrates difference as an advantage for business. Customers are also culturally diverse and possibly more critical. This paradigm focuses on using diversity to cover more market niches. According to Thomas and Ely (1996), this paradigm “tends to emphasize the role of cultural differences in a company without really analyzing those differences to see how they actually affect the work that is done.”

3) The “integration and learning” paradigm focuses on integration as a principle. It values the fact that different perspectives can have a positive impact on the organization - connecting diversity to work perspectives. This “integration and learning” paradigm has a positive evaluation of diversity and seeks to integrate cultural differences into core work and work processes. (Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 79)

The “positive” interpretation concept of ideology that Lozano and Escrich (2017) present in their article serve to reinforce practices that improve human coexistence. Lozano and Escrich (2017) advocate for a concept of respect, based on discursive ethics, to promote intercultural coexistence that helps to build a fairer society. From an ideology of tolerance, the idea is that companies are independent organizations which operate in a society and try to resist the interference of social phenomena; the ideology of respect considers that companies are a substantial part of society and that they have to respond to social challenges with moral legitimacy. This is an integrative view where cultural diversities are managed according to ethical rather than merely profit-seeking criteria (Lozano & Escrich, 2017).

The difference between tolerance and respect is not a theoretical, second-order issue; rather, it has real and specific implications for life in organizations. Cultural diversity management in firms requires serious normative reflection on legitimate cultural practices and actions that foster dialogue between different traditions and respond to the moral imperative of respect for people’s dignity (Lozano & Escrich, 2017).
**Cultural Minority Commitment**

In a field study conducted by Rupert, Jehn, Engen, and Reuver (2010) it was concluded that cultural minorities felt more committed to the organization than majority members, thereby challenging the existing theoretical view that cultural minorities will feel less committed. Rupert et al. (2010) also found that organizational pressure to conform and effective leadership increased the commitment of minorities. The findings indicated that organizational leaders and researchers should not only focus on increasing and maintaining the commitment of minority members, but also should consider how majority members react to cultural socialization and integration processes. The commitment of minority members can be further enhanced by effective leadership (Rupert et al., 2010).

**Women: Minority Leadership Perspectives**

The Korn Ferry (2019) report noted that more than 1,800 American companies were featured on the Fortune 500 list since 1955. Only one of them has been led by a Black woman CEO. Riley (2006) conducted a study of African American women in the Fortune 500 exploring success strategies and what motivated them to succeed. When Bell and Nkomo (2001) included African American corporate women in their motivation studies they found that what motivates African American women is not the same as what motivates White women. Hewlett, Luce and West (2005) note that companies benefit when they seek out and leverage the unique talents that minority executives bring to the workplace. However, they also note that companies know little about the lives their minority professionals lead (Hewlett, Luce, & West, 2005). Making a similar observation specifically about African American women executives Daniels (2004) suggests that much could be gained by more in-depth knowledge of that population.
Riley’s (2006) research report sought to profile some of the motivating influencers that helped African American women executives to succeed. The participants were asked in the Riley (2006) study, “What factors motivated you to succeed?” They responded: parents/ the way I was raised (64.7%), personal drive to succeed (29.4%), feeling of obligation and gratefulness for sacrifices made during Civil Rights movement (11.7 %), and the need to make a living for my family (11.7%). One (5.8%) cited her lack of a safety net as her primary motivator. One (5.8%) said she simply always knew that to succeed was what she was supposed to do. One (5.8%) cited her family values as her motivating factors. Thus, the most frequently cited motivators are identified and displayed in Figure 5.

![Motivating Factors](image)

Figure 5. Motivating Factors of Success
In the Riley (2006) research report when asked “To what do you attribute your success?” they responded as shown in Figure 5. Nearly 53% (52.9%) said “My parents”, who provided support and expectations of success. More than 29% (29.4 %) said their success was attributed to God, their faith in God, their spirituality, divine intervention, or prayer. An equal percentage, 29.4%, attributed their success to their personal drive to succeed. Seventeen-point six percent attributed their success to help from mentors. Eleven-point seven percent attributed their success to the sacrifices made by others during the Civil Rights Movement. Similarly, 11.7% attributed their success to hard work. One (5.8%) attributed her success to her family values. Another attributed her success to flexibility, and another attributed her success to the energy she got from being smart and savvy and enjoying responsibility and the chance to make a difference (See Figure 6).

The data collected reflects that the most frequently cited attributions given were to (1) parents (the way I was raised); (2) God (divine intervention), faith in God; (3) their own personal

![Figure 6. Attributing Factors of Success](image)
drive; and (4) help from mentors or other support networks. The data collected from the participants and reported in the Riley (2006) study leads to the finding that there were specific success strategies used by the African American women participants who have all achieved executive positions in the Fortune 500. In answering Research Question 1 from the Riley (2006) study, those success strategies are: (a) work harder than peers; (b) attain strong educational background/credentials; (c) develop a network of mentors/helpful relationships; (d) be flexible, relocate; (e) acquire and demonstrate strong communication skills; (f) be comfortable with oneself; and (g) maintain visibility. In addition, from the data collected and analyzed in the Riley (2006) study, the answer to Research Question 2 is that the participants were primarily motivated by their parents (upbringing) but other motivating factors included their own personal drive to succeed, their feelings of obligation to The Civil Rights Movement, and their need to make a living.

Although the literature suggests that the issues of success and motivation are linked (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Cobbs & Turnock, 2003; Herzberg, 1968; Maslow, 1943; Zacarro 2001) no literature exists to explain whether or how the issues of success and motivation are linked when the population studied is African American women.

Motivation Theories and Research

Riley (2006) expresses that the issue of what motivates people has been studied by many behavioral scientists. Perhaps the best known is Freud. Freud’s focus, as explained by Vander Zanden (2000), was on studying how and to what extent behavior is controlled by unconscious motivation. It was Freud’s hypothesis that human behavior was largely affected by each human’s passage through a series of psychosexual stages (Vander Zanden, 2000). Freud also hypothesized
that each stage must be completed in progression, and failure to move from one stage to the next resulted in conflict, tension, and ultimately, illness (Vander Zanden, 2000). It was Freud’s belief that people have very little control over the stages and to a large extent are at the mercy of his or her environment (Vander Zanden, 2000). It is worth noting that the focus of Freud’s work was never the workplace. Riley (2006) suggests Freud’s theories have no direct relevance to the study of what motivates people to aspire to executive status; however, Freud’s reasoning could be used to convey the importance of environment in forming a person’s personality. Consequently, Freud’s reasoning would advocate that by improving a child’s environment, one could improve a child’s unconscious motivation and resulting behavior.

A humanistic psychologist, Maslow (1943) theorized that human motivation could be understood only if the whole of the particular human’s condition was studied. According to Maslow (1943) instinctual, inherited, environmental, unconscious, and conscious elements make up the human experience. Accordingly, the whole person must be considered in the context of his or her life to understand what motivates that person (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) found that human motivation is linked to five sets of goals he called basic needs. Those needs, in order of what he termed a hierarchy of prepotency are: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow’s (1943) study then shifted away from what motivates humans generally, to the study of the few people who had reached the highest level in the hierarchy – self-actualization. Leaders, heads of organizations, and over-achievers may fall into this category. These are people who fully realize their potential and seek self-fulfillment, and self-development to accomplish all they can. Maslow (1943) also hypothesized that humans are motivated by multiple factors and that their behavior is shaped by other determinants as well. As it relates to this research study, lived experiences could serve as a heavy motivator and influencer in
determining one’s behavior and leadership development. Maslow’s (1943) work is important to the study of human development because Maslow introduced the concept that what motivates one person may not motivate another. For management scientists this concept is important because it led to the recognition that what motivates one group in the workplace, may not motivate another group. Since Maslow’s studies, worker motivation has been the focus of other scientists, most notably Herzberg (1968).

According to Herzberg (1968), extrinsic motivating factors pertain to the job environment and include such things as supervision, company policies, salary, and working conditions. Intrinsic motivating factors include the work itself, the ability to achieve, recognition of achievement, responsibility, and the opportunity for growth (Herzberg, 1968). In addition, any exploration of motivation should include not only the employee’s motivating factors, but also an exploration of how the employee perceives the motivation of their employer (Riley, 2006).

Another motivation theory is Vroom’s (1964) Expectancy Theory of Motivation. Expectancy theory holds that humans are motivated by a combination of three factors: (a) valence – the value of the outcome to the individual; (b) instrumentality – the individual’s belief that if they take certain actions they will be rewarded; and (c) expectancy – the individual’s belief that they are able to take the actions necessary to net a reward (Vroom, 1964).

Bacchus (2005), Cobbs and Turnock (2003), and Porter (2002) undertook studies of successful African Americans who work in the corporate sector. Bacchus (2005) examined what motivating factors may have assisted Black men in reaching the top of the Fortune 500. Bacchus (2005) surveyed (by written questionnaire) the total population of 200 Black male executives in the Fortune 500. With nearly 72% responding, Bacchus (2005) discovered that for Black males,
the factors that most motivated them to achieve their successes were their interest in succeeding at their jobs, and the challenge of the accomplishment. Other factors identified, but not deemed as important by respondents were as follows: their drive to increase status, drive to increase income, interest in making positive changes in corporate America, encouragement from others, nothing in particular, and “other” which included hard work and great results (Bacchus, 2005). Porter (2002) researched the profiles of successful African American women who had broken through the glass ceiling and researched their leadership styles. In general the study’s participants were motivated to prove that they could succeed within their organizations.

Roberts (1991) and Miner (1996) conducted studies of high performing entrepreneurs and identified that some of the high performers were motivated by their need to achieve. According to Miner (1996), people motivated by the need to achieve have common behavioral characteristics: desire for feedback, desire to plan and set goals, strong personal initiative, strong personal commitment to their organization, belief that one person can make a difference, and belief that work should be guided by personal goals, not goals set by others. In contrast Roberts (1991) did not find that the entrepreneurs he studied had high need for achievement, but also had only a moderate need for achievement. Nevertheless, both scientists found that high functioning entrepreneurs were motivated by their personal need to achieve.

Livingston (1971) studied company executives rather than self-employed entrepreneurs and found that executives were not primarily motivated by a need for achievement, but also were instead motivated by a need for power. According to Livingston (1971), executives were actually motivated by their need for power. Bacchus’ (2005) study of African American executive males did not find that group primarily motivated by a need for power, but rather by their interest in
succeeding at their jobs, and by the challenge of accomplishment, which are more closely aligned with a need for achievement, than with a need for power. This finding is also linked to the findings of Cobbs and Turnock (2003) who state, “For many Black Americans the compulsion to work twice as hard and to be twice as good, no matter how physically and emotionally exhausting, is how they make their mark. They use this as a powerful motivation to succeed,” (Cobbs and Turnock, 2003, p.76). Thus, the need for achievement theory may offer the best explanation for the motivation of African American male executives who have reached the top, but it does not provide the defining explanation for the African American female executives who have reached the top as the results of the Riley (2006) study show that this group is not primarily motivated by a need for achievement, an intrinsic factor, but rather their primary motivator was their upbringing, an extrinsic factor (Riley, 2006). The fact that so many of the women viewed their upbringing as the catalyst for their success supports the theory of Vygotsky (as cited in Mooney, 2000) that culture matters as well as the theories of Bell and Nkomo (2001), Gilligan (1982), Parker and Ogilvie (1996), and Valian (1999) that women’s upbringing matters.

Daniels (2004) asserts that in the post-Civil Rights era African American executives’ goals are for power and influence and these goals are rooted in a desire to succeed on their own terms, rather than in terms defined by other groups. The Bell and Nkomo (2001) study found African American women executives likely to be conscious of their race’s past history of struggle and consequently involved in working as tempered radicals to uplift their communities through social change. This finding is also consistent with Daniels’ (2004) who found that African American women executives were motivated by their desire to improve and uplift the Black community.
Another motivator for African American women was their need to make a living for their families. This finding supports the work of Bell and Nkomo (2001) who found that the Black women executives in their study were more likely to report the assumption of the financial responsibility for their families, not just for their immediate families, but for their extended families as well. This finding also supports the viewpoint of Valian (1999) who noted that women in the U.S., unlike men, are raised to be nurturing, communal, and to be concerned about the welfare of others.

Regarding some of the success strategy applications for African-American women in the Fortune 500, the Riley (2006) research study concluded that these women felt they had to work harder than their peers, attain strong educational backgrounds and credentials, have a network of mentors, acquire and demonstrate excellent communication skills, and participate in leadership development programs, to name a few. All of the above strategies were previously documented as being efficacious for women in work by Bell and Nkomo (2001), Catalyst (1999, 2002), Cobbs and Turnock (2003), Porter (2004), Wellington and Catalyst (2001), and Parker and Ogilvie (1996).

The Riley (2006) research report also concluded that motivating factors for African American women in the Fortune 500 are parents, personal drive, feelings of obligation and gratefulness to The Civil Rights Movement, and the need to make a living for their family. These motivators support both the theory of Herzberg (1968) that motivating factors for managers can be either intrinsic or extrinsic to the job itself and the theory of Maslow (1943) that people who reach the top of an organization are motivated by multiple factors and exhibit behaviors shaped by multiple determinants. Some of those determinants may be the personality types and
leadership behaviors of the individual executives as is suggested by Livingston (1971), Miner (1996), and Roberts (1991). Riley (2006) notes that the motivation of the African American women executives may be better explained by expectancy theory which, in essence, is rooted in the human development theory of reinforcement. In expectancy theory expectations about the outcome of future events is predicted and then behavior is moderated (actions are taken) to increase the likelihood that the expected outcome is reached (Vroom, 1964). The theory of equity may also help explain what motivates African American female executives to succeed. According to the equity theory, humans perform better when they are happy, and they are happiest when they perceive they are being treated fairly (Adams, 1963).

The difference in motivation between the male executives and female executives may be attributable to the different socialization processes the two groups undergo as was explored by Bell and Nkomo (2001), Catalyst, (1999, 2002, 2004), Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003), Davis (1981), hooks (1981), Parker and Ogilvie (1996), Valian (1999), and White (1999). The differences may lie in levels and types of emotional intelligences (Bar-On & Parker, 2000, Goleman, 1995, 1998,) exhibited by the different groups.

The Riley (2006) research report contends that this study should be used as a starting point for a large comparative study of the human development issues of motivation and leader behavior of groups who have achieved executive status in the Fortune 500 to include, African American males and females, White males and females, Hispanic males and females, and Asian males and females in order to get a more complete picture of (a) what leadership styles, traits, or competencies are exhibited by the top executives; (b) what success strategies were used; (c) what motivates the different groups to succeed; (d) what determinants shape the behavior of the
successful executives in each group; and (e) what theories exist to explain the differences found
(if any). A final note of the Riley (2006) study is that most of the participants were motivated to
succeed by their parents and some African American women executives in Fortune 500
companies attribute their success to a higher power: God, their faith in God, their spirituality, or
prayer rather than to their own efforts alone.

Leadership Styles

Leadership style has immense impact on employees to perform, grow and lead to positive
attitude towards achieving organizational goals (Mohiuddin, 2017). One fundamental theory of
leadership, “Great Man” states that a leader has a very significant role on the organization’s
success (Shaukat et al., 2012). Leadership is one of the most widely discussed aspects of
organizational behavior as all groups and teams need a leader to direct them and guide them in
order to find their respective goals (Kuchler, 2008). Therefore, because of rising concerns about
leadership, researchers have started to evaluate the conceivable worth of leadership style in order
to forecast leader’s behavior (Rollinson et al., 2001).

Leadership is a trait which is extremely cherished in most organizations, and this has
become a major cause that is widely being investigated and discussed in organizational behavior
and performance (Adair 2003). The ability of leadership is considered as a prized skill for those
who hold it, achieve high positions and rewards (Mohiuddin, 2017). Leadership is a process of
societal control for leaders to pursue the controlled involvement with subordinates in order to
attain organizational objectives and goals (Omolayo, 2000). Leadership places emphases on the
growth and development of followers and their desires/wants.
The concept of leadership and its influence on employee’s performances have turned into a genuine logical review over the most recent times. Leaders define moral values, cultural tolerance within organization and figure out institutional tactics including their implementation and effectiveness (Mohiuddin, 2017).

Leadership style is the consequence of unique characteristics, understanding, and state of mind and logic of the leaders. Different circumstances require distinctive leadership styles (Mohiuddin, 2017). Milgrom (1991) and Ittner (2002) states that the democratic leadership style approach is considered most preferable in many organizations which bring all activities that give direction and benefit to its social existence while persevering and enduring the duties from individual accomplices. Heneman et al. (1999) reinforce the democratic style, citing that this style drives the sharing of responsibilities and course of action regarding daily tasks and meetings. In the participative leadership style, leaders choose obligation to their followers and suggest direction according to their targets however, they also involve followers in the decision-making process. Northouse (2007) highlighted that participatory style leaders and administrators always welcome and urge the employee and workers to take a fundamental part in essential basic leadership. A transformational leader is a person who stimulates and provokes followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Robbins et al., 2007). Transformational administration is about authority that enhances improvement in the workers (Warrilow, 2012).

Most of Mohiuddin’s (2017) study verified that leadership style has a crucial relationship with employees as well as organizational performance. Transformational leadership can perform better in ever normal condition. Knowing which leadership approach to apply is critical.
Evidence from literature shows that the transformational leadership approach has more beneficial outcomes on worker execution than transactional leadership (Mohiuddin, 2017).

The field of leadership has witnessed an infusion of theory that House and Aditya (1997) referred to as the neo-charismatic paradigm. Specifically, the neo-charismatic paradigm stresses how some leaders are able to articulate visions that are based on strongly held ideological values and powerful imagery, stimulate thinking that fosters innovative solutions to major problems, and emphasize radical change and high performance expectations. Furthermore, these leaders generate high degrees of follower confidence, intrinsic motivation, identity, trust and admiration in the leader, and emotional appeal (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Pawar & Eastman, 1997; Sashkin, 1988; Shamir et al., 1993).

Bass (1985, 1998) has been a strong proponent of transformational leadership as a model for understanding extraordinary effort and performance in organizations. Bass emphasized the difference between transformational and transactional leadership and how the latter is based on satisfying the short-term, self-interests of both the leader and followers. In contrast, transformational leadership has been defined in terms of how such leaders stress self-sacrifice for the long-term good of the larger group or collective (Bass, 1985, 1997, 1998; Howell and Avolio, 1992). It is important to note that charisma has been characterized as the core component of transformational leadership (Lowe et al., 1996; Waldman et al., 2001). Many writings portray the charismatic or inspirational leader in largely heroic terms (e.g., Bass, 1985; Manz & Sims, 1991, 2001; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Indeed, early writers such as Weber (1947) have even depicted such leaders as somewhat larger than life or as having a special gift.
Bass (1985) originally distinguished between two aspects of transformational leadership: (1) emotional and (2) intellectual, breaking down the emotional aspect into the two factors of charisma and inspirational leadership. In subsequent research, Bass (1997) acknowledged the empirical lack of independence of the two factors, a finding discussed in detail by Lowe et al. (1996). The definition of charismatic leadership is based largely on the work of Bass (1985), Conger and Kanungo (1998), and House and colleagues (e.g., House & Shamir, 1993). Charisma may be defined as a relationship between an individual (leader) and one or more followers based on leader behaviors combined with favorable attributions on the part of followers. The term relationship is used broadly to include both physically proximal and distant, or even non-existent, interactions (Waldman & Yammarino, 1999). In other words, an emotional or cognitive connection can be felt on the part of a follower toward a leader even if no direct contact is ever realized. Key behaviors on the part of the leader include providing a sense of mission and articulating an inspirational vision, based on powerful imagery, values, and beliefs. Additional behaviors include demonstrating determination when accomplishing goals and communicating high performance expectations. Favorable attributional effects on the part of followers include the generation of confidence in the leader, making followers feel good in his/her presence, and strong admiration or respect based on the leader’s accomplishments and the values and beliefs that he/she espouses (Waldman & Yammarino, 1999). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) also addressed moral values, suggesting that charismatic leaders may reach higher levels of moral development, a proposition receiving support from Turner et al. (2002). Along similar lines, Kanungo (2001) and Mendonca (2001) argued that charismatic leadership, in contrast to transactional leadership, can be rooted in strong ethical values. The essence of this argument is that such leaders are likely to be guided by morally altruistic principles that “reflect a helping
concern for others even at considerable personal sacrifice or inconvenience” (Mendonca, 2001, p. 268).

Shamir (1991) and Shamir et al. (1993) advance a theory of charismatic leadership based on the self-concepts of followers. The essence of their work was that such leaders communicate or symbolize messages that contain numerous references to values and moral justifications. They are able to have motivational effects on followers by presenting goals or a vision in terms of the values that they represent. Subsequently, the intrinsic valence of effort and goals, and the follower’s self-concept, become linked to values, resulting in value internalization on the part of the follower (Lord & Brown, 2001, 2004; Lord et al., 1999). As such, the salience of certain values espoused by the leader becomes greater for followers. In addition, Shamir et al. (1993) suggested that self-concepts are composed, in part, of identities, and that charismatic leaders help link one’s identity with greater social causes.

Social identity theory would suggest that group membership can provide a powerful source of identification for individuals that, in turn, can influence attitudes and behavior (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Charismatic leaders may be effective at forming a collective identity based on appealing values that go beyond the self-interests of individuals and even the greater organization. In line with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), such values may include an appeal to the greater needs of stakeholder groups and the good of society. Accordingly, followers would connect their organizational identity with the greater good of society and be motivated to pursue CSR (Waldman et al., 2006). Charismatic leaders may engage in behavior and advocate policies that culminate in CSR. Part of the appeal to this leadership approach pertains to the desire on the part of employees to maintain a favorable
organizational image, thereby fostering a collective self-esteem or pride in the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Followers are likely to admire such leaders since their visions may be based somewhat on values of altruism, justice, and humanistic notions of the greater good (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Bass (1985) referred to intellectual stimulation when considering the intellectual aspect of transformational leadership. Intellectual stimulation involves leader actions geared toward the arousal and change in problem awareness and problem solving on the part of followers, as well as beliefs and values (Bass, 1985). Intellectually stimulating leaders help followers to question old assumptions and beliefs so they can view complex problems and issues in more innovative ways (Bass, 1997). Conceptual capacity includes the ability to integrate or process information pertinent to the environment (i.e. breadth of perspective), as well as deal with a high level of abstraction. Conceptual capacity also allows leaders to demonstrate intellectual stimulation to help followers get at the heart of complex problems. Intellectually stimulating leaders may attempt to show how improving the educational level of the workforce can impact the firm’s competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2002), as well as appeal to their sense of values regarding a higher-level, collective interest. The upshot is that followers will attempt to implement strategies that emphasize CSR (Waldman et al., 2006).

Research has demonstrated the link between CEO charismatic leadership and firm performance, especially under conditions of perceived environmental uncertainty (Waldman et al., 2001). There is a distinction between the nature of a leader’s power motive, and the extent of an individual’s non-conscious desire to have an impact on others or one’s environment (House & Howell, 1992). Regarding socialized charisma, the power motive is self-controlled and directed
toward social responsibility or the good of the overall entity that s/he is attempting to lead.

Power is garnered and used for the purpose of pursuing goals that will benefit the larger entity or society in general (House & Howell, 1992). In contrast, the personalized charismatic uses power for personal gain, is exploitative or manipulative of others, and narcissistic (Maccoby, 2004). As a practical implication, these intellectually stimulating CEOs appear to understand that CSR can be used as an integral part of a firm’s corporate and business-level strategies, and they provide the type of leadership that will engender it. In this case, the CEO will need the interpersonal and persuasion skills to help others conceptualize old problems in new ways (Waldman et al., 2006).

**Leadership Style and Effectiveness**

Effective leadership can have a connecting influence on minorities relating to enhanced commitment (Rupert et al., 2010). The more effective the leadership of an organization is towards the needs and concerns of its minority employees, the more committed the employees are to the organization. In the last decade, societies and organizations have become increasingly multicultural and growing attention is being paid by business practitioners as well as scientists to the integration of cultural minorities into organizations (Chemers et al., 1995; Cox, 1993). Organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of diversity in the workplace and the need to manage this diversity to sustain their competitive advantage (Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Past research has produced mixed results, with some studies indicating that diversity can increase creativity and problem solving and others showing that diversity can lead to conflict and decreased performance (for reviews and meta-analyses see Jackson et al., 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Stewart, 2006; Webber & Donahue, 2001; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998).
An organization may be shaped by the socialization process, in which the organization teaches employees about values and norms (Allen & Meyer, 1990b; Caldwell et al., 1990). This socialization experience may affect the commitment of the individual toward the organization (Buchanan, 1974; Louis, 1980). Research shows that there is a difference in the impact of leadership styles on the organizational commitment of minority versus majority members. Leaders have shown to influence employee outcomes, such as follower’s job satisfaction and work motivation (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Since minority members have different socializations than majority members, leadership styles will differentially impact various types of organizational commitment for these two groups (Rupert et al., 2010).

Leaders can play an important role in stimulating the commitment of cultural minorities in organizations. Leaders can support cultural minorities by showing confidence in their capacities, thereby stimulating their perceived self-efficacy. In addition, leaders who show respect for cultural minorities make them feel that they are being accepted by the organization (Rupert et al., 2010). Perceived inequity and unfairness promoted by a less effective leader can decrease the confidence of employees in the organization, which can have a negative effect on the effectiveness of the organization and the commitment of members (Van Breukelen, 2004). However, leaders are not always consistent in their behaviors to different employees they supervise.

Leader-Member-Exchange (LMX) theory states that leaders develop different relationships with their subordinates, thereby displaying different behaviors to different members (Yukl, 1998) or even discriminate between them (Dansereau, 1995). Research shows that employees who are similar in demographic characteristics to their leader have a better
relationship with their leader than employees who are not similar (Ashkanasy & O’Connor, 1997; Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 1995). The Rupert et al. (2010) research study expected leadership to have a different impact on minority members versus majority members. In general, leaders will have a stronger impact on cultural minority members than on majority members and expect a stronger relationship between effective leadership and commitment for cultural minorities than for majority members.

Charismatic leaders can have an extraordinary impact on subordinates by articulating ideological goals that are related to the mission of the organization (House, 1977). They often provide an appealing future vision to subordinates, which can give more meaning to their work and can make them feel inspired and enthusiastic. A meta-analysis by Judge and Piccolo (2004) on the predictive value of transformational leadership (of which charisma is conceptualized as a sub dimension) and transactional leadership shows that charismatic leadership is related to follower job satisfaction, leader satisfaction, and employee motivation, all of which can contribute to employee commitment. Charismatic leaders stimulate the emotional involvement of followers with the mission of the organization. Effective leadership can be an important variable in the enhancement of the commitment of both minority and majority members (Rupert et al., 2010).

**Leadership Style – Employee Expectations and Perceptions**

According to Epitropaki and Martin (2005), the cognitive processes of leadership insights are comprised of classification, individualized impression creations, and fundamental acknowledgements of performance. Leadership schemas are employees’ perceptions regarding traits and behaviors associated with an ideal leader, which are embedded in employees’ memory
and are recalled when they have to deal with leaders (Trichas et al., 2017). When they are recalled, the basic structures generate expectations regarding characteristics and behaviors of a leader. Researchers examining leadership schemas have identified the image people have regarding leaders (Tsai et al., 2017). Ideal leaders are assumed to be competent, caring, honest, understanding, outgoing, verbally skilled, determined, aggressive, decisive, dedicated, educated, kind and well dressed (Carroll, 2015). These diverse approaches, describing leadership schemas, characterize people’s beliefs concerning leaders at different levels of specificity (Flores, 2012). What is common to all of them is the idea that people do have a schema regarding leadership, which forms a standard for judging leaders. This schema is also termed a person’s implicit leadership theory (ILT) (Subramaniam & Sambasivan, 2018).

ILT indicates the attributes and behaviors that differentiate leaders from non-leaders, good from bad leaders and effective from ineffective leaders (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013). The better the fit between an individual’s perception and the leadership style of his/her leader, the more likely this person will be seen as an effective leader (Guay, 2013; Offermannet al., 1994). Densten and Borrowman (2017) have identified that the follower is likely to be satisfied with the leader, when a leader’s behavior matches the follower’s ILT.

One’s view of the role of leadership is shaped by the culture in which one lives (Tsai et al., 2017). Culture is known as the general beliefs and shared values, which describes the “shoulds” and “oughts” of life of certain ethnic communities (Gom et al., 2015). The impact of ethnicity and ethnic identification on human behavior should also be examined with respect to values, since values are the consequences of culture and ethnicity (Meyer & Zane, 2013). It has been identified that both cultural differences and similarities can explain behaviors (Church et
al., 2010). Based on the similarity–attraction paradigm, members of a leader–follower dyad who share similar demographic characteristics are likely to have a more positive relationship (Randolph-Senget al., 2016). Individuals who are demographically similar often believe they are similar, despite the differences in values, beliefs, and expectations (Duffy & Ferrier, 2003). Dissimilar dyads will encounter more interpersonal difficulties due to misunderstandings, misperceptions, and conflicts of interest (Riordan, 2000).

According to Sy and Choi (2013), a feedback loop exists among the behaviors expected from a leader and the behavior that followers experience with the leader. Employees use an implicit–explicit matching process to develop an impression of the quality of the interactions they have with their manager (Subramaniam & Sambasivan, 2018). When the actual behavior of the manager is aligned with the expectations of employees, followers accept the leader’s influence attempts and develop higher quality relationships with the leader (Humphrey et al., 2016). As noted by Shupe (2007), the more different the people are in terms of cultural backgrounds (ethnic and nationality), the more likely their interactions will result in misunderstandings and other problems.

Leadership Style – Humility and Authenticity

The results of a research study by Oc et al. (2019) pertaining to leader humility and authenticity contributes to the understanding of the interpersonal antecedents of authenticity at work as well as the growing body of research on the impact that leader humility has on important employee outcomes. Authenticity is the “sense or feeling that one is in alignment with one’s true or genuine self” (Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton, & Thomaes, 2017, p. 521). Research demonstrates that experimental manipulations of affect, nostalgia, and power (e.g., Baldwin, Biernat, &
Landau, 2015; Kraus, Chen, & Keltner, 2011; Lenton, Slabu, Sedikides, & Power, 2013) as well as behaving in ways consistent with certain personality traits (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010) or reflecting on real-life situations (Lenton, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2016) impact one’s felt authenticity. Leaders are an important source of social approval for followers (e.g., Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Tjosvold, 1989), and therefore, influence follower felt authenticity.

When humble leaders admit their failures and demonstrate their own fallibility (Exline et al., 2004) as well as act in ways that decrease the power differentials between them and their followers (Rego et al., 2017), they create an environment where followers feel less vulnerable. Leaders care about how they are viewed, the social information they receive can impact their willingness to act in accordance with their true selves (Wallace & Tice, 2012). Research indicates that one major barrier to acting authentically is the desire to meet the expectations of others and decrease the chances of social rejection (Brewer & Roccas, 2001; Brewer, 1991; Paulhus & Martin, 1988).

Often leaders have considerable power over their subordinates as they tend to control valued resources (Gagne & Lydon, 2004; Oc & Bashshur, 2013), and therefore, followers care quite deeply about what their leaders think of them and desire to be accepted by them (Morrison, 1994; Tjosvold, 1989; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). This combination of dependence and need for acceptance can lead to feelings of vulnerability on the part of followers (Lemay & Clark, 2008). Humble leaders are those who are willing to accurately assess their personal strengths and weaknesses, admit their mistakes, ask for feedback about themselves, value the strengths and contributions of others, and are willing to learn from others (Oc et al., 2019).
Humble leaders, “give away power” to subordinates (Rego et al., 2017, p. 5) and “adopt a stance of egalitarianism rather than superiority or servility in their communications with others” (Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005, p. 1341). This creates an environment in which subordinates feel more comfortable speaking up without fear of retribution or damaging their relationships with the leader (Liu, 2016). Humble leaders admit their mistakes, note their limitations, and demonstrate their own fallibility (Exline et al., 2004). These humble behaviors, combined with their tendency to appreciate the contributions of others (Owens et al., 2013), enhance others’ trust in them (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010; Weick, 2001) and make it easier for followers to establish strong social bonds with them (Davis et al., 2013; Owens et al., 2013; Peters, Rowat, & Johnson, 2011). Humble leaders modulate their sense of self-importance and focus their attention on the value of others (Morris et al., 2005). When followers question the authenticity of the leader humility, they are less likely to be influenced by it and the beneficial effects of leader humility are less likely to develop or persist (Oc et al., 2019). When followers perceive leader humility to be inauthentic, followers feel more distrustful of their leaders (Owens & Hekman, 2012).

**Servant Leaders**

Robert K. Greenleaf's (1991) famous essay on servant leadership spearheaded a movement that continues to gain strength today. Many of Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work for in America name servant leadership as a core company value (Ruschman, 2002). Servant leaders may promote increased collaboration and creativity among employees, which helps organizations gain and maintain competitive advantage (Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008). Servant leadership may also improve the ethical culture of modern companies because servant leadership promotes more morality-centered self-
reflection by leaders than other leadership styles (i.e., transformational leadership; Giampreto-Meyer, Brown, Browne, & Kubasek, 1998). There remains a need to better understand the scope and magnitude of the influence that servant leadership has on the individual and group levels, necessary to help scholars and managers better understand how to best apply servant leadership and what benefits can be expected from an emphasis on this particular leadership style. The Hunter et al. (2013) study applies the social influence theories of social learning (Bandura, 1977) and social exchange (Blau, 1964) to propose that servant leaders initiate a cycle of service, thereby influencing a range of multilevel outcomes both directly and indirectly through service climate. Peterson et al. (2012) included multiple sources in their organizational-level research of the servant leadership among chief executive officers (CEOs).

According to Greenleaf's seminal essay in 1970, “the servant-leader is servant first” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 13). Ehrhart (2004) conducted a thorough review of the literature and identified seven dimensions of servant leadership. Servant leadership also has a moral component similar to ethical and authentic leadership (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Neubert et al., 2008). Altogether, servant leadership is different from other leadership styles and, in its distinctiveness, offers the potential to have a unique influence on organizations and their stakeholders (Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009; Neubert et al., 2008).

Two key social influence theories that can help explain why individual-level and store-level servant leadership promotes positive outcomes are Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Blau's (1964) social exchange theory. According to social learning theory, individuals learn by modeling the attitudes, values, and behaviors of role models in their environment (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Followers must desire to mimic their leader's behavior (Wood & Bandura,
1989), which is more likely if leaders are viewed as credible role models. Servant leaders are likely to be seen as credible role models because followers perceive their motivations to be altruistic (Brown et al., 2005); servant leaders are self-motivated to serve humbly without expecting service in return. As a result, a servant leader's humble service is often mimicked by followers (Graham, 1991) and may also be reciprocated through the process of social exchange in which followers return the service they receive in kind (Blau, 1964). Thus, through social influence processes, a servant leader inspires a cycle of service. Greenleaf sums it up when he asks of followers, “Do they, while being served, become . . . more likely themselves to become servants?” (Greenleaf, 1991, pp. 13–14). Hunter et al. (2013) suggest that the cycle of service will be perpetuated through the social influence process at the individual-level to inspire followers to reciprocate by remaining engaged with the organization.

Agreeableness and extraversion are two traits from the Big Five most relevant to servant leadership (Hunter et al., 2013). Agreeableness reflects an empathetic concern for others (Barrick & Mount, 1991), whereas extraversion reflects a tendency to be “sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active” (p. 3). Theory and research on personality and performance (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 2005; Barrick et al., 2003; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2000) suggest that agreeableness and extraversion are associated with servant leadership because they are associated with motivational tendencies likely to be espoused (or rejected) by servant leaders. These motivational tendencies in turn are likely to reflect underlying values that may be communicated to followers through word and deed, leading to follower perceptions of servant leadership and modeling of behavior.

The social cognitive theory, Barrick et al. (2003) argues that personality traits, particularly the Big Five, are associated with work-related behavior through their influence on
broad motivational intentions or goals. Agreeableness is associated with communion striving, or striving “toward obtaining acceptance and intimacy in personal relationships” (Barrick et al., 2003, p. 66). Highly agreeable individuals value positive relationships with others and are motivated (i.e., willing to direct attention, energy, and other resources) to engage in behaviors toward that end. Among individuals in leadership positions, agreeableness, with its concomitant motivation toward social harmony, is likely to be associated with behavior that followers perceive as servant leadership and desire to emulate (Hunter et al., 2013). Servant leaders take time to form quality relationships and build community among followers (Ehrhart, 2004). The Hunter et al. (2013) investigation of personality lends insight into the types of individuals who are likely to become servant leaders.

An important contribution of Hunter et al. (2013) is the empirical evidence it provides about the benefits of servant leadership and applying role modeling and social exchange theories. Hunter et al. (2013) theorized that servant leaders may influence follower helping behaviors because they role model these behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Brown & Trevino, 2006; Neubert et al., 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Employees who perceived their leader exhibiting servant qualities were more likely to assist each other with task-related and interpersonal matters. The Hunter et al. (2013) study provides empirical insight into the burgeoning field of servant leadership. The findings provide initial evidence that servant leadership may indeed be an effective leadership behavior in terms of fostering a favorable service climate, inducing positive follower behaviors.
Adaptive Leadership Theory (The leading and following process)

DeRue’s (2011) theory shifts the theoretical focus away from people as leaders or followers, and instead foreground the evolutionary value of a dynamic and fluid leading–following process. DeRue’s theory provides a theoretical basis for challenging the individualistic, hierarchical, one-directional and de-contextualized notions of leadership that permeate the existing literature. Scholars have criticized leadership theories, both old and new, for conflating leadership with supervision and focusing on the behaviors and attributes of individuals at the expense of understanding the dynamic and social processes involved in leadership (Avolio, 2007; Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hosking, 2006; Rost, 1993; Day, Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001). Leadership theories are often criticized for understating the importance of followership and disregarding the social and contextual embeddedness of leadership in organizations (Grint, 2005; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). DeRue (2011) conceptualize leadership as a socially complex and adaptive process and suggest that leadership studies are often inconsistent with the basic definition of leadership. Scholars commonly define leadership as a social process of mutual and reciprocal influence in service of accomplishing a collective goal (Bass & Bass, 2008; Yukl, 2010). Yet, by focusing mostly on how individuals, often supervisors, influence their subordinates, the existing literature concentrates more on people as leaders or followers than it does the process of leadership (Hunt & Dodge, 2000).

With the exception of research on informal leader emergence (Bales, 1950; Morris & Hackman, 1969) and team leadership (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Morgeson et al., 2010), leaders are generally thought of as having formal authority and managerial responsibility for a set of followers. Indeed, most leadership theories and empirical research are grounded in a
context of supervisor–subordinate relationships whereby the supervisor is conceived of as the leader and the subordinate as the follower (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hosking & Morley, 1988; Hunt & Dodge, 2000). Between 2003 and 2008, 84% of leadership research in management journals approached the study of leadership from this hierarchical perspective (Ancona & Backman, 2008).

Even when considering leadership across hierarchical levels, researchers assume that transformational leadership originates from people who are hierarchically superior. These same hierarchical assumptions are prominent in other contemporary leadership theories, including but not limited to ethical leadership (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009), leader–member exchange (Zhou & Schriesheim, 2010), and authentic leadership (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008).

Given the emphasis in the existing literature on inspirational motivation (Avolio, 2004; Bass, 1985), power and empowerment (Hollander & Offermann, 1990), and structural coordination (Halpin & Winer, 1957; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004) as mechanisms through which supervisors “lead” their subordinated followers, it is not clear that current leadership theories can sufficiently explain this form of “leading up” or “leading across.”

An important disconnect between definitions of leadership and existing research on leadership is related to the direction of influence. In fact, an important distinction between leadership and traditional conceptions of social influence (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) is the bidirectional mutuality of the leadership process and the focus on a collective goal.

Definitions of leadership describe the concept as a social process of mutual influence among actors that is in service of accomplishing a collective goal (Bass & Bass, 2008; Yukl,
DeRue (2011) states existing research on leadership foregrounds a one-directional process whereby one actor exerts influence over another actor. For example, consider Bryman’s (1986) description of leadership: “. . .leadership involves a social influence process in which a person steers members of the group toward a goal” (p. 2). This one-directional pattern is also evident in research examining upward, downward, and/or lateral influence attempts (Mechanic, 1962; Mowday, 1978; Schilit & Locke, 1982; Yukl & Falbe, 1990).

Endorsing a unidirectional influence pattern, prior research overlooks the behavioral interdependencies involved in the leadership process, and in particular, how actors co-construct the process of leading and following through mutual influence and the interdependent acts of leading and following (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). DeRue (2011) argues the most theories of followership commit the same offense—they are generally silent on how following interacts with and is contingent on leading. Yet, if we conceptualize leadership as an interactional process of leading–following, it becomes clear that leadership and followership are inseparable. The implication is that existing theories need to be revised to account for the contingent response patterns and interdependencies that exist between them. In particular, the leadership process is such that one actor’s following (leading) gives meaning and legitimacy to another actor’s leading (following), and this interdependence is fundamental to our understanding of how leadership processes emerge and evolve in groups.

Dating back to great man theories of leadership (Galton, 1898) and perpetuated by numerous entity-based perspectives on leadership (Hosking, Dachler, & Gergen, 1995), the existing literature often assumes that leadership is something that an individual possesses (e.g., in the form of traits, attributes or skills) or engages in through specific behaviors (e.g., initiating
structure, consideration, transformational, transactional behaviors). Relational theories of leadership classify individuals as either leaders or followers (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), thereby treating leadership (and followership) as a property of the person. Unfortunately, this individualistic and person-centric perspective emphasizes the person as the source of leadership (or followership), and therefore does not fully account for the social and dynamic processes by which patterns of leading and following develop and evolve (DeRue, 2011).

House and Mitchell’s (1974) path-goal model of leadership proposes that leaders are most effective when they adapt their style to fit with subordinates’ personal attributes (e.g., ability) and situational factors such as task repetitiveness and position power. More recently, scholars have extended these theories by examining how individuals adapt their leadership styles based on follower attributes such as self-efficacy (DeRue, Barnes, & Morgeson, 2010), task characteristics such as disruptive events (Morgeson, 2005), organizational factors such as life-cycle stage and structure (Shamir & Howell, 1999), and societal factors such as culture and norms (Shin & Zhou, 2003). Common across these contingency theories is an assumption that the environment supplies the variation that individuals (‘‘leaders’’) must adapt to, and that this variation is exogenous to the leadership process (DeRue, 2011).

DeRue (2011) attests that the primary function of leadership is to assess the source of environmental variability (e.g., followers, situational factors) and match that variability with a leadership style or approach that best controls the (negative) effects of the environment on group functioning. Servant leadership theories (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, Spears, & Covey, 2002), maintain a focus on how individual ‘‘leaders’’ achieve results by prioritizing the needs and interests of their followers.
Trait theories of leadership suggest that individuals’ dispositions and attributes (e.g., personality, motives, values) determine their effectiveness as leaders either through a direct effect on behavior or by manipulating others’ attributions or perceptions of the individual (DeRue et al., 2011; Lord & Maher, 1991). Other research has considered the antecedents to such behaviors, the focus has been on how individuals’ personality (Judge & Bono, 2000), motivations (Chan & Drasgow, 2001), or prior experience (Avolio, 1994) predict the display of leadership behaviors. The behavior of others may be an important antecedent to individuals’ displays of leadership and/or followership.

Ethnic Minority Leadership Styles

In their article, “Leadership Styles of Ethnic Minority Leaders,” authors Okozi, Smith, Harvey, and Sherman, (2009) provide an overview of the findings of some major studies of differences in the leadership styles of persons of color and European Americans. Most studies examine leadership style within organizations. Less attention, however, has been paid to the examination of difference in leadership style regarding ethnicity or race (Okozi et al., 2009). The few studies that do examine ethnic or racial differences are limited in their description of the differences in leadership style between ethnic minority leaders versus leaders from the dominant White culture (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

In a research investigation among Black, White, and Chicano subordinates of Black and White supervisors in three industrial plants, Parker (1976) found that the Black supervisors were ranked significantly higher or more favorably than White supervisors on three of the four managerial leadership measures (managerial support, goal emphasis, and work facilitation). Parker (1976) also found that the Chicano subordinates seemed to perceive both the Black and
White supervisors similarly with respect to the interpersonal aspects of leadership (interaction facilitation), but also perceived Black supervisors more favorably on task-related leadership dimensions.

Parker's findings support the argument that cultural background heavily influences leadership style (Hatty van Emmerik, Euwema, & Wendt, 2008). Other evidence suggests that ethnic minorities, in particular, tend to adopt a nurturing, inclusive, dynamic, engaging and inspiring leadership style that falls under the umbrella of "transformational leadership" (Ardichvili, Mitchell, & Jondle, 2009). Specifically, a transformational leader is one who inspires, shows respect for, and is authentic in her/his desire for the professional and personal advancement of her or his subordinates (Ayman, Korabik, & Morris, 2009). Ethnic minorities engage in a leadership style that is generally in direct opposition of the dominant culture. This style includes the ability of many ethnic minority leaders to lead and simultaneously connect with others in a meaningful manner which sets them apart from leaders in the dominant culture. We could argue that the unique balance of good interpersonal skills, humility and steady leadership is what distinguishes many ethnic minority leaders from leaders in the dominant culture. One contributing factor may be that individuals who represent the dominant group may be blind to their privilege, making them less aware of how their leadership style affects those whom they lead (Okozi et al., 2009).

Others have highlighted the role that historical and modern-day racism and discrimination have played in shaping the leadership style of ethnic minorities. The long history of intergenerational trauma seems to unconsciously shape the way ethnic minority leaders view and interact with the world; these experiences help to create a leadership style that is genuine and
participatory in nature, with clearly defined goals and objectives (Okozi et al., 2009). This is congruent with a social justice perspective of leadership. It has been found, for example, that the stereotypic views that emphasize that ethnic minority individuals are not qualified because of their cultural and/or racial background, actually helps ethnic minorities to stay grounded and affirming to their subordinates (Trevino & Nelson, 2004).

Ethnic minority leaders have demonstrated their role as advocates for change and transformation amongst themselves and for those they lead, although the experience of acts of injustice can create significant stressors (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). Ethnic minority leadership style is different from White leadership style, and also has been shown to have a positive impact on those they lead, specifically in regard to the interpersonal skills used to communicate and interact with subordinates. Ethnic minority leaders' increased awareness about social justice suggests that ethnic minority leaders strive to avoid the use of oppressive measures when providing leadership. Understanding the benefits of ethnic minority leadership is one step in building support for the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority leaders, which is important given the underrepresentation of ethnic minority leaders in industry (Okozi et al., 2009).

Communication Styles

Several authors have noted that communication is central to leadership (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Frese et al., 2003; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Riggio et al., 2003; Shamir et al., 1994; Spangler & House, 1991; Towler, 2003), but, except for studies devoted to oratory skills and content in highly specific speech-like contexts, few have attempted to operationalize the communication styles leaders use in their daily transactions with
subordinates. Even fewer have attempted to find out what the relations are of these communication styles with general leadership styles. This is somewhat surprising, given that one of the core elements of leadership is a leader’s interpersonal communication style (De Vries et al., 2010).

De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, and Oostenveld (2010) consider leadership from this communicative perspective, and also define a leader’s communication style as a distinctive set of interpersonal communicative behaviors geared toward the optimization of hierarchical relationships in order to reach certain group or individual goals. In line with Daft (2003) and McCartney and Campbell (2006), De Vries et al. (2010) make a distinction between the interpersonal aspects of leadership, which revolve around communicative activities in interpersonal relationships, and the managerial aspects of leadership, which revolve around non-interpersonal activities such as planning, organizing, decision-making, problem-solving, and controlling. De Vries et al. (2010) investigated the relations between leaders’ communication styles and charismatic leadership, human-oriented leadership, task-oriented leadership, and leadership outcomes. Their study showed that charismatic and human-oriented leadership are mainly communicative, while task-oriented leadership is significantly less communicative. This study offers input for leadership training programs by showing the importance of leader’s supportiveness, assuredness, and preciseness when communicating with subordinates.

There is a vast array of instruments to measure interpersonal communication styles. Several authors have explored integrating diverse communication style scales with the interpersonal circumplex model (Leary, 1957), which consists of the following two main interpersonal (communicative) dimensions: friendliness/affiliation and dominance (Dillard et al.,
1999; Hansford and Hattie, 1987; Sorenson and Savage, 1989). Others have suggested that there are more than two communication style dimensions. For instance, Gudykunst et al. (1996) factor-analyzed 96 items from existing communication style instruments (Booth Butterfield & Booth Butterfield, 1990; Norton, 1978; Singelis, 1994; Takai & Ota, 1994; Wiemann et al., 1986) and 62 additional items based on Hall’s (1976) and Gudykunst and Ting Toomey (1988) conceptualization of low- and high-context communication, and arrived at eight factors: Inferring Meaning, Indirect Communication, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Dramatic Communication, Use of Feelings, Openness, Preciseness, and Positive Perception of Silence.

Although it appears that there are more than two main communication style dimensions, until now, when investigating communication styles, most scholars have focused on the two styles that are most closely associated with the interpersonal circumplex, i.e., friendliness and dominance. Communication styles have been an especially welcome topic for scholars interested in doctor–patient communication (Bultman & Svarstad, 2000; Hailey et al., 1998; Street, 2002; Van Dulmen & Bensing, 2002; Yedidia et al., 2003), teacher–pupil communication (Noels et al., 1999; Prisbell, 1994), parent–child communication (Bugentalet al., 1999; Hawes, 1996; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), and communication among married or dating couples (Bienvenu, 1970; Christensen, 1988; Noller & White, 1990).

The above studies seem to indicate that satisfaction is more often associated with a friendly communication style, while a dominant communication style may be associated with performance, but only in some instances (e.g., strong dependence situations). One important inter-mediate concept, which may be determined by communication styles on the one hand, and which determines team performance (Srivastava et al., 2006) and may determine satisfaction, is
the concept of knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing has been defined as the process where individuals mutually exchange their (tacit and explicit) knowledge and jointly create new knowledge (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). Knowledge sharing may be an interesting variable in relation to communication styles, because the exchange process assumes a communication process. Even when people have ready access to the internet or a firm’s intranet, people are more likely to turn to other people for information than to impersonal sources (Levin and Cross, 2004). Consequently, the communication style of a team member is likely to have an effect on the willingness and eagerness of team members to share knowledge with each other.

Penley and Hawkins (1985) conclude that consideration (or human-oriented leadership) is mainly communicative, while initiating structure (or task-oriented leadership) is much less so. According to Penley and Hawkins (1985), the close correspondence between human-oriented leadership and communication is due to the fact that consideration is heavily saturated with relational aspects of communication, such as interpersonal concern and warmth, while task-oriented leadership is much more saturated with the actual content of the information provided instead of the style of communication.

Given the explosion of studies on charismatic-transformational leadership, it is surprising that the number of studies linking communication to charismatic-transformational leadership is relatively sparse and directed mostly at oratory skills and content (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Den Hartog and Verburg, 1997; Frese et al., 2003; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996; Riggio et al., 2003; Shamir et al., 1994; Spangler and House, 1991; Towler, 2003). The meta-analysis of Judge and Piccolo (2004) revealed positive relations between both transformational and charismatic leadership and subordinates’ job satisfaction, satisfaction with the leader, motivation, leader
effectiveness, and group performance. Judge and Piccolo (2004) did not find any significant
differences in results between charismatic and transformational leadership, which shows that
these constructs are by-and-large interchangeable. A meta-analysis on leader’s consideration
(e.g., human-oriented leadership) and initiating structure (e.g., task-oriented leadership) also
revealed positive effects on outcomes for these two styles (Judge et al., 2004).

According to Yukl (1999), there is a “considerable ambiguity about the essential
behaviors for charismatic and transformational leadership” and conceptual weaknesses in
charismatic and transformational leadership are “similar to those in most of the earlier leadership
theories” (Yukl, 1999, p. 289). According to this research, both charismatic and human-oriented
leadership styles are to a considerable extent grounded in communication styles (De Vries et al.,
2010). In contrast, task-oriented leadership is much less communicative and may be regarded,
following Daft (2003) and McCartney and Campbell (2006), more as a managerial than as a
leadership style. Consequently, the question of whether leadership equates with communication
can be answered in the affirmative for charismatic and human-oriented leadership and is
disconfirmed for task-oriented leadership.

De Vries et al. (2010) concluded that charismatic leadership and human-oriented
leadership are characterized by a different communication style profile. Human-oriented
leadership is strongly associated with the communication style supportiveness, and to a lesser
extent with leader’s expressiveness and (a lack of) leader’s verbal aggressiveness. In contrast,
charismatic leadership is characterized by a profile which includes five out of the six
communication styles. Charismatic leaders are characterized by an assured, supportive,
argumentative, precise, and verbally non-aggressive communication style. De Vries et al. (2010)
determined on the one hand that charismatic leaders do not need to be particularly expressive to reach their desired effect, as for instance less expressive but notable charismatic leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, have shown. On the other hand, cultural ‘styles’ may play a role, with subjects from the Netherlands valuing a less ‘expressive’ style of interaction than for instance people from Southern Europe (Pennebaker et al., 1996).

Additionally, having a leader who radiates certainty may help to give a team direction and purpose, but may also cancel some of the positive effects in knowledge sharing situations by instilling uncertainty in employees who are willing to share or ask for information (De Vries et al., 2010).

In a study by Umans (2008), the case is that ethnic diversity in top management teams (TMT) leads to more informal and open communication in the teams. Additionally, the results highlight the importance of the effects of ethnic diversity on communication through variables like environment and shared goals. Carnegie School theorists Cyert, March, and Simon argue that managers, being bounded in rationality, process information through their individual perspectives, which are formed through individual life experiences, including formal training and work history (Cyert & March, 1963; March & Simon, 1958). This alludes to the notion that managers and executive leaders form communication styles through lived experiences. In the study by Umans (2008) the case is made that cultural diversity creates competitive and innovative TMTs that contribute to the success of organizations (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Hoffman & Hegarty, 1993).
Communication Styles – Impact of Ethnic Diversity

Umans (2008) considered the interrelationship between power structures, communication (one of the team processes), and cultural diversity (operationalized in terms of ethnicity). Communication was targeted in the Umans (2008) study because it is believed to be a key process affecting group performance (Smith et al., 1994). The Umans study contributes to the conceptualization of culture and to the field by examining the complex interrelationships between ethnicity, power, and communication.

According to Shaw (1981), communication can be described as the heart of group behavior and the essence of social systems (Katz & Khan, 1978). Communication is multidimensional and represents the total amount of interaction among team members, regardless of the informality or frequency of a mode of interaction. According to Shaw (1981), while these channels are conceptually distinct from each other, informal communication facilitates more efficient and effective communication. Researchers agree that informal communication permits team flexibility and promotes more open discussion (Umans, 2008). Moreover, more informal communication results in the better flow of ideas and greater productivity and efficiency (Smith et al., 1994). It is generally believed that demographic diversity in teams negatively affects communication (Smith et al., 1994). Especially, when it comes to cultural diversity in teams, most researchers have stressed the strength of influence of this variable and its negative impact (Umans, 2008).

Cultural Diversity and Communication

One school of thought claims that culturally diverse teams offer a diversity of values, resulting in effective group discussions, ultimately leading to enhanced group performance
Culturally diverse groups are said to lead to more co-operative choices (Cox et al., 1991) and better performance than that of homogeneous groups in identifying various perspectives on problems and generating alternate solutions (Watson et al., 1993). The opposing school of thought, however, expresses itself more loudly and is supported by more empirical evidence. Researchers who claim that cultural diversity negatively affects processes and outcomes maintain that cultural diversity in team’s results in interpersonal problems and communication difficulties (Ruhe & Eatman, 1977; Triandis, 1960), and consequently leads to misunderstandings and weakened team cohesiveness (O’Reilly et al., 1989). Many researchers have come to the general conclusion that cultural diversity negatively affects communication (Ruhe & Eatman, 1977; Triandis, 1960; Elron, 1997), resulting in emotional (Pelled et al., 1999) and competitive conflicts (Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992).

While some research has investigated power relationships in TMTs, most of the literature has concentrated on CEO power in relation to organizational performance and processes (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Halebian & Finkelstein, 1993; Michel & Hambrick, 1992).

**Effective Leadership Communication – The Researcher’s Perspective**

A leader’s ability to use communication to influence his/her followers helps to determine a leader’s effectiveness. Communication is a tool that when used appropriately can assist in fostering working relationships within an organization, as well as improving productivity and the overall success of one’s business. Effective leaders incorporate the components necessary to influence their audience toward a particular end by using specific communication elements. The components to improve communication include directness (face-to-face communication), clarity
(repetitious communication), trust (encouraging communication) and integrity (ethical communication).

Additionally, effective leaders use communication to infuse their vision into those that follow. Vision cultivates through elements like motivation, optimism, values, and empathy. Through the use of an acrostic for the letters F.R.E.E and M.O.V.E. leaders may incorporate the components necessary and the elements used to help tailor a person’s communication to be an effective leader.

Effective business leaders should seek ways to improve their communication and impart their vision into their employees. One may improve communication skills by being F.R.E.E. – A leader should speak F - Face-to-face with their staff, use R - Repetition for clarity and comprehension, and E - Encourage (mutual trust) while exuding E - Ethics as a business leader.

Additionally, leaders may become effective leaders by imparting their vision into their followers. In essence, leaders should M.O.V.E. people by appealing to their emotions. This process involves M - Motivating one’s team, being O - Optimistic about the climate of the organization, having V - Values that are admirable and can be replicated by the organization, and being E - Employee-centered by regarding the needs of one’s employees).

How does a person tailor their communication to become an effective leader? Leadership encompasses having the ability to influence others to accomplish a goal. Influence fueled by communication is an inspiration. When leaders inspire their followers, these followers feel free to express themselves and are ready to act or move. The notion of feeling free comes from a sentiment of not feeling bound with one’s words; conversely, open and uncensored speech allows for there to be input and thought into discussions and decisions between a leader and
his/her employees. The notion of moving or acting may come from the influence of a leader's appeal for change, involvement, and support.

Additionally, a leader who establishes an organization with a culture of "free" communication allows for open conversations. Effective leaders welcome conversations that are unrestrained, repetitive if necessary, and overstated or reiterated if it helps to get the point across. Conscientious leaders might want to ensure what is said to an individual is understood. Leaders should promote reassuring work environments. Leaders and workers alike, should feel compelled to encourage and be encouraged. Developing mutual trust addresses ethics and credibility. These additional factors help to provide trustworthiness to what a leader is trying to convey. For leaders seeking to conquer the raging rivers of miscommunication toward calmer streams of communication success, the answers lie within the fluidity of information transfer. Seamlessly transferring information involves clarity and method of delivery.

Communication is a tool that evokes action. Whether one imposes the order to act or remain still the listener/follow must then "re-act" by complying or disobeying the request. In any case, an action denotes that one has to respond to one way or the other. The power of communication is in its ability to motivate, inspire and bring about positive change. Being an effective leader means learning how to navigate the hurdles of communication and produce positive results.

Brash dictators are leaders in the sense that they “dictate” order (one-way communication) where more readily accepted leaders are humble. Truly effective leaders understand the power of not only speech (giving) but also the power of listening (receiving) – two-way communication. Communication should always be considered a two-way street and
leaders should understand the key components. “They must strive not only to be understood but to understand” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 357). Business leaders are effective communicators when they institute ways to improve their communication and incorporate ways to impart their vision into their employees.

*Face-to-Face Communication*

Appealing to the human element begins with face-to-face communication. "It's really important to make time to meet if only for a few minutes, to discuss things in person. Face-to-face communication has been described as the fundamental building block of human communication" (Berry, 2011, p. 17). Leaders do themselves and their organization great service when they choose to engage with their employees on a personal level. Leaders who manage, administer, and oversee their staffs with a hands-on approach help to establish a pleasant workplace environment. A workplace that has a family-oriented sentiment yields loyalty and a stronger desire to perform, because there is a higher sense of purpose and a sense of community. Communicating in-person cultivate a connection between a boss and an employee, a manager and his/her staff, and an overall correlation between a team and an organization.

Communication that flows and is fluid is aided by face-to-face interaction, because of the proximity of the conversation. Open and direct talks lend to streamlined discussions and decisions. Employees can engage in-person with their leaders and ensure comprehension of tasks and assignments. Face-to-face interactions allow both employee and leader to correspond with one another, not only to speak and listen, but also to assess and interpret body language, non-verbal cues and intensity and urgency of tone. The flow of the conversation can have a more natural progression and relevance factor attributed to the nature of the communication. What
needs to be said, is said precisely and directly as not to overstate or understate any point made. “The regulation of communication can ensure an optimum flow of information to managers, thereby eliminating the barrier of “communication overload.” Communication is regulated in terms of both quality and quantity” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 357). Quality communication is what leaders want to express to guarantee optimal conveyance of information to their workers.

The transmission of information is the foundation of communication. Successful information transfer garners more achievement of objectives when supported by personal communication. Leaders dialoguing with employees on a regular basis is about ensuring understanding which leads to achievements. “Extraordinary leaders realize that individual achievement and success are the basis for team achievement and success” (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 113). The individualized attention given to a person or a group helps to establish a level of familiarity, trust, and expectation. As companies grow and units and departments spread across an organization’s campus or even position around the world, leaders are faced with an even more significant challenge to stay connected to their employees. Mass distribution of open letters, pre-recorded messages and video podcast from one's company are more efficient; however, the level of intimacy is lost, and the probability of miscommunication and even disengagement becomes more likely.

Leaders should strive to keep a more personal approach to their communication practices within their organizations. Prioritizing meetings to speak to one's audience directly communicates the importance of the leader’s dedication to being personable and also reduces misunderstandings. “Face-to-face communication is still the best method for eliciting feedback
and interpreting whether the message was received as intended” (Richman, 2016, para. 4). Another way to ensure that one's communication is correctly understood is repetition.

**Repetition**

Clear, consistent communication helps to ensure comprehension. The saying, “slow and steady wins the race” applies to the repetitious element of communication. This approach is the moral of one of Aesop's fables, "The Tortoise and the Hare." Consistent, effective communication leads to successful interpretation and thus correct application. Like the analogy of a flowing river, a steady, consistent flow of communication aids comprehension and familiarity. "Most communications activity comes with a cost, and it is important to achieve the best impact. In addition to well-targeted content that is relevant to the recipient, it is also essential to achieve consistency" (Shelton, 2015, p. 8). Leaders achieve consistency through repetition.

“Introducing repetition or redundancy into communication ensures that if one part of the message is not understood, other parts will carry the same message” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 359). Redundancy can appear on the surface as unwarranted or excessive communication; however, it is in the repeating of information and the redirecting of attention toward the desired objective that leaders can help followers sustain focus. A leader's strategic reiteration of the vision/mission helps to solidify the directive of an organization.

Steady tactical communication of a company’s message is the responsibility of leaders. Heads of organizations must be thorough to ensure that task and objectives are understood. “Following up involves assuming that you are misunderstood and, whenever possible, attempting to determine whether your intended meaning actually was received” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, &
Matteson, 2018, p. 357). Being careful to make sure everyone is on the same page is better than not being vigilant and checking to certify comprehension.

Leaders must be detailed and meticulous when it comes to communicating with their followers. Paying attention to the details and always aiming for clarity in conversations is the goal. “Try asking the receiver questions like: “Was there anything we covered here that wasn’t entirely clear?” or “I’ll check in with you later to see if you have any more questions” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 357). The re-verifying of instructions cuts down on mistakes and errors. Being particular and precise improves communication between leaders and followers.

To deliver directions that are not misinterpreted and misunderstood, leaders must relay simple statements in a simple and clear way – direct instructions that are easy to follow and understand. “The challenge of simple and direct communication is that it requires great clarity of thought plus more than a little courage” (Kotter, 1996, p. 89). Leaders enhance their communication ability by taking the time to assess what they are saying, how they are speaking and how often, to achieve clarity. For a leader’s communication to be received, there must be a level of mutual trust.

Encouraging Mutual Trust

Encouragement and trust are desired sentiments by most followers. “Managers who develop a climate of trust will find that following up on each communication is less critical and that no loss in understanding will result among subordinates from a failure to follow up on each communication” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 359). Communication is improved when leaders establish levels of trust between themselves and their employees.
Leaders must recognize the impact of positive affirmation spoken over their workforce. Using encouraging, supportive language also speaks to the comfort level that a leader can have for their staff. Analogous to a boat flowing with a stream’s current, and not against it, so the encouraging communicative trust that leaders have for their employees supports the efforts of the organization.

By allowing employees to work independently and even be given considerable responsibilities within the company displays the leaders level of trust. “Transformational leaders give followers access to the funds, materials, authority, and information needed to complete tasks and to develop new ideas. These leaders allow others to make decisions rather than insisting on making all the decisions themselves” (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 103). Communicating trust also alleviates leaders from having to do everything themselves. Credibility, accountability, and a shared dependency on one another benefits the whole organization. Leaders instill trust within their employees thereby building the employees' level of confidence and dependability. Communicating faith through consistent words of encouragement allows leaders to accentuate a climate of success and achievement further.

Encouraging words brings people together, and leaders that communicate compassion and voice concern over their staff bring their organizations together. “Consideration involves behavior indicating friendship, mutual trust, respect, warmth, and rapport between the leader and the followers. The leader with a high consideration overview supports open communication and participation” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 359). Open dialogue between the leader and the followers creates a culture of encouragement and unity. A harmonious flow of
free-flowing conversations yields ideas that are better, more innovative and diverse. My staff workers appreciate organizations that have welcomed an open communication culture.

Employees typically perform better and put forth more of an effort when they receive regular encouragement from their leader. When leaders compliment and express gratitude to their staff, there is an improvement in the quality of work, as well. Employees feel valued by leaders who communicate trust. By communicating a trusted reliance, leaders can inspire their employees to work harder. Researchers Pam Shockley-Zalabak, Kathy Ellis, and Ruggero Cesaria (2000) suggest that “product and service quality critically depend on employees’ trust in their organization and its leaders” (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Cesaria, 2000, p. 7). Leaders and followers gain trustworthiness through mutual respect and a shared appreciation of values. Followers who believe in their leaders support them because of their organizational morals and ethics.

Ethical Communication

When it comes to improving communications within an organization, leaders who profess and exhibit ethical behavior garner favorable support from followers. Leaders must express and establish principles that will define conduct and speech within the organization. Followers will listen to a leader who has high morals, integrity and is just and fair. Kreps (1986) postulates three broad principles applicable to internal organizational communications. “The first is that organizational members should not intentionally deceive one another. The second principle is that organization members’ communication should not purposely harm any other member. Third, organization members should be treated justly” (Kreps, 1986, p. 250). Communication with the intent to deceive, harm or treat unjustly should not be tolerated by leaders or followers as each of
these groups can serve as prime examples of ethical behavior. Kulshreshtha (2015) points out that:

According to the ethics of prudence or self-development, expounded by Aristotle, a person of any rank or function can be a leader in an organization if he/she sets examples of right behavior while avoiding wrong-doing, provided wrong behavior is clearly identified. Thus, leaders can 'set the tone,' 'create the spirit' and 'choose the values' for the employees of their organization. (p. 94)

Followers recognize the tone set by leaders and follow suit by acting accordingly. It is up to leaders however, to convey and demonstrate to followers what types of behavior is and is not tolerable within the organization. Additionally, Kulshreshtha states and cites Chakraborty, that:

Leaders have always inspired others to pursue noble goals such as commitment to truth, conviction, courage, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, and renunciation (Chakraborty, 1995). Noble goals help to establish an organization's "code of ethics. (p.94)

“Leaders who are ethical know they have an obligation to the organization and community at large to 1) focus on quality at all levels in the company, 2) use methodology to assess failures and successes, and 3) set standards and guidelines to measure every function in the organization” (Knights & O’Leary, 2006, p. 127). An effective leaders' moral obligation to communicate ethics is always evident, active and of high priority. Operating with purpose connects your actions to significance, and ethical leadership means doing “the next right thing,” not “the next thing right.” Doing what is right and communicating this notion to followers is of utmost importance.

Dealing with ethical dilemmas in the business world is universal. Leaders must navigate the complicated highways of business with prudence, wisdom, and discernment. Ensuring that the moral fibers of what the company stands for sustains over time means leaders must regularly communicate with their staff and various constituents the ethical manner in which to conduct
business. Ethical leaders have respectful, two-way discussions, where they engage directly with colleagues, customers, and other stakeholders. Engaging with one’s workforce is where leaders begin to infuse and impart their vision into their employees.

Motivation

Leaders must appeal to the emotions of their employees through inspiration and motivation. “Effective leaders are skilled at sharing and responding to emotions. For example, they know how to communicate affection, liking, and excitement to followers. In addition, they know how to channel their emotions in order to achieve their objectives and maintain friendly group relations” (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 112). Dwight D. Eisenhower stated, “motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.” An effective leader communicates with a passion which incites followers to stand up, pay attention and then act.

So how do you keep a team motivated? Some organizations heavily rely on the concept of building up a robust and efficient team and are then challenged with the task of continuing to motivate that team to continue to perform at a high level. Many motivational theories are applicable to helping improve a team’s performance. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) appeals to one's basic needs. If an organization is structured to identify and supply the basic core needs of its team, this may help to ensure satisfaction and thus help to continue to motivate that team to excel in their performance.

In hierarchical organizations, where decisions come from the top executive levels, it may be harder to incorporate a team-motivated concept unless this notion is highly encouraged and a
significant part of that organization's structure. In a decentralized organization, where decisions are handled more bilaterally, this notion of motivated team building may be more easily applied.

Frederick Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Two-factor Theory) relates more directly to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). More than just ensuring that a team has what it “needs” (adequate compensation and achievement opportunities) this theory seeks to address a team’s genuine “job satisfaction” with what they are doing, and how they are supported and acknowledged by leaders. Behavior impacts motivating factors, and it serves a leader’s best interest to build a strong team by keeping one’s employees happy, motivated, and satisfied. Motivation theories build on the premise that our motivations affect our behavior. "Motivation affects the choice of behavior, the longevity of the behavior, and the level of effort" (Kanfer, 1991, p. 77).

James Collins and Jerry Porras explain in their book Built to Last, “organizations with a well-articulated vision that permeates the company are most likely to prosper and have long-term success” (Collin & Porras, 1994, p. 67). Success within a company fuels a leader's ability to inspire through adversity, motivate through dedication and captivate by creating a visual in one's mind that speaks to each employee. Leaders must be able to touch the spirits of their employees in order to appeal to their minds which drives their abilities and talents.

“The charismatic leader is one who creates an atmosphere of motivation based on an emotional commitment to and identity with his or her vision, philosophy, and style on the part of followers” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 418). By leaders communicating a business culture of motivation, followers can approach their jobs with encouraged, inspired and
stirred up “can do” mentalities. Leaders can use motivation to breed optimism within the organization that radiates out to the public.

**Optimism**

“Inspiring leadership speaks to our need to have meaning and purpose in our lives. Furthermore, being upbeat, positive, and optimistic about the future offers people hope” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 23). Optimism in the workplace is contagious, as it permeates the very halls, cubicles, and offices of a company. Leaders use optimism to garner support and sustainability of their visions. Visions are fueled by hope that is breed through positive and progressive speech. Confidence in one’s leader confirms an affirmative affiliation with their beliefs. An effective leader injects meaning and purpose-driven lives into their employees through upbeat, progressive affirmations and inspired compilations of where the organization is and where it is going in the future.

Another essential aspect of optimism is concerning one's current state. This positive premise even produces confidence in dire situations of existence in organizations. When leaders continue to assure better days when times are tough, employees are encouraged to stay the course and be confident in their leader's ideas. “Effective emotional leaders communicate confidence and stability in the face of these emotional ups and downs” (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 29). No matter the forecast, helpful leaders exude a sure and certain outlook on the company’s survival.

“This is crucial at any time, but in times of great uncertainty, leading with positive emotions is absolutely essential to moving people upward and forward” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002 and Fredrickson, 2001, p. 2). Leaders evoke their certainty through sustenance
provided by clear and explicit direction. Clarity in direction cuts down on confusion and discourages negative thoughts. When leaders communicate their vision confidently, they answer questions, clear up misunderstandings and avoid the whole notion of despair and negativety. Optimism does not usually flourish from low energy, uncharismatic individuals. Intensity is warranted.

Employees gain optimism from high-energy personalities that have an appeal and magnetism. “We also expect our leaders to be enthusiastic, energetic, and positive about the future” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 3). The allure of a leader with enthusiasm and charm helps to enthral all their audience to the images and ideas that the leader is trying to put forth. When leaders speak with high-energy, it promotes high-energy within the organization. Employees become captivated by their leader's dream and vision for the company when the leader speaks with passion. This type of spirited communication has a substantial impact on behavior as well.

“In addition, studies have proven that positive executive leader behavior has a greater positive impact on employee behavior and value acceptance than the corresponding negative impact of negative executive behavior” (Jones & Millar, 2010, p. 5). The behavior of one's organization lies at the cornerstone of accomplishment and achievement. When employees believe in the vision, their actions support their beliefs. Leaders can be confident in knowing that their employees will "act" following their belief and support of the business. Belief is grounded in values.

*Values*

“It is the values and beliefs of the organization that establish the organizational culture” (Baldwin, Bommer & Rubin, 2013, p. 53). Essentially, it is a culture that leaders are creating
when they effectively communicate their values regarding themselves and about the company. Imparting their vision stems from leaders communicating about what is valuable and important to the company. Employees are pleased when they are described as "valuable" to the organization by their leader. Leaders who speak the truth and promote what is right, just, and fair, acquire support from their employees. Having values, communicating values, and living values matters to each employee, potential partner, and loyal customers. When leaders impart their vision, their values, what they genuinely believe in, and how they live shines through their being.

Leaders must exhibit what they believe in and advocate for others to do. The values, morals, and character of a leader should be apparent to all. “If the employees of an organization see the leaders of a company living the values instead of giving—or in workplace vernacular when they see leaders walking the walk—they are more likely to conform to and accept those values themselves” (Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013; Simons, 1999, p. 135). As staff members accept the standards of their leader, organizations transform, mature and grow into the industries envisioned by the company’s leader. The morals and ethics of a leader demonstrate authenticity.

The embodiment of character and genuine leadership help to communicate a vision. Organizations are transformed daily by leaders who can exude an essence of reliability. Employees want to know that they can rely on their bosses and leaders want to know they can depend on their followers. Companies, where leaders and followers share the same core values and beliefs, help organizations to transform into global entities beyond the industry. “Congruence in values between leader and follower forms the strategic and moral foundation of
authentic transformational leadership” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 184). When leaders display values that employees can support, this in-turn establishes a sustainable following and a grounded existence.

“Organization strategy that does not include values does not make a sustainable impact on an organization’s growth” (Chun, 2017, p. 871). Values are an integral part of conveying one’s vision. As entities evolve and grow, leaders must work to ensure the organization is always moving in a positive direction. Leaders should divulge their beliefs in order to solidify sameness with the employees. “Individual values that are similar to institutional values helps to drive institutional growth positively” (Pitlik, & Rode, 2017, p. 578).

The values and ethics of leaders are essential to inculcating change (Salmela, Eriksson, & Fagerstrom, 2012; Nelson-Brantley & Ford, 2017; Blackburn, 2014). The interplay and congruence between individual and corporate value systems have been studied, and value congruence is a key factor in garnering behavioral support for change (Liedtka, 1989; Lamm, Gordon, & Purser, 2010). Moreover, the values and ethics of leaders are essential components for gaining support for change (Nelson-Brantley & Ford, 2017; Hendricks, 1989). The whole notion of gaining support from one's followers personifies a leader's values and ability to make their followers feel special. Put people first.

Employee-centered

The employee first concept is a value grounded in selflessness. Leaders intrinsically impart their vision not only through communicating but also by allowing communication from the bottom up through the hierarchical chain of the organization. Leaders must show empathy. “Empathy involves being receiver-oriented rather than communicator-oriented” (Konopaske,
Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 358). Employees are more likely to listen if they know their leaders are listening to them. Leaders who show compassion toward their employees gain respect and loyalty. Leaders must demonstrate that they are responsive to the needs of their workforce. Leaders, displaying caring, consideration and kindness, gain favor amongst their staff. Essentially, employees want to know that they are working for someone with whom they identify and know identifies with them.

Shared vision, similar outlooks, and compatible work ethics are born out of shared experiences. “Empathy is the ability to put oneself in the other person’s role and to assume that individual’s viewpoints and emotions” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 358). Leaders who genuinely identify with their staff can speak to them and hear from them because these leaders understand the plights, conditions, and concerns of their team. Heads of organizations must convey their vision in such a way that employees know that leadership within the company will always address their issues. Sympathy is warranted because it unifies the leaders and followers and symbolizes support.

“The employee-centered leader focuses on the people doing the work and believes in . . . aiding employees in satisfying their needs by creating a supportive work environment” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 407). Leaders must be accommodating to the request and desires of their teams. Comradery builds through experiences and leaders know they have to "roll up their sleeves” and get in the trenches or at least personify the type of person that would do the work that is necessary and not just the work that is preferred. Communicating a vision centers around getting people to jointly, co-identify with one's outlook.
“The employee-centered leader is concerned with followers’ personal advancement, growth, and achievement” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 407). None of those mentioned above aspirations center around the leader’s self-interest. The employee-centered leader is not consumed with being served by his/her staff. Effective leaders are always seeking ways to make his/her team even better. By encouraging participation in a variety of trainings and workshops for professional development, leaders display a special affinity towards their workers' opportunities to advance their skills and capabilities. Effective Leaders want their workforce to grow in their abilities. These leaders want their staff to be recognized and honored for their achievements. Effective leaders possess universal collective gratitude for all the support and contributions that their staff provides the organization. Employees consequently embrace the vision communicated by their leaders because of the appreciation and gratitude extended toward them.

Tailoring one’s communication to be an effective leader is essentially about grooming one’s ability to appeal to people’s emotions. The human nature aspect of relaying respect, clarity, trust, and morals in a way that it is warmly received is a talent/skill. The ability to communicate and evoke emotion through inspiration, positivity, values, and compassion is a gift. The genuineness of a leader helps to sustain the proficiency of the level of influence that he/she communicates. Effective leaders have to have a heart for their followers to establish a connection. Appealing to the most basic needs, desires, and aspirations of one's workers signify a leader's sensitivity to what is important. Without one's workforce, there is no work. Without communicating gratitude, appreciation, or concern for one's staff there is no emotional motivation to work in the most dedicated and productive way for that leader. Communication works better when there is an open-door policy between leaders and followers.
When leaders make it a priority to have no barriers that would hinder the goals and objectives of the organization, leaders can have seamless lines of communication. Leaders must make it a routine practice to sustain positive communication efforts. “Improving organizational communications is an ongoing process” (Konopaske, Ivancevich, & Matteson, 2018, p. 357). Leaders by their admission must be in it for the duration to garner loyalty and genuine admiration.

Kirkpatrick and Lock review of the literature suggest, “that drive, motivation, ambition, honesty, integrity, and self-confidence are key leadership traits” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 51). “Leadership creates organizations or alters them in some fundamental way by challenging the status quo, creating a vision, communicating that vision widely, getting people to believe in it, and then empowering them to act,” (Kotter, 1997, p. 20).

“Evidence suggests that outstanding leaders have high levels of emotional intelligence (EI)” (Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011, p. 46). “Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, respond to, and express emotions” (Mayer, 2001, p. 3). EI ability enhances one’s effectiveness by promoting communication that is Face-to-face, Repetitious, Encouraging and has Ethics (F.R.E.E). Additionally, effective leaders must use communication elements that Motivate, are Optimistic, are enriched with Values, and are emphatically Employee-centered (M.O.V.E.). The integrity and humility of an effective leader are evident by their desire to influence change for the betterment of the individual, the team, and the organization.

description of emotional intelligences abilities which includes self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself. McCrae (2000) notes that Salovey and Mayer, who are credited with coining the term emotional intelligence, have narrowed their focus of study from attempting to measure emotional personality traits to trying to measure emotional ability.

**Synthesis**

The above-mentioned articles and case studies encapsulate the core concepts of this research study. Minority leaders face several challenges that test their resolve not only as business pioneers, entrepreneurs, corporate role models and as industry leaders attempting to make a name for themselves, but also test the application of attributes forged through the lived experiences that help to shape their leadership and communication skills. For example, humility, authenticity, diversity, and communication traits are embodied in a leaders’ capacity to lead.

The added label of minority denotes another dimension of proving capability all while displaying fortitude with a resolve to be resilient in the face of not only the typical pressures of business, but also the perplexing element of race and the perceptions that come with being a minority. Minority CEOs personify fortitude and resilience simply by being in “the game of” business; yet and still, in many instances they must exude know-how, confidence, and an unwavering determination – just to be recognized or given consideration.

Based on the literature reviewed, evidence is overwhelmingly given to the challenges and barriers of minority leaders and those seeking to become leaders. By exploring the lived experiences of minority leaders, the hope is that the testimonies and narratives of creating, sustaining, and thriving in the business industry against all odds will merit further consideration and research into a demographic of individuals who on the backs of their rich communal history
have tempered the storms of racial injustice, gender bias, and ill-guided prejudices. With the research method applied in Chapter 3, the objective was to provide documented accounts of lived experiences by minority CEOs, for the purposes of insight, revelation, and business education. These purposes serve as a resource for future knowledge, business application, and genuine acceptance – diversity and inclusion, reimagined.
Chapter 3: Research Method

Overview

The aim of Chapter 3 was to narrate the research methodology used in this study and to divulge reasons and explanations for the research approach utilized by the researcher. A qualitative research method was chosen to convey the genuine value, characteristics, and attributes of the participants. Qualitative research “empowers individuals to share their stories and hear their voices,” (Creswell, 2013, p.4). Additionally, qualitative research was conducted to provide a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, and by allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) emphasizes that qualitative research is more suited for problems that need to be explored.

This research study involved exploring what lived experiences motivate the leadership attributes and communication styles of minority CEOs. Exploring the motivational factors of leadership and communication among minority CEOs helped to provide indications as to how specific leadership approaches are fueled by distinct phenomenon. Furthermore, by executing a phenomenological study, this research revealed how and why minority CEOs are compelled by fortitude, resilience, and perseverance (FRP) to lead their organizations in the way that they do. This research study explored the communication style and leadership approach as forged by the FRP of minority leaders.

Based on the revelations of this research study, the leadership and communication characteristics of minority CEOs contributed to positive workplace experiences and interactions with employees. Consequently, these experiences and relationships impacted the profitability and
sustainability of the respective companies. The aim of this research study was to consider minority-owned and –led businesses in STEM industries with regards to the fortitude applied by CEOs. Furthermore, this study identified what fuels the motivation of minority CEOs to lead their company and discovered what influences have played a role in how they lead and communicate within their organizations. At its core this study aimed to assess leadership attributes and communication styles of minority CEOs to gather what drives them to succeed, “at all cost and against all odds”, beyond the mere goal of profit, achievement, and status.

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs and identified what influences and motivations factor into the leadership and communication attributes of minority CEOs. While there have been numerous leadership communication styles researched over the past half-century, most of the styles compare authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire styles of leadership communication or they contrast task and interpersonal leadership communication (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Essentially, one can learn a leader's style by observing "close attention to the leader's communication” (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 21). The reason this is important is that "leadership is first, and foremost, a communication-based activity” (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 21). Leaders spend much of their time conceptualizing a vision (spurring direction) that is then presented to a variety of followers, constituents, and stakeholder groups. “It is also true that the more leadership responsibility one has, the more one's job focuses on communication" (Hackman & Johnson, 2013, p. 21).

After identifying the communication style used by each respective minority leader, this study explored the significant experiences and/or influential individuals that helped shape each
leader. The critical elements that shaped each CEO was compared and contrasted to identify the similarities and differences that have influenced and motivated each CEO. A well-crafted research methodology was established to address the central research question (James, Slater, & Bucknam, 2012). The organization of the research methodology was constructed to ensure that future researchers would be able to comprehend, replicate, and expand the research in a way that would help substantiate the findings.

**Worldview**

Minority leaders face workplace issues not experienced by white leaders including lack of support, discrimination, racism, and stereotyping (Flores & Matkin, 2014). The workplace issues that minority leaders face range in scope and in intensity. These variables/issues cannot be known or understood without inquiry of the affected individuals. This qualitative phenomenological study was an exploratory study into the lived experiences that helped to shape the leadership and communication styles of minority leaders. The primary focus of this study derived from an ontological philosophy commonly associated with qualitative phenomenological research. In conducting this phenomenological study, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data to expound on the foundational implications from this philosophy. Ontological implications focused on the reality of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participating individuals by using their own words to convey varying realms of reality from the participants’ perspective. When studying individuals, qualitative researchers conduct a study with the intent of reporting the nature of the participants’ realities (Creswell & Poth, 2016). By using the testimonies of different individuals and cataloging their distinct vantage points, the researcher identified a phenomenon/shared lived experience that while respectively unique to the individual was collectively familiar and left relatable impressions on each participant’s perspective.
The barriers and challenges that minority CEOs face were not necessarily tangible and therefore required philosophical interpretation. Inquiring into the mindset of a particular group of individuals and analyzing their lived phenomenon as minority leaders was what made the ontological philosophy appropriate for this study. Furthermore, the worldview of social constructivism (interpretivism) insinuated that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. The researcher, based on the “words of the participants,” interpreted the lived experiences and substantiated the “stories” as phenomenon that shaped the individuals in some shape or form. For this reason, qualitative research is often called “interpretive” research. The goal of the research was to rely heavily on the participants’ views of the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The constructivist worldview manifest in phenomenological studies, in which individuals describe their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology

This study gained insights into the leadership and communicative strategies of minority CEOs who work in dominant or non-dominant-culture corporate organizational settings. This study explored how minority CEOs view the impact of resilience on building lived experiences on their leadership and communication approaches. By attempting to understand these CEOs through their narrated experience, the research uncovered themes identified through phenomenon. According to Van Manen (1990):

Phenomenology appeals to our immediate common experience in order to conduct a structured analysis of what is most common, most familiar, most self-evident to us. The aim is to construct an animating, evocative, descriptive (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld. (p. 20)
Concurrently, Orbe (1998), citing Van Manen (1990) asserted that phenomenology is based on several key assumptions:

(1) There is no such thing as an objective researcher; this requires the researcher to acknowledge how they are positioned in the study; (2) Phenomenology seeks to gain a deeper understanding of everyday lived experiences; (3) Phenomenological methods differ from traditional methods that predict what the research will reveal it offers meaning centered questions; (4) Phenomena are openly studied; (5) Phenomenology is interested in persons rather than the individual; (6) It focuses on the conscious experience rather than hypothetical. (Orbe, 1998, p. 12)

As Langellier and Hall (1989) explained, a phenomenological approach assumes the co-researchers are active participating actors and contributors to social research. They further suggest that phenomenology is appropriate for studying minority CEOs because its primary focus is centered on the lived experience. Additionally, it does not separate the researcher from the researched.

The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of how resilience factors into the “make-up” of minority CEOs. This is achieved by entering the participants’ life worlds. Remaining at a distance would not allow the researcher to hear their personal stories, so the interpretive paradigm was specifically chosen. Examining the participants’ lives through an interpretive lens allowed a more holistic picture of their life words to develop. The interpretive paradigm, "centers on the study of meanings, that is, the way individuals make sense of their world through their communicative behaviors” (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983, p. 5).

Organization

The organization of this study is described in the seventeen sections of this chapter. Preceded by an overview, worldview, phenomenology, and current organization section, the fifth section presents the questions that guided the research. The sixth section of this chapter is the
research design that introduced the methodological approach, phenomena, and rationale for selecting a qualitative research methodology. The seventh section of this chapter provides the research approach that was used in the study. The eighth section discusses the population. The ninth and tenth sections describe the participants and how the participants were selected respectively for this study. The eleventh section discusses the instrumentation. The twelfth section covers the procedure that was used during this study. The thirteenth section details the approach that was used for data collection. The fourteenth section consists of a methodology for analyzing the data for this study. The fifteenth section covers the ethical considerations for this study. The sixteenth section details the researcher positionality. The seventeenth and final section is a discussion of the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

**Research Questions**

According to Rossman (1995) research questions serve two purposes. The first purpose is to guide the research. The second is to provide an outline for the presentation of data. In this study the research questions served both purposes.

This qualitative phenomenological study explored how the lived experiences of minority CEOs help to establish their FRP in business. The principal research question (RQ) and subsequent questions were developed to explore the phenomenon shared by minority CEOs in developing their respective leadership and communication styles.

RQ1. What lived experiences reported by minority CEOs in STEM industries contribute to FRP?

RQ1a. How does FRP affect the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs?
RQ1b. How are lived experiences of FRP operationalized in decision-making practices by the minority CEO?

RQ2. What is the organizational impact of minority CEO FRP with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability?

**Research Design**

A qualitative research application was utilized. A phenomenological study of minority CEOs was conducted to document experiences and record testaments regarding leadership and communication attributes. The rationale for using a qualitative phenomenological design was to understand the CEOs’ experiences behind the information in order to gain increased insight. Because positive leadership and communication qualities are invaluable attributes of a CEO, it was important to understand the underlying phenomenological aspects and experiences that were extraordinarily unique to minority CEOs operating in an industry and region where minority CEOs are underrepresented, and the executive positions are majority-dominated. In-depth interviews provided a means of collecting rich data that is essential for understanding leadership and communicative attributes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) identified several strengths of qualitative research. First, qualitative research focuses on the “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what “real life” is like (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on the research questions investigated, qualitative inquiry allowed the researcher to hear the participants articulate their everyday experiences in their own words and focused this researcher on what their “real life” was like, which is particularly important when studying the lived experiences of minorities.
According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data provides thick descriptions that are vivid and based on real-life experiences that have a major impact on the reader. The authors further noted that real words are stronger and more revealing than statistics.

A third strength Miles and Huberman (1994) offered is that the qualitative approach transcends the quantitative approach. Through qualitative inquiry, understanding is gained of the “how” and “why,” not just the “what” and “how many.” This study explored the origins and influences of the resilience embodied in minority CEOs. This approach allowed the researcher to contextualize the individual experiences of each participant involved in the study.

Janesick (2000) offered a thorough list of characteristics of qualitative research design. She indicated that qualitative research is holistic, aiming to understand the whole by viewing the larger picture. It did not focus on making predictions, but rather on understanding. These characteristics are important in illuminating the stories of minority CEO resilience.

The voices of minority CEOs were at the center, not in the margins, of this study. Pennington (1999) concluded that having minorities (particularly, executives) at the center of the research “gives their voices a long-denied privilege; more important, for researchers, it allows the minority CEOs to be understood in the contexts in which they live, grow, and make sense of their lives” (Pennington, 1999, p. 23).

**Overview of Research Approach**

The exploratory nature of the research problem suggested a qualitative phenomenological approach based on in-depth personal interviews which allowed the emergence of themes (Filstad, 2011) that would be important to organizations exploring leadership attributes, particularly of minority CEO candidates. This qualitative phenomenological research supported the
development of thick descriptions of the phenomena where the research provided a detailed
portrait of events provided by the participants (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016; King,
1994; Moustakas, 1994). Personal accounts and perspective shared by minorities may help to
derstigmatize stereotypes, nullify gender bias, and invalidate racial negative perceptions regarding
executive leadership capability. Education, awareness, and enlightenment of issues facing
minority CEOs may go a long way in providing insight that could help support efforts of
diversity and inclusion in corporate America.

Phenomenology is a method of research to uncover distinct features and understand
complex social phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). The limited studies on the lived experiences of
minority CEOs made conducting a qualitative design most appropriate and essential. A
phenomenological study provides meaning and context to the lived experiences of a group of
individuals of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The transcendental approach followed
for this phenomenological study centers the research on the experiences of the participants
(Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

**Participant Sample, Region, and Identity**

In a phenomenological study, Creswell (2014) suggested that the range of participants
should be three to ten individuals. Creswell (2014) recommended a small sample size of
participants to facilitate collecting extensive details about each individual in the study. Van
Manen (2016) suggested putting the focus on providing enough examples to provide a lived
experience description of the phenomenon. Van Manen (2016) further mentioned that too many
transcripts may thwart the creation of a scholarly and reflective phenomenological study. The
sample size for this study consisted of 10 minority CEOs, in STEM-related industries. The organizations were not named in this study to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Organizations within STEM-related industries were targeted to assess similar or dissimilar experiences and perspectives of being a minority CEO in various regions. Minority CEOs in STEM-related industries in the southern regions of the United States including Alabama, Georgia, select regions of the East Coast including Maryland, the District of Columbia, and parts of the West Coast including California were utilized for this study. Choosing participants in STEM was used to compare and contrast experiences in an industry where the participants’ profile (ethnicity and/or gender) was underrepresented in executive leadership roles.

The participants’ identity was kept confidential. Ethnic identity was observed respectfully by inquiring of the participants’ history, native origins, or heritage. Open-ended questions and preliminary discussions of about their upbringing and where they grew up were gathered through the interview process.

**Participant Selection**

Solicitation of minority CEOs to participate in this research were administered using the following resources: The Small Business Development Center at Alabama A&M University, the local and state Chamber of Commerce, word of mouth, email, and social media. Participation was completely voluntary. Methods for acquiring content and data for this research study from participants included: dialogue via phone, email, and text with minority CEOs; interview protocol via Zoom media application; and a demographic leadership profile inquiry.
Instrumentation

The instrumentation proposed for this study was an in-depth, one-on-one scheduled interview between the researcher and the participants using questions developed from a pilot study that helped refine the interview protocol guide (See Appendix A). A pilot study, often used in research to test the quality of instrumentation (Chenail, 2011) was conducted. The pilot study resulted in adjustments to questions to increase the clarity of understanding for reasons of gathering the most genuine intent of the responses. Special emphasis was placed on obtaining the essence of the “lived experiences” of the interviewee through recorded and note taking session. Interviews were used to gather information based on the lived experiences of the minority CEOs regarding the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance required to attain their current leadership status and how the attributes impacted the way they lead and communicate. The interviews were conducted using a set of semi-structured, open-ended questions validated by the pilot study (Maxwell, 2013). Participants in this study signed a consent form (see Appendix C) verified by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and provided by and maintained via the researcher. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the qualitative data analyses software tool, NVivo 12 Pro.

Study Procedures

Interviewing was chosen as the method for collecting data because it enables greater openness to the object of study. Discussion-based interviews were used to allow the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and probe for new aspects of the phenomenon studied (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Interviewing involved certain inherent limitations when it came to exploring the “lived experiences” of minority CEOs, since it merely adds to an “understanding” of a phenomenon rather than capturing it in its “natural” setting, as could be achieved through in situ
observation (Rennstam, 2007). Even though observation would be desirable in the present study, the researcher realized the near impossibility of gaining access to formal or informal environments of each CEO engagement in an actual day-to-day setting (in varying locals). The use of interviewing as the sole source of the data gathering processes is justified, as otherwise these processes would have to remain unexplored. Upon the conclusion of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed and processed through the qualitative data analyses software NVivo Pro 12 to help develop codes and identify themes (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection

The researcher conducted an initial interview and followed-up with calls, text, and email correspondences (for thoroughness and clarity) with the CEOs. The researcher developed an interview guide to manage and facilitate the line of questioning (see Appendix A). Conversations were recorded and transcribed via Zoom media. Verification of accuracy and authenticity were checked by sending transcripts to the participants. Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could at any time seek removal from the study.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this phenomenological study began during the interviews as the researcher actively listened to participants to formulate the meaning of the accounts of their lived experiences, developed a preliminary coding scheme, and validated the codes through clarifying questions (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). Data analysis involved a rigorous process of assessing the interview transcripts, notes and memos using the NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis tool. This process involved uploading the digital transcriptions into the software and generating file classifications. Coding involved categorizing segments and portions of the transcriptions into
coding sentiments and relationships. From there, queries and inferences were made by sorting word frequency analysis and comparison which produced criteria results and coding matrices, and visualizations like the word clouds (see Figures 16 and 17). Final data analysis was conducted by categorizing concepts, annotating notes, and uncovering themes from the interview using the qualitative data coding mechanism (see Appendix F).

Ryan and Bernard (2002) found coding serves two distinct purposes in qualitative analysis. First, codes act as tags to mark off text in a corpus for later retrieval or indexing. Tags are not associated with any fixed units of text; they can mark simple phrases or extend across multiple pages. Second, codes act as values assigned to fixed units (Ryan & Bernard, 2002). The codes of this study were formulated from the transcripts, notes, and memos of the interviews and used within the qualitative data analysis tool to generate concepts that yielded themes that associated with the research questions.

**Ethical Considerations**

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed for this research study to ensure all ethical considerations. To protect the participants from any possible risks and to inform participants of potential benefits, an IRB application was submitted and approved prior to beginning this study (see Appendix D). Participants received an informed consent form that was signed prior to participation in the interviews (Appendix C). All research participants will receive access to the final copy of this dissertation identifying the findings and conclusions drawn from this study. The data collected from this study was used to make general assertions regarding how the lived experiences of minority CEOs can instill the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance necessary for them to warrant business leadership validation and acceptance.
Participation in this study was purely voluntary and could be stopped at any time. The participants’ identity will be kept confidential for this study. Safeguarding of personal information was upheld and any and all data collected was secured at all times. Truthfulness and authenticity were a priority in the gathering and the reporting of data. To further substantiate the ethical considerations of this study, the researcher completed all applicable training for the certification in human subject protection through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).

**Researcher Positionality**

Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they “position themselves” in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). As a minority, the researcher may indirectly relate personally to some of the emotions, sentiments, and views of the participants. While not functioning as a CEO, the researcher has led and been a part of a minority business and may be able to empathize with some of the experiences and thoughts of the CEOs, themselves. Albeit reactionary, the researcher engaged, analyzed, and assessed the participants only from an objective researcher role, with the utmost intent and focus of recording, accepting, and recapping the information, data, and insights purely from the participants' perspective. The researcher’s connection to and interest in the topic was purely based on the researcher’s educational background (MS degree - Communications Specialist with Business concentration) and interest in leadership roles (as an ordained minister and an aspiring business leadership consultant).
Epochen/Bracketing and Triangulation

The researcher used the epoche method, also referred to as bracketing to help set aside biases when conducting phenomenological research (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). This approach allowed me to consider my own experience with the phenomenon (though limited) to prevent preconceived notions or conclusions to be drawn which could subsequently interfere with the findings gathered from the study (Creswell, 2014).

Triangulation was also used as a qualitative research strategy to test validity. Triangulation uses multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). The three methods I used were 1) selective literature – scholarly peer-reviewed and gray articles (what other research suggest, theories, findings, results, and recommendations); 2) CEO interview transcriptions – first-hand accounts (participatory insights from personal business perspectives); and 3) researcher memos and notes (deductive reasoning and critical analysis of research study as well as information gathered during pilot study).

Validity and Trustworthiness

Qualitative phenomenological studies by their very nature carry certain risks related to the validity of data collection and analysis. The validity and trustworthiness of a study is found through the ability to replicate the findings (Merriam, 2009). While qualitative research may concede acceptable margins of variability, the methodology should consistently yield results that are similar, although differing in specific content description (Carcary, 2009). Creswell (2014) described reflexivity as, when the researcher engages in self-understanding about the biases, values, and experiences that can be injected into a qualitative research study. I applied carefully constructed mechanisms to ensure researcher bias was not a factor in any findings and
conclusions drawn from this study. By implementing a strict guideline of the participants’ voices being heard and not mine, I purposely used direct quotes from the research participants to lessen researcher interpretation or translation. I also employed respondent validation. This qualitative research component involved sharing interview transcripts with the participants to allow for verification of any sentiments and statements made during the interview sessions. The interview questions themselves involved some elements of redundancy for the purposes of validation and to test consistency of responses.

Authenticity of the interviews was maximized by the researcher giving the participants total autonomy in their responses and reflections. Risks were minimized by the lack of history or personal relationship between the researcher and participants, thereby limiting the likelihood of fabricated or staged responses to influence the research. Additionally, the implementation and adherence to a strategically well-crafted guide for the interview sessions, helped to ensure a stringent focus was maintained on collecting data, and gathering information that was uniquely consistent with the goals and objectives of the research study. The participants’ leadership and communication-related approaches, driven by the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance attributes ascertained through lived experiences remained the central focus of this study. While generalizability may not be construed due to the small number of participants, the researcher produced a study that captured the essence of the lived experiences of minority CEOs from various STEM industries. The authenticity and honesty of this study provided insight, perspective, and awareness. The validity and trustworthiness of the findings could help bolster diversity and inclusion efforts, and also foster more consideration of minority executive-level leaders in the United States and the world.
Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

Chapter 4 provides an overview outlining the findings from the research, a research participant leadership profile demographic, an explanation of the data analysis process, an account of how the interview and qualitative data analysis tools were incorporated in the study, the research findings, and a detailed participant interview synopsis for each theme generated and the components that reinforced each theme. The essence of this study were the informative accounts from the research participants which provided an authentic perspective into the insights of minority executive-level leadership. This chapter concluded with contributions to applied practice in a narrative of the intrinsic benefits that minority CEOs can provide to organizations.

At the onset this research study initially sought to explore only the attributes of fortitude and then resilience among minority CEOs; however, through the research process, perseverance emerged as a succinct, complementary, and necessary component for this study. Individually the terms are unique in that fortitude may be seen as a learned mindset from one’s upbringing and includes experienced adversity; resilience is a trait achieved with repeated application allowing one to bounce back or recover repeatedly; and perseverance is an action applied showcasing endurance. According to the findings of this study, collectively the components of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance can help substantiate the capacity and capability of minority CEOs.

Findings from this research study centered on the influence of the attributes of strength and stamina, collectively referred to as the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance (FRP) of minority executive-level leadership. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how the attributes of FRP may distinctively serve as a human capital advantage with
regard to Minority CEOs. The study explored the unique perceptions of minority CEOs and how life experiences influenced their respective leadership styles and communication approaches within their organizations. The findings provided exclusive insight from top level executives regarding the phenomenon of being a minority leader navigating challenges, barriers, and perceptions within an industry, namely the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), where minority leaders are underrepresented. By using a qualitative research design, this study was able to garner the authenticity of the minority CEO participants’ life and business experiences, as well as the personal influencers and motivators that contributed to their respective approaches in business.

The research questions served to ignite the discovery of how the lived experiences of minority CEOs may instill fortitude, resilience, and perseverance, and subsequently impact their leadership and communication styles in business. The findings derived from the research questions were obtained through a qualitative data analysis process which encompassed the development of an interview protocol with questions (confirmed and verified by the IRB: Appendix D), subsequent pilot study (to substantiate the line of questioning), interviewing of participants, and coding of the interview transcriptions, notes, and memos.

Data Collection and Interview Process

The findings of this research study resulted from the exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of ten minority CEOs in STEM-related fields of industry. The participants were solicited via word of mouth, email, and social media. An initial pilot study was conducted to validate the interview protocol and line of questioning (Appendix A). The interviews were in-depth, one-on-one sessions via the Zoom media platform. The interview sessions involved semi-
structured, open-ended questions that allowed participants to provide thorough accounts of experiences and unrehearsed, impromptu responses recounting their perspectives. The interview sessions included a preliminary briefing referencing the terms of resilience and fortitude, a synopsis of a phenomenological study, and basic types of leadership and communication styles. The twenty-five questions of the interview protocol (Appendix A) inquired the participants’ perspective on the lived experiences that constituted their respective resilience and fortitude behaviors and practices in business. The interviews provided the researcher with an essence of the participants “lived experiences” regarding the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance required to create, sustain, and thrive in their executive leadership positions. The participants also recounted how the attribute of FRP impacted the way they lead and communicated within their organizations.

Research Participants

The ten minority CEO research study participants were all in STEM-related fields of industry, as seen in Table 2. The industry areas represented by the research study participants ranged from a variety of backgrounds in STEM-related fields including information technology, engineering, architecture, technical solutions and networking, cyber security, clinical research, biotechnology, intelligence analysis, and science and technology integration services. The STEM field industry was chosen for this research study to provide exclusive insight from top level executives regarding the phenomenon of being a minority leader within an industry where minority leaders are underrepresented.

The gender breakdown of minority CEOs included six males and four females. Observations regarding gender differences among the research participants were noted in the
ensuing text relating to Figures 10, 11, 12, and 13 regarding business influences, motivations, leadership, and communication applications.

Among the research study participants, the ethnicity ranged between African American and Native American heritage. Specific ethnicity identification for each participant was not disclosed to further ensure confidentiality.

Table 2. Participant Industry Area of Service and Gender

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Participant Organizations - Industry Areas of Service</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Contracting, Logistics, Acquisition, Information Technology, Program Management, and Engineering</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Management Consulting, Information Technology, and Knowledge Management Solutions</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Aerospace Engineering, Manufacturing, and Program Management</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Architectural Firm</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Technical Solutions, Information Technology, Networking, General Construction, Procurement &amp; Logistics</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Systems Engineering and Firm Integration of Solutions &amp; Cyber Security</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Cultural and Technological Integration in Clinical Research</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Intelligence Analysis, Logistics, Biotech, Information Technology, Administrative/General Management Services</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Math Collaborative Innovation Integration Services</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supplementing the interview sessions, the participants were given a brief leadership profile survey to complete. The results (as seen in Figures 7 through 15) yielded data with respect to the participants’ age range, their years of experience at the executive level, the number of employees lead or supervised by the participants, the predominant business influencer in the participants lives, the major motivating factor contributing to the participant as a business leader, the leadership and communication style the participants felt most associated with, and the
participants’ sentiment as to the overall level that their ethnicity and/or gender attributed to their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance as a business leader. The figures provide a visual representation of the participants’ leadership profile. The survey was used to provide greater insight and serve as an additional analysis tool to verify and assess demographic-related notions of the research study participants that could be used for this study and for additional study when evaluating the referenced factors.

Figure 7 displays the age range of the research study participants. A majority of the participants (7) were between the ages of forty-one and sixty, while 30% of the participants were over the age of sixty.

![Figure 7. Participants – Age Range](image)

While not conclusive due to the small number of participants represented in this study, the researcher was able to note the contrast of perspectives due to age and worldview of the participants. With respect to the participants’ lived experiences impacting their leadership and communication approaches in business, the older demographic participants referenced experiences from their youth tied to the Civil Rights Movement and racial tensions that left indelible impressions on them until this day with respect to how they conducted themselves in business. Older demographic (age 61 and up) Participants 1 and 2 acknowledged the following: Participant 2 stated from a gender and racial perspective, “women have the fight that a majority
of women fight in business, along with the fight that has been going on as long as we can remember, from a Civil Rights perspective.” Participant 1 stated, “since my early start in business, I felt like there was always some level of racial animosity at play, . . . but I believed being the best in the room would mitigate a lot of racial distrust.” The middle-aged demographic (age 41-60) participants were generally more in tuned with their personal will and drive as opposed to drawing from the ancestral fortitude of the generations before them. The middle-aged demographic generally acknowledged that while racially driven challenges exist in business and they were not oblivious to the racial issues; these executives took concerted efforts to make sure that their work, work ethic, and capabilities preceded any notions of race or preconceived notions based on the color of their skin. Notwithstanding, their own standards of Black excellence or minority pride, some of the older participants expressed genuine pride in making sure that they were not only the best minority candidate, female, male, but “the best person in the room for the task or objective at hand.”

Figure 8 displays the range of years that each participant had in an executive leadership role. The vast majority, eighty percent, had eleven or more years of experience while only two participants had between six to ten years of executive leadership experience. The eight participants who had eleven or more years spoke to the advantages of having experience as a minority leader in the STEM industries. Participant 1 who had forty-five plus years of experience stated, “I had to learn resilience, . . . it is not something that you’re born with. It takes a lot of study. It takes a lot of learning. It takes a lot of experience.” Participant 6 stated, “with experience, you learn to be able to assess situations,” and Participant 8 alluded, “with experience you learn a lot about your place within the industry as a minority, how to cover your bases, be about results, and how to treat people (clients and employees),” insinuating how experience in
leadership and communication skills are critical components in running and sustaining a business.

**Figure 8.** Participants – Years of Experience in an Executive Leadership Role

Black-owned employer firms tend to have fewer employees than the national average. According to American Express research, 38% of Black-owned firms have two to five employees, while just 7% have six to ten employees. As seen in Table 3, the overall average for majority-owned firms notes 41% employ two to five people and 12% employ six to ten people (Perry, 2023).

**Table 3.** Percentage Comparison of the Number of Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Two to Five Employees</th>
<th>Six to Ten Employees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-owned firms</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority-owned firms</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research study garnered a demographic of participants that had experience with a greater number of employees to further substantiate the leadership capacity of the minority leaders participating in this research study. Figure 9 shows the number of employees lead by the participants. Ninety percent of the executive-level participants had six or more employees and sixty percent had sixteen or more employees.
Figure 10 references the predominant influence in business for the participants. While other influences were factors, fifty percent (five) of the participants regarded their faith as a predominant influencer in business. This acknowledgement supports literature stating that minorities in business have foundations of faith-based reliance and dependence when working in majority-dominated environments or conditions. The Riley (2006) research study concluded that more than 29% of African American women executives studied attributed their success to God, their faith in God, their spirituality, divine intervention, or prayer. Of the other influencers, four of the participants noted the military or family, two a-piece respectively, and one participant acknowledged a mentor or educator as their predominant influencer in business. The gender breakdown provided the following observations: (6) males (2-Military, 2-Faith, 1-Mentor/Educator, and 1-Family); and (4) females (3-Faith and 1-Family).
Figure 11 highlights that Self was the predominant motivating factor for the minority business leaders of this study. Though acknowledging the other influences of faith, family, the military, and mentors; overwhelmingly, ninety percent of the minority CEOs of this study characterized themselves as self-motivated businesspersons. The personal drive of these participants was evident in their autobiographical accounts of unwavering resolve to be successful, accountable, and reliable. Participant 5 asserted:

When it comes to just starting a business, it really came down to the natural progression of where I saw my career path going. I had already become very successful at what I did for other people, and it seemed like starting a business was just the next natural progression of where my journey was taking me.

He had to have the drive and assert himself to be successful. Moreover, Participant 10 admitted not having motivating mentors or guides and had to reach down into herself to be motivated and to motivate, affirming:

Oftentimes I consider those thoughts (not having a motivating entity to draw upon) and thinking through what it felt like; conversely, I wanted to “motivate” and bring out the best in other people that I lead, who were giving me their talent and time.

Figure 11. Participants – Predominant Motivating Factor as a Business Leader

The gender breakdown provided the following observations: (6) males (6-Self-motivated); and (4) females (3-Self-motivated and 1-Life experience motivations).
Figure 12 reflects the leadership style that the participants noted most suited their approach in business. Notably, fifty percent of the participants saw themselves as coaches to their staff. Throughout most of the interviews the participants referred to their employees as their team, discreetly lauding “we” as a team rather than “I” as the leader. While coaches are recognized as the leader, they inconspicuously and inherently see themselves as part of a team. The coaching leadership style is about helping others, “your team” to improve themselves and achieve their goals. The coaching style provides guidance and counsel. Coaching also requires assessment and execution. Participant 6 affirmed, “as a leader, you learn that the big thing is to be able to assess situations and plan for the best way to go about executing things . . . selecting the right person or persons to be on a project and putting the right teams together.” Participant 3 professed, “I have this thing that I do when I refer to “all of us” as a team . . . a “true team” . . . I’m really focused on the elements of what it takes to be a team and communication, transparency, accountability, respect; those are all pillars of our corporate culture.” Additionally, Participant 4 expressed, “good leadership has to define direction, to know where you’re going . . . it takes some coaching sometimes to get there.” While thirty percent recognized themselves as transformational leaders; correspondingly, ten percent of the minority CEOs identified with the democratic and charismatic style. Styles not selected but noted as options were, autocratic/bureaucratic, laissez-faire, servant, and transactional leadership approaches.

The gender breakdown provided the following observations: (6) males (4-Coaching, 1-Charismatic, and 1-Democratic); and (4) females (3-Transformational and 1-Coaching). It is worth noting that the styles not selected by the participants (e.g., autocratic/bureaucratic, laissez-faire) are those that generally carry negative or less desirable connotations in regards to advantageous leadership, which could have played an inhibiting role.
Figure 12. The Leadership Style Which Suited the Participants the Most

Figure 13 reflects the communication style which fit the participants’ business approach the most. Forty percent of the participants equally characterized themselves as either assertive, sure, and focused communicators or strategic, methodical, and meticulous communicators. Still, twenty percent of the participants identified with an aggressive, direct, and to-the-point approach as to how they communicate within their organizations. How one communicates can establish, generate, and facilitate a positive and cohesive environment for one’s workplace. Leaders convey the level of importance of communication by their approach. Most of the minority CEOs of this study strove to keep a more personal approach to their communication practices. Prioritizing meetings to speak directly to one's audience communicates the importance of a leader’s dedication to being personable, and reduces misunderstandings. “Face-to-face communication is still the best method for eliciting feedback and interpreting whether the message was received as intended” (Richman, 2016, para. 4). Participant 1 maintained, “I have always felt that communication, in terms of information should be a free-flowing two-way street . . . communication is a learned response . . . and part of communication is listening . . . and learning how to listen succinctly.”
The gender breakdown provided the following observations: (6) males (4-Assertive and 2-Strategic); and (4) females (2-Agressive and 2-Strategic).

Figure 14 displays the result of a Likert Scale weighing the intensity for which the participants conceded that the lived experiences relating to their ethnicity and/or gender attributed to their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in business. Overwhelmingly, ninety percent of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the sentiment that their lived experiences contributed to their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. This acknowledgement by the participants, recognizes that these minority executive leaders saw a direct correlation of their resilience with their inherent, ethnic and gender identity. Participant 3 acknowledged about her lived experience, “working in a (male-dominated) industry as a small, woman-owned business presented all kinds of challenges . . . it required every day to be resilient; and not to get discouraged.” Participant 4 recognized that life teaches you, “it’s a certain sensitivity that you have to have . . . whether it’s because I’m Black or because I’m a woman, it really doesn’t matter . . . you still have to do what needs to be done.” Participant 8 confessed with racial undertones, the notion of having to outwork his contemporaries; realizing they did not have the same barriers and challenges that he had to overcome. Participant 8 asserted, “hard work, I just thought that’s what you had to do. When matching yourself up with your contemporaries, you realize, they
didn’t have to do all of these things, or they had all these things already established. I had to establish a hard work ethic . . . and outwork the next guy.”

Figure 14. Likert Scale – Lived Experiences Attributed to FRP in Business

When asked to rank the factors that helped to establish and influence the participants’ fortitude, resilience, and perseverance as a business leader, from 1 to 4 (where 1 is most influential and 4 is least influential) the participants weighted the factors in Figure 15. After weighing the responses of the participants, the ranking of factors that helped establish their respective resilience in business from 1 as most influential to 4 as least influential were as follows:

1. Personal resolve/will to succeed
2. Family inspiration (motivated by parent, children, or matriarch/patriarch)
4. Ethnic and/or gender pride (cultural/peer representation and dignity)

Personal resolve weighing highest in the ranking order corroborates with testaments given by the participants that recognized their own personal will to succeed as the predominant factor in helping to establish their resilience. Notwithstanding the other factors, which garnered almost as
equal standing, the participants generally expressed an attitude of not giving up and not quitting as a personal mantra to keep striving in their business ventures.

To garner the business personality interest of the minority CEOs, the participants were asked, “what was the most influential book read, as it pertains to their business/leadership approach?” As seen in Table 4, the participants named book titles in the genres of faith-based, self-help, and ethnicity & business economics. These genres encapsulate the categories of faith, self, and ethnicity in business. The book titles and inferences elude to the areas of interest and importance for the participants of this study.
Table 4. Most Influential Book with Regard to Leadership Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOK TITLE</th>
<th>GENRE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren</td>
<td>Faith-based, Self-help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Book of Secrets: Unlocking the Hidden Dimensions of Your Life by Deepak Chopra</td>
<td>Self-help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible</td>
<td>Faith-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 48 Laws of Power by Robert Greene</td>
<td>Self-help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible</td>
<td>Faith-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship by Juliet E. K. Walker</td>
<td>Ethnicity &amp; Business Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think and Grow Rich: A Black Choice by Dennis Kimbro and Napoleon Hill</td>
<td>Ethnicity &amp; Business Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear by Elizabeth Gilbert</td>
<td>Self-help</td>
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**Data Analysis Process**

To document and understand the experiences of the minority CEOs, I used a qualitative phenomenological research design of 25 semi-structured, open-ended questions (Appendix A).

At the core of this research was the exploration of the underlying phenomenological aspects that were extraordinarily unique to the experiences of the minority CEOs of this study. The qualitative research approach assessed from the minority CEOs’ perspective the operationalization of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance through the leadership and communication styles of the participants. Miles and Huberman (1994) identified strengths of qualitative research as: 1) focusing on the naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, 2) providing thick descriptions that are vivid and based on real-life experiences and 3) transcending the quantitative approach, namely the what and how many, and going deeper by
gaining understanding of the how and the why. The interview sessions allowed me to hear the participants articulate their “lived experiences” in their own words. Janesick (2000) indicated that qualitative research is holistic, aiming to understand the whole by viewing the larger picture. Consequently, the voices of the minority CEOs are at the center of this research study, and Pennington (1999) concluded that “having minorities (particularly, executives) at the center of the research “gives their voices a long-denied privilege, and it allows the minority CEOs to be understood in the contexts in which they live and grow” (Pennington, 1999, p. 23). Using a social constructivism (interpretivism) worldview, the shared essence of a phenomenon could be understood through the participants’ view of the experience (Creswell, 2014). Based on the “words of the participants,” I interpreted the lived experiences and substantiated the “stories” as a phenomenon that influenced the minority CEOs’ leadership and communication style. With the design of this research relying heavily on the participants’ views (Creswell and Poth, 2016), the individual experiences as a collective phenomenon of minority CEOs allowed me to understand the “why” and “how” questions regarding fortitude, resilience, and perseverance’s influence on leadership and communication styles.

**Interview and Qualitative Analysis Tools**

The interviews were analyzed using NVivo 12 Pro, a qualitative data analysis software. Analysis involved a rigorous review and assessment of the interview transcriptions, notes, and memos taken during the interview stage. Screenshots and coding formulation are provided as examples in Appendices F and G. The researcher actively listened to the participants to formulate the meaning and sentiments of their respective accounts of their lived experiences. Subsequently, preliminary coding schemes were derived, and the process of categorizing concepts, annotating notes, and uncovering themes ensued. The research method of analyzing the
information involved highlighting, bolding, and underlining pertinent text from the interview transcriptions to help profile intriguing sentiments and thought-provoking notions expressed by the participants. Exclamatory remarks and repetitive statements were given special attention to highlight points of emphasis and strong emotion. The more notable perspectives given by the participants were profiled and given greater preference as important observations. The participants were able to communicate their personal perspectives in a way that reflected how each minority CEO genuinely felt about the subject matter of the research study.

Further assessment and analysis were garnered through the editing and formatting process of the transcriptions. While the Zoom media interface software was used to capture initial video, audio, and text transcriptions, Otter.ai was also used to further corroborate the interview dialogue. Otter is a software application that converts speech audio files to text transcription documents by using artificial intelligence. Transcriptions were shared with the participants to verify and clarify sentiments and statements made during the interview sessions. Editing and formatting the transcriptions allowed the researcher to become more immersed into the stories, revelations, and insightful views articulated by the participants. The transcripts had to be formatted for incorporation into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The formatting process permitted the researcher even more analysis by unveiling new formulations of meaning as key ideas relating to specific lines of inquiry were generated from poignant moments during the interviews. Uploading the formatted transcripts into NVivo allowed for multiple query analysis yielding codes, patterns, categories, and themes (see Appendix F). The codes provided a summative, salient inference of words and phrases. The patterns derived from the codes produced repetitive occurrences allowing for categories and themes to be created which helped to organize and identify meaning and assertions from the data. NVivo served as an analytical tool
for the research to see patterns through words, phrases, and concepts by identifying possible themes. By virtue of the word frequency query in NVivo, a word cloud was generated encompassing all the interviews that helped to visualize the central themes of the research study (see Figure 16 and Appendix F).

Figure 16. Word Cloud Generated by NVivo Qualitative Data Analyses Software

The word frequency query provided the researcher with a list of words that were then used to begin establishing nodes. The nodes were queried and cross-referenced with each respective participant’s answer to the same question or line of questioning to elicit commonalities or discords in the ensuing analysis (see Appendix F). From the NVivo cross analysis, sixteen nodes were identified and incorporated across the central research questions, exhibiting four nodes per question (see Table 5). The nodes were queried across each participant’s answer and each research question generated a central research concept to explore, analyze, and assess.
Prior to beginning the interview sessions, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and engaged in an open discussion with the participants about relevant terms and to encourage their beliefs and opinions about leadership and communication in business, from their perspectives. After preliminary discussions were fulfilled, the interview protocol (Appendix A) resumed through the 25 semi-structured, open-ended questions with the participants. The interview questions were arranged to encompass the most pertinent elements of the research study. Interview questions 1-16 were insight questions relating to the “lived experiences” contributing toward the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of the minority CEOs. Interview questions 17-19 were a combination of leadership & communication related questions. Interview questions 20-23 were leadership-focused questions and questions 24-25 were communication-focused questions.

The participant responses for each interview session were prepared for qualitative data analysis using the NVivo Pro 12 software. Significant word occurrences across each participant’s responses were derived from the word frequency query. Phrases, sentiments, and expressions extracted from the interview transcripts, regarding the participants’ minority business experiences, helped to formulate codes that could be converted into nodes. The nodes were created and crossed referenced for each interview. After thorough review and consolidation, 16 nodes were identified and correlated with each particular research questions as seen in Table 5.
### Table 5. NVivo Coding Nodes and Correlating Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NVivo Coding Nodes</th>
<th>Correlating Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fortitude/Resilience/Perseverance (FRP)</td>
<td>RQ1. What lived experiences reported by minority CEOs in STEM industries contribute to executive-level FRP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Life Experiences</td>
<td>RQ1a. How does FRP affect the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal Influencers</td>
<td>RQ1b. How are lived experiences of FRP operationalized in the decision-making practices of minority CEOs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal Motivators</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Leadership Style/Approach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Communication Style/Approach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Encouraging Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Motivating Others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Minority Competitive Advantage</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Minority Organizational Operationalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Minority Leadership Perspectives/Best Practices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Minority Leader/Organizational Implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Will/Drive to Succeed – Identity</td>
<td>RQ2. What is the organizational impact of minority CEO FRP with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Minority Business/Leader (Pros &amp; Cons) – Identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Barriers/Challenges – Culture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Minority Leader Evolution &amp; Legacy – Sustainability</td>
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### Research Findings

The information gathered from the qualitative data analysis yielded research findings correlating with the research questions of this study. RQ1 explored what lived experiences contributing to minority CEO fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. RQ1a sought to explain how the lived experiences contributing to fortitude, resilience, and perseverance may have influenced the leadership and communication styles of the minority CEOs. RQ1b sought to explain how fortitude, resilience, and perseverance gained through minority lived experiences are applied in the decision-making practices of the minority CEO. RQ2 explored from the CEO’s perspective, the impact of the lived experiences on their respective organization’s identity, culture, and sustainability of their respective business. The codes correlating to each research
question provided eight concept premises (as seen in Table 6). The concept premises were analyzed and assessed to discover themes.

Table 6. Concept Premise and Correlating Codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept Premise</th>
<th>Concept Premises Generated from Research Study</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 1</td>
<td>Minority life phenomenon yields fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 2</td>
<td>Personal influencers (faith, family, mentors, and military) serve as motivators in businesses for minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 3</td>
<td>Leadership and Communication Styles derive from minority life phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 4</td>
<td>Minority life phenomenon facilitates empathy, encouragement, and motivational attributes in minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 5</td>
<td>Minority leadership perspectives contribute to a minority competitive advantage component in business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 6</td>
<td>Operationalization of a minority competitive advantage component can have positive implications in majority firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 7</td>
<td>Barriers and challenges of minority leaders may help to garner the will/drive and tenacity of minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Premise 8</td>
<td>Business life phenomenon helps to establish the legacy and evolution of minority leaders</td>
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</table>

The eight concept premises consequently yielded four main themes (Table 7) of the research study. The four themes that emerged may serve as significant indicators of performance index measures for minorities. The performance measures may be perceived as positive attributes and understated defining elements of the human capital capacity of minority leaders. The human capital component that minority leaders contribute to an organization may serve as an invaluable asset for a company’s diversity of thought, variety of applicability, and multiplicity of innovation. The four profiled themes lie at the crux of the significance of a minority CEO. They were 1) the lived experiences, 2) the influence of FRP on leadership and communication,
3) the operationalization of FRP, and 4) the organizational establishment of identity, culture, and sustainability.

Table 7. Profiled Themes Generated from Corresponding Concept Premise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority Phenomenological Themes Generated from each Concept Premise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1</strong> Lived Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority life phenomenon yields fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal influencers (faith, family, mentors, and military) serve as motivators in businesses for minority leaders</td>
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<td>Barriers and challenges facing minority businesses help to garner the will, drive, and tenacity of minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business life phenomenon helps to establish the legacy and evolution of minority leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2</strong> FRP Influence on Leadership and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3</strong> Operationalization of Minority Leaders’ FRP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4</strong> Organizational Identity, Culture, and Sustainability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Synthesis and Summary of Data

The information gathered from the qualitative data analysis yielded research themes correlating with the research questions of this study. Addressing RQ1, Theme 1 regarded how the lived experiences of minority CEOs encompassed fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. As outlined in the following synopses, the research participants incorporated life lessons and unique
minority experiences to test their resolve and groom their tenacity in business. Regarding RQ1a, Theme 2 considered how the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs revealed again that life experiences influenced how minority executives lead and communicate within their organizations. The ensuing synopses explain how minority CEOs use leadership and communication methods to inspire and motivate by driving expectations and articulating vision. Addressing RQ1b, Theme 3 concerns operationalization. The lived experiences of minority CEOs, as disclosed in the synopses, elicit cause for operationalizing what they have garnered from what they have gone through. The minority CEO actually uses lived experiences as barometers of FRP and incorporates the actual application of these attributes into their organizations. Finally, RQ2 assesses the organizational impact of minority CEO FRP with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability. This theme reveals that minority CEOs do not just possess FRP but they intentionally instill the characteristics and application of it into their organizations. Minority CEOs propagate FRP into the organization’s culture allowing it to permeate and influence every aspect of the organizations’ identity, mission, and method of operation. From the minority CEOs’ perspective summations are offered for each theme.

**Participant Interview Synopses – Theme 1: Lived Experiences**

The lived experiences of the minority CEOs of this research study are fortitude, resilience, and perseverance – reimagined. The participants explained in their own words the influencing factors in their lives that motivated them in business. The influences and the motivations that helped them to garner fortitude, resilience, and perseverance were life challenging and changing accounts. These lived events experienced by the minority CEOs of this research study, accounted for their ability to achieve and ascend to greatness – successful
enterprises. In the accounts that follow, the participants explain their lived experiences and define fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in their own words.

As Participant 1 explained, “resiliency is the ability to encounter adversity and either recover quickly as to the effects of it, or to mitigate it and/or turn it into a positive.” Along that same concept, Participant 1 defined fortitude as knowing how to do the right thing when you encounter adversity and doing it!” Knowing the right thing aligns with knowledge and know how, while “doing it” and having the courage to do it embodies fortitude. As it pertains to lived experiences, Participant 1 acknowledged that one had to learn from both the positive and negative influences. Being a minority in a majority dominated field, industry, boardroom, or business room meant “being the best.” Participant 1’s philosophy was to be the best in the room. “As a Black man excelling through the ranks in business and in the military, I had to be resilient. I learn resiliency to recover from . . . negative experiences.” Participant 2 shared that her lived experience of being a young single mom motivated her to achieve greatness. Having the experience of being around other young Black professionals at an early age incentivized her to go back to school, get educated and informed, and to take advantage of every opportunity afforded her. Additionally, gaining confidence and a “can’t give up” attitude, Participant 2 took her knowledge, personal drive, and support from family to fuel her fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in business. Participant 2 mentioned wanting her daughter to be proud of her and what she had made of herself, “that child gave me motivation to be something worthy, . . . that motivated me.”

The influence of family was also important. Participant 2 humbly stated, “(Black) families that don’t have things, money, and other resources . . . give support and encouragement
and love that become valuable. And culturally, Black families have had that.” Weathering the storms of life and business, “came from some place deeper,” Participant 2 reiterated, “it’s a unique experience. . . a Black cultural experience, I tell other Black people about it, and they get it. They’re nodding their head like, yeah, I know what you mean . . . versus if I tell my story to another (majority) audience, and they like appreciate it, but they don’t really know what that means.” How minority leaders come into their experience is just different. Participant 3 asserted, “it’s required every day to be resilient; not to get discouraged when things don’t happen the way you plan or expect” in business. Participant 4 declared that having family motivation was very helpful in her professional pursuits. Without many people going before her, her brother set the stage for achievement in a field where not many African Americans succeeded. Participant 4 revealed that gaining insight from her brother’s experiences “was confirmation that I could do it, too., “having great family support” and a brother to succeed helped her personal confidence. Regarding the importance of the support she received, Participant 4 revealed that, “it definitely informed me as a leader and allowed me to say, if you set your goals, you can do anything you want to do.”

The negative lived realities of some minorities could also serve as motivation to set oneself apart from a victim mentality. As noted by Participant 5:

Being a person of color, you’ve been conditioned, at least in the United States that there are certain obstacles that naturally or supernaturally are against you in this country. One of my experiences that set me apart from breaking out of that mentality was leaving the country and exploring how you’re received in other places in the world. Not being treated as my race first, and then as a man helped me to break away from that psychology or having a chip on my shoulder.

Tearing down negative stereotypes and being inspired, as Participant 5 put it, “learning the true history of who you are as a person, where your roots may lie, and things that other Blacks have
accomplished in the most dire times and in times where we flourished.” Lived experiences and understanding of lived experiences, the history of one’s roots also serve as motivation of a “no excuse mentality.” Participant 5 declared, “if they (my ancestors) could do it in those times, then I have no excuse.”

Participant 6 also acknowledged that, “racial issues come up that you’re going to have to contend with, in whatever type of business you go into, . . . however, attending and conducting workshops on business resiliency helps.” Having a mentor or a brother or sister company in the industry serves as motivation and support to counteract “sometimes when you feel like giving up,” as exclaimed by Participant 6, “you have to persevere!” Participant 3 professed that, “resiliency is the ability to weather or persevere through various dynamics of business, and especially in the STEM industry, one has to continue to press forward and overcome obstacles.”

Participant 7 attested, “just through life experiences, . . . you have to learn how not to be afraid to take a chance, . . . and that once you learn success and you understand how to attain it, you just repeat it over and over again.” Participant 9 maintained that as a leader the drive you ascribe to yourself from lived experiences, you have to help to instill in others, whereby challenging yourself and others, “forces everybody in the organization to carry their weight.”

Being able to sustain a business over time speaks to the years of experience of the minority CEO research study participants and their application of resilience. Participant 4 acknowledged, “from a resilience point of view, you have to keep your business relevant, because as the landscape changes for doing business, you have to stay current to what your goals are, and what’s going on in your field because it’s ever changing.” Being a minority in your industry, you must “offer your clients the best service.” Participant 5 preferred the term
perseverance over resilience, proclaiming “perseverance is just your ability and mental fortitude to overcome not only obstacles, but turning obstacles into opportunities.” Participant 6 also preferred the term resilience over fortitude acknowledging, “you’re going to have some challenges,” but “it’s all about perseverance,” and that one has to be resilient through the challenges. Participant 7 affirmed that overcoming challenges was about, “being willing to outwork the next guy, . . . if you can outwork the next guy, you will achieve success.”

Participant 8 proclaimed that being a leader is about decision-making, and that “fortitude and resilience comes into play in making difficult decisions.” Making tough decisions and solving problems are at the discretion of leaders. Solving problems are a matter of perspectives, Participant 8 confirmed, “problems are just challenges waiting to be solved.” Participant 9 concluded, “the pursuit of problem-solving and having to go back to the drawing board . . . is kind of baked into (the notion of) resilience and having some level of fortitude.” As a minority leader Participant 9 gave this summation regarding drawing from the attributes of fortitude and resilience using personal experiences to lead a team:

My leadership constantly requires me to, “come up with different ways to be flexible, . . . different ways to consistently shift and change perspectives of how to attack a problem. I pull from those personal experiences into how I lead my team, and how I lead my organization, and how we think about attacking community-based problems and ways that we identify solutions through problem-solving.

In terms of discrimination and unequal treatment, Participant 5 expressed that he doesn’t focus on those lived experiences, “not because they don’t exist, but because I won’t let that be my excuse not to succeed.” Participant 6 affirmed, “as a Black business owner, you deal with racism; you deal with people doubting you; you deal with typically not having the same resources that others have,” but you must “be persistent, . . . and be prayed up.” Relying on faith
and family for strength was a consistent theme for inspiration and motivation for the participants. Participant 6 expressed that even with suffering many defeats growing up, his folks and particularly his mom pushed him his entire life. He excelled in promotions to the executive level not necessarily that he was the most skilled or best speaker, but that “I would try REAL hard to get the job done by whatever means I had,” and my colleagues respected that and selected me to be the leader. People are going to doubt you and difficult times are guaranteed in business. In response to struggles, Participant 7 quoted Fredrick Douglas infamous words, “there can be no progress without struggle.” The challenging lived experiences that minorities are faced with corroborated by the participants insist that you have to get over, get through, and press on. Participant 7 remarked that as a minority in business, “you have to produce in ways that nobody can argue with. I think that lends to how I kind of got to the point where, no matter what the circumstance was, I allowed my results, and what I produced in the outcomes, to speak for themselves.”

Through the lived minority experiences that Participant 1 encountered, he was taught, “never to forget who you are, where you are, what circumstances you encounter and came up against, . . . positively or negatively, . . . don’t ignore them, don’t run from it. I just learned how to incorporate (what I went through or experienced into my leadership “tool box”) it.

**Influence and Motivation Factors**

Participant 3 acknowledged that the positive influences on her growth and success instilled in her, “a responsibility to create opportunities for other minorities . . . to help influence the next generation and to change some of the social economic challenges that
minorities face.” Participant 4 mentioned a teacher as “a big influencer in giving me the confidence that I had talent.” Participant 5 declared, “everybody should have a mentor, . . . having someone that I know that has done exactly what I want to do is invaluable. . . these are people who are successful at what they’ve done in areas that I actually want to get into, . . . if they are willing to share, I’m willing to listen.” Regarding role models, Participant 7 expressed, “I had many, . . . I took bits and parts from a lot of people, and then turned it into what I understood to be the right thing to do in business.” Participant 2 stated how having a mentor was invaluable, and that one has “to be able to not only hear the good advice, but be able to weed out the advice that’s not good for you.” Participant 8 realized the value of mentors and sought them out, along with recognizing family attesting that his entrepreneurial work ethic was instilled by seeing his stepdad, “going out, finding work, doing the work, and not going to work for somebody else.”

Participant 9 also got the entrepreneurial bug from family articulating, “my grandmother and grandfather were both business people,” asserting “the only thing that really distinguishes somebody who’s a true entrepreneur and everybody else who talks about it, is execution. In the words of Participant 8, “get results” to sustain a business, to maintain a business, and achieve a favorable reputation in the industry. A sense of moral responsibility and faith were also motivating factors as Participant 3 eloquently acknowledged in her interview stating, “I believe I have a responsibility based on my faith to care for people, and that the reward for that is not necessarily going to come with dollar signs in my bank account but in fulfillment in my heart and soul, and the ability to look back and see what an impact I had on people’s lives.” It was overwhelmingly evident by the minority CEO participants’ responses who motivated them as a majority
mentioned their children as prime motivators in their success and wanting to serve as a good example.

*Participant Interview Synopses – Theme 2: FRP Influence on Leadership and Communication*

According to the research participants, minority leaders are faced with lived experiences that leave an indelible mark on the consciousness of one’s mind. The influence of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance can weigh heavy on the leadership and communication styles of minorities. As acknowledged by Participant 2, challenging life circumstances can teach you a lot about resilience and fortitude and it is through those situations that you learn perseverance, stating, “you learn so much . . . and from a leadership perspective, there are times when you’re just learning but you might find yourself very quickly in a role where you’re now leading what you’ve just learned.” The co-relationship between leadership and communication is noted by Participant 2 stating, “my leadership was that I was able to speak to the customer at a high level, a senior level of understanding their requirements,” and be able to relay that in an “aggressive way” that my team would understand the importance and urgency of a need. A self-declared strategic communicator, Participant 2 noted the importance of being flexible in one’s approach declaring, “sometimes I have to be aggressive, . . . sometimes I have to listen and be a participant (not THE leader) because someone may know more than I do.” Continuing, Participant 2 acknowledged, “roles may shift and you have to be flexible enough to allow other people who may know more than you know, to take on the leadership of a particular project.”

Trials and demanding life circumstances can teach one to adapt and pivot in and out of varying strategies and approaches in leadership and communication. Participant 3 affirmed, “my style encompasses multiple approaches and may be at some level circumstantial. When dealing
with employees one may need to be a servant leader, when dealing with customers one may need
to be charismatic, . . . sometimes exhibiting motivation to my engineering team to help inspire
their completion of a tasks, . . . or democratic when other voices (than my own) needed to be
heard.”

**Communication and Leadership**

Communication and leadership patterns and styles were determined using open-ended
questions asking interviewees to describe how they communicate and lead their organizations in
formal and informal meetings with their employees. As well, they were asked to explain how
their particular communication approach and leadership style was shaped by their “lived
experience” journeys in becoming the CEO of their organization. The following Leadership and
Communication Style sections provide even more insight into the approaches employed by the
minority leaders of this study.

**Leadership Style**

Participant 9, along with a majority of the participants felt flexibility was an important
part of leadership, acknowledging “you can’t lead everybody the same way, . . . sometimes you
have to coach your team, . . . other times you have to energize your team with a charismatic
approach. . . and still other times for his self-motivated employees, he could be a laissez faire
leader.” Participant 4 viewed herself as a blend between democratic and coaching styles of
leadership; consequently, her employees described her as “a good listener, collaborative, and
flexible.” Participant 5 affirmed that life experiences taught him to “lead by example,” however,
when starting his business he pondered, “can I get someone to follow my lead?” To accomplish
these tasks of leadership, he felt using all the innate abilities he had were needed. Participant 5
utilized a bureaucratic/autocratic approach to establish rules and “bring structure to the organization.” Additionally, he exercised charisma saying, “to have people follow you, you have to be charismatic . . . but also be worth following.” Further still, Participant 5 proclaimed, at times one must be “a democratic leader,” by being receptive and listening to other’s ideas. Leadership involves not only leading but understanding the people you lead. Participant 7 mentioned participating in various professional leadership courses as part of his military training; yet, he stated his lived experiences helped him know how to relate to people and empathize with their varying circumstances. Regarding employee relations, Participant 7 articulated, “if you show genuine concern, understand who their family members are, try to understand something about them, . . . they know you care.” Moreover, stating “it’s about mutual respect. With mutual respect, a leader has to support job satisfaction criteria, addressing if your employees are happy. Supporting the notion of employee job satisfaction, Participant 5 affirmed, “you want to keep your employees happy,” by securing their financial worth, they know they are appreciated and it helps them to “focus on the work” and execute “exceptional performance.” “Treating people right” (employees) and “getting results” (out of your employees) was a leadership mantra for Participant 8. His lived experiences taught him the value and formula for business success were “high accountability, getting results, and quantifying those results,” – noting, valuing your team helps to solidify bottom line achievement.

Participant 10 summed up the leadership approach sentiment by emphasizing the importance of adapting one’s style to the situation and personnel. The minority “lived experience” supports the notion of being flexible, adaptable, amenable to your surroundings. For Participant 10, being an autocratic leader was important, “to establish clear protocol, policies, and procedures, . . . being charismatic was important, “to be able to connect with your team so
that you can motivate them at times, . . coaching is also important, “to be able to understand why your team has bought into your vision, and being able to listen to what components of the work that they’re doing that they personally ascribe to.” Participant 10 declared, to be a strong leader, you must have “integrity and trust, . . to be able to have some level of connection” with your team. In conclusion, she asserted, being a transformational leader is “probably the overarching umbrella of all of the approaches” of leadership, affirming getting your team “to understand from an operations perspective . . . and a programmatic perspective, . . . so they feel connected to the vision,” whereby their connection to the vision makes them “committed to the mission.”

Communication Style

Participant 1 viewed communication should be as amenable as leadership in business stating that, “it should be a free-flowing two-way street,” advocating for “transparency and supportive exchanges in reaching the best outcome for all parties.” Furthermore, Participant 1 viewed communication as “a learned response, . . . we all have individual emotional filters, . . . we all don’t seem to understand communication the same way.” Along the notion of filters, Participant 1 maintained minorities filter communication “through our previous experiences.” Moreover, “we filter it racially, emotionally, so it’s difficult sometimes to hear what the other person is intending for you to hear. Communication is listening . . . and learning how to listen succinctly.”

As minorities are inundated with experiences in communication pitfalls with majority colleagues, one must genuinely value the concept of the importance of understanding and not just being understood. Lending to the insight regarding communication, Participant 10 said that minority lived experiences teach you that, “as a woman understanding what it feels like to not be
valued,” one has to overcompensate in speaking up and speaking out regarding matters of importance or decisions you feel strongly about, “just to be heard.” The whole notion of effective communication through understanding was expressed by Participant 7 stating, “understanding behaviors and understanding what those are and then applying the appropriate communication style based on who you’re talking to,” is important.

Having a flexible approach to communication ranges from being vulnerable to being. As Participant 5 put it, “being a small business owner, . . . it’s as much about the people you employ. So it often requires compassion and a little bit of vulnerability . . . in building up those relationships with employees.” Conversely, Participant 4 expressed having to be a blend between assertive, aggressive, and strategic” in one’s communicative approach to ensure, “everybody’s on board and going in the same direction.” Participant 5 said:

I’m assertive, . . . but in a respectful way. I’m not a CEO that’s unreachable. They can contact me anytime . . . they know who I am, and what the company stands for and what level of expertise I expect. You have to be strategic in your communication style. I choose to be supportive and encouraging at times.

Alternatively, Participant 5 mentioned, “I’ve had instances where I was very direct with people and their shortcomings and what they should have done.” Through the lived experiences as a minority he affirmed, “you have to be very tactful in the way you speak to people.”

Being strategic and assertive was the overwhelming method of communication (8 out of 10 participants). Participant 8 stressed the importance of him “being himself.” The authenticity of his leadership was apparent to his employees when he was strategic and assertive in his approach. He proclaimed that being strategic and assertive was of equal importance. Participant 8 professed, “the strength that I have is the ability to look and put together strategy – to take a
bunch of complex things and put them together” and express and communicate, “here’s how they fit together, and here’s our plan to make it happen.” Concluding the notion of the strategic and assertive approach, Participant 10 noted:

I am direct and to the point and for some, it may come off aggressive, and it may seem aggressive; however, I feel that it’s important to be trustworthy with your team, and how you communicate and not to sugar coat situations, because people respond to the words that come out of your mouth and how you communicate. . . I am amenable to how I communicate, but I really rely heavily on direct and strategic conversations. . . I am always trying to communicate in a way that is best for the organization.

**Encouraging and Motivating Others**

Leadership has to do with drawing people in by galvanizing and encouraging a team, as expressed by Participant 6, “(as CEO) you’re the captain of the organization but you’re also an encourager.” Part of encouraging people is motivating them and inspiring them. As stated by Participant 2, you need to “motivate people to use their creativity.” Life reinforces one’s drive and as affirmed by Participant 2, one must ask the tough questions, “before starting your own business, being your own business owner, and being your own boss, . . . is this something you really want to do?” Encouragement and motivation must be supportive and honest. Participant 5 compelling stated, “(business) this is not for the faint-hearted. If you’re going to do it, do it. It takes a level of commitment and effort . . . but the idea is that you can.”

Expounding the belief of difficult but achievable is the notion of help and assistance. Perseverance is key. As acknowledged by Participant 5, “There are going to be hard times, not to discourage people, but that’s just part of business . . . it’s not easy. It is hard to sustain a business . . . but you can be much more successful . . . with a team.” His mentor advised him to “know what you are going into it (business) for and try to find a team.” The mentor also advised Participant 5 to get help so he would not be on his own, doing everything himself,
recommending “outsource what you can,” so that as the owner one can focus solely on operations – business development, customer satisfaction, and growing the business. A majority of the participants articulated that having a mentor and being a mentor to others was invaluable. Participant 7 revealed, “I like teaching people about what you need to do to be in business” namely, “be good at something, understand your books (bookkeeping), and create your own pipeline of customers.” Participant 8’s motivational advice to his team and to others in business was “not that only results matter . . . but get results,” as a minority business leader, the industry, customers, and clients respond to and respect results.

Concluding this section on the encouragement and motivation of minority leaders, Participant 10 noted:

We need as many people . . . we need as many minds and thoughts and creatives and critical thinkers as possible to solve problems. And not just to solve problems, but to be creative to create spaces and things that we’ve never seen. And if you don’t believe that you can do that, then I challenge you to think about what your purpose is in life. What your passion is in life, and how you want to leave this earth. There’s never going to be another you, but I strongly recommend you to stand for exactly who you are, the good, the bad, and all of the things that come with it; because it really helps you to create a lane that’s uniquely you. I motivate people to understand that failing, it’s really a part of it. Failure is a part of a process of how you not just solve problems, but how you should live life; because that eliminates a lot of the fears that we have around if you should or should not do a thing; because we often times don’t want to fail, or we don’t believe that you can come back from a failure. Or we believe that failure is the absolute worst thing that could happen in our entire life. Demystifying that and making it a norm in that you think about how fast you can come back from a failure, or how you can strategize ways that you can try again, will be critical for anyone that solves problems . . . it creates your own personal motivation system of . . . knowing how to speak to yourself in order to overcome obstacles and overcome challenges.

Participant Interview Synopses – Theme 3: Operationalization of Minority Leaders’ FRP

The fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of the minority CEOs of this study was incorporated within their respective organizations by virtue of their leadership properties. From
their unique backgrounds and collective minority experiences, the participants of this study implemented leadership strategies, and voiced the importance of minority-influenced perceptions. This section provides insights of how minority leadership perspectives and the varying applications thereof support the notion of a human competitive advantage regarding minority leaders in business. The minority-related implications are acknowledged and referenced by the minority CEOs of this research study. The operationalization of minority leader FRP is given credence by the research study participants’ perceptions, awareness, and discernments.

Participant 6 relayed his understanding of applying FRP by stating, “you have to be prepared, . . . overly prepared” to launch and maintain a business. He maintained, “you need to do a personal assessment” and ask the questions . . . “Do I have the fortitude to be in business? . . . Can I be persistent enough to make my business sustainable?” Furthermore, Participant 6 queried, “Do I have the kind of network to support me emotionally and do I have the kind of network to facilitate my being in business.” These are the type of questions minorities must ask because more times than not the emotional requirements and financial network of resources is not available. Participant 6 acknowledged, “when I started my first business, I didn’t have the resources, the know-how, nor the support to fall on when times were tough . . . that’s the resiliency part, knowing how to weather the storm.” Participant 6 found support through various connections stating, “you have to have connections to people that know ‘people’ in the business.”

Minority Competitive Advantage

The competitive advantage minority leaders provide as claimed by Participant 6 is “a different perspective . . . a broader perspective” in the way a problem is seen and how a solution
may be implemented based on one’s own minority experiences or the experiences that are known of other minorities. Participant 1 advocated, “companies have to realize that they are stronger with us than without us . . . and embrace philosophies where we are better together than not together.” Participant 9 declared, “oftentimes I find minority leaders are going to bring a different ear and a different perspective on how to be hungry and get to a solution because we’ve had to work a little bit differently to get there and so if we are in a room our level of empathy, depending on the subject matter, is going to be different. Furthermore, Participant 9 stated:

We bring a life experience that has forced us to look at problems as a means to an end and not the obstacles that maybe some other groups see them as. WE DON’T GIVE UP, as easily because just to get there, we had to work awfully hard. Even mishaps don’t hit us in the same way. It’s just something that happened and we can fix it and keep it moving. Righting the ship while we are rowing, while we’re in it. I’ve felt those times when we are building the bridge that we’re standing on. You have to do what you have to do. Trepidation be damned. We don’t get paid at the end of this, if we don’t figure this out. So let’s get this done, . . . so maybe that’s the approach that differentiates us.

Participant 9 concluded, “the differentiation – it’s not just who we are, it’s how we became who we are and what we still continue to strive to instill in the people around us, in order for them to be successful.”

Regarding the competitive advantage component, Participant 6 professed, “by nature most really serious Black businesses and business owners are resilient by nature. Black leaders are going to find a way to keep going.” Continuing Participant 6 confirmed, “because of our background and experiences (Black leaders) bring a better, fresher, or different way to look at things . . . a different way to do it.” Participant 7 acknowledged that because of his background and experiences as a minority, he developed a “hard work” ethic. He expressed, “growing up poor, not knowing that I was poor, hard work was just what you did,” to achieve success. Participant 7 asserted, “my super power was people underestimating me . . . I used that to fuel
my fire.” When noting the what he had to do to get to where he was versus his contemporaries not having to go through as much and with access to more resources, Participant 7 knew he just had to outwork them, stating, “having a hard work ethic, outworking the next guy, sticking to it and believing in myself,” guided his success.

Regarding his personal competitive advantage, Participant 8 mentioned, “People say, every time you say you’re going to do something, or you set out a goal or a vision, you seem to accomplish it. I work really hard to make sure the vision gets accomplished. I have the mindset that I can accomplish anything that I put my mind to . . . my capabilities . . . my training . . . my experience . . . work to make it happen.” Participant 9 poignantly affirmed, “it is specifically the fact that we’ve had challenges that we’ve overcome, that makes us probably well-suited to deal with the next set of challenges.”

Summarizing this section on minority competitive advantage, Participant 3 noted:

So, outside of the technical and required skills . . . minority leaders have resourcefulness. One had to have overcome significant challenges and obstacles and have had to learn from the school of hard knocks and persevered. Minority leaders are very resourceful and very adaptable, meaning they are able to wear more hats and juggle more responsibilities . . . and do so in an efficient manner, just by nature of some of the things that minorities have had to overcome. So that’s a great benefit of having a minority as the leadership of an organization.

*Minority Leadership Perspectives and Best Practices*

Participant 4, “we really listen to what the clients’ goals are and we try to honor those goals . . . we have priorities . . . we have to really do a good job selling ourselves and what we bring to the table.” Being a successful minority business and leader has to do with, “fixing a problem,” as affirmed by Participant 7. Continuing Participant 7 proclaimed, “(As a Black business leader), I have a capability where the industry has a gap. Articulating that my company
can fill that gap makes me a very viable business partner . . . showing that I can add value . . . makes other people want to work with us.”

From a Black business perspective Participant 1 asserted, “we still do not have full seats at the table,” suggesting, “no matter what your accomplishments have been, you still need to prove yourself. When you come to the table with 4 degrees, like I have, and 45 years of experience, like I have, racial and emotional thinking still exist, contending - that dark-skinned guy doesn’t belong here with us.” Additionally, noted regarding the notion of whether governmental set-aside contracts were still necessary, Participant 1 stated, “yes, because things are still not equal . . . but that is not going to stop me from trying to be the best in the room.” A beckoning call of contemplation for minority businesses and leaders conveyed by Participant 1, “keep your nose to the grindstone, and keep pushing, and advocating for inclusion for all of us.”

A unique minority perspective offered by Participant 2 revealed the following notion, “you lead from under the foundation of the thing versus I’m at the top of the pyramid – I’m the leader, . . . because you understand the nature of the organization that you’re leading.” Participant 2 recommended, “being able to understand the foundation and leading from the foundation provides and produces a sensitivity to the people and a commitment to the cause your organization supports.”

The minority leadership best practices and perspective that Participant 3 offered were, “to be transparent (entailing honesty and integrity) and fair with employees and clients – values established by her faith.

Another perspective offered by Participant 4 was that minority leaders should have “direction” and know where they’re going. She encouraged lofty but “realistic” goals and “to be
willing to invest and make those goals happen.” Along the same sentiment, Participant 7 stated, “offer clear direction by articulating the objective, help to train your followers, and trust them to do the job.”

Participant 5 offered the “no excuses” mantra. “Failure is not an option . . . you don’t fail, you learn because the only time you really fail is when you quit,” asserted Participant 5. Leaders and minority leaders in particular have to have a shift in mentality, Participant 5 expressed, “obstacles have to be viewed as opportunity, . . . opportunity to show your skill set, opportunity to shine, opportunity to be great. I represent the people who raised me and the people who invested in me and invested in my success – so I have a no excuse mentality.”

Participant 6 declared as a leader, “have a vision and be able to plan that vision to stay on track and stay focused because the people that you’re leading, they’re watching you . . . and you’re accountable to these people . . . you have to have a level of concern and care about them and their growth.” As a minority leader Participant 6 explained, “you have to know how to utilize the talents and the resources that you have in the most effective manner – maximize (doing more with less) and get more out of your small group than what some large group is doing (outwork them). Participant 8 agreed stating, “get the most out of the people that you influence.”

Participant 9 surmised, “good leadership lives on a spectrum – sometimes it’s fast, sometimes patient, and sometimes it’s strong and sometimes it’s empathetic . . . minority leaders understand the paradigm – ever learning, ever evolving and embracing flexibility.” Additionally, participant 10 acknowledged having to pull from a lot of different places, but at the end of the day, “I feel like my work has to speak for me.” Being accountable, reliable, and dependable as a leader and business owner is a huge testament of one’s credibility.
How Minorities Operationalize Leadership

Where minority leaders make a distinct impression is the operationalization of FRP into their respective organizations. The participants of this study remarked consistently of how their lived experiences impacted their approach to business operations. Promoting an environment that felt like a family and a team, as well as one that was transparent and honest were routine sentiments felt by the participants. Participant 3 stated regarding her organization, “it starts first by having a really good relationship with employees and treating them as some level like a team . . . and on some level I consider them my family.” Continuing Participant 3 alluded that her life experiences taught her the value of relationships, communication, and leading by example when running an organization. “They see me work hard and striving to achieve our goals. I lead by example. They see the relationships I cultivate internally (within the company) and with our customers.” Participant 3 also referenced the value of team in her organization, acknowledging, “I have this thing I do when I refer to all of us as a team, and I’m really focused on the elements of what it takes to be a team and communication, transparency, accountability, respect; those are all pillars of our corporate culture.” “Quality and technical excellence, when you (as the leader) exemplify those behaviors, the team around you will do the same,” asserted Participant 3.

Nurturing a team environment was also important for Participant 4. She peppered the word “we” throughout her thoughts on organizational operations declaring, we developed a mission statement to serve the client and community with design excellence beyond expectation.” Everybody was involved to set “our” goals . . . we developed a vision for the company. Participant 4 continued, during company and employee evaluations, “we decided what we needed to improve upon and what we did well.” Everyone was accountable individually and collectively, and as the leader, Participant 4 assured, “I’m going to be responsible for making
sure that everybody has the tools, training, equipment, and whatever “we” need to be successful.”

Participant 5 professed that lived experiences taught him to lead his organization by example stating, “They (my employees) see how I interface and speak with the customer and how I give a no excuses and a yes we can attitude to my employees.” Participant 5 believed his lived experiences influenced him to be an all-in type of leader and an example for his organization. Fortitude, resilience, and perseverance imparted the attributes necessary for Participant 5 to succeed maintaining, “Leading by example . . . I’m in during the day and I’m in at night to make sure that my employees (even overseas) are successful. Solving problems and giving them confidence . . . pays dividends because now they’re confident and motivated . . . and my supporting them cultivates a team organizational environment.”

With regard to “putting the right team together,” Participant 6 mentioned, “knowing how people on your staff work together, and who works well together; . . . as a leader you learn to assess situations, execute plans, and select the right person or persons for a project.” Participant 7 revealed that his experiences as a minority that translated into his understanding of being a success in business was, “people know genuine when they see it . . . in order to do business (with employees and customers) you have to have three things: 1) they got to “know” you; 2) they got to “like” you; and 3) they got to “trust” you.” Relating to understanding his employees, Participant 7 said, “I do not believe anybody comes to work to fail . . . so it’s important to know what motivates them . . . so you can encourage them.”

Participant 8 affirmed as a minority leader life instills the importance of understanding your team. Continuing he explained, “A lot of times, I’m in the role of a coach pushing my
“players” to find out that they can do more than what they believe they can do themselves. Also, understanding the fact that, “my words, my actions, the way I interact with my team is not happenstance; it’s very strategic – how to lead and how to coach, checking the emotional and mental well-being of your team.” Participant 8 conveyed that organizational operations relied on team continuity and leadership sensitivity – “relationships are so important.”

Whether by the allotment of or the lack thereof, Participant 10 revealed life experiences embedded in her the importance of exhibiting appreciation as motivation. Participant 10 cemented, “I express gratitude, not just support, but to also engage them (my staff) in a way that it helps to sometimes push them a little bit harder so they understand that they’re making a huge impact.” As a minority Participant 10 attested life experiences teach you that, “you have to create an environment where praise and critiques are given,” to make the person and the organization stronger.

In drawing from her leadership capabilities, Participant 10 inquired of herself, “how can I bring out the best in the people that are giving me their talent and their time.” From an industry standpoint the key to organizational success meant doing what other companies in your industry, aren’t doing (fill a gap) . . . and get results – most people like and respond to results” as a barometer for success, noted Participant 8.

Minority Implications

The implication for majority organizations regarding having more diversity in the room and being more inclusive of “other” views and understandings of an issue surrounds the genuine intent of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives. Participant 6 asserted, “the intent of majority firms is not really about what it is . . . for a lot of bigger companies, it’s the photo opt. The optics
of having someone (a minority) in a position,” but if you hire a person with a different skin tone but similar backgrounds or ideologies, “what have you really gained” as it relates to diversity of thought. Participant 6 expressed, “majority companies may vie for a select few without realizing, “there’s lots more of us out there that can do things that go unrecognized.” The argument being, for majority organizations to cast a larger net and broader considerations, especially as it relates to a viewpoint or background that may be contrary to the norm. What is gained in return is multiplicity of organizational operationalization. Participant 9 added, “you need a cadre of folks . . . rigid, creative, worker bees, visionary, dreamers, . . the full spectrum.” There is a certain sensitivity and acknowledgment of inequities with regard to minority leaders recognizing the vital need and importance of diversity and inclusion. Participant 4 noted that her firm really “tries to be diverse in the selection of consultants, so that we can have a true diverse team . . . and we are also diverse within our organization.”

Additionally, majority organizations may want to consider the value of minority inspiration within an organization. Participant 2 affirmed, “Employees and team members are inspired by seeing executive level leaders running a project or unit.” In that regard, majority organizations can help garner not only employee satisfaction but employee gratification, by facilitating minority employee appreciation. Participant 2 stated, “in a lot of ways that would help minority entities appreciate the organization’s valuing of executive-level leaders.” Having a sense of worth and value, not just because the person is a minority but that that person brings value, creativity, and innovation of thought to the company is what ignites inspiration.
Participant Interview Synopses – Theme 4: Organizational Identity, Culture, & Sustainability

Minority Will & Drive to Succeed

Regarding the will and drive to succeed in business the participants of this study had compelling statements regarding their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. Participant 3 regarding fortitude as a minority business owner concisely stated, “So you (as the leader) just persevere and YOU figure it out.” Participant 4 added that “you just have to be resilient” stating, “I had worked a while and had some life experiences that gave me a certain sensitivity that you have when you are being discriminated against but you don’t know exactly why. I can’t tell you if it’s because I’m Black or because I’m a woman, but it really doesn’t matter either way . . . you still have to do what needs to be done and be able to just move on and not linger on the why.” Participant 5 articulated:

So to me, perseverance comes with a no-excuse type of attitude. When you’re trying to achieve a goal, of course, life is going to throw you curve balls. Life’s going to get in the way; it’s always going to be a negative incident; so it’s always going to be a reason or an excuse that could be given as to why you can’t do something. So, instead of looking at the excuse of why you can’t, I focus on why I can and really dig within myself to see, is there something that’s really stopping me or am I stopping myself. Because if there’s nothing physically stopping me, I don’t really subscribe to the “I can’t” mantra. I’d rather explore towards my capability as to why I can do something. So as long as there’s time in the day, I’m going to get it done, and as long as there’s a way, there’s a will to do it.

Minority Pros & Cons in Business – Barriers & Overcoming the Challenges

Regarding pros and cons as a minority business Participant 4 admitted, “whereby establishing industry distinction, we can distinguish ourselves very easily when it comes to how we’re competing with majority firms” which can be an advantage in some cases; however, “competing with another minority firm” can be perplexing, alluding that there is a consensus that we (Black firms) are all the same by some entities’ point of view.
Participant 8 announced, “some of the strategies of being a successful minority-run organization is knowing times where you leverage being a Black-owned business and then, sometimes when you have to not leverage being a Black business . . . and being smart enough to know the difference.” Participant 8 alluded, majority organizations would struggle sometimes when serving underserved communities, “because they didn’t understand the lived experience of the people, we did.” When leveraging being a Black business “doing for our people in our communities,” Participant 8 asserted, “we’re Black, we’re a minority-owned company, we understand the issue . . . and oh by the way, we have the best (people), the best techs, the best engineers, and the best platforms,” to get the job done. “That’s when being a Black company matters,” and as the leader Participant 8 stated, “I have to know that even when being a Black company doesn’t matter, you don’t see that as a problem, because you’re going to figure out a strategy to still get to the outcome.” Regarding the challenges that minority leaders face that fortify FRP, Participant 8 stated, “the challenges that you go through are either going to break you or make you stronger and the reality is being a person of color in this world, you probably all things being equal are going through more challenges than others, and that’s either going to get you down . . . or that’s going to make you resilient and strong, and I’m like you can knock me down, but I’m getting right back up again.”

_Minority Business – Leadership Evolution & Legacy_

Participant 1 revealed, in the big picture of business and industry, “Black businesses are still in their infancy . . . because comparably they are small (in number and in financial status); however, it will take fortitude, resilience, and perseverance for minority organizations to continue to thrive and evolve.” The evolution and legacy of minority leadership and organizations lies in their identity, culture, and sustainability – minority pride.
Regarding legacy Participant 5 poignantly mentioned as a minority leader, “I’m always looking at how am I going to be viewed when I leave? What am I leaving behind? Who am I leaving it behind for? And that motivates me to continuously, do well, and represent not only my family well, but the culture as well. With all ethnicities, we’re all looking to take pride in what we do and have something that we enjoy doing. So that’s the commonality I seek with other people that transcends a culture or race.”

Participant 7 stated regarding pride, “I want people who look like me to see that we can do it – they look at me doing it . . . and there’s a lot of respect.”

The evolution of minority leaders and business owners as stated by Participant 8, “From a capitalistic standpoint and an opportunity standpoint, we are in a place where if you can truly solve somebody’s problem, it doesn’t matter what you look like or where you come from.” Furthermore, Participant 8 regarded his personal evolution as a minority leader, “I use to be all about results – get results and treating people right was secondary.” He reflected on his experience as a minority and navigating the challenges of getting results in business and came to realize, “my employees are people first, I needed to be more conscious of their personal needs. I’ve come to understand that that model both makes me better as a human being, and it also at the end of the day actually has people who are more loyal, and produce more, and do more for you – that continues to be my evolution.

While experience can drive leadership evolution, mentors can be influential as well, as regarded by Participant 9:

I’ve evolved into the type of person that my mentors have led me to be, and that’s somebody who enjoys giving back. So for me my legacy, I hope to be one that has nothing to do with the businesses that I’ve built, but instead the people who built
businesses with some guidance that I have given . . . prompting them to do exactly the same thing, because that’s what people did for me.

Continuing, Participant 9 affirmed, “I want to lend a hand, reach back, and give time to help others – my evolution (as a minority leader) is not just business-related, it’s personal,” alluding that the foundation of this consciousness was one of ethnic pride and priority.

Participant 10 observed, legacy as one’s “reputation” and “how one leads” and “if you will be respected for what you do and have done . . . I think all of those things have made me who I am right now . . . there was an internal motivation at the beginning – you weren’t going to get me to stop. You have internal goals, and you have like an internal way that you see yourself, that good or bad is part of your evolution.

**Contribution to Applied Practice**

One of the benefits of more representation of minority leaders in majority firms or otherwise is overall understanding of contributing attributes, awareness of potential benefits, and acceptance of a new normal of executive representation. As regarded by Participant 5, “the more minorities businesses you have, the more opportunities you have (for minority leaders) to gain ‘access’ to these rooms – to gain a seat at the table; thereby helping to make them (majority entities) more comfortable knowing that there are minority companies and minority leaders out there that are fully capable. Participant 5 elaborated, “I applaud companies for establishing diversity and inclusion initiatives; however, they have to be committed to hiring and putting minorities in positions of power and changing the culture and the stereotypes surrounding minorities,” theorizing “the more you see the less it becomes a rarity and more of the norm.”
Changing preconceived notions is about changing mind sets. As articulated by Participant 8, “this myopic view of the world that there’s only so many opportunities . . . and entities not being used to doing business with Black persons or what you have to offer,” must change.

The advocacy for minorities in senior leadership roles for this study explored whether the FRP attribute served as an overlooked human capital advantage. This research is important as it provides a foundation for the organizational focus on human capital management. The positive impacts of diversity, anchored by the human capital virtue of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance vote well for determined minority leaders. Schultz (1961) and Romer (1990) noted that, in the modern economy, human capital is one of the most important factors for economic growth, if not the most essential source of economic productivity. Further, Richard (2000) asserted that the strategic use of human capital offers a competitive advantage. The incorporation of diversity within the leadership ranks of companies contributes to a firm’s competitive advantage, as it fuels innovation and promotes an understanding of multiple viewpoints (Kochan et al., 2003).

The four profiled themes noted in Table 8 support the notion of the human capital advantage and as it relates to minority leaders in particular, added significance, credence, and validity for minority leaders is warranted as a definite advantage. From an organizational standpoint, the minority leadership attributes gained through unique lived experiences suggest a human capital advantage that can yield benefits in company profitability, senior leadership execution, and differing operational perspective. This impact can be felt from executive level decision-making to the overall culture and brand of the organization. The findings from this research study support the notion that minority leaders at the executive level can provide a
unique perspective with far reaching benefits for organizations. By virtue of minority lived experiences, the influence of FRP on leadership and communication, the operationalization of how minority experiences may serve an organization, and the impact of organizational identity, culture and sustainability is realized in the human capital advantage of executive level minority leaders.

*Table 8. Minority Leadership Themes Supporting Human Capital Advantage Theory*

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</table>

Each CEO research participant surmised their own definitions and expressed their own thoughts surrounding the terms of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in business. By means of the word frequency query in the NVivo qualitative data analysis, the researcher was able to generate a word cloud from each participants’ fortitude, resilience, and perseverance perspective. The terms the participants used in describing FRP as it related to their personal views and professional experiences in business embodied the very nature of their leadership and
communication capacity. Being steadfast, firm, tough, and driven personified their applications of tenacity, dedication, diligence, and determination. The spirit of each participant symbolized their persistence, stamina and resolve to succeed in business by sheer will, strength and endurance. The visualization of these attributes is manifested in the word cloud represented in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Fortitude, Resilience, and Perseverance Word Cloud

Perceived by the Participants and Generated by NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software
Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations

Overview

The discussion of this research study considers the issue of the lack of diversity and inclusion in major corporate entities. The implications of this research study center around the benefits of minority CEO attributes for an organization. The recommendation of this research study advocates for a broaden awareness of the human capital advantage of executive-level minority leaders. The fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority executive-level leadership may serve well for organizations seeking a human capital advantage resource. This dissertation opened referencing how Fortune Magazine brought attention to the fact that, “in the history of the Fortune 500 list, there have been only 19 Black Chief Executive Officers out of 1800” (“Fortune 500 Companies 2020: Who Made the List,” 2020). The magazine further enquired, “why, after so many years of awareness of this problem, is that number still so stubbornly low?” While diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts abound in corporate industries, the needle toward executive leadership representing the minority demographic remains a daunting statistic. This research study explored how the answer to this issue may lie in the understanding of the problem and how the problem, namely the lack of diversity and inclusion is addressed. Robertson (2004) investigated the meaning of diversity and inclusion in organizations. Her results endorsed the argument that diversity in organizations may be supported by sets of practices to manage fair treatment issues, increase stakeholder diversity, and demonstrate leadership commitment to diversity. Whereas inclusion, on the other hand, may be supported by practices to integrate diversity into organizational systems and processes, and encourage the full participation and contribution of all employees (Visagie and Linde, 2010). Robertson (2004) commented that scholarly literature on definitions of diversity primarily
focused on heterogeneity and the demographic composition of groups or organizations, while definitions of inclusion focus on employee involvement and the integration of diversity into organizational systems and processes. Robertson (2004) believed that diversity and inclusion ‘encapsulate’ the discrimination and fairness, and integration and learning diversity paradigms suggested by Thomas and Ely (1996). The conclusions of these research studies along with numerous research articles that cite the lack of management track opportunities, too few inclusion initiatives, and the lack of corporate diversity awareness campaigns – individually or collectively, may be part of the problem. Solving this issue remains a complex challenge and the solution, as this study probes, may lie in greater awareness of an unexplored attribute that test the strength and stamina of most business entities – fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. Strong leadership attributes fair well for organizations. A study by Fred Kiel (2015) found that organizations with leaders of high character, where employees rated their leaders very high on integrity responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion – had nearly five times the return on assets of those with low character (Kiel, 2015). As supported by the data of this study, many minority leaders share lived experiences that help to galvanize their resolve which can be translated into a competitive advantage for an organization. Leadership traits ascertained through unique distinct experiences may be considered assets for many organizations. Illuminating the attributes of minority leaders and bringing attention to intrinsic, invaluable characteristics may help destigmatize the notions of the inability of minority leaders. This research study aimed to provide insight into a possibly unrealized collective attribute – the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs.

The collective terms of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance bring to mind attributes like strength, courage, grit, stamina, determination, and endurance. Business leaders in general
may be acclaimed for possessing such attributes; consequently, minority business leaders specifically in fields where they are significantly underrepresented, such as the STEM industries, require a considerable amount of staying power to withstand negative stereotypes, perceptions, and preconceived notions questioning their ability to lead. As was disclosed in the literature, minority leaders are given opportunity sometimes under the guise of the laudable cause of inclusion and diversity (Thomas, 1990). While commendable, “checking the box” for inclusion and diversity by industries and the corporate culture at large, minimizes the collective value that resilience, fortitude and perseverance can bring to an organization by minority leaders. The notion of the capability and capacity of minority leaders can be queried by the question of what true, tangible value is gained by a minority leaders’ presence. The leadership attributes of minorities and the respective communication approach they employ may serve as strong influencers in helping to shape a company’s organizational identity. Leadership style has immense impact on employees to perform, grow, and lead to positive attitude towards achieving organizational goals (Mohiuddin, 2017). Company leaders use varying leadership approaches to incite the best effort from their employees to maximize productivity and efficiency. The motivations and influences of minority leaders may stem from notably different elements than that of majority leaders. This research study assessed how minority leaders utilized FRP to withstand challenges and incorporate these attributes for the competitive advantage of their respective organizations.

The ability to lead and communicate effectively is paramount for minority leaders for reasons of respectability and validation, not only for organizational sustainability but also for their company’s ability to thrive within their respective industries. The fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs is influenced by factors that shape business leadership and
communication. The sustained execution of these positive attributes can help establish respect, admiration, and the operationalization of an organization’s reputation. The influences of these attributes amongst minority CEOs lie at the crux of this research study. With the credibility, capability, and capacity of minority CEOs being in question, the influences on the business leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs warrants exploration and consideration.

The accounts cited in this research study provided authentic and personal views from the perspectives of minority CEOs in STEM industries. The reflections and recollections of the minority CEOs of this study accounted for raw occurrences experienced by the participants that shaped their leadership and communication styles in business. The experiences of the minority CEO participants were personal occurrences which provided distinct and applicable approaches for business and revealing strategies for business leaders.

This study takes an in-depth personal inquiry approach by providing first-hand accounts of the motivations that ignited the business endeavors and drove the success stories of minority leaders. This study sought to explore what motivated the drive of minority CEOs by recounting their prevailing interests, behaviors, and passions in the midst of extenuating circumstances and challenges. By describing the experiences of minority leaders, the aim for this research study was to discover the specific motivations that might help to substantiate the overarching reasons to hire minorities in executive-level positions; thereby, cultivating diversity and inclusion in business leadership. This study sought to provide insightful information and be a resource for both minority and majority organizations seeking to harness a sustaining attribute through the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs.
Contribution of the Study

This phenomenological qualitative study contributes to the research and overall understanding of how the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority CEOs contributes to an organization’s human capital advantage. This study identified four significant themes that support the human capital advantage of executive level minorities. Through the lived experiences of the participants of this study, the findings disclosed how minority executive-level leadership and communication is influenced by fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. Through the lived experiences of the participants of this study, the results yielded how minority executive-level leadership use fortitude, resilience, and perseverance to influence organizational culture and operations. The knowledge gained from this study adds literature and context to insinuations and generalizations of the impact and influence of an executive-level minority leader on an organization.

As was disclosed in the literature review, countless studies and articles identified that diversity and inclusion remains a problem and a point of concern warranting attention, awareness, initiatives, and application from corporate entities to address. As noted by McKinsey & Company (2018), companies continue to struggle with the implementation of inclusion efforts. The insight gained from this study adds cerebral support on the value-added attributes of executive minority leadership. The awareness provided and the human capital advantage notions generated from this study may lead to incite, further exploration, and an ideological benefit toward business practices. Ethics in business stem from a long history of moral beliefs, mass ideology, and human philosophy. William May (1984) promoted the relevance of virtues such as honesty, respect, benevolence, promise keeping, prudence, perseverance, courage, integrity, concern for the public good, compassion, justice, and humility. Additionally, Robert Solomon
(1992), emphasized personal character and virtue in a business context, advocating that this approach would encourage the “flourishing” of the individual, the business, and the society not just in the bottom-line sense of success but in the broader promotion of “excellence.” Solomon mentioned “the basic business virtues” of honesty, fairness, trust, and toughness and also the “virtues of self” within a corporation of honor, loyalty, friendliness, and a sense of shame.

Further still Solomon noted that equally important were the application of caring, compassion and the “ultimate” virtue of justice. This study has the potential to establish new beliefs toward the advancement for not just “what” is striven for – more diversity and inclusion, but “why” diversity and inclusion is essential and in many cases necessary for organizations. The application of a model of organizational integrity is pondered by this research study. The lack of inclusion of a seemingly obvious absence of representation of an ethnic demographic questions fairness, justice, equality, and due prudence.

This research study explored the human capital advantage of minority executives and the influence lived experiences had on their respective fortitude, resilience, and perseverance in business and as a business leader. The research questions uncovered how the lived experiences of minority CEOs may have instilled fortitude, resilience, and perseverance and subsequently impacted their respective leadership and communication styles. RQ1 explored what lived experiences contribute to minority CEO FRP. RQ1a sought to explain how the lived experiences contributing to FRP might have molded the leadership and communication styles of the minority CEOs. RQ1b sought to explain how FRP gained through lived experiences might be applied in the decision-making practices of the minority CEO. RQ1c explored from the CEO’s perspective, the impact of the lived experiences on their respective organization’s identity, sustainability, and culture of the business. The research questions were designed to encourage critical thought by
the reader and provoke the participants to evaluate and contemplate their perceptions about their business leadership applications and the influence behind their approaches.

This research study provides insightful data regarding the unique phenomenon of being a minority CEO in an industry where minority executives are rare. Further still, this study gives personal deep-rooted accounts by minority CEOs whose experiences have driven, molded, and shaped their business methodology. The distinct perspectives of the minority CEOs provide first-hand accounts of context for interpretive analysis of business leadership motivation and practice. As noted in the literature review, minority leaders are among the most driven executives in corporate America (Korn Ferry, 2019). This research study provides some context as to why minority executives possess an elevated driven mentality. The very will of the minority participants of this study was motivated by either the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance gained by their lived experiences. By giving voice and representation to the executive minority leaders of this study, a heighten awareness and sensitivity may be gained that could substantiate the human capital advantage that minorities bring to corporate entities and industries. The researcher’s understanding is that by documenting the experiences, reflections, and viewpoints of minority executives will support DEI awareness, thought, and implementation. Understanding of the human capital advantage of minorities at the executive level helps facilitate initiatives for more DEI.

Discussion

Diversity and Inclusion

Despite efforts for diversity and inclusion at the executive level in business, minority underrepresentation continues to be an unresolved reality in corporate America. According to the
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2015), there is an increasing gap between the number of minorities in the U.S. population and the number of minority leaders in executive-level positions of U.S. corporations. Working in tandem, diversity and inclusion tap into the varied backgrounds, life experiences, and rich diversity of thought, ideas, and opinions of leaders and members of an organization (Smith & Angood, 2020). Promoting a business culture that encourages varied ideas, mindsets and perspectives adds value to an organizations resource perspective and is a human capital advantage when incorporated into the culture of a company. The insights gained from this study hope to help aid diversity and inclusion efforts by detailing the admirable wherewithal of minority CEOs “against all odds,” thereby increasing awareness and destigmatizing negative perceptions regarding the capability and the value-added attributes of minority CEOs. Mike Hyter, managing partner of Korn Ferry stated, “The rapid decline in the number of Black CEOs is alarming given the millions of dollars that companies have spent on diversity and inclusion programs,” (Korn Ferry, 2019). For things to change, organizations and the “powers that be” may need to take a closer look at a qualifying factor and a not so obvious attribute: fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. By exploring the experiences of minority leaders, the aim was to discover the specific motivations that help fuel their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance, which help to substantiate the overarching reasons to cultivate diversity and inclusion in business leadership. This study provides insights and is a resource of understanding for both minority and majority leaders and organizations seeking to embody this virtue of resilience in their organizations. The principal research question helped to guide the literature review regarding the constructs of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. The secondary questions broadened the scope of the literature by addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, barriers minority leaders face, and providing insight as to how minority leaders operationalize
the attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. Honored as one of the top 25 minority leaders by Modern Healthcare, Michellene Davis supports diversity and inclusion (D&I) not as an “either/or” proposition but as a “yes/and” opportunity to identify and hire female and diverse candidates who truly are the most qualified candidates for the job. Cognitive diversity and inclusion advocate for organizations to make a choice not to choose someone who’s more qualified, but rather to choose among equally qualified candidates who fill a gap in representation” (Smith & Angood, 2020). Robertson (2004) believed that diversity and inclusion ‘encapsulate’ the discrimination and fairness, and integration and learning diversity paradigms suggested by Thomas and Ely (1996). Personal accounts and perspective shared by minorities may help to destigmatize stereotypes, nullify gender bias, and invalidate racial negative perceptions regarding executive leadership capability. Education, awareness, and enlightenment of issues facing minority CEOs may go a long way in providing insight that could help support efforts of diversity and inclusion in corporate America. The authenticity and genuineness of the participants help to provide insight and perspective regarding their lived experiences. The wherewithal of the minority leaders of this study equates legitimacy, truth and realism. The candor of the minority CEOs, as noted in the findings, speaks to the value-added benefits of their resolve. The testimonies and reflections of the participants of this study help to bolster diversity and inclusion efforts for minority leaders in executive roles. The awareness and advocacy that this study conveys not only fosters acceptance of minority leaders but also brings context and legitimacy of the claim that minority CEOs are genuine assets to firms within the United States and the world.
**Theme 1: Lived Experiences**

Directly correlating to Research Question 1, the lived experiences of minority CEOs serve as an initial construct to the participants’ fortitude, resilience, and perseverance. This theme explored what particular lived experiences contributed to each minority CEO’s resolve. The participants explained in their own words what life experiences influenced and motivated them in business. The influences and the motivations that helped them to garner fortitude, resilience, and perseverance were life-changing and challenging accounts. These lived experiences accounted for the ability of these minority leaders to achieve and even excel in their respective fields in STEM industries. From not being taken seriously to only being seen as a “token” the participants expressed countless life situations where they had to either prove their worth or be steadfast in the opportunities granted them. Being a minority not only in life but in an industry where one’s presence and representation was scarce, the minority leaders of this study used the negative perceptions, challenging paths, and dire journeys to propel them toward success. As affirmed by a majority of the participants, they felt they had an obligation to themselves, family, and as a representative of their respective race and gender. Compelled by a will to succeed, the participants noted faith, family, and mentors as influencers of their drive in business. While their personal drive was a predominant motivating factor, undoubtedly the minority participants acknowledged those that went before them as major sources of inspiration. The lived experiences of the minority CEOs commission their destinies and served as a key influence of their fortitude, resilience, and perseverance.

**Theme 2: FRP - Influence on Leadership and Communication**

Directly correlating to Research Question 1a, the influence of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance on the minority leaders’ communication and leadership approach was made evident
by the participants’ tone of management, control, and direction. The leadership and communication styles of the minority CEOs may be described as liberal yet focused. The participants conveyed a team approach where communicatively, everyone had a voice and could be heard and from a leadership perspective the participants heavily relied on their employees. There was not a sense of “big I’s” and “little you’s” from the minority CEOs’ viewpoint. The participants expressed open dialogue, two-way communication, and a moral compass of empathy and understanding. Relating to the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of the CEOs was a sense that the minority leaders had empathy and understanding because of what they had lived through or experienced themselves. The minority CEOs could relate to their employees and understand their customers alike, because of the ability to put themselves in someone else’s place. The FRP influence enabled the minority leaders to communicate with compassion and lead from a sense of all-inclusiveness.

The comprehensive approach to leading and communicating provides a controlled governance to one’s organization. The participants expressed while open and amenable to their employees, overwhelmingly their communication and leadership was strategic and assertive. The minority CEOs conveyed a meticulous speech pattern that while simple was very methodical. Each participant expressed a communication strategy that leant to the strength and talents of each employee. The leaders knew how to use motivation to get the best out of their team. Even by using assertive tones, some of the participants stated that this helped to breed peace of mind with employees because the direction that was given was sure and focused.

Additionally, the leadership and communication styles used by the minority CEOs of this study provided clear direction. The participants expressed the importance of having a vision,
relaying that vision to your team, and facilitating the execution of that vision by keeping a clear, achievable, and executable objective front and center. A sentiment of the participants conveyed that a tried and tested leader will exhibit confidence, breed trust, and uphold loyalty. A well-defined and coherent vision is facilitated by the FRP influence of the minority leaders.

**Theme 3: Operationalization of Minority Leaders’ FRP**

Directly correlating to Research Question 1b, the minority CEOs incorporated the attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance into the operation of their business. The operationalization of these elements were seen through the minority leaders approach in running their organizations. The coaching style was a prevalent leadership approach by the minority CEOs. The participants advocated a team approach to how they executed objectives to achieve the highest rate of efficiency and effectiveness. As a resilient leader some CEOs expressed being taught from a young age never to give up. As a leader with fortitude, participants asserted a stand your ground mentality that was learned through their minority lived experiences. As a leader with perseverance, the minority CEOs expressed time and time again, the mantra of “if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” as well as the notion of “you can’t fail, if you don’t give up.” The minority leaders of this study ascribed to the belief that their very nature could be imparted into the organizations they represented.

**Theme 4: Organizational Identity, Culture, and Sustainability**

The incorporation of a leader’s traits into the identity, culture, and sustainability of an organization directly correlates with Research Question 2. The lived experiences of the minority CEOs of this study were advantageously positioned into the brand, values, and endurance of their respective organizations. The participants routinely made sure that their methodology and work
Ethic was showcased as a show of example, expectation, and conviction in their organizations. Numerous participants articulated that they lead by example and try to clearly communicate their expectations of their employees. The deep-rooted convictions of the minority leaders yielded a level of comradery and trust within the organization. Again, forged by the lived experiences of the minority CEOs of this study, the leaders were able to cohesively characterize the very nature of their organization’s operations by their personal and professional qualities. The characteristics personified by the minority leaders yielded a brand of strength, a culture of excellence, and a staying power of business durability.

Implications

From the discussion and the themes thereof, the implication of this research study rest with the notion of the human capital advantage of minority executive-level leaders. As noted in the literature review, minority leaders are among the most driven executives in corporate America (Korn Ferry, 2019). The answer to why this may be the case lies in the phenomenon of being a minority in a majority-driven society and majority-driven industry. The direct correlation of not only strong leadership but leadership that clearly understands and embodies the attributes of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance clearly makes a case for higher organizational achievement. As corroborated by Mohiuddin (2017), leadership style has immense impact on employees to perform, grow, and lead to positive attitude towards achieving organizational goals. A study by Fred Kiel (2015) found that organizations with leaders of high character, where employees rated their leaders very high on integrity responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion – had nearly five times the return on assets of those with low character (Kiel, 2015). The character, attributes, or traits of a leader can have a profound impact on an organization. One
may argue that the success, sustainability, and durability of an organization may be characterized by the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of the leader.

This research study implies from the data that minority leaders exude FRP from lived experiences. The phenomenon of the minority lived experience that produces FRP yields a particular and unique approach to leadership and communication within an organization. Additionally, the FRP of minority leaders influences the operationalization of that minority leaders’ decision-making and influence on the company’s operations. Finally, the FRP of minority leaders impacts organizational identity, culture, and sustainability. Based on the data provided from this study and the interviews conducted of executive-level leaders, there is a direct correlation to the lived experiences of minorities and the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance they exert within business.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study

Research Study Participants and Industry

As disclosed in chapter four, the research study participants included ten minority CEOs from STEM-related fields of industry. Generating a broader scale of minority CEOs would provide even greater insight from a minority phenomenon perspective to either further substantiate the results of this study, provide supplementary understanding and discovery of themes and concepts, or even dispute the findings of this study.

The industry areas represented by the research study participants ranged from a variety of STEM-related backgrounds. The STEM field industry was chosen in particular for this research study to provide exclusive insight from top level executives regarding the phenomenon of being a minority leader within an industry where minority leaders are underrepresented. A
complementary study could involve focus groups of varying or specific industries and an exploration of particular regions of the United States or countries abroad.

The gender breakdown of minority CEOs in this research study included six males and four females and ethnicity ranged between African American and Native American heritage. Further analysis could be made by concentrating on gender and a broader range of ethnicities. Further still, future research could place direct focus on one or more of the specific and distinctive demographics of this study – as it relates to the participants’ age, years of experience at the executive level, number of employees lead, predominant business influence and motivation, and leadership and communication style as a business leader. The assessed demographic-related notions of this research study could be used for future study as well as evaluating additional distinguishable factors.

Regarding pertinent applications addressing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) with the incorporation of minority executive-level leaders, future research could define and measure success. Defining success (achievement and reward) or failure (opportunity to learn and grow), through life experiences producing fortitude, resilience, and perseverance, could be aligned and assessed with the notion of grit. Grit is passion and perseverance for very long term goals (Duckworth, 2013). The implication of grit along with a growth mindset – continued development through challenges that yield success (Dweck, 2006) could be a notable research endeavor for business organizations, minority leadership, and DEI initiatives.

**Conclusion**

This research study explored the influence of the attributes of strength and stamina, collectively referred to as the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance (FRP) of minority executive-
level leadership. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover if and how the attributes of FRP could distinctively serve as a human capital advantage for organizations with regards to minority executive-level leadership. The implication being that the greater understanding and awareness of this human capital advantage/positive leadership attribute could oblige companies and support diversity and inclusion within organizations.

This research study explored the unique perceptions of minority CEOs and the extraordinary talents, perspective, and value they possess. The participants who lie at the center of this research wanted not to be seen as a “hot” commodity to be analyzed and debated but more as a part of humanity to be recognized as having significance and merit in business. The voices of the minority CEOs are at the center and not in the margins of this study. Pennington (1999) concluded that having minorities (particularly, executives) at the center of the research “gives their voices a long-denied privilege; more important, for researchers, it allows the minority CEOs to be understood in the contexts in which they live, grow, and make sense of their lives” (Pennington, 1999, p. 23). To be seen is to be documented as present; however, to be recognized is an observation of a person and of a people’s value and worth. Recognition is an acknowledgement of purpose and achievement. If the notion of diversity and inclusion along with equity is only given quantifiable consideration, the human characteristic element loses its capacity to qualify its human capital potential. The fortitude, resilience, and perseverance of minority executive-level leaders is clearly a positive character competitive edge. In an article, “Make Leader Character Your Competitive Edge,” Crossan, Furlong, and Austin (2022) maintained that most organizations give little thought to what is one of the most significant factors to effect positive organizational development; asserting that organizations that fail to hire for and develop positive character among its leaders are missing an opportunity. Martin Luther
King famously quoted, that people should “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” The conclusion of this study is that minorities of ethnicity and gender provide invaluable leadership attributes through the fortitude, resilience, and perseverance that they emit as executive leaders. The business application and human capital advantage of these attributes pay dividends toward organizational identity, culture, and sustainability.
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Appendix A: Interview Protocol – Minority CEO

The nature of this study is to inquire and document the lived experiences that have fueled the fortitude and resilience of minority CEOs in STEM industries. By conducting in-depth interviews with minority CEOs, the researcher sought to explore how fortitude may have helped to influence the leadership and communication styles of minority business leaders. Additionally, this study will explore the impact that leadership and communication has on establishing the organizational culture, and subsequent sustainability and “thrive-ability” of minority-run businesses in the STEM industry. Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher will explain the purpose of the study and define or clarify specific terms used in each section.

Research Questions

- RQ1. What lived experiences reported by minority CEOs in STEM industries contribute to fortitude?
- RQ2. How are the phenomenological (lived) experiences of fortitude operationalized in the decision-making practices by the minority CEO?
- RQ2a. How does fortitude affect the leadership styles of minority CEOs?
- RQ2b. How does fortitude affect the communication styles of minority CEOs?
- RQ3. What is the organizational impact of minority CEO fortitude with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability?

Exploratory Research Design

The researcher will compare, contrast, assess, and analyze the phenomenology (lived experiences) of each CEO. The research study is important because:
• This research helps to identify how the phenomenon (lived experiences) of minority CEO/business leaders contributes to their fortitude/resilience.

• This research helps to identify how particular influences that serve as added incentives to succeed in business have influenced the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs.

**Purpose:** To expand and further substantiate the body of literature regarding minority leaders in business and to facilitate the cause for inclusion and diversity in the culture of business leadership.

**Inference:** Motivating factors for minority CEOs may carry universal themes or may carry unique components versus that of majority CEOs. Additional factors (i.e. minority-lived experiences: sense of responsibility toward race, family, and community; thwarting negative perceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices of minorities in leadership) may incite the “extra” motivation and imperativeness to succeed.

The interview questions seek to disclose the following regarding the minority leaders: As a minority CEO, what’s your “Driving Force”? . . . what motivates you? . . . where do you get your resolve?

Resiliency through peril can influence how one leads and communicates within an organization.

(Note: for the purposes of clarity, emphasis, and validity some interview questions may be similar in nature or have an element of redundancy)
Preliminary – Pre interview briefing (RESEARCHER will):

- Discuss fortitude/resilience with the participant and establish the constructs of fortitude as it relates to this research study.
- Define and explain and phenomenology to each CEO.
- Define, explain, and identify types of leadership for each CEO.
  Assess “most-relatable” Leadership Type (Determine type(s) most identified with each CEO; (i.e., Coaching, Charismatic (Visionary), Servant, Autocratic, Laissez-faire (hands-off), Democratic, Transformational)
- Define, explain, and identify styles of communication for each CEO
  Assess “most-relatable” Communication Style (Determine style(s) most identified with each CEO; (i.e, Assertive (sure/focused), Aggressive (direct/to-the-point), Passive (open/receptive/amenable), Passive-aggressive, Manipulative (strategic/calculating)).

- (IQ) = Insight questions relating to the “lived experiences” contributing toward the fortitude/resilience of the minority CEOs (1-16)
- (L & C) = Combination of leadership & communication questions (17-19)
- (L) = Leadership-focused questions (20-23)
- (C) = Communication-focused questions (24 & 25)

Opening Discussion and conversational questions:

(IQ) – How would you define fortitude/resilience? Is this a term that you would ascribe to yourself as it relates to your professional approach? (If so, explain how it applies to you, where it came from). Is fortitude/resilience applicable to your business? (If so, explain how and provide
examples). If **fortitude/resilience** is applicable to your leadership approach, explain how you operationalize in your business, with employees, and with clients.

(IQ) - *(If applicable)* What person(s) or life experiences serve as motivations (instilled **fortitude/resilience**) for you starting your business? How has this person or life experience influenced/impacted how you lead and communicate in business?

(L) - Based on the identified types of **leadership**, which style BEST defines your approach to **leadership**? *(If applicable)* Is there more than one **leadership** approach you identify with? Which & why?

(C) - Based on the identified types of **communication**, which style BEST defines your approach to **communication**? Is it the same philosophy toward employees and customers? What experiences shaped how you communicate with people (your employees and your customers)?

**Sample Interview Questions:**

**RESILIENCE AND FORTITUDE**

1. What life experiences (directly linked to your ethnicity and/or gender) influenced, defined, and/or shaped you into the (resilient) business leader you are today and/or shaped your (resilient) approach to succeeding in business?

2. Personal influencers/motivators: Did you have a business role-model that helped guide the development of your business and/or instilled fortitude into your leadership approach? Or a mentor that helped develop your leadership or communication style? *If not, explain how this might have helped, if so, how did it impact/influence the creation, sustainability, and thriveability of your business.*
3. What are the motivating factors of how you LEAD your employees (how do you translate resiliency and fortitude onto your employees?)

4. What are the motivating factors of how you COMMUNICATE resiliency and fortitude to your employees?

5. Are there any other personal motivations that help to drive your resiliency and fortitude in business? (For example do you feel a sense of personal obligation to your employees’ welfare (satisfaction/well-being), and/or, a sense of responsibility and accountability to one’s race, community, or family?) Explain.

6. How do you establish and cultivate the operationalization of resiliency and fortitude into your organization’s culture?

7. What kinds of barriers/challenges does your organization experience because you are a minority owner?

8. Have the life experiences you faced as a minority positively, negatively, or indifferently impacted your ability as a leader? Explain.

9. What is the greatest challenge you face as a minority CEO? What drives you to overcome these challenges?

10. What are the pros and cons of being a minority CEO in STEM?

11. What might be some benefits of the existence of more minority-owned businesses in STEM? (i.e. more role-models/mentors to help guide and “show the way”, who also serve as examples of inspiration that it CAN be done).

12. How do YOU as a minority CEO (Leader) uniquely contribute to the competitive advantage and increased organizational performance of your business?
13. As an accomplished minority CEO how would you encourage/motivate other aspiring minority CEOs?

14. As a minority business leader, do you feel a sense of responsibility for helping to foster a level of acceptance for other minority-owned businesses from federal, state, or local contractors to extend business opportunities for other minority-owned businesses? Is this added pressure or fuel to motivate success?

15. In your opinion, what are the implications for majority organizations who neglect opportunities/partnerships/collaborations with minority-owned businesses or the hiring of minority CEOs?

16. What can other (majority-owned/run) organization leaders learn from your “lived” experience as it relates to fortitude, leadership and communication?

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION

17. Identify the leadership style and communication approach that you MOST identify with from the aforementioned types?

18. Was your particular style of leadership and communication approach primarily influenced by faith, family, business, and/or some other factor/lived experience? Explain.

19. How does your specific leadership and communication style contribute to the organizational culture of your business? How have your lived experiences correlated into the operationalization of your business approach?

LEADERSHIP

20. What do you consider to be the primary/essential components of your brand of leadership?

21. What does good leadership look like to you (in 2-3 bullet points/statements)?
22. How is your organization’s culture impacted by your particular brand of leadership? Are there pluses and minuses to this approach?

23. How has your leadership changed since the founding of your organization, or has it relatively remained the same? As it relates to your leadership style, have you stuck to core principles or evolved and adapted over time through experiences?

COMMUNICATION

24. As it relates to HOW you communicate directly to your employees (day-to-day) and HOW you communicate the company’s vision (universally), how has your particular communication style aided the development of your organization’s culture (day-to-day operations & as a whole)? Explain.

25. Is HOW your employees communicate with one another, a mandated/recognized priority in maintaining your organization’s identity (brand)? Explain.
Appendix B: Participant Request Letter/Email

Minority Business Owner/CEO in STEM industry:

My name is Torin Malone and I would be honored to have your involvement in conducting an intriguing and significant research study. The study is titled: A Phenomenological Study Examining Resilience of Minority CEOs in STEM Organizations: The Influence on Leadership and Communication Styles.

A little background about me: I am currently employed at Alabama A&M University, as a senior grants administrator in the office of Title III. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Business Administration, at Florida Institute of Technology (FIT), and I am conducting this research study as part of my doctoral dissertation. This qualitative phenomenological study seeks to explore how particular lived experiences may help to establish the fortitude/resilience of minority Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in business, specifically in the STEM fields.

The instrumentation for this study will be an in-depth, one-on-one virtual interview (via Zoom) between the researcher and the participant. Participants in this study will be required to sign a consent form verified and backed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of FIT and maintained by the researcher. The privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the information gathered respectively will be guarded and secured with the utmost consideration. Participation in this study is purely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time without penalty or consequence.

As a CEO, your unique individual perspective will provide an invaluable, immeasurable account of the essence and unique capabilities, capacity, and influence of minority business owners. This research seeks to broaden the body of knowledge and literature to help educate future aspiring minority business owners and majority owners alike about the barriers, challenges, as well as, the indelible influence, inspiration, and advantageous attributes of seasoned and experienced CEOs, such as yourself.

I would genuinely appreciate your involvement and participation in assisting in this research study. Please see the accompanying consent form. For additional information or inquiry, feel free to contact me. I look forward to your response and welcome your consideration.

In genuine humility and warmest regards,

Torin Malone
Doctoral Student
Florida Institute of Technology
Phone: 256-503-6996
Email: torinmalone@gmail.com or malonet2018@my.fit.edu
Appendix C: Participant Informed Consent Form

FLORIDA TECH

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
INFORMED CONSENT

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study. The researcher will answer any questions before you sign this form.

Study title: A Phenomenological Study Examining Resilience of Minority CEOs in STEM Organizations: The Influence on Leadership and Communication Styles

Purpose of the study
This study seeks to explore how the lived experiences of minority CEOs may help to establish their resilience in business. The study seeks to identify how the phenomenon (lived experiences) of minority CEOs contributes to the human capital advantage of resilience. This research explores how particular influences may serve as conduits for minority CEOs to succeed in business (influencing leadership and communication styles).

Procedures
The instrumentation proposed for this study will be in-depth, one-on-one recorded virtual interviews (via Zoom, Google Meet, or Skype) between the researcher and the participants (back-up recording device will be on hand).

Potential risks of participating
Potential risks to the participants involve psychological/emotional recall of lived experiences/events that the researcher inquires that may have fostered the participants’ attribute of resilience. To mitigate risk, the researcher will remind participant before, during, and after sessions of inquiry that they may stop, end, or redirect line of questioning and/or participation in the research study at any time without penalty or consequence.

Compensation
No monetary/valued compensation is being offered for participation in this study; however, your participation may help to expand and further substantiate the body of literature regarding the advantages of minority leaders in business and help to facilitate and substantiate the cause for inclusion and diversity within business organizations where executive minority leaders are underrepresented.

Confidentiality
Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Information gathered will be coded to protect any personally identifying information. Audio files, notes and consent form will be stored in a secure password protected, cloud-based storage account. Printed material and digital notes used during the study will be shredded when the study is completed. Once analyzed all transcriptions and recordings will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. Measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality and privacy to protect participant identity as well as their related data.

Voluntary participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You may also refuse to answer any of the questions we ask you.

Right to withdraw from the study
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.
FLORIDA TECH

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
INFORMED CONSENT

CONTACTS
Torn Malone; Email: malonet2018@my.fit.edu; Phone: 256-503-6996

For questions about the study:
Dr. Jignya Patel, IRB Chairperson
150 W. University Blvd., Melbourne, FL 32901-6975
FIT_IRB@fit.edu
321-674-7391

AGREEMENT

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure, and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant's signature: ___________________________ Date: __________

Principal investigator's signature: ___________________________ Date: __________

Torin Malone

Digitally signed by Torin Malone
DN: cn=Torin Malone, ou=, email=torinmalone@gmail.com, c=US
Date: 2012.06.20 14:54:05 -07'00'

Florida's STEM University
Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approval

Florida Institute of Technology
Institutional Review Board

Notice of Exempt Review Status
Certificate of Clearance for Human Participants Research

Principal Investigator:  Torin Malone
Date:  August 26, 2022
IRB Number:  22-075
Study Title:  A Phenomenological Study Examining Resilience of Minority CEOs in STEM Organizations: The Influence on Leadership and Communication Styles

Your research protocol was reviewed and approved by the IRB Chairperson. Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.101, your study has been determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and exempt from 45 CFR46 federal regulations. The Exempt determination is valid indefinitely. Substantive changes to the approved exempt research must be requested and approved prior to their initiation. Investigators may request proposed changes by submitting a Revision Request form found on the IRB website.

Acceptance of this study is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of Florida Institute of Technology’s Human Research Protection Program (http://web2.flt.edu/crm/irb/) and does not replace any other approvals that may be required.

All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a secure location for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

The category for which exempt status has been determined for this protocol is as follows:

3. Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection and at least one of the following criteria is met:
   a. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
   b. Any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation, or
   c. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and IRB can determine if there are adequate provisions in place to protect the privacy of the subjects and confidentiality of the data.
Appendix E: Participant Demographic Solicited Information

Current age *(select one)*:
- □ 20-40
- □ 41-60
- □ 61 and up

Years in an executive leadership role *(select one)*:
- □ 1 to 5
- □ 6-10
- □ 11 or more

In your leadership role, the number of employees/colleagues lead *(select one)*:
- □ 1-5
- □ 6-15
- □ 16 or more

Predominant Influencer to you in Business *(select one)*:
- □ Family
- □ Faith
- □ Mentor/Educator
- □ Military

Predominant Motivating factor to you as a Business Leader *(select one)*:
- □ Influencer (listed above)
- □ Self-motivated/Personal Drive
- □ Life experience motivations

Rank the factors that helped to establish and influence your Fortitude/Resilience/Perseverance as a Business Leader from 1 to 4 *(where 1 is most influential and 4 is least influential)*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General business outcomes/lessons (profitability/trial &amp;error/school of hard knocks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family inspiration (motivated by a parent, children, or matriarch/patriarch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ethnic and/or gender pride (cultural/community of peers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Personal resolve/will to succeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You may possess a combination of the attributes/styles listed below depending on the circumstance or situation; however, which BEST generally describes your leadership and communication approach?

Basic types of leadership *(choose one – which suits you the most)*:
☐ Autocratic/Bureaucratic: Policy and procedure maker. Employees are expected to follow the direction and the rules precisely as instructed by the leader.
☐ Charismatic: A motivating leader that inspires their followers. Seen as a visionary.
☐ Coaching: This leadership style is about helping others to improve themselves and achieve their goals. Leader provides guidance and counsel.
☐ Democratic: This leader is receptive to what other people have to say. Allows and even encourages others to participate in decision-making.
☐ Laissez-faire: This leadership style gives employees complete free reign. Empowers employees, is hands-off, and trust them to accomplish tasks.
☐ Servant: Servant leaders live by a people-first mindset and believe that when team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they’re more effective.
☐ Transactional: Seen in a sales environment, these leaders incentivize goals and give teams targets to achieve in order to gain a reward.
☐ Transformational: Works with teams to identify a change that is needed, creates a vision, and then guides their followers by inspiring them.

Basic styles of communication *(choose one – which style fits your business personality the most)*:
☐ Assertive (sure/focused)
☐ Aggressive (direct/to-the-point)
☐ Passive (open/receptive/amenable)
☐ Strategic (methodical/meticulous)

*(Rate your level of agreement with the following statement)*: The lived experiences relating to my ethnicity and/or gender attributed to my Resilience/Fortitude/Perseverance in business and as a business leader.
☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

(Optional) Most influential book/article read as it pertains to your business/leadership approach:

☐ :
☐ : N/A
Appendix F: NVivo 12 Pro Coding Screenshots

![NVivo Coding Screenshot]

### Appendix F: NVivo 12 Pro Coding Screenshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Flag</th>
<th>References</th>
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<th>Created by</th>
<th>Modified on</th>
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<td>Resilience: Fortitude, Persistence</td>
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<td>Leadership &amp; Communication Affect</td>
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<td>RQ1.6</td>
<td>Leadership Style, Approach</td>
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<td>RQ1.7</td>
<td>Communication Style, Approach</td>
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<td>RQ1.9</td>
<td>Operationalization of RE</td>
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<td>3-Challenges</td>
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**Reference 1: 1.21% Coverage**

So I think everybody has a bit of fortitude, that they’ve got a display at some point and time. Business being the whole pursuit that it is certainly requires a bit of fortitude, so sure I argue, and I ascribe to myself. Certainly any entrepreneur, I think would shuck with the idea of somebody being an entrepreneur and not having fortitude. But certainly, I’ve grown up that way. Right so, business has been in my blood for quite some time. And problems are just challenges waiting to be solved right. So that’s, that’s business right there.

**Reference 2: 1.49% Coverage**

Fortitude and resilience from the perspective of a STEM person, before we get to leadership, I think it’s kind of baked into the pursuit of problem solving and having to consistently go back to the drawing board to answer questions. The entire process of developing a hypothesis and testing that entire scientific method is kind of baked into resilience as well. You’re going to have some sort of experience and just think as a leader, I bring that to the table. Having been in the STEM field and understanding that when you’re addressing complex problems, there’s a certain level of fortitude is that is required of you to help you remain focused and continue to pursue a thing. Even if the outcomes is not what you had anticipated. From resiliency, you experience with that comes from being in graduate school and in that process resilience is a big part of staying committed to a process. While working on your dissertation and being able to continue to see it through and coming up with different ways of being flexible.

How you are taking in information, as well as how you’re understanding time frames and being able to find, and you could say, some freshness in your mind to continue to pursue something. So because of that, using those kind of examples of fortitude and resilience from a source of research within STEM and my background is in biological sciences. Knowing for a fact, I pulled those personal experiences into how I lead my teams, and how I lead my organization and how we think about attacking community-based problems and ways that we identify solutions through problem solving.
## Appendix G: Correlating Questions, Codes, and Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlating Research Questions</th>
<th>NVivo Coding Nodes</th>
<th>EXPLANATIONS – The participants expressed from their perspective . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. What lived experiences reported by minority CEOs in STEM industries contribute to executive-level RFP?</td>
<td>Resilience, Fortitude, Perseverance (RFP)</td>
<td>What RFP means to you as a business leader</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life Experiences</td>
<td>Phenomenology – minority-centered lived experiences impact on leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal Influencers</td>
<td>What or who influenced you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Personal Motivators</td>
<td>What or who motivated you</td>
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<td>RQ1a. How does RFP affect the leadership and communication styles of minority CEOs?</td>
<td>Leadership Style/Approach</td>
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<td>Communication Style/Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging Others</td>
<td>Leadership - RFP impact on encouraging others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Motivating Others</td>
<td>Leadership - RFP impact on motivating others</td>
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<td>RQ1b. How are lived experiences of RFP operationalized in the decision-making practices of minority CEOs?</td>
<td>Minority Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>How RFP serves as an attribute for minority leaders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Minority Organizational Operationalization</td>
<td>How minority leaders’ RFP serves an organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Minority Leadership Perspectives/Best Practices</td>
<td>How minority leader RFP contributes toward diversity of thought, application, and procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Minority Leader/Organizational Implications</td>
<td>Implication of how minority leader RFP may impact operations (minority and majority entities alike)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ2. What is the organizational impact of minority CEO RFP with regard to organizational identity, culture, and sustainability?</td>
<td>Will/Drive to Succeed – Identity</td>
<td>The minority leader’s drive helps to establish the brand and identity of the organization’s RFP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority Business/Leader (Pros &amp; Cons) – Identity</td>
<td>The good with the bad of being recognized as a minority-owned firm. Set-asides work to your advantage as being able to be in business but may hurt when it comes to the perception of your worthiness to exist and/or compete in that industry. “You are here only because you are a minority, you don’t deserve it, or you haven’t earned it per se.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barriers/Challenges – Culture</td>
<td>Because you are a minority organization facing greater barriers and challenges helps to garner a RFP culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority Leader Evolution &amp; Legacy – Sustainability</td>
<td>Minority leaders are always evolving, adapting and pivoting – seeking ways to survive and thrive and to sustain their businesses to legitimize their existence and substantiate their legacy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>