How successful African-American male leaders in predominately White Organizations integrate spirituality with leadership practice

Emmanuel Small

Business Studies, Stockton University, Galloway, NJ, USA

ABSTRACT
Using Critical Race Theory, this article presents findings from a hermeneutic phenomenological study to explore the leadership experiences of five African-American men in senior-level positions in predominately White organizations (PWO) located in the U.S. This study will show that as a result of the intersectionality of race, gender, and religion, African-American male leaders encounter various challenges born out of White privilege expressed through racially insensitive micro-aggressions. A phenomenological interpretative analysis of participants’ semi-structured interviews concluded that African-American spirituality provided the self-determination and resiliency to transcend fluid racial narratives, ideologies, and discourse embedded in the culture of a PWO. Findings from this study broaden contemporary leadership theory taking into account the intersecting cultural dynamics and experiences of successful African-American male leaders who integrate spirituality into their leadership practice.

Research on the connection between spirituality and leadership is growing in the fields of management and organizational science, psychology, and other related disciplines. The literature suggests that spiritually-grounded leaders engage in transcendent processes that guide them to change their organizations to better respond to employees who feel lost, dispirited, and overwhelmed (Fry 2003). Spiritual leadership integrates moral and ethical values (e.g., justice, fairness) with the perception of a calling, mission, or purpose, usually identified with a Higher Power (Bolman and Deal 2003; Dantley 2003; Fairholm 1997; Fry 2003; Reave 2005).

Fairholm (1997), Fry (2003), and Mitroff and Denton (1999) were foundational in the development of this model of spirituality and leadership in which a CEO’s spiritual values transform an organization from economically-driven to purpose-driven. Such organizations are known for a significant number of positive achievements, including: a) creating a positive and ethical work climate, b) inspiring trust in the leader-follower relationship, c) increasing productivity, d) lowering staff turnover rates, and e) improving employees’ overall health and well-being (Dantley 2005; Dent, Eileen Higgins, and Wharff 2005; Fry 2003; Reave 2005). Despite the importance of these studies to the field, they do not...
address the specific perspectives and lived experiences of African-American male leaders (Hucles and Davis Sanchez-Hucles and Davis 2010; Wingfield and Alston 2014). More specifically, these studies do not address the role of spirituality in overcoming the specific organizational obstacles experienced by minority leaders in predominately White organizations (PWOs).

According to a recent survey by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), African-Americans occupy roughly 8% of management, business, and financial occupations in the U.S. workforce. The numbers are even more stark at the highest positions: African-Americans make up only 3.5% of U.S. CEOs, compared to whites (89.5%), and other races/ethnicities (7%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). The underrepresentation of African-Americans in senior-level management positions compared to their percentage in the general workforce suggests that they are facing opposition or obstacles at the mid-management level (James 2014; Thomas and Gabarro 1999). These numbers support the perception of many African-Americans that their workplaces favor their White colleagues in subtle but pervasive ways (Prieto et al. 2016).

African-American male leaders are viewed as the “other” in PWOs, out of place and undervalued in an environment that valorizes the history, culture, and religion of White-Anglo Christian male leaders. (Nkomo and Ariss 2014; Rossette et al. 2008; Sidanius et al. 2004; Walker 2009; Winfield and Alston 2014). It is now generally accepted by organizational behavioral scientists that structures within PWOs privilege one racial/ethnic group and gender over others. These structures are subtly reinforced through covert forms of racism called microaggressions (Nkomo and Ariss 2014; ; Waymer 2008; Wise 2009). Directed toward people of color, microaggressions take the form of verbal and non-verbal derogatory and/or hostile insults based on race and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname (Lewis et al. 2007; ; Sue et al. 2019).

The types of microaggressions experienced by African-Americans were on public display during the election of the first African-American President of the United States, Barack Husain Obama II. The constant barrage of microassaults (half-breed, mongrel, Muslim terrorist) against his African ancestry and Islamic name during and after the 2008 presidential campaign served as a reminder that America is inherently a White Christian country, in character, in structure, and culture (Hacker 2003; Wise 2009). Businesses and organizations reproduce these more extensive systems of racism prevalent in the U.S. culture, engendering institutional practices that treat women and people of color differently from their White male counterparts (Pitcan, Park-Taylor, and Hayslett 2018).

To withstand and overcome these micro- and macro- assaults on their identity, values, and abilities, some African-American executives rely heavily on their spirituality (Evans and Moore 2015). Conger (1994, 17) reminds us that “spirituality, more powerfully than most other human forces, lifts us beyond ourselves and our narrow self-interests … It helps us to see our deeper connections to one another and the world beyond ourselves”. The ability to resist and persevere in the face of systemic oppression has been a hallmark of African-American leadership, and it is framed as a calling to fulfill God’s plan (Dantley 2005; Mattis 2000). Whether historically or in the contemporary workplace, spirituality is integral to African-American male leaders’ adaptive capacity, resilience, and determination to succeed (Bennis and Thomas 2002).
Purpose of study

This article presents select findings from a more extensive qualitative study examining how successful African-American male leaders in predominately White organizations integrate spirituality into their leadership practice. More specifically, this article seeks to forefront participants’ lived experiences of overcoming micro-racial bias within PWOs (Byrd 2009). The central question raised by this study is, “What is the role of spirituality for African-American male leaders in a predominately White organizations”? To answer the question, this study is informed by critical race theory (CRT) and uses an interpretive lens of hermeneutic phenomenology to analyze patterned similarities to understand how spirituality provides a sense of purpose, hope, and resiliency, enabling African-American male leaders to overcome the intersections of race and gender inequality.

Significance of study

This study builds on Steingard’s (2005, 230) spiritually-informed management model, a philosophical and metaphysical framework for integrating spirituality and management that moves “beyond one’s sense of self into the awareness of a larger and more meaningful universe.” Adding this dimension to traditional management studies “requires new methodologies, research paradigms, phenomenology, language, and a variety of different ideas and tools” to bring this theory into fruition (Steingard 2005, 237). The contribution of the current study is significant because it offers new scholarship examining Black religious thought through the lens of African-American spirituality and leadership across different sectors (e.g., healthcare, business, government, education). Through interviews with successful African-American men in the form of positive portraits, this study also creates a culturally responsive epistemology (beliefs, faith, intuition, systems of knowledge) of Black life and leadership in the workplace. Without this critical voice in academic literature, such contributions to the field of study on management, religion, and spirituality will remain under-theorized and under-researched (Ospina and Foldy 2009).

Theoretical framework: critical race theory

One method for understanding how the confluence of race and gender affects the experiences of African-American male leaders in PWOs is Critical Race Theory (CRT), an interdisciplinary iterative framework designed to contextualize the epistemological worldview of a group of people that have experienced racism, discrimination, and marginalization in the United States (Goessling 2018; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). Critical Race Theory emerged in the 1980–1990s from the work of critical legal scholars Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, in response to their critique of the institutionalized racism within the U.S. legal system and inequalities in education (Crenshaw 1991; Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Critical race theorists consider race and racism as “an endemic part of American life that is deeply ingrained through a historical consciousness and ideological choices about race” (Parker and Lynn 2002, 9), leading to prejudice and discrimination within social institutions (Ackerman-Barger 2015; Collins 1990).
CRT has three main tenets: (a) storytelling and narratives from people of color are valid approaches to examining race and racism in law and society; (b) we must eradicate racial subjugation while recognizing that race is a social construct; and (c) the importance of the relationship between race and acts of domination (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Parker and Lynn 2002). Critical race theorists postulate that people of color are uniquely qualified to speak from their experiences with oppression and should be encouraged to give voice to their plight through expressive activities like storytelling (Louis et al. 2016, 460). From critical race theory perspectives, knowledge can and should be generated through the narratives and counter-narratives captured by the researcher, experienced by the research participants, and told by people of color (Milner 2007). Through such personal expressions, CRT uncovers structural racism, domination, oppression, and alienation, and can lead to a more nuanced examination of the ways that race and racism affect social structures, practices, and discourses (Creswell 2007).

For this study, narratives and counter-narratives provide an analytical framework used to 1) identify similarities in the way participants discussed the importance of spirituality; 2) analyze collected data for other possible expressions of spirituality that may have added to their success; 3) paint a portrait of the participant’s racialized life experiences; and 4) identify culturally mediated patterns of inequality contributing to the pervasive microaggressions they experienced as leaders in a PWO (Ruiz Castro and Holvino 2016, 331; Parker and Lynn 2002). Critical race theory’s advancement of the narrative and counter-narrative centralizes race for the knower and for the known (Milner 2007). In other words, race and racism are placed at the center of the narrative and counter-narrative to unpack the empirical reality that in America, race matters (Milner 2007; West 1996). The following section examines the literature on spirituality and the challenges African-American men experience during their rise to leadership positions in PWOs.

Literature review

Spirituality

Derived from the Latin word *spiritus*, meaning breath or life force, spirituality generally refers to a transcendent relationship with a Higher Power, through which one finds meaning and purpose (Fry 2003; Hage 2006). Spirituality is informed not only by sacred texts and religious practice, but also cultural, familial, and personal beliefs about the origin and meaning of life (Gibson 2014). The core value underlying spirituality is the development of a higher consciousness that creates an intimate relationship within one’s inner self that governs our morality (Dantley 2005). The guiding principle of spirituality is the emotional expression of the sacred part of ourselves which is unseen and mysterious that gives our life meaning and a sense of purpose as we chart our way through life’s paradoxes (; Fry 2003; Hage 2006; Howard and Navarro 2016).

African-American spirituality

For African-Americans, spirituality derives from the soul consciousness emanating from their African ancestors’ communal source of liberation, solace, and hope (Paris 1995).
Though it may vary between individuals, African-American spirituality is “distinctively African in its explanations of phenomena and its understanding of God as the definitive source and sustainer of life” (Ngunjiri 2011, 9). African-American spirituality is a powerful value system inclusive of African cultural beliefs and practices across time and contexts to interpret, adapt, and resist oppressive forces (Dantley 2005; Smith 1999; Stewart 1999; Wood and Hilton 2012). Historically, African-American religiosity and spirituality are grounded in the quest for liberation from oppressive forces (Dill 2017). Spiritual traditions of African-Americans emerged from hundreds of years of forced migration, enslavement, and systemic discrimination and victimization (Lewis 2008). Spirituality became a vital component for survival during slavery, as enslaved people saw parallels between their social conditions of oppression and those of various subjugated people in the Bible and Qur’an, and viewed God, Christ, and Allah as symbolic victors in these battles (Dantley 2003; Dill 2017). Reincarnated and nurtured in the slave quarters, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and the African tribal traditions coalesced into African-American spirituality (Dantley 2003; Stewart 1999).

African-American spirituality is a combative, emancipatory force, meaning it is framed out of an animated integrative power described by Stewart (1999) and others as the “soul force” within African-Americans to resist and confront self-degradation, hopelessness, and social injustices (Paris 1995; Dantley 2003). It enables African-Americans to shape their consciousness, to forge their own identity to “adapt and transcend social maladies, confront and surmount all threats to their existence, and establish a spiritual and ontological location in American society” (Stewart 1999, 3). African-American spirituality motivates Black people to transform systemic oppression and dehumanizing conditions into idioms, rituals, and hermeneutics that serve as survival mechanisms, preserving their existence and nurturing their souls (Dantley 2003; Paris 1995; Stewart 1999).

Conceptual work on African-American spirituality theory acknowledges three distinctly cultural attributes that stem from this spiritual framework (Lewis 2008). These attributes include (a) faith in a transcendent force; (b) personal relationships with God, others, and self; and (c) empowering transformation of and liberating consolation from adversity (Lewis 2008, 459). From slavery to the Civil Rights Movement to the present day, African-American spirituality has provided Black people with a religious and cultural ethic to transcend social, political, and economic injustices in American society and the Diaspora (Boyd-Franklin 2010; Dantley 2003; Paris 1995; Stewart 1999; Waymer 2008).

**Challenges that impact African-American male leaders**

Despite the popularity of diversity management interventions in many U.S. organizations, subtle discrimination still exists and actively hinders the advancement of African-American men across an array of institutions. To fully understand the unique challenges encountered by African-American male leaders, it is essential to explore the environment of predominantly White organization (PWO) (Cornileus 2016). Ultimately, African-American men cannot escape issues of race and gender as they assert their power and influence within a racialized society (Crook, Thomas, and Cobia 2009; Wilson 2005). The following discussion will highlight racial and gendered structures that result in a unique set of obstacles, prompting African-American male leaders to rely on their
spirituality to achieve their goals while maintaining a strong sense of identity and purpose.

**White male privilege**

When a single group is dominant in positions of power and authority, the organization tends to privilege those who share qualities with that group. Studies on organizational diversity suggest that in private and public institutions led by White males, rising White male leaders receive preferential treatment. Researchers attribute this phenomenon to the fact that White men in a PWO have two very important, recognizable, characteristics they share with most of their White superiors: their race and gender (Knight et al. 2003). More than simple preference, White privilege is characterized by the “entitlement and unearned authority of White men to engage in attitudes, beliefs, and practices to perpetuate the status quo of White supremacy, social and racial segregation, and systemic inequality” (Liu 2017, 352). As stated by Frankenberg 1993, 236), “whiteness is the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than a disadvantage.” This one-sidedness of racial identity and ascription engenders racial antagonism that positions those marked White are essentially different from and superior to non-whites (Hughey and The 2010).

White privilege within a PWO establishes itself through multiple factors, including hiring and promotion decisions, discrimination, job queues, differential access to social networks, physical attributes, all of which collectively work together to create practices and patterns of behavior that disadvantage non-Whites (Wingfield and Alston 2014). African-American men encounter discrimination in the form of gendered racism because of the cumulative effect of being both “Black and men -”Blackmen” – a multidimensional understanding of their single social position” (Cornileus 2013, 445). There is an assumption that these men are capable of trading in on their gender to gain privilege. Cornileus (2016, 84–85) explains it best when she says:

this assumption is misleading due to how the interlocking positional characteristics of race and gender have a cumulative effect of describing a man’s hierarchical standing and experiences in America; and because of their social position as “Black men,” being both Black and men, they more often encounter gendered racism.

African-American male leaders in PWOs find themselves embroiled in a complicated dilemma where they receive social and economic advantages by virtue of their gender but suffer disadvantages that result from racial inequality. Within this context, African-American male leaders work in a constant state of emotional and psychological stress, trying to preserve their masculinity and racial identity as they thrive as leaders within the hegemonic culture of a PWO.

A significant driver of inequality in PWOs occurs during hiring and promotion decisions. In their study of challenges to career advancement among people of color, Thomas and Gabarro (1999) showed that, within PWOs, people of color are promoted more slowly than their white colleagues, and that their movement up the corporate ladder stalls at middle or upper-middle management. This may be because people of color do not have access to informal support networks in which high-level White mentors support the advancement of similar, White junior executives.
Another barrier to advancement is the perception that the promotion of an African-American male to executive status in a PWO represents an infringement on White executive privileges (Wells 1998, 394). In their book, Soul in Management (1996), America and Anderson detail the social and cultural realities of over 150 African-American leaders working in a predominantly White corporate environment. They found that when White males in senior management positions are asked to relinquish or share power, they perceive emergent African-American leaders as threatening or undeserving of their promotion. This resistance pressures African-American men to alter their behavior to assimilate as they rise within the organization (Nkomo and Ariss 2013; Thomas and Gabarro 1999). In doing so, they must choose between tacitly participating in their own objectification and marginalization (Evans and Moore 2015) or actively resisting these hegemonic pressures at the risk of being alienated and excluded from the dominant group (Pierce 2014).

White fragility

A key aspect of white privilege is white fragility, a series of defensive moves that White people use to avoid discussions about race and white privilege. Even a small amount of racial stress is intolerable and triggers a range of defensive behaviors from White people to minimize and deny the significance of race, racism, and white privilege (DiAngelo 2011). These behaviors strategically function as a defense mechanism used to insulate and preserve White racial equilibrium to sustain white privilege (ibid.).

White fragility effectively shuts down any attempt to “call out” racist behavior and insulates White people from criticism of their attitudes and actions. When confronted, White people may respond with “outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation” (Robin and Fragility 2011, 54). The concern then shifts from the person of color experiencing the microaggression to the White person, decreasing empathy from an already marginalized group back to the one in power (Fine 1997; Jayakumar and Adamian 2017).

In her book, I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness, Austin Channing Brown (2018) argues that “White fragility” and “White guilt” are ways in which Whites absolve themselves of inherent racism, microaggressions, and injustices that plague Black life. Brown provides vivid examples of being a Black woman in a position of authority where her White subordinates were dismissive and resisted her authority. Beneath the volatility and combative nature, Brown (2018) asserts that Whites feel disturbed because they cannot perceive that Black people in positions of authority can teach them something about themselves and the world.

As professor of social work Rich Vodde 2000, 3) stated, “If privilege is defined as a legitimization of one’s entitlement to resources, it can also be defined as permission to escape or avoid any challenges to this entitlement.” White fragility is a direct result of White supremacy (Hines 2016), which directly affects the experiences of people of color in a PWO. Rather than combating racist behaviors and attitudes, sensitivity training or even casual discussion about race can elicit strong adverse reactions that further marginalize African-Americans and people of color (Robin and Fragility 2011).
Microaggressions

The systemic barriers to advancement for African-American male leaders in PWOs are not explicit; instead, they communicate through subtle and often unconscious signals that Black behaviors, identities, and orientations are not welcome. Psychiatrist Dr. Chester Pierce at Harvard University was one of the first to define the term racial “microaggressions” as a form of racism that stems from an unconscious attitude of White superiority (Olds 2011, 2; Pierce et al. 1997). Racial microaggressions consist of subtle derogatory slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that negatively affect the environments, psyche, and productivity of minorities, continuously reminding them of their second-class status (Louis et al. 2016, 455; Pierce et al. 1997). An example might be an insensitive comment such as, “You’re not like the rest of them” or “I don’t think of you as being Black” (Wells 1998, 395). Moreover, it is not uncommon for White colleagues, subordinates and supervisors to assume African-American men can dance, were athletes, were raised in impoverished neighborhoods, or had first-hand experiences with gangs, guns, and violence (Eisnberg, Goodall, and Trethewey 2014, 210).

Sue (2015) and his colleagues divide microaggressions into three categories: micro-insults, micro-invalidations, and micro-assaults. Micro-insults are actions that verbally or nonverbally convey insensitive, rude remarks that demean a person’s racial identity or heritage (Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder 2008; Sue 2015). For example, An African-American being told by a White person that their job was given to them as a result of affirmative action. This comment is an insult because the White person is insinuating that the African-American candidate is not qualified for the job and that he or she received the promotion as a result of their race.

Micro-invalidations are actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiences of people of color (Sue 2015; Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder 2008, 331), such as when African-Americans are told “I don’t see color” or “We are all human beings,” negates their experiences as racial/cultural beings. Micro-assaults are offensive, racial, derogatory insults such as using a racial slur is a deliberate attempt to hurt and discriminate against people of color (Sue 2015; Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder 2008). Any or all of these three types of microaggressions may be at work in PWOs.

The covert message of microaggressions is “you don’t belong here- change or leave,” prompting African-Americans to ask themselves a series of questions: “Whom should I emulate? What values should be of importance to me? Is race important to me because it is central to who I am or because I am defined by it in society?” (Pinkett, Robinson, and Patterson 2011, 10). If they choose not to conform to White-Anglo norms, African-American men must instead fight for acceptance in a hegemonic culture that fails to acknowledge their cultural and ethnic identity.

Resilience: inner strength

Most leaders, if not all, will encounter a crisis sometime during the course of their leadership experiences, and must draw on “certain protective factors, including the resources, beliefs, and practices of individuals, teams, organizations, communities, and nations” to recover and move beyond such disruptions (O’Grady 2016, 168). Because it was born out of oppression, African-American spirituality is characterized by the cultivation of resilience,
interconnected with a Higher Power to transcend chaotic human experiences (Chandler 2017; Stewart 1999). Resilience typically refers to having the ability to thrive and learn in the face of adversity (Stratta et al. 2015; Polk 1997). More fully, resilience consists of several factors that empower individuals to develop an internal locus of control, rather than be controlled by their environment (Teti et al. 2011).

For Lewis (2008), resilience draws from three factors: faith in a transcendent force; personal relationships with God, self, and others; and empowering transformation through adversity. Dill (2017) characterizes spiritual resilience as relying on one's spiritual beliefs and teachings in times of hardship to manage life events through prayer, leaning on God for support, courage, and spiritual guidance. Lewis describes these attributes as (a) having faith in a transcendent force; (b) establishing personal relationships with God, others, and self; and (c) empowering transformation of and liberating consolation from adversity.

Boland (2000) suggests that spirituality allows individuals to access internal resources to cope with adversity, facilitate resilience, and promote positive health outcomes when distressed.

Mattis (2009, 267) proposes that during turbulent times, African-American leaders draw “from an inner source of strength to endure and overcome the oppression handed to them by society as they seek to fulfill God’s plan to lead.” Bennis and Thomas (2002) studied leaders’ adaptive capacity to overcome adversity through resiliency. They discovered that extraordinary leaders are demonstrating the perseverance and toughness to overcome adversity, find meaning and gain valuable knowledge and wisdom from negative life events (Bennis and Thomas 2002). Each of these theorists support the notion that for many, spirituality and connection to God, self, and community is integral to their ability to overcome difficulties.

In practice, spirituality has been demonstrated to positively affect the abilities of multiple populations to build resilience in the face of adversity. Bacchus and Holley (2004) show how African-American professional women use their spirituality to cope with the stress of confronting corporate America’s glass ceiling. Likewise, in Herndon’s (2003) study on African-American males undergraduates at predominately White institutions revealed that spirituality served as an internal mechanism of strength, providing Black college students with the courage and a sense of purpose to overcome struggles that impeded their academic and professional goals. Participants cited specific acts of spiritual coping, including prayers, church attendance, and reading scriptures or inspirational writings (Herndon 2003).

Spirituality provides resources for overcoming all types of adversity, not just racial. According to Russo-Netzer and Moran (2018, 60), accessing spiritual resources create a deep sense of self-awareness that facilitates meaning-making of trauma and adversity, and is positively associated with greater mental and physical well-being that serves as a protective factor in psychological adjustment to adverse life experiences. This study builds on and brings together existing work in management theory and spirituality studies, in order to demonstrate how spiritual practice, calling, and sense of self are used to confront challenges and assist leaders in overcoming adversity (Steingard 2005).
Methodology

Strategy of inquiry

This study employs a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research design, describing and interpreting both the objective reality and the individual perceptions of participants who have all experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenology, developed by Martin Heidegger, focuses on the essence of human experience, described as “the way a person lives, creates, and relates in the world” (Moustakas 1994, 48). It supports the ontological perspective for the self-interpretation of being, i.e., what it means to be where “reality is constructed, fluid, and relative”; moreover, the “subjective nature of mankind can only be known or understood through interpreting the human experience of being” (Amour et al. 2009, 106). Phenomenology was viewed as the most suitable methodology for this study because the commonalities between the researcher and participants in this study are based on experiencing the same phenomenon. “Identification of the experience of phenomena occurs through increasingly deeper and layered reflection by the use of rich descriptive stories from the research participants and the researchers’ theoretical and personal knowledge” (Ajjawi and Higgs 2007: 616). Given the dearth of research examining the experiences of African-American male leaders in PWOs, a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was ideal because it allowed for exploration and identification of phenomena through the perceptions of those in the situation (Moustakas 1994).

Setting and participants

Participants for this study were selected using purposeful criterion-based sampling to identify and select African-American male leaders in PWOs who integrate spirituality with their leadership practice. Unlike random sampling methods, purposeful sampling enables the researcher to select individuals who embody or typify the qualities being explored by the research problem (Creswell 2007). The sample size (5) was kept small to support a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell 2007; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013), and was drawn from a pool of African-American men, at least 50 years old, with 5 or more years of leadership experience, who had risen to midlevel or higher managerial positions in their respective PWO. A minimum of five years as a CEO, manager director, and vice president of operations ensured that participants had extensive experience in a position of power (Northouse 2007). The minimum age requirement ensured that participants had the maturity, experience, and demonstrated success in overcoming various organizational impediments. The range of participant’s religious affiliation included one Muslim and four Christians. Participant’s names and their organizations were replaced with pseudonyms.

Data collection procedures

Data collection occurred during semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews. All interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed into a written text format. Participants were asked 18 open-ended questions that covered four domains: (a)
significant career/life events, (b) spiritual insight, (c) leading through adversity, (c) envisioning the future for African-American male leaders in PWOs. The questions were constructed to elicit descriptions of factors that influenced their career development, the impact of racism on their rise, and strategies they employed to transcend threats to their identity as Black men and leaders.

Data analysis and interpretation

The tenants of interpretative phenomenological analyses (IPA) suggests a researcher should have a pre-understanding of the phenomena reflective of the research participant’s experiences (Creswell 2007; Denzin 1996; Patton 2002; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013). The interpretive research process “begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher” as the primary instrument used to collect and analyze qualitative data (Denzin 1996, 12). As stated by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013, 25), “the researcher, readers, and participants bring their prior experiences and preconceptions to the encounter and cannot help but look at any new stimulus in the light of their own prior experiences.” Therefore, instead of removing their own experiences from the interview and research process, researchers should acknowledge and incorporate these experiences as they engage with their subject (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013). This is achieved through a reflexive awareness of how their own beliefs, perceptions, and experiences enrich their interpretations of the participant’s experiences (Peat, Rodriguez, and Smith 2019). My preconceptions and experiences as an African-American male do not bias my interpretation of the phenomena experienced by the participants for this study (Creswell 2007).

According to Creswell (2007, 148), the core elements of qualitative data analysis consist of reducing data into meaningful segments in order to assign themes for each segment to combine codes into “broader categories or themes, displaying and making comparisons in the data graphs, tables, and charts.” The interviews were transcribed and coded. The first stage of the data analysis process for this article started with the implementation of the hermeneutic circle of understanding. The hermeneutic circle is a circulatory technique requiring a researcher to move back and forth reading, listening and re-reading transcripts in addition to more collected data used to identify significant statements, patterns and themes emerging from the data (Creswell 2007; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2013; Wojnar and Swanson 2007).

Subsequent to the hermeneutic circle, a manual coding system was used to identify significant words and non-overlapping statements from the participant’s narratives. The patterns, themes, and categories identified through this process were used to understand the participants lived experiences (Ngunjiri 2006; Suter 2006). This included:

1. Re-reading the interviews to gain an overall understanding;
2. Writing interpretive summaries and code emerging themes;
3. Analyzing selected transcripts as a group to identify themes;
4. Returning to the transcripts or to the participants to clarify discrepancies in the interpretation of the analysis for each text;
5. Comparing and contrasting transcripts to identify and illustrate shared practices and common meanings;
6. Identifying patterns to link the themes.
This process was followed with the organization of categories through axial coding of interrelations, similarities, and dissimilarities across participant statements, which involved a process of clustering and breaking of categories and themes (Russo-Netzer and Moran 2018, 62). Accordingly, coding was an iterative process of conceptual development, returning to the respective texts to analyze and condense themes into essential categories (Russo-Netzer and Moran 2018; Ngunjiri 2006). Textural-structural descriptions of each category were compiled and clustered into a thematically organized synthesis, integrating unique textural elements to capture the essence of the phenomenon shared by the participants. Ultimately, four themes emerged, describing each participant’s shared spiritual experience of being an African-American male leader in a PWO.

Trustworthiness and dependability of these thematic categories were assessed by three experienced researchers. Additionally, the validity of the themes from the narratives was checked by having the participants read and edit the textual descriptions of their experiences.

**Findings**

The first theme that emerged from the analyses of the data was a *spiritual calling* to lead. Each participant viewed the trajectory of their career as a result of following a calling from God to use their position to serve the needs of their followers, organization, and community (Alford and Naughton 2001; Bandura 2003; Fry 2003). The second theme was the pattern of *microaggressions* from White colleagues, superiors, and subordinates. The third theme, *resiliency*, was described as a transformative process to cope with and overcome adversity. The fourth theme related to having *pride in their identity*. Participants explained how they took pride in resisting pressures to assimilate to the hegemonic culture of White male executives. The following excerpts, taken from the participants’ narratives, illustrate key thematic points of their collective experiences throughout their leadership journey.

**Theme 1: spiritual calling**

A key finding of my research was that participants felt a spiritual calling to use their professional position as a platform to serve a high power. Dik and Duffy (2009) define a “calling” as a transcendent drive to integrate one’s work to serve an overall purpose or meaning that originates from a source external to one’s self. “Dr. Pete” was the first African-American Chief of Psychology of a metropolitan correctional facility. He described his spiritual calling as a transcendental experience where the voice of God will guide him in the right direction. He stated that “When God speaks to you; you listen to what He has to say.” Listening to God’s voice was a critical element of Dr. Pete’s spiritual relationship with God and had a significant impact on his decision to take an executive position. “Bob Bailey”, VP of a multi-billion-dollar pharmaceutical company, stated: “When I received my spiritual calling, it was so transformational that my spiritual connection to God not only profoundly changed my life, it also changed the lives of others in my current and past organizations.” For these men, a spiritual calling to lead meant embarking on an inner journey in discovery of an outward mission to improve the lives of others (Mattis 2000). This is essential for understanding why they directed their
careers toward “other”-oriented or pro-social fields where they could give voice to unrepresented minorities who might otherwise be silenced (Conklin 2012; Dantley 2003; Scott 1994; Stewart 1999).

Police Chief “Amir Johnson’s” Islamic faith led his fellow police officers to view him as a threat due to his association with a Nation of Islam paramilitary wing called the Fruits of Islam (FOI). Johnson recalls his experience when he said:

The Black cops didn’t want to work with me because I was a Black Muslim member of the FOI and the White cops did not want to work with me because I was Black and belonged to the FOI. Members in my Mosque did not trust me either because they knew I was in law enforcement.

Feeling discouraged and unsure about his career, Amir considered quitting the force. He went to visit his Imam, who told him: “Brother, as long as you know who and what you are, what other people think of you don’t matter. You need to stay on the police force because God has a plan for you that will serve a higher purpose.” Johnson perceived his Imam’s advice as a calling from God to pursue his career as a police officer, and ultimately became the first highly-decorated African-American Muslim police chief in a major U.S. city.

“Dr. Grant”, one of the first African-American mayors in the United States, credits his success to God’s call to pursue leadership positions to serve a higher purpose. He explained his spiritual calling to lead in the following manner:

Every leadership position I received was not of my own doing: it was from God. I did not apply to be the chairman of the utility commission. The governor called me, and I accepted that position. I did not apply, nor did I seek out the city’s managing director position. The Mayor called me to be the managing director, and I accepted that position, too. All of these leadership positions were given to me by God to serve a purpose.

“Dr. Smith” is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics where he serves as the attending cardiologist. During a period of career uncertainty, Dr. Smith’s friend suggested that he become a physician, which would allow him to practice his Christian faith while ministering to others. He viewed his friend’s advice as a message from God and realized that, as a doctor at a University hospital, he would have the opportunity to both minister to people and to teach. Grounded in the ontological tenets of African-American spirituality, the participants’ callings were conceptualized as being “spiritually inspired to tap into the power, sagacity, and creative genius of the Creator” to serve a higher purpose greater than themselves (Schiele 2005, 818). The spirit-driven leadership exhibited by the leaders in this study deepened their “intuition and inner knowing through a shared consciousness” in response to fulfilling a calling to do God’s will (Dantley 2003).

**Theme 2: microaggressions**

All participants were acutely aware that their social identity is a primary marker of difference and threatens the status quo of a predominately White organization. Despite their high-ranking position in their organization, they were burdened with the task of reducing negative stereotypes and unconscious biases. Dr. Pete stated that microaggressions, “are ingrained in White people’s psyche if and when they encounter [an] African-American man.” His mentor, a White man he ultimately succeeded, warned Dr. Pete of the subtle, unwritten, cultural rules in their organization. Dr. Pete recalled one of their
conversations, where his mentor stated, “in my generation, we were under the impression that if a White man had a Black man as his boss, that White man had the wrong job.” He described another conversation he had with his mentor:

In the eyes of the White people in my department, according to my mentor, I was performing a White person’s job, which was different compared to the subservient jobs traditionally slotted for Black people in our organization. Given my experience and level of education, I became the exception to that unwritten rule. My mentor explained that as an African-American man, I would be perceived more as a threat than as an ally. He cautioned me that the White people in my department would resent me as the executive director because I broke down a racial barrier to take a position that traditionally for the last 25 years, belonged to a White male.

As the only African-American male executive in his company, Bob Bailey felt he was in the spotlight, and had to convince his colleagues and superiors that he belonged on a corporate executive team. He recalled a situation where employees in his organization anonymously posted critical comments on social media, labeling him as the token Black on the executive team:

They would say things like, “Bob Bailey is a token; it’s clear that the management committee needed a Black to make the company look diverse. So that’s why he is there. It made me feel violated in some ways; it actually made me sad to think that people did not recognize that I have earned where I am and that I belong there (corporate boardroom). I know that some people have difficulty with me (African-American male) being on stage giving them direction. What they don’t know is that it took longer for me to get there (CEO); I had to do more; I had to be better; I had to overcome more, and to me, it’s ignorance when people say that this was given to you.

Similarly, Dr. Smith recalled an incident during his residency at a hospital in Augusta, Georgia, where the parents of his patient asked that he be taken off their child’s case:

I was getting ready to examine a White patient and the father, who also was White, stopped me from examining my patient and told me, ‘You can’t touch my kid. I don’t want a Black doctor touching my kid. The attending physician, who just so happened to be a southerner as well, met with the family as I stood by. They explained to the attending physician (White male) they didn’t want a Black doctor involved in the care of their child. At this point, I was under the impression that the attending physician was going to remove me from the case. But much to my surprise, the attending physician gave the parents an ultimatum: he said, “Either Dr. Smith takes care of your child, or you can leave the hospital right now.” The family opted to stay and allowed me to provide medical treatment for their child. Each participant described the experience of having to put forth an enormous amount of energy and time to mitigating stereotypes about Black men’s intelligence or abilities, which compelled them to work twice as hard as their white colleagues. Moreover, they had to control their emotional response to others for fear of exacerbating the stereotype of Black men as angry and aggressive.

Police Chief Johnson found himself embroiled in a racial conflict with a high-ranking White male officer who deliberately altered the test score examinations of another African-American officer, preventing his promotion. He recalled:

I received a letter from the wife of a White police lieutenant stating how she was disgusted that her husband came home and bragged to his friends about how he purposely gave
Blacks bad scores on their promotional examinations. We ran an investigation and discovered that he was preventing Blacks from being promoted, a lower rate compared to other races, and some of our sharpest Blacks, at that. We made a whole lot of changes . . . to elevate more Black people and people who are minorities and Black women. We had to get rid of his board of evaluators and retest the Black applicants that he failed. I purposely put more minorities and women in high ranking positions throughout the entire department. As a matter of fact, I promoted the first Black female to be a deputy commissioner, and I promoted the first Hispanic chief inspector on the police department.

Chief Johnson’s dilemma was the residua of decades of White male privilege within a hegemonic culture that employed discriminatory tactics to prevent people of color from entering higher ranks in the police force.

Theme 3: Resiliency

The participants’ narratives support the perspective that both severe threats and successes were informed by their African-America spirituality to adapt, persevere, and overcome adversity (Stewart 1999; Teti et al. 2012). All study participants acknowledged that their resilience was a result of their spiritual calling to serve others. They described being confronted with various obstacles to attaining their goals, which made them work relentlessly to achieve them. As they achieved greater control, their calling to lead was further reinforced in the growth of their personal strength and self-confidence gained through a spiritual relationship with God. Dr. Smith feels that his actions and behaviors as a leader are indicative of his faith in Christ. He said:

I use the Bible as my governor. What I do at work, it should be obvious in my behavior that I am a Christian. My spirituality is the grounding for the values and principles I espouse that is seen in my personal and professional behavior. I believe that at some point in life, everyone will have to give an account for what we say, do, or think.

Bob Bailey relies heavily on the Biblical passage from James 1:19: “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.” When asked how this verse applies to his leadership practice, Bob commented that:

There are times when God speaks that verse to me so clearly when I’m in a situation where I have the authority to speak out. And remembering that verse has diverted me from making ill-advised decisions, and I’m certain they’re some un-seen things that I have risen above as a result of following that philosophy.

Bob discussed a situation during his career in a PWO in which he was passed over for a promotion, which instead went to a White colleague. Bob refused to become discouraged, and instead of getting angry and responding in a vindictive manner, chose to cope with his disappointment. He stated that he prayed to God, requesting that He bless and support the person that received the promotion over Bob. Relying on his faith, Bob patiently waited for God to bless him with another opportunity that would ultimately serve His purpose.

Dr. Pete expressed how he thrives despite adversity and feels as though he must prove that he is qualified to run his department. He provided a very passionate description of the resiliency of African-American spirituality when he said:
It did not matter what they did or tried to do to me; I was not going to fail. If I had to work 16 hours a day so that my department would be successful, I did it. The forces that come against us (African-Americans) have a hard time comprehending how and why African-American people continue to rise up above and conquer insurmountable systemic challenges. What they (the opposition) don’t seem to realize is that they are not just going up against just me, they are going against God and the spiritual connection to our African-American ancestry within us that secures my faith, determination, and drive to succeed.

Dr. Pete’s statement captures the essence of a radical spirituality, passed down from African ancestors, which has sustained Black people through the brutality of slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement to confront and transcend threats to their identity and existence (Dantley 2005; Stewart 1999; Teti et al. 2012; Walker 2006).

**Theme 4: pride in their identity**

Of all four themes that emerged from participants’ interviews, the overarching theme is pride in the religious, gendered, and racial aspects of their identities. This is particularly rare among African-Americans in white environments, who experience the bicultural strains of the Du Boisian double consciousness, who are asked to negotiate between their Black selves and the identity that is expected of them (Jackson 2002). The research participants in this study describe a conflict in the early stages of their careers, but ultimately reach a point of peace, pride, and wholeness. Chief Johnson’s superiors made strategic career decisions for him based on his race as he moved up the ranks of the force. When he became the police commissioner, he felt pressure to minimize his ethnicity and religious identity:

Every rank I was, they used my race as a reason to justify their needs. I was Black when I joined the department, and I was Black when I left the department. You all (powers that be) told me at different points during my career I was Black. When they needed a Black sergeant or Black captain in a certain location, they sent me; when they were looking for a Black lieutenant for the mayor’s security detail, they sent me. Now all of a sudden, when I became commissioner, I am no longer Black? Well, I am Black! I am a Black commissioner.

Johnson reflected that his race and religion made the already difficult job of police chief more difficult, but that these identities became more powerful when combined:

It was doubly tough being a Black police chief of a major city. It became severely tough being a Black, Islamic police chief. Looking back, I may have been the first, and only Black Islamic police commissioner of a major city in the United States and I was proud of being Black and being a police officer and being a Muslim.

Dr. Gray also understood the significance of how his identity was perceived in the eyes of the White constituents. He explained:

It was challenging being the first Black mayor and to try to have people close to me who looked like me that I can trust and still have a relationship with a White business community. However, I feel fortunate for my achievements in spite of all the circumstances around me. I was honored and felt especially used by God to be a candidate for mayor and to be elected mayor in a predominantly White city, to become the first African-American to do so. I was able to overcome all of that and still rise to the top. I’m a proud African-American man living in a country that doesn’t respect me as a full man that discriminates against and subjugates African-American males to a substandard position. But I still walk around with
my head held high, proud of what I have been able to do in this country and understand that many people still would rather see me as a slave.

Dr. Gray’s comments, like those of all the participants, point to an intimate understanding of the way that their physical characteristics affect the way that they are perceived and treated, but that they did not let that affect their identities. Bob stated that he is very comfortable with who he is, remarking that “Identity for me is something that I’m grounded in so that circumstances don’t define me, situations don’t define me, and tough times don’t define me. I’m very comfortable in my skin.” On the surface, these findings may not seem to relate to the aspects of spirituality drawn out earlier in the paper. However, looking deeper into the experiences of the leaders in this study, one can gain insight into the spiritual aspects of resiliency as a mechanism to overcome racial inequality and workplace stratification, regarding power, status, and privilege within a PWO.

**Discussion**

The findings for this study build off Steingard’s (2005) spiritually-informed leadership model where leaders possess a higher self-consciousness and moral reasoning in response to a series of human interactions based on the configuration of power, values, and authority. The spirit-driven leadership exhibited by the leaders in this study was drawn from a deep connection to their inner selves, their communities, and God. When asked about some of the things that motivate them to succeed and to identify their source of inspiration, participant’s responses were based on intrinsic values: putting God first, staying true to themselves, being authentic, creating ways to develop others, making a difference, leaving a legacy, and paving the way for the next generation of African-American leaders, male and female.

African-American spirituality is a cornerstone of African-American life. It is an amalgam of creativity, reflection, resistance, and reconstruction that has guarded people of color against the threats of self-degradation, hopelessness, and bitterness (Dantley 2005). Dr. Pete provided a passionate description of African-American spirituality when he said:

> What they [the opposition] don’t seem to realize is that they are not just going up against just me, they are going against God and the spiritual connection to our African-American ancestry within us that secures my faith, determination, and drive to succeed.

Dr. Pete’s statement is the essence of Africana spirituality passed down from African ancestors which has sustained Black people through the brutality of slavery and the Civil Rights Movement (Dantley 2005; Stewart 1999; Teti et al. 2012; Walker 2006). His supposition does not suggest a monolithic Black expression of spirituality or belief in the teachings derived from the “Black church” and other religious institutions (Wood and Hilton 2012, 29). His assertion, however, does suggest the existence of a ubiquitous force that influenced a powerful cultural value system inclusive of African cultural beliefs (tools for survival) and practices across time and context to interpret, adapt, and resist oppressive forces grounded in xenophobia and racism (Dantley 2005; Smith 1999; Stewart 1999; Wood and Hilton 2012).
The four themes that emerged from the interviews encapsulate the spiritual strategies participants employ to thrive and rise to senior leadership positions despite the adversity they encountered. Instead of being discouraged by this adversity, it appears to have made each participant more determined to fulfill their calling from God and to use their leadership position as a platform to serve others. When workplace trials became overwhelming, all the participants reported that they took part in faith communities, faith leaders, and theological narratives for comfort, direction, and to fulfill physical and emotional needs (O’Grady et al. 2016). With a firm inner conviction and a direct relationship with God, these men were able to transcend the limitations set out for them and flourish.

All of the participants passionately elaborated on the importance of having a spiritual relationship with God which was contextualized in the broader sense for the greater good of humanity (Dantley 2005). From this perspective, spirituality is viewed as a personal quest for understanding questions concerning meaning-making and the relationship with the sacred or transcendent to serve a higher moral purpose (Crumpton 2011; Russo-Netzer and Moran 2018, 60). African-American spirituality was the driving force that compelled the leaders for this study to confront and transcend threats to their identity as leaders in a PWO (Dantley 2003; Stewart 1999). African-American spirituality served as a protective factor responsible for the esoteric barrier that prevented them from conforming to the hegemonic culture of White male leaders. It also played a critical role in helping them masterfully maneuver in and between two cultures without having to compromise their identity. Ultimately, it was their faith in God that kept these men grounded in the soul consciousness emanating from the African communal spirit of love to resist and survive and thwart psychological repressive conditions as they maintained their pride, cultural identity, and self-dignity (Dantley 2005; Paris 1995; Stewart 1999).

Implications for human resource management and future research

The present study opens several pathways for future research. First, the role of microaggressions in the workplace as experienced by African-American men in PWOs is essential for structuring evidenced-based diversity training and inclusion principles to foster an environment where people from different backgrounds and cultures feel accepted. The literature and findings on the impact of stereotypes in the form of microaggressions from an Afrocentric perspective was an important topic for this study as these interactions significantly affect African-American men’s career development. (Cornileus 2016). The participants’ stories should push human resource managers to acknowledge and reflect on their professional responsibility to design practices that support the well-being of minorities, rather than the status quo (Cornelius 2016; Drake-Clark 2009; Prieto et al. 2016). These practices include, but are not limited to, performance reviews, succession management, eligibility criteria for leadership development programs, job assignments, hiring, and promotion practices and workplace chaplains (Cornelius 2016).

This article proposes a correlation between African-American spirituality and the success of African-American men. This link should be explored more deeply by scholars of management, spirituality, and religion in collaboration with practitioners and leaders from PWOs across racial and gender demographics. A diverse population creates
a collective multi-level understanding of the ways in which spirituality fosters resilient individuals, teams, and organizations (O’Grady et al. 2016, 166). The participants’ counter-narratives provide a reflection on spirituality and its connection to leadership across three experiential domains: self, work, and community. Future research may expand upon these three domains to include groups with different social identities to identify ways in which their experiences are similar or different and to further elucidate the relationship between individual and organizational power (Witt Smith and Joseph 2010).

Finally, we must also acknowledge the importance of religious affiliation in the workplace. In particular, the Islamic faith is vital to any conversation on the organizational dynamics within a PWO as at least 20% of American Muslims are African-American (Pew Research Center 2017). As negative stereotypes and generalized fear toward Islam grows, African-American Muslims are hyperconscious of how their ethnic and religious identity will be received by employees and management in PWOs. To provide an inclusive and safe environment in today’s culturally diverse workforce, it is imperative for CEOs and human resource management to acknowledge and develop policies that will address anti-Muslim or anti-Islam religious bias.

Limitations

The purposive sampling in this study provided a framework of deliberate participant identification that generated new knowledge based on the participants’ lived experiences. A larger more diverse sample could produce different findings as the findings for this study cannot be generalized to all African-American male leaders. This study did not fully conceptualize coping and meaning-making processes related to spiritual survival in the face of adversity. There may be regional differences not reflected in this sample. All the narratives used in the present study were self-reported, and, therefore, were based on participants’ memory and their perceptions of their behavior as well as the behavior of others. Nonetheless, their perceptions have value in understanding how participants were affected by their lived experiences. As with all qualitative research, the findings for this study were highly contextualized and tentative; they are not generalizable to every African-American male leader working in a PWO.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of five African-American male leaders in predominately white institutions integrate spirituality with leadership practices. Under the CRT framework, the objective was to uncover and understand how the inequitable system(s) within a PWO contribute to the interplay of individuals’ meaning-making with White privilege and pervasive use of microaggressions. A persistent note in the participants’ relation of their lived experience is the act of being judged or prejudged by white subordinates, colleagues, and superiors, including the constituents they serve. The participants’ narratives revealed that this barrage of adversity was met with a deep spiritual relationship with God. Inspired by this divine relationship, these men used their leadership positions to serve humanity, which justified their existence for the greater good of their followers, the organization, and the
community that they serve (Alford and Naughton 2001; Bandura 2003; Fry 2003). Furthermore, their spirituality was instrumental in transforming adversity into life learning lessons which gave their leadership experiences meaning and a greater sense of purpose.

The relationship between spirituality and management may be difficult to evaluate through conventional, evidence-based scientific analysis due to its multiple meanings and religious expressions (Steingard 2005). Ultimately, studies on the integration of spirituality and leadership is not about mastering an understanding of spirituality in order to research it, but rather opening a space for engagement and for narration of experiences that requires participation and shifts in our epistemological certainty” (Agosto and Karanxha 2012, 47). It is more about creating a space to explore such multiplicities, rather than honing them to a singular characterization.

It is my wish that PWO, scholars, and human resource managers use the findings of this study to consider the use of spirituality as a response to confront social injustices, understand its role in how African-American leaders thrive in the midst of adversity, and acknowledge how the multiple forms of difference- i.e., race, gender, class, and religion—manifest in every facet of African-American male leaders personal and professional lives. This study may encourage more African-American professional men to tap into the transformative power of integrating spirituality and leadership.

Note
1. White Fragility finds its support in and is a function of White privilege, fragility and privilege result in responses that function to restore equilibrium and return the resources “lost” via the challenge – resistance toward the trigger, shutting down and/or tuning out, indulgence in emotional incapacitation such as guilt or “hurt feelings”, exiting, or a combination of these responses (Robin and Fragility 2011, 58).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

EMMANUEL SMALL RECEIVED HIS PH.D. IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP from Eastern University St.Davids, PA. He has a Master’s of Education Administration and a Master’s of Science in Adult Continuing Education and a Bachelor’s of Science in Human Services. He has over 20 years of experience as an administrator for a residential treatment facility in the Child Welfare and Human Service sector. He served as an mobile therapist specializing in crisis intervention and behavior modification for children diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome and ADHD symptoms and was a visiting professor in higher education. Currently Dr. Small is a assistant professor at Stockton University School of Business. He does executive coaching and strategic management for nonprofit organizations and small businesses. Research interest are: African-American spirituality, White privilege, cultural diversity and inclusion, microaggressions, organizational behavior, and strategic management.
References


Teti, Michelle, Ashley E. Martin, Richa Ranade, Jenne Massie, David J. Malebranche, Jeanne M. Tschann, and Lisa Bowleg. 2012. “I’m a Keep Rising. I’m a Keep Going Forward,


