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An Exemplar Woman Leader Of Malawi, Africa: A Narrative Account Of The Honorable Anne Mary Fletcher

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An Exemplar Woman Leader of Malawi, Africa: A Narrative Account

of the Honorable Anne Mary Fletcher

Toni Pettiford Bradsher

North Carolina A&T State University

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Leadership Studies

Major: Leadership Studies

Major Professor: Dr. Comfort O. Okpala

Greensboro, North Carolina

2014

The Graduate School
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

Toni Pettiford Bradsher

has met the dissertation requirements of
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Greensboro, North Carolina
2014

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Biographical Sketch

Toni Pettiford Bradsher, a native of Greensboro, North Carolina received her Bachelor of Science (B.S.) and Master of Science (M.S.) degrees in Industrial Technology from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, North Carolina. She also received a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship at Nova Southeastern University in Davie-Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and a Master's Certificate in Project Management from The George Washington University located in Washington, DC. Toni has Fortune 500 experience in areas of project management, team building, leadership, strategic planning, and diversity education and inclusion. Toni holds memberships in International Leadership Association (ILA), Golden Key International Honour Society, Epsilon Pi Tau International Honor Society, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Toni is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Interdisciplinary Leadership Studies at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

Dedication

I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to

the place that I have prepared.—Exodus 23:20

I dedicate my dissertation to my husband, Dantá, who stood by my side and kept me grounded in Spirit. I also dedicate this epic production to:

- The Queen of us all—my mother, Beulah. I am what I am because of her.

  "Praise my mother for showing me how to live and love and pray...

  ...For being the woman whose powerful faith inspires my life to this day."

- My sisters, Pattie, Louise, Nita, Regina and Sandy, who constantly encouraged me, the go-getter, to "go get my blessing." I love you more.

- My niece, Renata and nephew, Mario, for checking on me and sharing laugher about my stories on this journey; especially my two trips to Africa.

- The youngest in our family; my nephew, E. DeVanté for his strong spiritual nature of keeping things simple and neutral. You are my rock!

- My Pastor, Rev. Rufus L. Johnson, Sr., and Sister Marva Johnson, who kept me at perfect peace, through prayer, and reminded me...*and with all thy getting get understanding*—Proverbs 4:7. One of my favorite sermons by Pastor Johnson, "*If the ant can you can too",* was my constant reminder that; Yes I Can too!

Acknowledgements

God makes a promise. Hope anticipates it; Faith believes it; Patience quietly awaits it.

This statement applies to every aspect of this doctoral journey. Without God as my guide and protector I would not have been able to conduct the research required for this epic inquiry. Hope, faith and patience are my testimonial words that define how I was able to complete this dissertation.

To my committee chair, Dr. Comfort Okpala for her encouragement, guidance, support, expertise in research and leading me complete my work. Thank you to Dr. Brian Carey Sims for his valuable comments. I extend sincere appreciation to Dr. Philliph Mutisya for his who gave me sage advice and practical support. A special thank you goes to, Dr. Sylvia Burgess and Dr. Pauline Uwakweh for coming on board during the final stage of this process and guiding me through the final stage. To Dr. Elizabeth "Liz" Barber, who introduced me to Malawi and encouraged me to 'birth' this final product. Although she was unable to remain on my committee in an official capacity, I am grateful for her contribution and expertise in narrative methodology for research. To Mr. Courtex Nzima, Journalist, University of Malawi and personal assistant to Anne Fletcher, for your care and attention to this project. I am forever grateful to Dr. Sheila T. Robinson, my guardian angel; your spiritual advice, narrative research expertise, and editorial assistance were right on time. The genesis of this project started with Anne M. Fletcher who gave this work life. Thank you for providing the seeds for this project to grow. God bless you for allowing me to enter your world to document your personal stories and give voice to the Phenomenal Woman Leader you are.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the life experiences, spirituality and a sense of community, and cultural values that undergird the leadership praxis of a woman leader from Malawi, Africa. By accounting for the culturally-situated understandings of leadership and leadership practices of an exemplar woman leader of Malawi, Africa, narrative inquiry methodology (Chase, 2011 &, Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was employed to create an interpretive framework with which to analyze interviews, stories, and field notes through the lens of an endarkened transnational feminist paradigm (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011). An endarkened transnational paradigm includes a sacred responsibility to bring forward this leader's story; serving the way this study was approached as well as describing the action of doing the study. Thus, interweaving narrative inquiry and endarkened transnational feminism as theoretical and methodological frameworks bring life to *herstory*. A theme of spirituality as necessity, interconnectedness, and devotion to service and willingness to withstand hardship affirms the sacred approach to this compelling narrative inquiry. This study captures the perspectives of Anne Mary Fletcher as she shares her life stories on African feminism, spirituality, cultural, entrepreneurial, and political leadership praxis as a woman leader in our global community. The findings contained in this study are not generalizable, but there are words of wisdom that can be replicated throughout the globe. It is applicable for all researchers interested in how African women and women in the African American diaspora engage in alternative cultural discourse to document our truths.

CHAPTER 1

Rationale

This study draws on theoretical constructs central to endarkened transnational feminism (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011) to examine the life experiences, spirituality, sense of community, and cultural values that undergird the leadership praxis of a woman leader from Malawi, Africa. According to Cynthia Dillard (2011), "an endarkened feminist epistemology is an approach to research that honors the wisdom, spirituality, and critical interventions of transnational Black woman's ways of knowing and being in research, with the sacred serving as a way to describe the doing of it, the way that we approach the work" (p. 148). The purpose of this study is to inform critical gaps in the literature on global leadership and the development of leadership in a third world country by accounting for the culturally-situated understandings of leadership and leadership practices of an exemplar woman leader from Africa.

Noted theorist Frantz Fanon (1963), whose works are influential in the field of post-colonial studies and the dehumanizing effects of colonization upon the individual man and woman, and the nation, accentuated the human, social, cultural, and political implications inherent to establishing a social movement for decolonization. Similarly, Kwame Nkrumah (1984) former leader of Ghana was a neo-colonial idealist who believed in the total liberation and unification of Africa. Nkrumah was a Pan-Africanist advocate whose ideology advocated men in power in order to achieve sufficient intellectual independence from the dominant ideology of the colonial ruling class. This ideology lacked the African centered perspective while neglecting the female leadership aspect as exemplified by the participant who has excelled in leadership despite the ideology of European thought instead of African centered thought.

Studies conducted by leadership researchers Michael Bagshaw (2009) and Karen Lokkesmoe (2011) demonstrate that current theories of leadership, which have almost exclusively been authored by scholars from North America and Europe who are White and male, do not travel well to different cultural contexts. Culture and leadership researchers Eric Kessler and Diana Wong-MingJi (2009), as well as management scholars Robert Moran, Phillip Harris, and Sarah Moran (2007), have shown that the ways in which leadership is imagined and enacted in various locations around the globe differ because understandings of leadership are based upon what a culture values and expects in its leaders. Currently, minimal research exists documenting how leadership is understood and practiced in Africa. According to Lokkesmoe (2011), this lack of scholarship forms a significant gap in the literature.

Besides the obvious problem of the imperialistic forcing of Western leadership models that are not culturally sensible onto globally-diverse populations, there is another even more compelling reason to study African understandings of leadership: we may glean new understandings to broaden the discussions on leadership in the West. Scholar of foreign policy Amitai Etzioni (2004) argued that the West does not necessarily hold all the knowledge needed for the world to continue to survive, and calls for a meeting of East and West to bring the best of both worlds to the decision-making table. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) did a remarkable job in the last decade to capture cultural difference globally. However, their work provided only very limited windows into the vast array of cultural diversity within the African continent. The literature calls for documentation of understandings of leadership and leadership practices from outside the developed West.

Another layer of argument providing rationalization for such an investigation involves the scarcity of knowledge so far about the leadership of people and women of color within our global community. Global feminist Caroline Sweetman (2000) argued that:

> Policy makers in Northern governments, international development agencies, and international financial institutions, is gradually coming to the realization that just and sustainable economic development depends on women being free to make decisions on a par with men at all levels of society. In particular, it is essential to have more women in political leadership. . . . If leadership is male-dominated . . . biases in distribution and control of resources will remain, and [indigenous peoples] will continue to be more vulnerable to economic poverty and social marginalization. (p. 3)

Global democracy depends upon the presence of women in leadership roles (Datta & McIlwaine, 2000; Longwe, 2000; Sperandio, 2000; Tamale, 2000) while the leadership praxis of all women of color trans-globally demands a more thorough investigation and documentation.

The significance of this research documented the leadership praxis of a woman leader from Africa, while exploring the cultural values grounding the understanding and practice of this woman leader from Africa, thus adding to the body of knowledge on values and leadership in this world sector. This study also provided an additional situated example of research conducted within the endarkened transnational feminist paradigm, and provided for exploration and documentation of the utility of this framework for leadership research in Africa. The investigation added to the emerging body of scholarship on the critical need for local indigenous understanding of leadership for framing the future of the African continent, as well as other formerly colonized regions on the globe that are engaged in the struggle to survive and compete in a global economy dominated by the developed West and China.

Theoretical Orientation

To share the narrative account of an exemplar Malawian woman leader most effectively, the researcher located the research within a worldview that accommodates the common African background of both the participant and the researcher. Endarkened transnational feminist praxis best accommodated this goal. Endarkened transnational feminism is "less about traditional academic notions of research practices and more about the collective diversity of black women's knowing and doings . . ." (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011, p. 155). African American feminist scholar Cynthia Dillard (2006a) defines and elaborates an endarkened feminist epistemology as follows:

> I use the term "endarkened" feminist epistemology to articulate how reality is known when based in the historical roots of Black feminist thought, embodying distinguishable difference in cultural standpoint, located in the intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socializations of race, gender, and other identities, and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppressions and resistance for African American women. (p. 3)

This framework embraced the researcher's sacred approach to this study while affirming the participant's truth. The researcher's personal axiology of honesty, sincerity, spirituality, and family unity were attributes that enabled the researcher to gather knowledge not previously available through the use of Western research methods alone, and promoted collaboration between the researcher and the participant.

Dillard's (2006b) endarkened feminist epistemology contests the idea that researchers should ascribe to a paradigm that may not speak to their cultural location. Dillard states:

> You see, contrary to popular belief, Black scholars are not White scholars who happen to be Black: We have fundamentally different ways of seeing and thinking about the world

. . . that many White scholar colleagues may feel is a "violation" of prescribed ways of

being, thinking, and representation, a violation at both the paradigmatic and

epistemological levels. (p. 63)

An endarkened feminist epistemology intersects with the historical and contemporary

contexts of oppression for African ascendant women (Dillard, 2000). Dillard and Okpalaoka

(2011) suggested:

. . . that both spirituality and the sacred are embedded fundamentally in the very ground

of inquiry, knowledge, and cultural production of Black women's lives and experiences

and that it is this understanding that helps us to understand the radical activism of Black

feminism transnationally. Whether in the United States, Africa, or elsewhere in the

African diaspora, women of African ascent share experiences with some form of

oppression characterized and related by our class, race, or gender, by our existence as

women. And, to think about and work through the differences across the continent and

diaspora, we must find our "common agenda," a transnational Black feminism. (p. 149)

The common agenda is inclusive of women as part of the struggle to unite Africa and the

African diaspora. The endarkened transnational feminist theory indoctrinates a construction of

knowledge through lived experiences and through interactions with other members of society.

African leadership and a global perspective connecting with African diaspora prominence and its

importance in bringing change are of growing importance. The needed change is exemplified by

the participant's rise in leadership despite all odds and the ideology that former leaders such as

Fanon, Nkrumah, and others expounded in Pan-Africanism. The ideology lacked the African

centered perspective while neglecting the female leadership aspect. Feminists have complicated

the nature and characteristics of globalization (Desai, 2007). By not involving women and

recognizing the role of the female gender in African leadership ideology, it did not differ much from the European thought in which authority or power holders was male dominated. Others have examined women's lives and working conditions in diverse international contexts, invoked the efficacy of postmodern thinking, the risk of reproducing Eurocentric concepts of feminism, as well as the inadequacies of cultural analyses that neglect oppressions rooted in material conditions under globalization. Women's active involvement in globalization and in-state politics is an important element in filling the gap between women's and men's social and economic positions. Similar to an endarkened transnational feminist theory the African Centered psychology recognizes the illumination and liberation of the spirit, the understanding of the meaning of human beingness, African reality, culture, and epistemology. The endarkened transnational feminist epistemology provides an example of ideological advancement. Black feminisms, African feminisms, and the endarkened epistemology share similarities with African perspectives. A common thread that cuts across African feminisms and the endarkened feminist epistemology is the emphasis on healing methods as a necessary research tool for life-enriching and transformative experiences, as well as the spiritual growth of women suffering multiple oppression and domination.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the life experiences, spirituality and a sense of community, and cultural values that undergird the leadership praxis of a woman leader from Malawi, Africa.

Given the critical gaps in the literature on leader development accounting for the culturally-situated understandings of leadership and leadership practices of an exemplar woman leader in Africa, this study constitutes a compelling case for further investigation. The

researcher's narrative account seeks to present a voice for an individual who represents other individuals who are seldom represented in research (Creswell, 2012), and add to the body of scholarly knowledge of an endarkened transnational feminist praxis in qualitative research.

Research Questions

The central research questions included the following: How does the participant's story illustrate development as a woman entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political leader in Malawi? How might the participant's account inform leader development emerging from Africa?

The following questions served as a possible catalyst to facilitate prompted recall during open interviews:

1. How does the participant ground her praxis of leadership?

   • What experiences in the participant's childhood and young adulthood led to deciding on the paths taken?

   • What obstacles and/or challenges?

   • If obstacles and/or challenges existed, how did the participant overcome these?

   • Describe development as a leader.

   • Were there mentors along the way?

   • What personal experiences added to the participant's development as an exemplar woman leader?

2. What led the participant to become an entrepreneur?

   • Were there experiences that prepared the participant to become an entrepreneur?

   • How did the participant get her start?

3. What prompted the participant to run for a seat in Parliament?

   • What did the participant know about serving in Parliament that piqued interest?

- Why did the participant think that opportunities were opening up for women in government?

- What did the participant want to achieve as a member?

4. How did the participant lead in Parliament?

   - What were the participant's experiences as a woman leading in Parliament?

5. What cultural and spiritual values grounded the participant's practice of leadership, whether as leader of family, country, business, or philanthropic endeavors?

6. What competencies does the participant view as essential for women leaders in Africa?

   - Describe personal leadership style.

   - Describe skills women leaders need.

   - What role did education play in the participant's development as a leader?

7. How might the participant's knowledge as a woman leader in Malawi inform and be put into practice to support other indigenous people?

Definition of Terms

- **Ascendant -** The notion of ascendancy, as it relates to African people, is attributed to Kohain Hahlevi, a Hebrew Israelite rabbi, who coined the term African "ascendant" as opposed to African "descendant" to describe people of African heritage and their forward-moving nature. According to him, the term "descendant" may imply a downward or backward moving process. In the same vein, ascendancy implies a progressive movement that calls us to consider a different language or discourse for the ways we talk about people of African origin (Okpalaoka & Dillard, 2012).

- **Endarkened transnational feminism** articulates how reality is known when based in the historical roots of Black feminist thought (Dillard, 2000, 2006a, 2006b). By using the

term "*endarkened*" in *endarkened feminist epistemology*, Dillard (2000; 2006a, 2006b)

articulates how reality is known when placed in the context of the historical roots of

global Black feminist thought. It is a term that plays on the concept of enlightenment

while distinguishing itself from mainstream (White) feminism in its location at the

intersections of race, gender, class, and other identities.

- **Indigenous** is defined as originating and living or occurring naturally in an area   or

  environment; native (The American Heritage College Dictionary, 2007).

- **Praxis** is a principle emphasizing action-oriented research that serves the needs of the

  community. In the context of an endarkened feminist epistemology, the thoughts and

  actions of researchers should be informed by an African worldview (Chilisa, 2012).

- **Malawi** is bordered by Mozambique on the east, south and west, Tanzania to the

  northeast, and Zambia to the northwest.

- **Transnational** is a literal term meaning a way of looking at endarkened feminism that is

  beyond or through (*trans*) the boundaries of nations (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011).

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study included the fact that the research is based on the

leadership praxis of one participant and one country on the African continent.

Significance of the Study

In an effort to add to the body of literature which largely discusses how leadership is

developed from a Western White male lens, this study provides a notion for how leadership is

developed from the perspective of an African woman in a region, a voice seldom heard in

research on leadership.   The study's theoretical framework, endarkened transnational feminist

epistemology, focuses squarely on the impact of culture, spirituality, and community in the experiences of participants. The researcher drew on endarkened feminism first as a responsibility to the participant

> . . . that centers on reciprocity and relationship between the researcher and the researched, between knowing and the production of knowledge; secondly, to use an approach that honors the wisdom, spirituality, and critical interventions of transnational Black woman's ways of knowing and being in research. (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011, p. 148)

While the literature has slowly begun to examine the practices of White mainstream women leaders (Coughlin, Wingard & Hollihan, 2011; Eagley & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Harvard Business School Press, 2005; Rhode, 2003), scholarship is largely silent on leadership experiences of Black women (for a notable exception see Edmondson Bell, 2003). The lack of scholarship on how people in African countries, such as Malawi imagine and enact leadership forms an even wider gap in the literature (Lokkesmoe, 2011). This research bridges these gaps, aiming to inform the knowledge base on women's praxis of leadership in Africa by focusing on the cultural values that undergird leadership in this region of the world, and explore the significance of local meanings of leadership for framing the future of the African continent, as well as other post-colonial regions on the globe.

For this study, the researcher invites the reader to "think narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), to engage reflectively through and about the stories as told by the participant. The researcher's narrative account hopes to yield the perspectives from one participant's leadership praxis, and in particular, the participant's perspectives based on the cultural, spiritual, and community experiences. It also adds to the literature and profoundly shape representations of women of color. Chilisa (2012) posits that "The woman's image, for example, is irrelevant

and subsumed under that of a man" (p. 75). The silencing of Black voices and voices of women

of color has been carried out as if we do not exist (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011). According to

Reyes Aterido and Mary Hallward-Driemeier (2011) a lower rate of entrepreneurship among

women, particularly in larger and formal enterprises, has been widely documented and is one of

the indicators being tracked in measuring women's economic empowerment. The participant's

narration of her life and success as a business leader, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and former

Member of Parliament constitutes a counter story that is examined for how it informs

transnational Black women who hope to lead. Such leaders must now inform the world about

leading in a developing country.

The endarkened feminist approach provided a lens for understanding the cultural and

spiritual realities of being a successful entrepreneur and serving in politics as a woman in Africa.

This research documents that of one woman leader in Africa, and focuses tightly on the cultural,

spiritual, and community values that ground her work.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 demonstrated the compelling need for research that examines the perspectives

of women who lead leaders of color, women leaders of color, indigenous leadership in Africa,

and women's leadership in Africa.   The chapter also provided the theoretical framework,

research questions and definitions of terms, along with delimitations and the significance of the

investigation. Chapter 2 reviewed relevant literature establishing the theoretical framework that

grounded the research. The third chapter sets out the methodology used to collect and analyze

the data. The chapters that follow examined themes that emerged from the field data and/or

literature. The final chapter discusses the results and implications for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Chapter 1 was used to provide the rationale and theoretical framework for this investigational study on leadership development in a developing African country. Chapter 2 provided a review of literature including a brief discussion on Black Feminism, transnational Black women leaders and their spirituality, cultural, political leaders, and entrepreneurial leadership experiences. Also included are discussions on African leadership as well as the historical and political contexts of women who hold leadership positions in the country of Malawi.

Black Feminism

Dillard (2011) posits that "given the too often exclusionary spaces for U.S. Black feminists within the broader conversations of feminism . . . we begin to see the interconnected nature of Black feminist struggles in the United States with those of Black women throughout the Diaspora and the continent of Africa" (p. 153).

Information on Black women's peculiar ways of "knowing and doing" has largely been missing in feminist studies in the United States. This void reflects the idea that "knowing" bears information affected by race, culture, and social standpoint, and thus has possibilities for expanded research on African Americans based on their storied history (King, 1995). From its beginning in the late 18th century to reform unequal pay, domestic violence, maternity leave, sexual harassment, women's suffrage, and other problems emerging from the historic oppression of women, even the earliest forms of feminism—women's suffrage—represented the interests of White, middle class and educated women, and left out women of color. Sojourner Truth's address to the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851 posed the Black woman's question:

"Ain't I a Woman?" Early in 1964, when women's liberation movement was at its height, minorities including gays and women of color were excluded from participating in the movement, an exclusion that led to the creation of Black, ethnically specific or multicultural forms of feminism. Black feminist thought encompasses diverse and contradictory meanings in that it groups all African American women's liberationists as Black feminists. The pioneer of Black feminism, Beverly Guy-Sheftall (2009), argued that racial and gender oppression of Black women result in needs and problems distinct from those of White women and Black men, such that Black women must struggle for equality both as women and as African Americans (pp. 11–15). The bond that all African American women share is the common experience of being Black women in a society that belittles women of African ascent. Historical African American women activists include Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, and Fannie Lou Hamer. Anna Julia Cooper was born into enslavement in 1858 in Raleigh, NC. The researcher brings attention to Cooper specifically, because her story is not as well known or included in discussions on Black feminism. Anna Julia Cooper, a highly educated and successful activist, argued for civil rights and women's rights. She is the author of *A Voice from the South* (1892), one of the first accounts that began to define Black feminism. Cooper suggested that the Black community would improve through educational, moral and spiritual uplifting. Cooper's argument that it is the duty of educated and successful Black women to support their underprivileged peers in achieving their goals resonates with the participant's account in this study.

Transnational Black Women and Spirituality

Spirituality resides at the core of transnational Black women's lives. However, it is defined differently by different individuals and groups: "Spirituality is not a rationalistic concept that can be measured, explained, or reduced to neat conceptual categories" (Richards, 1980).

Although it is sometimes conflated with religion, spirituality is not the same as religion (Agyepong, 2011). Spirituality is not necessarily associated with a certain belief system or type of religious worship. For some, spirituality may include participation in organized religion, or it may be understood as less social and more personal, with people seeking their spiritual side through prayer, meditation, quiet reflection, or exercise.

Spirituality may be associated with a higher power; a process or journey of self-discovery, and as a guiding principle for meaning, purpose, and direction. Developing spirituality can offer many benefits, both emotionally and physically, to everyday life. At its core, spirituality helps to give human life context and structure. In 2007, Njoki Wane examined the impact of spirituality on women's lives by building on findings that explored feminism among women of African ancestry living in Canada. Wane's research focused on the interweaving of spirituality demonstrated by the participants. Salient points extracted from this research included:

- The participants expressed that as African/Black women, they see spirituality as a way of life, and an expression of community and relationship building that is based on sharing and cooperation.

- The practice of spirituality is defined by relationships, by caring not by creed, by enjoying human fulfillment and not adhering to orthodoxy.

Wane (2011) stated: "Black women's feminism and activism and the role of spirituality is essential so that we can make sense of how generations have struggled with liberation from sexism, racism, classism, homophobia etc. and the maintenance of cohesiveness in Black communities" (p. 159). Rosina Agyepong (2011) similarly asserted the following:

Black culture and religious spirituality have very strong affinities and are difficult to

separate entirely when discussing their influence on Black life even though some scholars

argue that spirituality is a private affair and has no place in the public intellectual arena.

In Western thought, the sacred and secular are viewed as separate entities. (p. 177)

As with many indigenous peoples of the world, spirituality is part and parcel of the

culture of people of African ancestry. Spiritual teaching informs African peoples of their past,

present and the future. Spirituality is "the vital life force that animates African peoples and

connects them to the rhythms of the universe, nature, ancestors, and the community" (Wane,

2011, p. 89). Further, bell hooks (1981) added:

This understanding which is situated in Black women's spirituality must encompass the

narratives of black women who have militantly engaged in radical struggles for change

offer insights and that the various narratives of Black women's lives have: "let us know

the conditions that enable the construction of radical black female subjectivity as well as

the obstacles that impede its development. (p. 57)

Wane (2011) concluded there is a need to create space for spirituality in research

projects. Spirituality is often described in terms of possible ties to religion, but not an exclusive

religious phenomenon. He defines spirituality as follows:

Spirituality is a way of living, an attitude, a motivation, recurrent integration, and

sustained conviction. It is a style, process and method by which one lives in light of the

goal. It is an awakening which starts with looking within ourselves for self-discovery

and continues on until one realizes that we are an integral part of the natural world. (p.

76)

To explore spiritual practices and how to incorporate the philosophical aspects of spirituality, Wane turned to African indigenous peoples. In his research on the various African indigenous spiritual ways of knowing for intellectual advancement, knowledge production, dissemination and storage, he noted the examination occurred within the framework that reconnects the intellect with the spirit and allows researchers to leverage their inner and outer knowings honoring their humanity. Endarkened transnational feminism argued for this exact reconnection in disciplined inquiry.

Cultural Experiences of Transnational Black Women Leaders

Few studies examine the cultural experiences of Black women leaders. Some scholarship looks at how stereotypes have plagued Black women since they first set foot on American soil (Hayes, 2012). Efforts to highlight the distinct history and cultural experiences of African American women have resulted in a cultural construction of Black womanhood that still finds resonance in academic circles and the popular media and often informs the identities of Black women. These images revolve around notions of strength, motherhood, and big bodies, all of which are seen as reflecting the distinct cultural values of African American and African ascendant women (Hill, 2009, p. 737). The African cultural worldview of Ubuntu, which views all life (present and past), all of reality (the physical world as well as the spiritual world) and all people, as connected and interdependent, include a particular view of women known as "ulemerero wa umunthu": human dignity exemplified by women as caretakers of their communities.

Rosemary Shield (2009) called for research that might explain the following: "What enables them to achieve against the odds? What cultural resources do they use to overcome personal challenges in their lives and immense barriers of historical trauma, cultural

discontinuity, institution and societal racism, gender bias, and deplorable socioeconomic conditions?" (p. 47). Shield's study included Native American Indian women from tribes indigenous to the north central region of the United States. She explored how Native women identify and understand the spiritual and cultural factors that enabled them to attain their higher education goals. The study participants reflected on their cultural strength using various tribally based metaphors, images, and aspects of traditional stories connected to their tribal cultural traditions. These traditions and metaphors served as an anchor that enabled them to access inner spiritual resources to retain identification with traditional Native ways of being (Shield, 2009, p. 53).

Black women administrators on White college campuses are often faced with multiple challenges as they attempt to maintain their cultural identity while assimilating to or accommodating the culture of the academy. This challenge is suggested by the limited research available. While there have been very few studies on the cultural experiences of Black women leaders, Debra Bright (2010) conducted a study of Black women senior-level administrators, particularly those employed on White college campuses in order to understand their lived leadership experiences. She found that Black women leaders are provided with an understanding of what they might expect in senior-level positions at a traditionally White community college. The participants' stories of their complex experiences revealed their challenges, support systems, and how they navigated through the process of achieving their goals.

Culturally constructed images of African American womanhood have been challenged in recent years but still inform scholarship. For example, Dianne Hayes (2012) argued that not even the first lady of the most powerful nation in the world is immune to stereotypes. Stereotypes of being the "angry Black woman" and curiosity about differences in appearance

still persist from the academy to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Hayes further stated, "as African American women rise in ranks, their accomplishments, education, successes and contributions are frequently shadowed by the realities of misperceptions and stigmas that can potentially mar their legacy" (p. 18). Since the time of slavery and post-slavery, African American women were seen as strong, but typically had no voice. Even during the feminist movement, African American women fought for inclusion and were largely overlooked. Feminist scholars have challenged the gender bias in the leadership literature. However, this research is based almost exclusively on the lives of White, middle-class women, and assumed to generalize all women (Aries, 1987; Grossman & Chester, 1990; Harrigan, 1997; Henning & Jardim, 1997; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1990).

In terms of leadership, Peter Northouse (2010) argued that there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it. He offered the following: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). This definition makes it possible for everyone to be a part of the process of leadership. However, some scholars view the meaning of leadership as embedded as classical Eurocentric notions that are rarely generalizable to women and minorities (Allen, 1998). The leadership of Black woman, especially, has been virtually ignored and the result has been an unfortunate lack of understanding the importance and the role of Black women leaders.

The lack of access to traditional sources of power and decision-making forced Black women to find alternative means of leadership in non-traditional arenas and ways (Giles, 1985). Patricia Collins (1989) referred to African American women as being outsiders-within holding a status of disempowerment within interactive systems of power, race, gender, and social class. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) asserts that many of the experiences that African American women

face in predominantly White organizations are not located with separate spheres of race, gender, or social class, but interact on multiple, simultaneous levels that contribute to systematic social inequality. The limited evidence (Allen, 1998; Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989; Hayes, 2012; Shield, 2009) suggested that Black women leaders are seen as strong, but typically have no voice. This voicelessness and omission shows that additional research is needed, worthy, and long overdue.

Transnational Black Women as Political Leaders

According to Chu, Benzing, and McGee (2007), historically the stories and experiences of Black women have been virtually invisible to the majority culture. My search yielded newspaper articles, most with a small caption acknowledging or announcing contributions by Black women in the political or entrepreneurial arena. For example, Phyllis Jones (2009) wrote an article published in *Speakin' Out News* reporting on Black women in politics. Jones's article included the following:

- Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman who had no fear of integrating a male dominated society on the national level. Chisholm was elected to the United States Congress in 1968 and served on behalf of New York's 12th District until 1983.

- Carol Moseley Braun, representing Illinois, was the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Senate and served from 1993-1999.

- In 1991, Congresswoman Maxine Waters was the first African American woman elected to represent California's 35th Congressional District and as of today, Waters is the senior African American Congresswoman of the 12 African American women in Congress.

- State Representative Laura Hall, was the first African American woman elected to represent Alabama House District 19.

In August, 2012 Forbes published the list of *The World's 100 Most Powerful Women,* which includes three African women leaders: #71 Joyce Banda, President of Malawi; #81 Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance, Nigeria; and #82 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President, Liberia, Africa's first women head of state and a Nobel Peace Prize winner. Still very little, if any, validity has been given to Black women's voices or contributions to the world (Shield, 2009).

Transnational Black Women as Entrepreneurial Leaders

Contrary to the lack of publication or validity of contributions, some women in all African countries are successful entrepreneurs, business owners, and company managers. Using primary and secondary sources, David Fick (2002, 2006) presented business stories of successful entrepreneurs and business owners, in a multitude of industries from all 54 African countries. Successful women entrepreneurs—business owners and managers—can be found at all levels and in all sectors in Africa (Fick, 2002, 2006; Spring & Rutashobya, 2009).

In *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel,* Adja Dior Diop (2005), an uneducated Senegalese woman who made her way in the entrepreneurial trade sector and eventually held a seat on the Economic and Social Council of Senegal recognizes her talents in the development of African women in business in *"The Importance of Work".* Diop has presided over the largest Senegalese women's organization for many years, representing Senegalese businesswomen and entrepreneurs and expressing advanced views about women's access to positions of power.

In *Enlightened Power: How Women Are Transforming the Practice of Leadership,* Marian L. Heard (2005) is featured as one of their most distinguished leaders from the nonprofit world. As the former CEO of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, she transformed the organization into the number one United Way chapter in the United States. Marian credits her

success to the importance of inclusion, and mentoring. In this same volume Stacy Blake-Beard (2005) shared her experiences in the field of mentorship. She discussed how mentoring relationships are critical in the career development of women, and that mentoring relationships create opportunities and exposure to models of success. The link between mentoring and leadership includes cross-gender mentoring relationships to address issues identified as barriers for women, and to create gender equality in the workplace. Blake-Beard provided this thought on mentoring: "The very essence of mentoring is that the process signals, 'I care'" (p. 105).

The National Council of Negro Women, Inc. pays an annual tribute to outstanding women in the Black community and is attended by some of the most influential Black women in the country. These women are honored for their hard work and dedication and for being strong leaders in their respective communities. While these honors are taking place, the recognition is not highly publicized nor published in mainstream media outlets. According to Sandrah Monthieux Pelage, international vice president of the European Federation of Black Business Owners in London, traditionally Black women have gathered, but never as leaders. It's usually been around social issues, not around the Black woman's value as leaders (as cited in Miller, 2004, p. 1).

Heidi von Hase (2010) provided a glimpse into an African Women's Entrepreneurship Program birthed by a need she saw while living in Africa. The need was to provide income to unemployed rural women. The women started craft projects which became recognized in the U.S., and noted for their important role as growth engines for the economies of their countries. This small glimpse was made visible because von Hase was seen as doing something worthy of publication in the Western world.

According to Nicole Dandridge (2012) historically, successful free enterprise has been more difficult for entrepreneurs of color than it has been for Whites. Certain barriers limit access to capital and industry markets as well as access to skills and work experience that facilitate proper business development and sustainability. Minority entrepreneurs continue to experience inequality compared to nonminority entrepreneurs, and the lack of capital-market access continues to prevail. Anita Spring (2009) posits that informal and formal sectors can be seen as "dual economies" of African countries. The new generation of African entrepreneurs forms an endpoint of the continuum because their global business methods, networks, financial transparency, and business ethics propel them to success. Hence, while most African women entrepreneurs are lower on the scale, there is a growing cadre of women at the top who provide role models of achievement within their countries.

Moving from scholarship on the spirituality, culture, and the political and entrepreneurial experiences of transnational Black women, the researcher next delineated the specific global context of the research. Women's spiritual, cultural and community aspirations meet unique challenges and opportunities in the Malawian context. Further, the history of Malawi in a post-colonial period and the restriction of women's rights are important and impact the lives and world views of transnational Black women. It is important to acknowledge the past even as we carry on into the future.

Sub-Saharan African Leadership

There are 47 countries in the sub-Saharan African region. This study focuses only on one country in the sub-Saharan regional group. This approach ensures the level of homogeneity in the country where the participant of this study is located.

Cultural researchers Hofstede et al. (2010) affirm that "*regional, ethnic, and religious* cultures account for differences within countries; ethnic and religious groups often transcend political country borders. Regional, ethnic and religious cultures . . . learned from birth forward, can be described in the same terms as national cultures" (p. 45). Culture is a complex matter in Africa. In Malawi, as in many countries on the African continent, colonially-determined political boundaries lack a match with cultural or ethnic boundaries. The result is that in Malawi, consisting of at least 17 different ethnicities—each with its own set of cultural values, practices, and languages—exist side by side. Consequently, prior to and during the years of colonial oppression, each ethnic group adapted its own models of leadership, particularly undergirded by their own cultural values and practices in order to sustain their existence.

However, just as notions of leadership are social and culturally context-dependent so are ways of articulating that knowledge. Bagele Chilisa (2012), a researcher who grew up in Botswana, completed her doctoral training in the United States, and returned to her home country in a state of epistemological diaspora because of the disparity in knowledge as well as the staggering differences in leadership practices and theory compared to the reality of the practice of leadership existing in her home country. Chilisa argued that theories and models of research that arose within the individualist Western world cannot account for how knowledge is expressed in different global contexts or is conceptualized in collectivist societies world-wide. Nevertheless, it is these very theories that guide development efforts in third world countries. Whether the source is non-governmental organizations, donor organizations or countries, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, or the World Trade Organization, scholar of globalization Wayne Ellwood (2010) argued that the model of leadership that is regularly imported into and imposed upon development projects in indigenous, mostly southern

hemisphere locations is the Western prototype. Consequently, when such projects predictably flounder, the blame most often falls on indigenous peoples, to whom and within whom those Western models of leadership and ways of doing business are incomprehensible and nonsensical. Notions of leadership and what it means to lead rest on cultural understandings and assumptions which vary widely across the globe (Hofstede et al., 2010; Kessler & Wong-MingJi, 2009; Moran et al., 2007).

Culture and Leadership in Malawi

Malawi—Land of the Lake—is a landlocked country in southeast Africa with a population of over 16 million. It is bordered by Mozambique on the east, south and west, Tanzania to the northeast, and Zambia to the northwest. Nicknamed *The Warm Heart of Africa*, Malawi is known for its peacefulness and warmth to visitors, and the beauty of Lake Malawi. Its current capital, Lilongwe, is the country's largest city in Malawi; the second largest is Blantyre, the business center in the far south; and the third largest is Mzuzu, in the north. Seventeen cultures include the dominant Chewa, Yao, Lomwe, Nyanja, Tumbuka, Ngoni, Sena, Tonga, Asian, and European. Chichewa, the most common language, and English, the language of business and government, are the two national languages, however ChiTumbuka is commonly spoken in the north, and language can differ village to village.

In 1891, the British claimed the land that is now Malawi as a protectorate called Nyasaland. For 73 years, the British exerted colonial rule over the disparate ethnic groups who had their histories, rituals, myths, and symbolisms, all of which defined the way authority and power were exercised before the onset of the colonial period (Kessler & Wong-MingJi. 2009). However when Charles Rhodes attempted to unite central African lands into the Federation of Rhodesia, the inhabitants of Nyasaland erupted in protest. Because Nyasaland existed under

colonialism, the people of Nyasaland knew it would be much worse in terms of human rights, should their Land of the Lake become part of Rhodesia. On July 6, 1964, Malawi gained its independence from England. Prime Minister Hastings Kamuzu Banda served as the first president (Dolph, 2011). At the beginning of the Banda regime, the country embarked on a vigorous program of economic development, however as with all leaders that followed, until the present, time in office led to entrenchment of power and loss of rights for the masses, merging on dictatorship. Under Banda's power and influence, in 1970, the constitution was amended and Banda declared himself president for life. Under the Banda regime, all women in the country were considered his wives, and were required to dance for him publicly. As Banda took one woman and then another to be his temporary paramour, and as women for the first time traveled from one village to another to organize dances for the leader, some viewed the Banda era as a time of political favoritism of women (Ribohn, 2002). However, women were not included in business and politics and the taking of women by the President resulted in distrust between husbands and wives at family dinner tables, and a backlash among Malawian men to further restrict any freedoms women might have been perceived to enjoy.

For almost 30 years Banda and his Malawi Congress Party firmly ruled, but as the economy started to decline, he faced rising domestic discontent and international criticism for human rights violations. In 1994, a new constitution was approved allowing for the first multiparty elections. Bakili Muluzi defeated Banda for the presidency and formed a government dominated by the United Democratic Front political party. Muluzi was president from 1994-2004, and like Banda came into office working hard for the people of Malawi, but later in his second term of office began consolidating power and restricting the rights of the people. However, his attempt to have the constitution revised to allow him to run for a third term of

office was defeated. Knowing he could not run again, Muluzi placed a global economist, Bingu wa Mutharika, as the party's candidate in the next election, expecting him to continue to look the other way and allow fellow party members to continue in their careers of corruption and graft. Mutharika was elected, and shocked his party by following through on campaign promises to the people to end corruption and get the country moving by spending what little funds did exist on actual development projects such as road-building.

Mutharika was viewed as a major Malawian political hero (just as his predecessors had been) during his first term in office. Corrupt officials were removed from office, roads were getting built and repaired, and women began being promoted within the country's leadership structure. However into his second term Mutharika began positioning his brother, Peter, to become his successor, and his leadership became more and more autocratic and dismissive of human rights. In April 2012 when Mutharika died suddenly of a heart attack, members of his cabinet had his body flown to South Africa and refused to tell the people that he had died, in an effort to buy time to have the country's Vice President, Joyce Banda, secretly executed. Police surrounded her home, and the outcome appeared inevitable, however neither the people of Malawi nor the international community would allow such a course of action. Mutharika's death was publicly announced, Joyce Banda was sworn into office as president, ushering in a time of political peace and some measure of stability for the country. Currently—one year later—Malawians are celebrating the distinction of having the second woman president on the continent, and the rights of women and mothers are enjoying a time of respect.

President Joyce Banda is founder and leader of the People's Party, created in 2011. President Banda is a former educator and grassroots women's rights activist. She was a Member of Parliament and Minister for Gender, Children's Affairs and Community Services; and founder

of the National Association of Business Women (NABW), the Young Women Leaders Network and the Hunger Project. Forbes named President Banda as the 71st most powerful woman in the world and one of the most powerful women in Africa. President Banda has also requested the informant to serve as one of her key advisors to strengthen her own popular power as the country's leader.

President Joyce Banda faces multiple challenges to lead the country with hope of reelection for a second term, including: devaluation of the Malawian currency, severe food shortages as a result of the rain coming at the wrong time in 2012, and an inheritance of profound poverty among the vast majority of the population. Very few Malawians own their own businesses. The majority of businesses in Malawi are still owned by people from India, Pakistan and the Middle East, whose ancestors sold slaves to the East for many centuries before the Atlantic slave trade to the West. This domination continues the legacy of limiting and denying Malawian people the conceptual tools to resist oppression. This culture of domination aims to replace the Malawian knowledge with their own cultural norms because the dominate groups realize that gaining control over this groups' lives simplifies control.

The context for women leaders in Malawi is complicated by a deep history of enslavement to the East followed by colonialism by the West, both of which disrupted indigenous leadership leaving the People of the Lake struggling for democratic governance across the regimes of three presidents who entered office as heroes of the people but ended their presidencies as self-interested despots (Englund, 2001; Power, 2010; Thompson, 2012). Manipulation of women by President for Life Kamuzu Banda caused a backlash among men that restricted women's rights. Yet the People of the Lake continue to struggle—it may have been the

availability of cell phones that allowed them to unite and spread the word that Joyce Banda was imprisoned in her home, saving her life and the hope for a better day.

In terms of culture, the basic unit of African society is the family. According to Moran et al. (2007), "The tribe is the ultimate community. In political terms the tribe is the equivalent of a nation" (p. 614). Moran et al. described the cultural characteristics of Africans as follows:

- The tribe (family) provides the guidelines for acceptable behavior.

- Trust and confidence are essential elements needed for successful enterprise in Africa.

- The way an individual views the concept of time has a major impact on any business relationship. People come first, then time.

- Corruption in Africa is most often related to poverty and to the collectivist desire to take care of one's own people.

- In Africa, age is an asset. The older the person, the more respect the person receives within the traditional community, especially from the young.

Summary

This chapter provided the review of literature for this study as existing in the endarkened transnational feminist paradigm and what little is available in the literature on Black women and spirituality, cultural experiences of Black women leaders, and Black women as political and entrepreneurial leaders. It defined the context for the research within Malawi, a post-colonial nation striving for democracy sometime with the help of, and sometimes against the grain of, its political leaders. The paucity of research on indigenous leaders, and African ascendant women as leaders, along with what motivates and sustains those women who lead, clearly called for this study. Chapter 3 provides the specific methods used to conduct the study and strategies for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Methods of Inquiry

Chapter 2 provided the literature review and set the context for this study. The construct of an endarkened transnational feminist paradigm sets out the research strategies employed in this inquiry. Included are the role of the researcher, the participant, data collection procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the study.

Narrative Research Design

Narrative inquiry (Chase, 2011), while a highly disciplined research methodology, does not lend itself to a set of standardized technical procedures as in quantitative research. It is a way of thinking about, and studying experience. In terms of "truth," narrative researchers working in the current post-positivist era refer instead to multiple realities, dependability and auditability (O'Leary, 2005, pp. 6–8).

A narrative inquiry which revolves around interest in life experiences as narrated by one who lives them, coupled with an endarkened transnational feminist epistemology allowed the researcher to work collaboratively with the participant and her story. This composite perspective also allowed for a rich exploration of the participant's experiences as the researcher worked to understand her voice, life, culture, and provide a platform for her story's rendition.

Narrative researchers work closely with individuals and their stories. The endarkened feminist epistemology and an African perspective include storytelling. In narrative research designs, researchers collect and tell stories about people's lives, describe the lives of individuals, and write narratives of individual experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). John Creswell (2012) asserted the following:

People live storied lives. They tell stories to share their lives with others and to provide

their personal accounts about . . . issues, and the settings in which they work. You use

narrative research when you have individuals willing to tell their stories and you want to

report their stories. (p. 501)

The researcher focused on a single participant willing to tell her story: Narrative inquiry begins

in experience as expressed in lived and told stories. Narrative researchers explore a research

problem by attempting to understand the experiences of an individual (Creswell, 2012; Chase,

2011). The participant's experiences were captured during interviews and informal

conversations. These experiences are referred to as stories and serve as the main data source.

These stories, called *field texts* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) provide the raw data for

researchers to analyze as they retell the story based on narrative elements. In this process the

researcher identified themes or categories that emerged. A chronology of events, which is a

qualitative approach to narrative writing as a time sequence can set narrative apart from other

genres of research as well as enrich the lives of both the researcher and the participant (Kale,

2004). Through narrative inquiry, meanings of experiences become the fuel creating the stories

and the retold stories, which include the researcher's experiences as a secondary analytic lens

(Creswell, 2009; see especially Chase, 2011), on a critical personal narrative. This methodology

provided guidance for the type of inquiry, data collection procedures, data analysis, and direction

for change or action (Creswell, 2009).

According to Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), "in narrative inquiry, people

are looked at as embodiments of lived stories" (p. 43). Researchers increasingly use a theoretical

lens or perspective in qualitative research, which provides an overall orientation for the study of

questions of gender, class, and race, or other issues of marginalized groups (Creswell, 2009).

The experiences of one or more individuals are allowed as a focus in narrative research. This design was utilized to capture the individual experience and understanding of one person willing to tell their story.

Narrative inquiry is a form of retrospective meaning-making. Events are reported over time, communicate the narrator's point of view, and include emotions, thoughts, and interpretations of the self as an actor within the story being told. Narratives highlight the uniqueness of each human action and event, rather than their common properties (Chase, 2005). Narrative researchers emphasize narrative as a joint production of narrator and listener, who view themselves as narrators as they develop interpretations and publish their ideas. Narrative researchers write from the first person to emphasize their role in displaying and interpreting the accounts of their participants (Chase, 2005).

Role of Researcher

The researcher sought to understand the lived experience of a woman who is an entrepreneurial and political leader in Africa, as narrated through her cultural and spiritual experiences, and employed an endarkened feminist praxis. This lens provides guidance for the type of inquiry, data collection procedures, data analysis method, and direction for change or action (Creswell, 2009).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) emphasized the role of everyday sociability as a means of building trust, and argue that in establishing field negotiations, ordinary topics of conversation can serve as a way to establish a basis for future research encounters. Referring to previous conversations with the participant to demonstrate the researcher's attention to her views is one strategy recommended. It can be difficult to refrain from one's own preconceptions, particularly in researching those whose lives are more familiar. The researcher must maintain "intellectually

poised between familiarity and strangeness" in a role somewhere in between "stranger and friend" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009, p. 89).

"The study of narratives is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is collaboration. At play is the complexity for both the participant and myself; we are living our stories while at the same time reflecting on life and explaining ourselves to each other.

I do not claim to be objective, as my life experiences shape my own stories, lens, ethos, and epistemology. Acting as '*legitimate peripheral participant'* (Lave & Wenger, 1991), I entered Anne Fletcher's multiple worlds of leadership through observation. For my research, narrative inquiry was the entry point for examining the role experience has on cultural understandings and identity. The experience of studying internationally is culturally complex. For me, the cultural complexity intensifies in the intersections between Anne's Malawian culture and my American culture. As a result, the emphasis for me as an interviewer was to not have preconceived notions of what I planned to hear from Anne. I allowed the role culture played in Anne's life to be one of my goals throughout the investigation.

The Participant

This research focused on the life experiences of one participant, an African woman who has had to fight the voicelessness "of the culturally constructed notions of race, gender, class, and national and other identities (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011, p. 148). Cynthia Dillard and Chinwe Okpalaoka (2011) suggest that maybe most importantly, such a culturally constructed view "arises from and informs the historical and contemporary contexts of oppressions and resistance for African ascendant women" (p. 148). The participant had to confront intersecting

oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism. In spite of this, she emerged as a leader in business, politics, and human rights.

Data Collection Procedures

Narrative researchers explore a research problem by seeking an understanding of the experiences of individuals. A key element in narrative research is to understand the individual's past as well as present.

The participant made a personal request to the researcher to "tell her story." Prior to the data collection process, approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University was granted. To conduct the study, the participant reviewed and signed the required consent form, which included the use of her birth name. The participant received the open-ended questions prior to the interviews. Collaboration with the participant was paramount throughout the research process. Creswell (2012) argues that "collaboration in narrative research means that the inquirer actively involves the participant in the inquiry as it unfolds" (p. 512).

Via the stories told, the researcher developed a chronological perspective on the experiences narrated. The stories constitute the data, and data collection strategies for obtaining the required evidence included participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009); face-to-face, telephone and online interviews (Briggs, 1986; Gatson, 2011) that include oral history methods (Gluck & Patai, 1993; Shopes, 2011) and "power sensitive conversations" (Bhavnani, 1993; Haraway, 1988); and extensive field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Member-checking was employed to allow the participant to examine transcripts of recorded conversations, and drafts of analytic memos (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009).

To ensure the authenticity of the data and to preserve the participants' perception, the researcher transcribed all interviews. The researcher began an indexing of emerging themes from each interview and developed categories based on the themes. To further ensure the accuracy of meaning and content expressed by the participant a system of "*member-checking*" was employed. This research incorporates multiple strategies including layering of evidence, member-checking, and the use of *rich, thick description* (Geertz, 1973, 1983) to convey the findings. *Layering of data* involves examining evidence from the literature to build themes. Data reliability was reviewed using reliability protocols as suggested by Creswell (2009). All transcripts were checked by the original interview participant to ensure that "they do not contain obvious mistakes during transcription" (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). *Member-checking* involves taking the established themes back to the participant to check for accuracy. Validity was ensured through member-checking of interview transcripts, researcher's acknowledgement, and review of bias (Creswell, 2009). Finally, thick description allows readers to live the experience of the narrators for themselves.

An interview log was developed to create a chronology of all the interviews. Table 1 illustrates how the researcher processed the interview log including dates, location, setting, and brief field notes in order to categorize the interviews. An additional log was developed to document the member-checking for all transcripts and data between the researcher and the participant (see Table 2).

Credibility of findings was based in part on the researcher's prolonged contact with the participant. The length of engagement began in 2011 with in-depth and varied experiences in the field. One segment of the investigation provided the opportunity for the researcher to spend one

month with the participant permitting the swift turnover for member checking, a layering of

inquiry methods and data, dense description, researcher reflexivity, and referential adequacy.

Table 1

Interview Log

Date	Location	Setting	Observation

Table 2

Member-Checking

Member-Checking	Notes	Notes
Transcribe recorded interviews		
Transcription emailed to participant		
Edits/corrections made		
Returned edited transcripts to participant for accuracy		
Final approval from participant		

Data Analysis

Interpretation of narrative data begins with the narrator's voice and stories in a natural

extension of the narrator-listener relationship and the active work of listening (Chase, 2005).

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) state "that underpinning the process of analysis is the necessity to *know* one's data" (p. 162). Creswell (2009) outlines the data analysis process used in narrative inquiry as:

- Inductive data analysis—Data, organized into increasingly more abstract units of information emerge from categories or themes built from the bottom up. Working back and forth between themes and database for the establishment of a comprehensive set of themes.

- Participants' meaning—Data interpretation focuses on the participants meaning concerning a problem or issue rather than the meaning held by the researcher or the review of literature.

- Theoretical lens—Lenses such as culture, gender, race, or class differences to view the study as well as the political, social, or historical context relative to the research.

- Emergent design—All phases of the research may change after the researcher starts the data collection process. For example, the questions may change, or the forms of data collection may shift.

Chase (2005) outlines five possible lenses that researchers can use in examining narrative data:

- The analytic lens utilized in viewing the empirical material. The researcher looks at the content of the narrative: What information is conveyed?

- Narratives can be viewed as verbal activities or performances. When a participant tells a story, she constructs and performs the self. Her reality is demonstrated and displayed. Researchers here pay attention to how the participant performs her identity in the act of

telling her story. The emphasis here is on the narrator's voice and her communication style, and how these locate her in specific subject locations and social positions.

- Researchers can view stories as enabled and constrained by a range of social circumstances and resources: The context of the narrator's community, local setting, organizational and social memberships, and cultural and historical location.

- Narratives can be understood as social interactions—as produced in specific settings with a specific audience for a specific reason.

- Narrative researchers view themselves as part of the story.

Collaboration with the participant was paramount throughout the research process. Creswell (2012) argues that "collaboration in narrative research means that the inquirer actively involves the participant in the inquiry as it unfolds" (p. 512). Researcher reflexivity is also critical. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), the reflexive process includes recording, storing, and retrieving data as well as reflecting upon it regularly with an awareness of the researcher's own perspectives and standpoints. Further, Creswell (2012) posits that ". . . Reflexivity involves the researcher being aware of and openly discussing his/her role in the research in a way that honors and respects the site and participants" (p. 474). The researcher regularly draws on her own background, points of view, and experiences, and uses this as foil for information being shared by the participant. Susan Chase (2005) refers to this active use of the researcher's reflections as "critical personal narrative."

In this analysis the researcher worked to find the voice of the participant in a particular time, place or setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To find the voice in the story, the researcher used an adaptation of the following to develop a type of story map. This was a way to

organize the participants' recounting of past, present, and future experiences within a rubric (see Table 3).

Table 3

Schematic Organization of the Participant's Stories

	The World of the Participant				
	Self	Family	Community	Work	Politics
Past Experiences	• Background • Self-identity • Roles	• Roots • Personal history • Events	• Setting the context • Past connections	• Past work experiences	• Personal history • Events
Present Experiences	• Current status • Level of awareness	• Current support	• Current connections	• Current work experiences	• Current connections
Future Intentions	• Outcomes • Personal development • Self-identity	• Future support	• Future Connections	• Future work expectations	• Future work expectations

Adapted from Richmond (2002)

Trustworthiness of the Study

The rigor of the research and criteria for its goodness must match its paradigmatic location. Consistency of methods is a requirement for all research. Narrative researchers rely heavily on self-reported information from participants. Even though the connections across conceptual frameworks, questions, and findings may not lead to a single truth, rigor and reflexive (self-aware) practice can assure that the researcher's interpretations are justified, are credible, and worthy of trust (O'Leary, 2005).

Human beings are inconsistent, revealing different aspects of themselves at different times and places. According to O'Leary (2005), dependability indicates quality assurance

through methodological protocols that are designed and developed in a manner that is consistent, logical, systematic, well documented, and designed to account for research subjectivities. (p. 60)

The criterion of transferability is satisfied when the researcher provides a detailed description of the research context and methods, so that readers can determine applicability by reading the research account (O'Leary, 2005).

Summary

This chapter has set out the construct of an endarkened transnational feminist paradigm for capturing the lived experiences of the participant. This narrative account included strategies employed for the role of the researcher, the participant, data collection procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the study. Chapter 4 unveils the participant, her life experiences, spirituality, sense of community, and cultural values undergirding her leadership praxis as a woman entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political leader of Malawi, Africa.

CHAPTER 4

The Honorable Anne Mary Fletcher

The research design and the methodology guiding this study through the data collection

and data analysis process on an exemplar woman leader in Africa were reviewed in Chapter 3.

Narrative inquiry was used to report the account and provided the means of understanding the

participant's experience and "it is a collaboration between researcher and participants over time,

in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000, p. 20). Chapter 4 unveils the participant, her life experiences, spirituality, sense of

community, and cultural values undergirding her leadership praxis as a woman entrepreneur,

philanthropist, and political leader. This narrative account is infused with the researcher's field

texts to help fill in the richness and nuance of the commonplaces of narrative inquiry—sociality,

place, and temporality. The participant's account is set off in italics to distinguish my own voice

and recollections. The participant requested the use of her birth name and the required consent

form was included with North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University's (NC A&T)

Institutional Review Board. To represent the focus of each section, an African proverb or quotes

of the participant are used to honor the long traditions of proverbs in the African and African

diasporic communities (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011, p. 160).

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) commonplaces "creates a metaphorical *three-*

dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the

social along a second dimension, and place along a third" dimension (p. 50). To address

temporal matters, the focus is on the personal and the social perspectives of the participant. To

organize the participants' stories, the schematic organization (see Table 3) allowed the researcher

to report past and present experiences along with future intentions. In addressing the social

dimension a detailed description of the exemplar, including her family, education, personality, personal conditions, feelings, hopes, desires, as well as the relationship between the researcher and the participant. The inquiry for this investigation occurs in a variety of personal and public settings located in Malawi, Africa and in the USA at N.C. A&T located in Greensboro, North Carolina. Accompanying the sequence of places are vivid descriptions to provide a picturesque account of the locale.

Introduction

In January, 2010 I started the doctoral journey. On January 21st the Leadership Studies Program presented an Eminent Leader Series with the guest of honor, Anne Fletcher. As a first semester student, there was buzz going around about this Eminent Leader from Malawi. I had never heard of Malawi but soon learned that it was a country in Africa. That piqued my interest and I was excited to meet this leader and to learn more about Malawi. As the students gathered for the occasion, Anne made her entrance. Not only was she a beautiful woman, she had grace that was complimented by her spiritual countenance—her presence impressed me; I thought her a kindred spirit. I introduced myself to Anne and her immediate response was *"Oh, you must come to Malawi; you will be most welcomed."* Exceeding my greatest expectations, that moment in time was just the beginning of a higher plan and destiny for our relationship.

Between 2010 and 2011 I continued my doctoral studies at N.C. A&T, at which time I was afforded an opportunity to study abroad in Zomba; a beautiful city of the Shire Highlands located in southern Malawi. *Annie's Lodge*, Zomba is the location in which the study abroad faculty and students live for their one month stay. The lodge is located at the foot of the evergreen Zomba plateau. It is next to the Old Parliament building and the Botanical Gardens. The British colonial architecture is evident in the façade of the Old Parliament building. The

structure's appearance has deteriorated over the years. The green metal roofing has started caving in and the bricks that were painted yellow have peeled. Also established by the British and located next to the parliament building, is the beautiful botanical garden. The garden is spacious; beautifully landscaped with indigenous and exotic species of trees and flowers, such as *Ginkgo biloba, ferns,* and *orchids*. The garden boasts a collection of palm trees and is often the gorgeous, picturesque sight for wedding ceremonies.

I began my journey to Malawi with an interest in Black women's leadership from an international perspective. In reviewing the literature on global women's leadership, I found that there was a miniscule amount of research. However, on a cool, dry day in Zomba, Africa, Anne Fletcher, herald as an eminent leader of her country, shared with me that she had many stories to tell and that she wanted me to tell them. Serendipitously this phenomenal woman leader would become the focus of my research. During our initial discussion, Anne briefly shared stories about her journey. Awakening my inner curiosity while capturing my full attention I surmised that this meeting was by divine intervention.

How ironic that while I was thousands of miles from home, my research topic is revealed. The remainder of the visit was filled with scheduled assignments, some site seeing, and my personal contact with Anne was limited. Prior to my return, I assured Anne that I would tell her story.

I returned to the United States with a desire to share with the world Anne Fletcher's stories. After taking an ethnography course, I understood that the best way to share these phenomenal stories would be through narrative inquiry. Many of the accounts are shared here in an unveiling of Anne's life stories. Some might call her a servant leader, or an authentic leader. I view Anne through the lens of transnational endarkened feminist which encompasses the

challenges and plights of transnational leaders with a focus on the cultural values that undergird her leadership praxis. Anne's account demonstrates her effective leadership style in her ability to establish a partnership with her community and articulate exactly what she aims to accomplish. She leads with boldness, courage, and insight into her projected future goals.

Anne and I are *chemwali anga's*—sisters in Chichewa language. We are united through our shared endarkened existence as women who live on different parts of the globe and are united in faith and purpose. Her stories can be understood in many ways; however, in transmitting indigenous knowledge one cannot apply labels from the Western academy, rather, let the stories speak for themselves to reveal lessons that are authentically Malawian.

Anne Mary Fletcher: Endarkened Womanhood

"*There is no greater agony than hearing an untold story inside you.*" ~ Maya Angelou

Anne Fletcher's social and cultural heritage is embedded in the globalization of Malawi on the African continent. Each character in her life story can be mapped onto the country's colonial and post-colonial history. Anne is herself, endarkened and transnational in every possible way because she is both endarkened in an international context and her connection to her cultural standpoint adds to her narrative account.

On May 23, 1957, Anne Mary Fletcher became the sixth child of William Agson Fletcher and Ruth Kuruneru Fletcher. Anne's father grew up in Mangochi, an ancient trading center located on Lake Malawi that played a major role in slave trade to the East. William Agson Fletcher grew up to become the Senior Clinical Officer, a medical doctor, at Zomba Central Hospital for 31 years from 1947-1978. Her mother, Ruth Kuruneru, grew up in Ntcheu, a district in the Central Region, bordered by Mozambique. As a young girl Ruth became sick and was

transported to Zomba Regional Hospital where she met William. They were married for 40 years and to this union 12 children were born.

The first born was Allan, who lives in Lilongwe, the post-colonial capital of Malawi chosen because of its central location in the country. Second born was the late Elizabeth whose daughter, Sally, works at *Annie's Lodge* in Zomba. Next was Herbert the animal farmer, who also lives in Lilongwe. Next is Chricy, who lives in Blantyre, the modern commercial center of Malawi that saw an influx of British settlers during the colonial period. Next born was the late Ethel; her son Tony lives in the family home close to Anne's current home. Anne, at number six, has lived in many diverse locations on the globe but returned in 1986 to Malawi and Zomba, her childhood home. Willie, described as Anne's right arm, was born next after her, and now also lives in Zomba. Number eight was the late Rose who lived near Anne in Zomba. Twins Emily and Emma, numbers nine and ten, live in Zomba and Lilongwe respectively.

Anne's paternal grandfather, William Fletcher, was born in Scotland. During British colonial times he served as District Commissioner for the Eastern Region of Malawi, which included Zomba, Mangochi and Machinga, a district in the Southern Region. Her paternal grandmother, Emily, grew up in Mangochi with the Yao people and was the sister to the village chief. Part of William Fletcher's duties as District Commissioner included work with the local chiefs as counselor on village affairs. While working with the local Yao chief in Mangochi, William saw the chief's beautiful sister, and said to him, "*I'm going to marry your sister*". William Fletcher and Emily married and Anne's father was born. Anne's maternal grandfather, Edmond Kuruneru, was born in Sri Lanka. Edmond came to work in Malawi as an engineer setting up the country's first railway line, which runs from Balaka to Mozambique. Anne's

maternal grandmother, Elizabeth John, was from Ntcheu in the Chiradzulu District, and ascendant of the Ngoni people, farmed and helped with the village children and elders.

The son of a Scot and Yao, and the daughter of a Sri Lankan and an Ngoni gave birth to Anne and her siblings. Their collective histories are embedded in the histories of places and the times of colonialism and post-colonial development. Such are the diverse threads in the history for the scenario that is Anne's life and work. To display Anne's family history, Figure 1 presents a pictorial representation of her rich heritage.
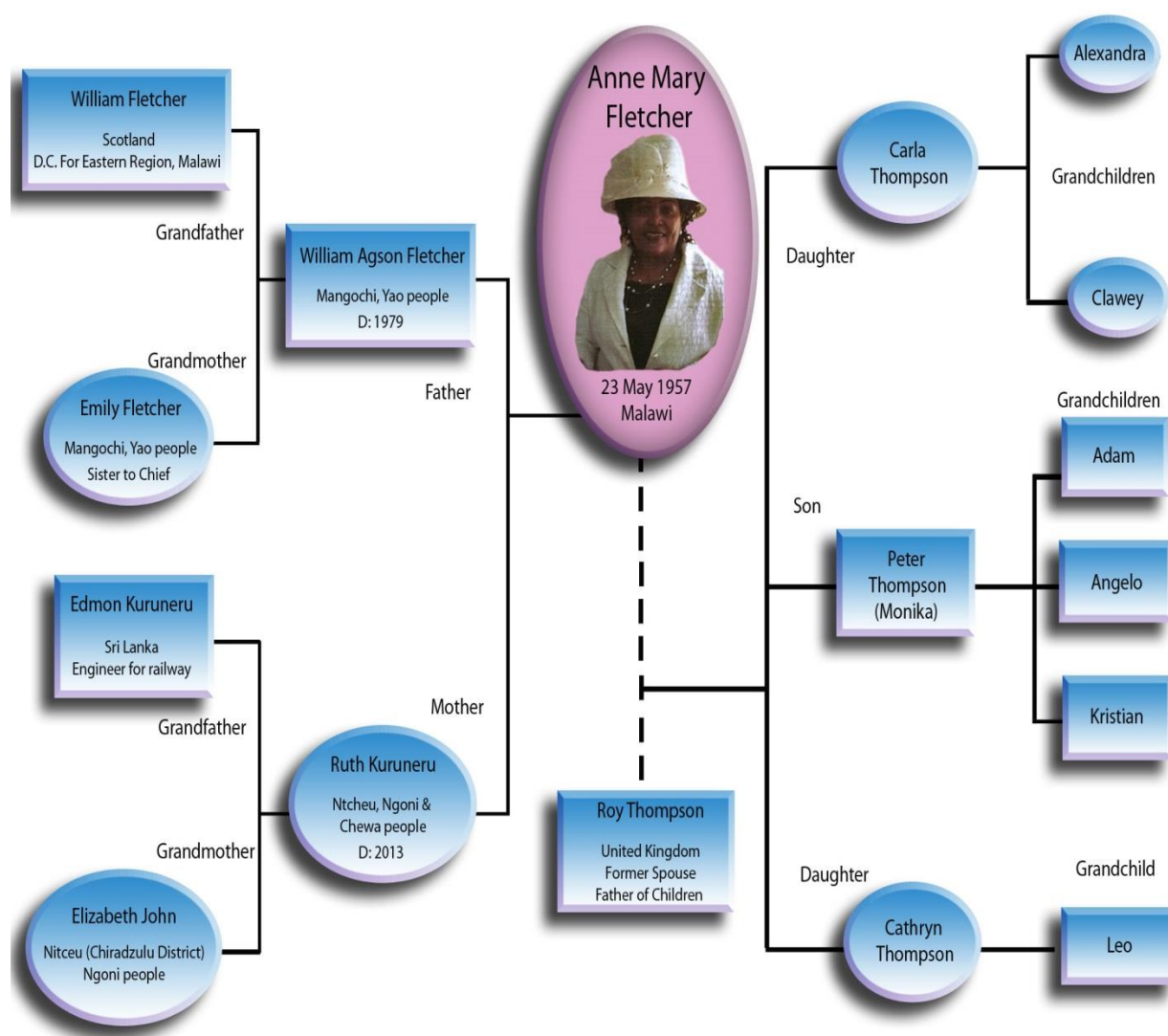

Figure 1. Anne Fletcher's Family Tree.

Creation of the bond.

"A friend is someone you share the path with."   ~ African proverb

It is April, 2012, Anne and her son Peter, have traveled to the United States for a one week visit. Their schedule is tight and packed with a visit to the three universities' that travel to Malawi each year for participatory action research. Three universities, N.C. A&T, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), and Radford University have each adopted a school in the Domasi region in Malawi. Faculty and students travel yearly for a study abroad experience, which is a life changing encounter.

The time allotted for me to interview Anne was constrained as she was to participate in a roundtable conference at NC A&T. The research questions had been emailed to Anne prior to her visit in preparation for the interview. A small but comfortable conference room was reserved in Proctor Hall on the campus in the Leadership Studies department, before my interview with Anne. Joined by her son Peter, we convened around a small table where I placed my journal for note taking along with my audio recorder. I had already met her son Peter and her brother Willie—he was our bus driver during our stay in Malawi. I learned that Anne had purchased a bus to provide transportation for the students and faculty. We all became quite fond of Willie to the point that most of us referred to him as "Uncle Willie". Anne's sister Emma, worked at the lodge; so that was three of her family members which I had the pleasure of meeting. Desiring to share my family with Anne and Peter as they had done with me, I brought my wedding album to this meeting to introduce my family, through pictures with Anne. With her being this close to my family, I would have loved for her to meet them in person—that was wishful thinking, on my part. However, conflicting schedules did not allow for such a meeting. Introducing each family member to Anne and Peter, I described their connection to me along with providing anecdotes of that particular family member. As the images from the photos seemed to come alive, captured in

those moments was a kindred connection. Anne and Peter enthralled by the experience as well showed their deep emotions by embracing one another, then reaching out to embrace me.   Both beamed with enthusiasm, smiles, and expressions of our family's uncanny similarities. I sensed the excitement and joy in Anne as we went through the album. This was my attempt to help her "know" my family as I described each one. This was a special moment in time.

Inconspicuously shifting the focus back to Anne, I began listening to her through her thick British accent flavored with her Chichewa native tongue. I made gentle eye contact as I postured myself to listen.

Formative years.

"A family is like a forest, when you are outside it is dense, when you are inside you see that each tree has its place." ~ African Proverb

With both parents and nine siblings, Anne grew up in a village in the Changalume in Zomba District of Malawi. Her family grew up on a private farm which her father purchased. Anne stated:

> *My father was a very good family man. He took us to the garden; to the farm. We attended Catholic Church and studied the Bible on Saturday's and every Sunday. Dad always talked about how to take care of ourselves and taught us all the time. My father was Yao from Mangochi; mummy was Ntcheu, Ngoni, and Chewa. We followed both traditions and languages. It was very easy to mix with everybody and the cultures. I enjoyed living both worlds; both cultures.*

Her father was a Senior Medical Assistant (doctor), a farmer, hunter and builder; her mother was a keen farmer as well. In a softly spoken, almost quiet voice she recalled:

I come from a village. There are two people; my father and my mother. My father worked in a hospital and my mother was mixed. It wasn't all that strong. My mum didn't pass [as a] *Malawian. There were so many things she liked to pass* [as]. *Although there were very strong cultures and seven girls* [in my family], *my father would tell us the reason why . . . especially with the way we looked, you know . . . we are supposed to be subservient and we are supposed to help people, love* [people], *to be very educated, and agree if mum does not have money, then* [the] *boys are to be educated first.*

Hearing this story, I thought, these are the identical teachings—deeply rooted in my African ancestry—practiced in my family and the majority of families within the African American diaspora. I recall how my parents instilled these values and had conversations with me and my sisters. There are six women in my family of which I am the fifth child. My father served in the United States Army and attended N.C. A&T; my mother was a seamstress and took care of us. They were private and protective of their six girls. They instilled the value of education—we all pursued higher education at a university and community college.

Anne went on to explain her experience with racism at an early age: "*At both primary and secondary school I suffered from racism. The predominately fellow Black students mercilessly taunted me for being of mixed blood. They teased me for my light skinned color.*" I sensed her sadness in sharing this part of her life. Her demeanor was subdued; her voice above a whisper. Sensing an appropriate time to interrupt, I shared my similar experience with her as I am also a product of mixed heritage. We leaned forward simultaneously and warmly embrace and she said to me "*God bless you Toni; I love you.*" This resonated with me as this was yet another chemwali anga and spiritual connection.

Collecting my thoughts, I experienced a momentary state of confusion that this phenomenon would occur in Africa. I read about the South African apartheid and its oppressive nature and a brief history of Malawi, however, I never thought I would meet someone, from Africa, who shares this commonality. Anne continued:

> *One thing I noticed, I relate to anybody the same; I don't see any differences. I can't see the difference between you and me; you and Peter. I sort of relate the same unless you tell me, Anne, I come from Muslim, and then I can relate to you. I treat you that way. I prefer if we sit around I fell you're all the same to me. I can't see any barriers or cultures unless somebody tells me something then I don't have the prejudice; it's not there.*

She followed that with what her father told her.

> *Very strangely* [sic] *during the colonial times, the whites were ruling Africa, especially the British. This is what my father told me back them it was that time everywhere, America, South Africa, even in Malawi . . . they would take my dad as a nurse, as a doctor, whatever; he would be put in where the white people are; that was during the colonial times, and I was wondering how would they accept to treat a white person during the . . . strictly say black stepson, the white stepson, but the Blacks and the Coloreds would be put together, no problem, but the Black would be on their own; how did they come to know about mixed people. If they kill a white person, I would not allowed because that's my mother or my father and is White; kill a Black one and not allowed; I was in the middle and I say no, no, no that's wrong . . . you want to get it right and it's very strange; not doing it fair.*

Continuing with an account of her formative years, Anne stated that she exhibited ambition and leadership at a very early age. She helped her father, mother, and family with chores and cooking. She worried her mother to learn more and to do more. She would be described as a precocious child.

> *Mum* [sic] *was always worried about me, you know. I was very, very naughty. Whatever she got I would check on it. Anything else she brought it home, I would check. I managed at a young age to make ironing for everybody just to keep me away from mischief. At the age of 10 or 11, I would cook the bread so fast that she would wonder how I made them very quickly. But what made me do that all the time* [was] *so that I could make some time to go around in the house checking on everything. And my mum* [sic] was *always on her feet with me, you know, very, very worried. She sent me to school very early at the age of four. I would stay with my dad working. I would then sweep the floor at 4:30, 5:00 before I go to school. So she would give me* [chores] *at home. I was very, very bright in school. I was . . . if you are very bright, you go to St. Mary's Secondary, a Catholic School; Box 2 which is a secondary school—which is a mixed one. I went four years to Malosa Secondary School at age 10.*

While at Malosa, Anne was involved in athletics; she loved to play volleyball and squash (a netball game). Of course she had to explain squash to me. Coincidentally, Anne had brought pictures taken with her team. Holding the picture in hand, she smiled—I could not imagine her playing the sport because, perhaps, I had met her at this point in life. After a brief pause, she continued with her school experiences.

> *Everybody pointed fingers at me to go for training . . . but you do very well . . . you go for training. Every time I get punished, I would go and meet the secretary. So, I say*

"well . . . I ought to become a secretary." So they put me in training for secretary and

after three years as a secretary, I starting working for the bank, Commercial Bank of

Malawi.

Our interview continued with Anne's reflection of her father. Anne shared that her father

provided books to read on health, tropical diseases, and hygiene. Her father was a constant

teacher and the epitome of a wise man. Being a physician, her father taught them how to take

care of themselves and each other. He had many discussions with his children on health issues

and his practice to treat them. Her father always spouted words of wisdom, encouragement,

along with the attributes of self-discipline.

When my dad would drive away on the farm, he wouldn't let us mix with people. He was

private; he liked to update his work . . . working in the hospital, then he gets on his

motorbike to [go] *to the farm and make sure we are reading our books. There was no*

television then; we used to listen to stories, with grandma. She would sit us down and tell

us stories.

Educational development.

"When you educate a man, you educate an individual.

When you educate a woman, you educate a nation." ~ African Proverb

Anne received her primary education at St. Mary's Catholic School. She was a very

smart student which led the faculty at the school to enroll her in secretarial training. Anne

excelled in her studies and at the age of 18 she received the Malawi School Certificate of

Education. After graduation from school Anne worked for one year with the Ministry of Works

(Malawi) as an accounts assistant. Her responsibilities included entering transactions into a

ledger, preparing invoices and orders, and analyzing expenses. Shortly after, she was employed

as a bank clerk at Commercial Bank (Malawi) where she was responsible for analyzing customers' details and verification. This was just a stepping stone for Anne. Her knowledge gained from reading books provided by her father and exposure to the secretary led her to achieve a Diploma in Business Studies, Certificate in Secretarial, and Certificate in Office Practice.

Although Anne did not have formal training at a university, she learned at a young age the value of an education. Her parents laid a strong foundation for her and her siblings. Her father the physician at the local hospital and her mother had an orphanage school where she brought up a lot of orphans by providing them with food, an education, and other basic needs. Anne was developing as the leader she would come to be by taking care of her family, learning from the books and stories told to her, and watching her parents as they worked together to provide for their family. She continued her professional training and development through continuing her education as follows:

- Small Industry Management Consultancy

- Small and Medium Business Enterprise-Business Management

- Conflict Management

- HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming

- Business Plan Development

- Leadership Learning Program

- Advocacy Awareness training

After Anne shared her educational background, she was interested in knowing about my educational experiences. Even though she had traveled the world and lived many different

countries, her knowledge of the African American culture in the US was foreign to her. She commented:

> *What I know about America is limited to what I have read and the short period of time I have come here. What I have read is troubling to me; especially with the government here and President Obama. I don't like it. There is a way how God wants us to live.*

I explained in the most succinct and most informative fashion my educational experience. I was educated through predominantly white, male standards. I started school right after desegregation, following a federal government ruling, based on a lawsuit entitled *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which declared that separate but equal schools must be integrated. Although the ruling was passed in 1953, the ruling of this law did not come into effect across the country until most schools implemented the policy. Consequently, my enrollment in a predominately white school was, in this instance, through the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In attempts to integrate schools, Black students were bussed to predominantly white schools. White students   maintained the privilege of walking to schools in their communities. The school environment was foreign and hostile and ridden with prejudice and racial overtones to African American students, which exacerbated the fact that these students lost their schools, mascots, many of their teachers and their cultural heritage. Integrated schools did not embrace elements related to African American history or culture. There were also a limited number of African American teachers, both male and female which added to my feeling of disenfranchisement. I completed my primary education in a desegregated school. After achieving an academic diploma, I continued with higher education and matriculated at N.C. A&T., I received my B.S. and M.S. in Industrial Technology and an MBA from Nova Southeastern University in Florida. Currently I am pursuing my terminal degree in Leadership.

Spirituality—Mobilizing faith and compassion.

"*Understand that when our ancestors were enslaved, the one thing that they did not want them to*

do was to learn how to read. You cannot lead if you do not read." ~ T. D. Jakes

With her parents' guidance, Anne was introduced to and studied the Bible at an early age; and attended church and Bible study regularly. Anne shared that before her father died he admonished her to be diligent in her work and to learn God. As a Catholic she has a deep attachment to her religion, her church, and community as evidenced by her tremendous involvement and support of her church. While traveling with Anne, we passed this huge church noticeable due to the size, its architectural design, and a display of a large sign which read, Zomba Catholic Cathedral. I was captured by its mass and beauty. The cathedral was designed and constructed by Father Francis Loughran, who gave 68 years of service. He left his Irish parents, immigrated to Malawi in 1943 in the Nsanje community, and learned their Chichewa language. I told Anne I wanted to take pictures of the church. Anne preceded a step further, by arranging a guided tour for me with one of the sisters from the church's convent. On the grounds of the church is the resting place of Father Francis. It is a sacred place for the members and is protected by a gate. When walking inside the cathedral with the sister, I was mesmerized by the sacred aura and the magnificent furnishings and religious symbolism. Breathtakingly gorgeous, the edifice is flanked with stained glass windows which glistened with colors of the rainbow created by the intruding sunlight. Moving past rows of exquisitely varnished benches, I took a seat and sat in silence to savor what my eyes, my heart and my spirit had captured. The surrounding array of colors, ushered me to a place of serenity and I thought to myself—God's promises. I prayed with gratefulness to be in this place; in God's kairos time. Unaware of the actual time I spent inside the church in meditation, the sister guided me towards another area of

the cathedral. As my tour ended and exited the church the sister said that the cathedral had a seating capacity of 5,000 with the membership far exceeding that number. On any given Sunday, the church reaches its capacity and the grounds are filled with parishioner's who have traveled near and far to be a part of the service.

While waiting for Anne's return after my tour, I continued to bask in the magnificence of this Catholic Cathedral. I could barely wait to see Anne to share my experience. Anne smiled and said:

> *I started at that church and when I pass by, I see so many people outside. There is no room for them inside and they travel so far to get here.   Some people approached me in 2011and asked me to help build them a church in their community because we have to travel so far.   In September, 2011construction began on St. Paul Catholic Church. I gave them cement, roof, and 10 long benches.*

While in Malawi, I attended a church service at St. Paul Catholic Church along with the 26 students and faculty of the study abroad group. The church is tucked away in a community very close to where Anne grew up. While walking on what seemed an endless dirt road, the church came into view. Approaching the church you could hear singing and praises. Suddenly, our attention was captured by songs from the church choir—beautiful voices becoming louder and louder as we reached our destination. Because the building is still under construction, lacking steps to the entrance, the members hoisted us upward into the sanctuary. Upon entering the church, there was lots of room for expansion. The building is finished, but all the flooring was not completed and it was announced that one of the schools had donated more benches. The service was conducted in part Chichewa and part English. Recall that Anne's father told her to

Marriage, family, world traveler.

"*A family tie is like a tree, it can bend but it cannot break.*" ~ African proverb

While Anne was working at Commercial Bank, she met Roy Thompson, a British economist, from the United Kingdom who was doing business in Malawi. They soon married, relocated to England, where their first child Carla was born in May, 1976. Because England does not allow dual citizenship, Anne declined British citizenship as she knew she would return to her homeland. While there she studied pre-nursing and worked at Nether Age Hospital. From there the family traveled to Papua New Guinea where Roy worked for the Papua New Guinea government. Anne was employed at PNG Printing—a supplier of business forms and general printing—as a sales representative promoting services and identifying gaps in the printing market. The company sent her to a local six month training program in Business Studies. After one year as a sales representative she went to the New Guinea News as a manager. During her four years there her responsibilities included identifying training and development needs, identifying performance gaps and determining intervention to improve performance, conduct staff appraisals and recruiting staff. She worked very hard managing eight shops—it was always number one—she proudly shared with me. While in Papua New Guinea, their first and only son Peter was born in February, 1981. Anne explained:

> *In Papua New Guinea I had a very dear friend. We used to go every morning to my*
> *office and we would drink coffee and talk. Her husband was put in jail for nothing.*
> *That's when I realized that Papua New Guinea was prejudice; their culture has no*
> *respect for life—they drink and fight with knives; killing each other. So Papua New*
> *Guinea was way behind Africa, but a very rich country . . . very rich . . . lot of gold . . . lot*
> *of people fighting.*

Anne was unhappy, so she, Roy, and their children relocated to Solomon Islands where their third child, Cathryn was born in June, 1985. Anne was employed as a nurse and after living there for one year the family moved to Australia where she continued to work as a nurse. Her father taught her a lot about his job as a doctor and she read his medical books which he always discussed with the family.

> *After Peter was born, that's when I started opening my eyes. We went to Australia; I started feeling very sad and depressed. I started feeling very bad immigrating to Australia when my brothers and sister were suffering in Africa. I started opening my eyes. I chose to come back to Malawi. I missed my family and culture.*

Her marriage provided opportunities for exposure to much travel, as well as exposure to many cultures. Anne and her family lived in the United Kingdom (UK); traveling to Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, India, Singapore, Egypt, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Burundi, and South Africa. Anne and Roy amicably divorced after 19 years and her world travels provided rich experiences from each culture which had a tremendous impact on her leadership. Included in Anne's travel is to the United States of America.

The beginning of great things to come.

"*If I am in harmony with my family, that's success.*" ~ Ute proverb

Longing to return home, Anne's family moved back to Malawi. This transition satisfied the "knowing" for Anne that home, in Malawi, was where God was calling her to be. Following in her grandfather's footsteps, Anne's generosity extends beyond her family; she includes the community and all who have the privilege of knowing her. For example, starting with her children, Peter is the Managing Director of the lodges in Lilongwe; Cathryn is the Managing Director of the location in Blantyre, and her sister's work at various locations. As she

explained earlier, "*I could not remain in the UK and traveling around the world knowing that my family was suffering.*"

In following her belief in Biblical teachings and her parental charge to take care of her family, Anne returned to Malawi. Her primary objective was to empower her family to become self-sufficient. Upon returning, she quickly found employment with a brick and tile company. This was another step in the direction she was destined to claim in the area of entrepreneurship. She gleaned from various employment opportunities, world travels, management training, and her father's sage advice to establish a business name. Anne knew she had to establish a business name to separate her business entity from her birth name; she chose "*Annie*". In 1986 Anne opened her first business *Annie's Coffee Shop* in Lilongwe; proprietary business.

> *I wanted to buy chairs and tables, so I went to the bank to get a loan. They asked, "how much?" I said come and assess the place. Then they told me that I needed a signature from a man—in this culture women are like second class citizens . . . have to follow what the man says. Women had to be subservient . . . it was a man's world.*

Starting out it was extremely tough for Anne, but she had a vision. Her international travels and various jobs helped to prepare her to capture her vision. Anne quickly focused on her vision, but was faced with the challenge of obtaining capital for her business ventures. However, she faced the challenge and was successful of securing a loan.

> *I gave them the details; got the loan. I worked extra hard to give the money back to them . . . had to make them trust me. They could check on me and my account . . . now they trust me, so from that time it's easy to give me loans . . . loans got bigger and bigger and loans had to be paid back quickly to gain trust. I have been with them over 20 years.*

To this day it is a thriving business managed by one of her sister's: "*I handed it over to my sister for her and her husband to use it for their living.*"

After the success of her first business venture, Anne kept her eyes fixed on a vision. Waking up early and praying a lot, she stayed focused. With an interest in the hospitality industry, she did her research and found a gap in the economic market. Between the hotels and rest houses there was nothing affordable that could provide all the services and facilities that a hotel offers. She set out to fill that gap and started buying land. Her vision and prayers included catering to the tourism industry, both local and foreign.

> *In 1994 my business life started; with experiences I had abroad, I wanted to empower my family first . . . take care of my family. I went to Sudan for four months and had problems fitting into their society because I was a Christian, I was not accepted. Because they are mostly Muslim they thought she might rebel because I could not take their dressing— women wore robes (culture). In Sudan . . . did not like the culture or being a second class citizen.*

The entrepreneur.

"*Many hands make light work.*" ~ Haya (Tanzania) Proverb

The year is 1995 and Anne launches her first venture in the hospitality industry. She established *Annie's Lodge* located in Lilongwe, Malawi. The location known as Area 47 is centrally located within walking distance to convenience stores.

Annie's Lodge, Area 47 Lilongwe is also the central location used for the study abroad students and faculty stay, upon arrival as well as departure. I clearly recall that upon arrival we were warmly greeted by the staff that is most happy to see us. They surround our bus with their huge smiles—"welcome to Malawi, you are most welcomed". The staff is familiar with the

faculty because they return each year. The men quickly unload our luggage; I observe how carefully they handle luggage and how meticulously the luggage is placed in lines for us to claim. Once we secure our luggage staff patiently waits inside to take it to our designated rooms. The beautiful landscape in the center of the lodge is manicured with indigenous plants and trees with beautiful bold colors in pink, red, and orange. The rooms are equipped with two full size beds, gorgeous, colorful bedding, which Anne purchased from South Africa. Each room is also equipped with a television, desk and fan. Colorful mosquito nets hang directly over each bed; they are in a variety of colors—mostly white, some pink, red, and blue. The accommodations also include a shower and/or tub, toilet, sink, a mirrored cabinet for toiletries, and sets of plush towels.

Exceeding expectations.

"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ~ African proverb

The opening of the coffee shop and then her first lodge was only the beginning of Anne's success as an entrepreneur. *Annie's Lodges* have expanded into other cities. Specializing in service to the tourism industry, Anne Fletcher has exceeded expectations as a business woman as evidenced by the establishment of the following businesses.

- Annie's Lodge in Area 47, Lilongwe, 1995

- Annie's Lodge in Area 10, Lilongwe, 1998

- Annie's Lodge in Zomba – headquarters location, 2000

- Annie's Lodge Nyambadwe, Blantyre, 2010

Her long term goal is to extend *Annie's Lodge* across the countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Anne realizes that the success of any business lies in the hands of its employees. She stated:

> *It is they who interact with its customers and can therefore make it a success or a failure. It is for this reason that Annie's Lodge Group pays particular attention to employee interests by motivating them with training opportunities, education, bonuses, salary advances, and healthcare services.*

Anne is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) overseeing all aspects of the business including operations, employee relations, budget and financial planning, strategic planning, cleaning, food preparation and purchases. Anne explained: "*To be able to do all that, I had to develop the humility to acknowledge the fact that I did not know everything and needed to work hard, educate myself, take risks, be independent and be adventurous.*" Anne explains her commitment to her community: "*As a responsible cooperate citizen, Annie's Lodge Group takes a bit back to the community. Orphanages, churches, and villages have been its main beneficiaries.*" Anne believes that the secret to her success is: "*Waking up early and praying a lot.*"

Anne Fletcher's additional International Achievements include honors and recognition received from North Carolina A&T State University, USA:

- Global Leader, Leadership Studies Doctoral Program, 2010
- Eminent Leader in Residence, Leadership Studies Doctoral Program, 2012

The Leadership Studies program recognizes Eminent Leaders for their prominence and accomplishments in areas of leadership.

Community engagement.

"What you give you get, ten times over." ~ Yoruba

Leading by the example set by her parents, Anne is a community activist as well. With assistance from her son, Peter, she provides financial support and food supplies to several orphanages in the villages. As part of our study abroad service learning project we visited Chifundo Orphanage. Each year the study abroad students and faculty support the orphanage with donations of blankets, books, and clothing for the infants, children and the elderly, and other goods plus monetary donations. She explained how she observed her mother and how it taught her the spirit of giving. "*My mummy* [*sic*] *doesn't believe in throwing anything away. She keeps whatever is left . . . she will keep it for somebody. Food, she would keep it. Old things, she cleans them up and saves them.*"

Zomba is the location for the one month study abroad students and faculty from N.C. A&T—for the one month stay. From what one learns about Africa, through the Western lens, is not even close to the actual experience. First of all, the weather—it is not 100+ degrees Fahrenheit as suggested. We were in Malawi during the cool, dry season when the weather was average high 78 degrees (24 degrees Celsius) ; average low 58 degrees Fahrenheit (14 degrees Celsius). The scenery is breathtaking—mountains on one side and Lake Malawi on the other. It is refreshing to have an opportunity to see such beauty. It was almost unbelievable to know that I was in Africa—the Motherland. Anne has done an excellent job with the landscaping at the Zomba lodge; beautiful and indigenous flowers, trees, and shrubs surround the lodge while maintaining the British colonial architecture. The British influence is apparent; including all the amenities that Americans are accustomed to, adding to the comfort and security. In terms of security, there are guards on duty around the clock. The Malawians are so nice and humble, you

never fear for your safety. It never crossed my mind that I was a foreigner—I felt at home; at peace. Their greeting says it all: "*You are most welcome.*"

The study abroad itinerary included a visit to an orphanage; I was somewhat apprehensive due to the commercials aired on television in America. The commercials are disturbing—full of videos of children suffering. With this image in mind, I did not want to see infants nor the elderly suffering. On the day of our visit, we drove down a long, winding, dirt road and were suddenly greeted with children running towards the bus. The image I had in mind quickly dissolved only to be replaced by a series of other happy moments. My heart smiled just to see their cheers and smiling faces. The orphanage reminded me of a school. It was brick, with Chifundo Orphanage painted in blue at the top of the building; inside were separate rooms—no furniture. As I stepped off the bus these happy children simply surrounded me with songs and cheering. I could not believe what I was experiencing; here I was thinking I was going to see very ill children—again this is based on what is shown in our part of the world.

Much to my surprise, the community had planned a formal ceremony. There were a number of greetings from the village chiefs and other dignitaries. The impressive event was followed by songs and traditional dance, in which I participated. I loved the children of the orphanage sing; their harmony and angelic voices, which soothed my ears, transported me to a blissful place. I closed my eyes and let the spirit move. Once the ceremony was over, the infants, children, and elders were separated into rooms to distribute the supplies. I choose to distribute supplies to the infants and younger children. In this group were two sets of twin girls in matching clothes—one pink with flowered dresses and the other in powder blue. I quickly became attached to them as they were the bright eyed, smiling little girls. They all sat quietly fixed on me. I tried to engage the children in play, but because of the language barrier my

attempts failed. I picked up an alphabet book and started showing them pictures and I started singing the ABC song. Obviously a familiar melody, they chimed in with their sweet accents making it more beautiful than my American rendition. I did not want this experience to end, but it will forever reside in my heart and be etched in my mind.

In 2013, I had the pleasure of spending another day with Anne. It was early Saturday morning and we had just finished a breakfast of toast and coffee. We were sitting in her dining room which has a large table and beautiful china cabinet. After spending a few days with Anne, I learned that the large dining table was needed to feed her family and friends that visit her. I also observed that a tradition in her culture is to always serve guest with a meal; Anne is always ready and prepared for guest at any time. The community loves Anne and they are always stopping by to chat or to check on her.

Meanwhile, Anne was called to her living room and I heard loud voices and laughter. Anne calls to me. *"Toni, I want you to meet my soccer team."* To my surprise, there were 20 young men on her porch; some were changing clothes and started to scramble, attempting to hide when I approached. Anne introduced me as her American sister and started to explain that the young men are from the village and she provides uniforms and transportation. The uniforms are blue and white and the team name is Chucks. They looked very professional and were excited to have on their new sport gear. They were ranked number one in soccer and were heading to a big game. Many of them could not understand me, but they had no problem posing for pictures. The scripture says in Luke 12:48 King James Version [48] *. . . For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.* This demonstrates the kind and generous character of Anne and is a testament to her strong faith and her spirit of giving. When she sees people having hope in the daily lives and getting food, she is happy. Helping the needy and seeing a change in them is

what she strives to accomplish. Anne feels bad when people are suffering, while she is there to help. Here's a moving story she shared. The title is "*You know who sent me is God*".

This story is about Mabrato who was working for World Bank in Solomon Islands on a short term consultant work and the government of Solomon Islands thought he was an American spy in that country. They wanted him to die if he was indeed an American spy. This is the time I was seen in this country as a savior for Mabrato because of my witness that the man came from Africa to work in that country through World Bank. The government believed me for his witness and Mabrato was not killed after all. While he was in Australia, they started questioning him to tell the true story about himself. He said "I am not from Solomon Islands, but I'm from Ethiopia." He was fighting with the UN Security Officers and tore an UN passport. The ship Captain thought of throwing this man in the deep water for him to die or by giving him the life jacket that he can swim to the other shore, but the water tides thrown him to the shore. So the Yemen police saved him by pressing his chest to remove the water from his lungs as they were trying to resuscitate him back to life. After the incident, the man spoke unknown things and people thought he was mad. I went to the police to ask them to release him because he was not an American spy, but he came from Africa; that's when the man was released. When he was out of prison the man started to ask me to become friends for saving his life, from being killed by the police thinking that he was a spy. I refused saying I was only happy that he was saved. I could not understand how I got the courage to rescue the man from the police at that particular dangerous time. I even got people to come and give him food while he   was in prison at that particular time. The saving of this man was a miracle to me because I was going out for a morning coffee when this strange man approached me

to ask if I was coming from his home. But I could not believe that I saved a man in that manner. The man now is a free person out of my help. The only surprising thing in this real event is that the man was carrying at his back bag a Bible wherever he was going. I still believe that it's God through this Bible who saved him through me—a fellow African man from Malawi.

The political landscape.

"*He who thinks he is leading and has no one following him is only taking a walk.*"

~ Malawian Proverb

In 1964 Malawi gained full independence from British rule and became a republic. With a new constitution in place, Malawi became a single-party state under the presidency of Hastings Banda who was then ousted from power in 1994. Following this action, the first multi-party elections were held with Bakili Muluzi defeating Banda.

The following is an excerpt taken from the discussion on Anne's interest in politics.

Having being successful in business, I was the first woman in Malawi to own a lodge, when there was no such enactment in Malawi laws for women to own such type of business. During the one party rule, the general trends was to suppress the people, and were not encouraged to do businesses for security reasons best known to the then government. It was from this background of exploitation of local Malawians that encouraged fighting for the liberation and empowerment of women in business.

In Malawi there exists a highly regarded and well known woman leader, Anne Fletcher, who at the urging and support of the village chiefs, members of the Catholic Church, family and friends ran for a seat in Parliament. Anne was elected and served as a Member of Parliament representing the Changalume district of Zomba from 1999-2004. While in Parliament Anne was tearing down barriers. Herr strong leadership and entrepreneurial skills led to other important

legal decisions that prohibited civil rights for women. Anne challenged the inequalities of laws within her country.

The women's support network.

"*Unity is strength, division is weakness.*" ~ Swahili Proverb

After serving in Parliament, Anne established this network for the purposes of training women in entrepreneurship and leadership development. It was largely shaped by her leadership and support.

The established programs are devoted to the uplifting of the communities the women represent. The network started with 50 women and has since grown to over 500 active members operating in the eastern region, headquarters in Zomba. My long term goal is to extend the operations of the network to other parts of the country.

The dismal situation for women was reflective of the challenges presented by the greater society. As a woman, Anne faced a problem;

Many people did not want to speak to me directly except through a third party. I was seen as incapable and was constantly underrated and undermined. I did not want my femininity to be a disadvantage. I made sure that I clearly understood before taking action.

Needless to say, she was not discouraged or deterred. Her strong personality and belief in God sustained her and saw her through. Anne goes above and beyond the call of duty to ensure fellow women are getting their own fair share of promotion and advancement through her network.

A monthly newsletter is published highlighting activities as well as accomplishments of the group participants. The following is an excerpt from the June publication of the newsletter titled *American Students Visit Malawi:*

Among the invited guests were 30 visiting students and 3 lecturers namely: Dr. Liz Barber from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, NC A&T SU, Dr. Pat Kelly from Virginia Tech and Dr. Ann Roberts from Radford University in the United States of America. The group came in Malawi on 22nd May 2013 and left the country on Thursday 12th June 2013. The aim of the visit to Malawi was to do some research in different fields according to disciplines among the students. But a particular doctorate degree student Toni Bradsher was assigned to study Anne Fletcher. Anne was chosen by the North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University as an Eminent Woman World Leader in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2011 and she was awarded the honor at the University. Toni Bradsher research theme was Exploring Women leaders in Africa; as a narrative area for leadership skills in African women. During their stay, the team visited a number of project activities under their assistance around Zomba such as St. Paul's Catholic Church on June 9, 2013 which had been constructed with aid from American friends through Anne Fletcher.

The sacred.

"*A united family eats from the same plate.*" ~ Baganda Proverb

When Anne lost her mother in April, 2013 news quickly spread to America. I received an email from the journalist that publishes the Women's Support Network (WOSUNET) newsletter. When I opened the email my heart immediately sunk; I had to hold back the tears and stand in prayer with Anne and her family. I forwarded the email to the faculty that organize

the study abroad program, then I watched the clock waiting for the hour in which I could call Anne—there is a seven hour time difference when we are on daylight saving time. Once the hour struck I called—I had to call and give my condolences as I had met her mother during my first visit to Malawi in 2011. Anne hosted a dinner at her home for us and her mother was sitting on her front porch. Madame Ruth Fletcher was a beautiful woman; with her hair covered it produced a clear view of her beauty. Her skin tone was cocoa brown with a hint of red undertone creating a beautiful glow of her Sri Lankan and Ntchue heritage.

During one of our calls, Anne advised the memorial service was scheduled for June 6, 2013. She briefly explained that 40 days after the death of a family member they have a memorial service releasing their spirit. An explanation of the ceremony follows.

The Father of Thondwe Parish presided over the memorial service. According to the Father, memorial services are an African way of life and traditional norms that the living relatives of the departed spirits pray to God to set them free if they were not walking in his ways as well as keeping his commandments.

The Father of Thondwe Parish further explained, that in the past as a matter of fact, people prayed to their ancestors for rains in times of drought and dry spells. Some prepared traditional beer (Thobwa), inviting people and friends to eat at the deceased home as one way of requesting for peace from the departed friends. He further said when people dream about dead people, this means that there is something one needs to do for them, either by praying for them or do some good work to others may also improve one's nightmare welfare.

Following is a thank you from Anne that was published in her newsletter.

Director's Desk

I would like to sincerely thank all my relations who came for the memorial ceremony of our beloved departed mother, Ruth Fletcher. The late Ruth fought to raise us all up in good and independent life. She taught us how to love, support and understand one another in times of grief, sorrow and happiness. I would also want to thank the Thondwe Parish Priest for sparing his precious time to come and help the family; the Chairman of St. Paul's Church, elders and members for their support to the Fletcher family; all visiting friends from North Carolina, Virginia Tech and Radford University–USA for their company which made the situation simple and easy; the Annie's Lodge staff on-duty during the memorial and farewell party for the friends.

I say thank you all and God bless you.

Summary

Chapter 4 unveiled the exemplar woman leader in Malawi, Anne Mary Fletcher. Her narrative account of her leadership praxis is multilayered embodying her Malawian culture, spiritual grounding, gender, and life experiences. Throughout the time I observed her ways of knowing and being a leader, she revealed how she stood her ground while in the process of tearing down barriers, rising to be a first—the first woman to establish a profitable and growing business and the first woman to serve in politics representing her region. An analysis of the content themes that speak to the social, cultural, political, and entrepreneurial meanings of Anne Fletcher are the focus of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Themes

Chapter 4 unveiled the sole character of my narrative, Anne Fletcher and shares the account of this exemplar leader's life. The evident themes echoing through this narrative embrace Anne Fletcher's life and truth. The truth of who we are is at the core of our being and our spiritual values coupled with our cultural and spiritual understandings that shape our ways of knowing, our ways of being. Anne Fletcher's spiritual stance honors this wisdom. I engaged Dillard and Okpalaoka's (2011) endarkened transnational feminist themes and gleaned from the interviews the salient stories representing these themes.

According to the literature review and paradigm guiding this research, the theme of spirituality, interconnectedness, devotion to service, and willingness to withstand hardship affirms the sacred approach to this compelling narrative inquiry. It is important to note, however, that while these three constructs formed the lenses for my analysis, my research captured Anne's perspectives of her African feminism, spirituality, cultural, entrepreneurial, and political frames of reference.

Anne renders emotional accounts of her journey by sharing stories, beginning with the accounts with strong life influences of her father, mother, and both maternal and fraternal grandparents. Her fascinating journey of tales took us to Malawi, Africa and documents her humble beginnings on her father's rolling farm, to her formative years, educational development, and work experiences. This journey also captures Anne as a wife, mother, and global traveler. On the political road to her quest for women's equality, Anne shared the challenges and triumphs when elected to Parliament, which served as a foundational platform to the birthing of the Women's Support Network to empower women in her community to advocate for equal rights

and issues affecting women and children. Continuing on the journey, our view broadens to Anne's exemplar leadership abilities, all undergirded by her belief in the responsibility we have to family and community. On stops in Lilongwe, Zomba, and Blantyre, we find Anne's entrepreneurial accomplishments, *Annie's Lodges*, and toured her community engagement projects, which both far exceeded naysayers' expectations. Atop the breathtaking view of Mount Mulanje, located in Southern Malawi, our narrative winds towards an ending with the passing of her beloved mother and the home going services at the family's private cemetery located on the family farm in Zomba. This story ends with a phenomenal women leader and the accomplishment of her vision that her story be shared. Throughout the narrative, the common thread of her spirituality, commitment to God and to God's work, and love of family reverberates. The following themes substantiate *herstory.*

Spirituality

Spirituality resides at the core of Anne's being and her life stories. As evidenced in her narrative, her spirituality is the principle that guides her purpose and direction. Wane (2007) research findings proved to be applicable to this narrative in that spirituality is a way of life and is defined by relationships, as recorded and presented in this study—our culture and spirituality influence our lives. Further, spiritual teaching informs our past, present, and future, influencing our ways of knowing and being.

> *My spiritual values tell me that all people are equal, but differ in few things according to* [their] *background. Therefore, I thought that all have rights to be recognized in society. By looking at these areas it helped me to help other people realize their potential in life. In sub-Saharan Africa most women are being sidelined in most of national issues because of their status. These have led most people into depression and loss of identities and are*

not useful in society. In business, leadership and other human understanding make life

change if handled well. Therefore it's not only doing charitable work to people, but

loving them as they are and in the way they were created.

Connection to Community

According to Dillard (2006a), "a spiritual life is first and foremost about commitment to a way of thinking and behaving that honors principles of inter-being and interconnectedness" (p. 77). The *Utu* reciprocity principle looks at the way knowledge and other tangibles and intangibles were reciprocated during the research process. For example, Anne gave me a dress; I gave her some jewelry I thought she would like. She told me about a hard time in her life; I told her about one of mine. Through reciprocity, connectedness was created which "removes the need for empowerment, feelings of separateness or distance, and the need to be in charge" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 180).

Anne has a very special spirit about her where she sees all people as equal; she does not make a difference in the way she treats people; she believes in equality. For example, in Malawi, as in places in America, people sell their goods at the market or on street corners. One day, as I was riding with Anne, she needed to purchase vegetables. We pulled to the side of the road to buy vegetables. There were three women vendors each selling the same. The first thing that caught my attention was the presentation of the fruits and vegetables; they were neatly placed on wood, stacked like a pyramid. They were not just thrown on the ground or lying flat on the board. I thought to myself—what pride and care they take to present their goods to potential customers. All of their goods were fresh and clean. I quickly noted that Anne bought equal amounts of her needs from each woman. When she returned, she explained:

I always buy from each person that is trying to make a living. This is how they make their

living to support their families, so I help by spreading out what I need equally. That way,

each one will have something. No one is left with nothing. You see, these people walk

miles to set up anywhere to sell what they have.

Devotion to Service

In terms of devotion to service, there is central element in leadership known as Ubuntu. Ubuntu, originated in the Xhosa culture and was referred to as "umunthu" by the Chewa, and Umunda by the Yao—Anne's heritage. Ubuntu is translated—I am because we are. This philosophy is indigenous to Africa (Western scholars are starting to show interest) and sits at the core of most traditional African cultures (Ncube, 2010). Ubuntu describes an African understanding of being within their community. Under African eyes, an I/We relationship emphasizes respect for the self and others; it implies a unification of the self with the environment. There is no concept of individuality, as in the US; the concept is all inclusive with the culture and the people. The cultural experiences of transnational Black women leaders often results in stereotypes—unwed mothers, big bodies—without a full examination of our cultural experiences. However, there exists a philosophy from the African perspective that has caught the interest of Western scholars. It is known as the Ubuntu philosophy. Central to an understanding of the African drive toward community is a saying that can be found in one form or another in almost every ethnic/cultural group on the African continent, which eloquently expresses the sense of interdependence between the community and the individual: *I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am*. The Ubuntu philosophy respects particularity, individuality, and historicity, and implies a sense of open-endedness, contingency and flux (Louw, 1994).

Culturally speaking, Anne adds:

> *I understand the values of people's beliefs. Cultural values bring about identity of people in a country. I personally helped the people in my area about how to conduct their cultural activities so that each and every individual was not infringed by such belief, but to learn moral values about their own culture. Instead they should love one another and work hard for their own benefit by providing them the necessary skills; such as using local materials in producing goods and services as an economic activity.*

Anne described some of the inequalities women face in her country. For example, they cannot sign loans nor have power unless married to a man. From her experiences, she stated: "*I had no fear; I don't know why. I could go anywhere and sign for anybody to be what I am today.*"

Anne's multiple worlds of leadership praxis engage her in the community and through politics she made a difference for women and still is. She travels around the country supporting the efforts of women through her Women's Support Network she formed while a Member of Parliament. Anne continues to organize women to influence Parliament continuing the fight for women's rights and equality.

Anne has an unwavering commitment to improve the plight of Malawi's poor, and she embodies courage and conscientiousness towards mentoring women in the challenges facing women who have been traditionally voiceless. As a popular leader, highly respected African officials, chiefs, and politicians rely on her knowledge, power, commitment, and devotion to her community and are encouraging Anne to run for a seat in Parliament again. Currently, Anne intends to focus on her family, expanding her lodges, and continue community development project.

Willingness to Withstand Hardship

> *I met great resistance from my men counterparts against this fight, but eventually it came*
>
> *to pass and now women in Malawi are doing businesses of their choice. Another reason*
>
> *of going to Parliament was to help people of my area with water and infrastructure.*

Summary

The content themes gleaned from the narrative account of Anne Fletcher through an endarkened transnational feminist frame that spoke to the social, cultural, political, and entrepreneurial meanings of Anne Fletcher were the focus of Chapter 5. This is a clear manifestation of Anne's love and zeal for her leadership qualities grounded in the discussions on her spirituality, her inter-being and connection to community, and devotion to service, a fact that cannot go without acknowledgement. She has sown sacrificial seeds that have contributed to the establishment and growth of her family, her community, and her country. The final chapter includes the discussion of the findings, implications for leadership, practice, policy, and future research.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion of the Findings

This chapter provides a summary of my study's findings and includes implications for leadership, practice, policy, and future research. Anne Fletcher asked me to tell her story and I situated myself in her world documenting her life story and journey as an unsung woman leader in Africa. Anne resides in the landlocked area in Africa known as Malawi, formerly known as Nyasaland during the colonial period. Although African women's history emerged in the 1970's, still little is known or documented. Further, current theories of leadership authored by scholars who are White and male do not account for different cultural context or travel globally. This view ignored the significant role of African women in economic and political activities. Anne is one such African woman who has played a dynamic role in Malawi's political development since post-colonial times.

The colonialism phenomenon is in many cases the result of the Western world's past involvement in Africa and includes remnants and extensions of the disruption it caused. The colonial era was most definitely a time of privileging men over women, and implied white men, of course. The mid-20th century was also a time when men were esteemed higher than women. We know the voices of women are just as important as their male counterparts. There are women being recognized more frequently, now, who were civil rights leaders during the period of time when any report of women was focused on the lives of women who were middle-class and predominantly white, but attempted to generalize all women. This study is an example of research situated within the endarkened transnational feminist paradigm, "whose notion of the sacred and the spiritual in research disrupts the Western tendency to bifurcate the mind and the spirit" (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011, p. 148). The use of the endarkened transnational feminist

paradigm was a clear choice for me in conceptualizing and completing this work. I posit, in agreement with Dillard & Okpalaoka (2011), to recognize a discussion that is still missing in this study is multiple epistemologies and theories of research (p. 148). I opted out of the Eurocentric concepts and paradigms that continue to shape one-dimensional examinations of Africa and African women and to engage in an alternative cultural discourse in keeping with the spirit of an African ethos.

The endarkened transnational feminist theory encompasses knowledge through lived experiences and through global interactions. Indigenous knowledge is already part of the global dialogue with regard to the production of knowledge and ethics. This knowledge base has increased the need to internationalize postcolonial indigenous research epistemologies and methodologies. In the context of research, it takes a poststructural view of the world with the aim of deconstructing truths, values, beliefs, and norms that have been presented as natural and normal and presenting them, through the Western lens, as socially and politically constructed. Chilisa (2012) posits that "postcolonial discourses also look at the resistance to the colonizing methodologies by researchers who chart other ways of doing research that are culturally sensitive to those colonized by the Euro-Western research tradition" (p. 49).

Further, opposed to the existing paradigms that do not include African and African American women leaders, our epistemologies, and ways of being, the endarkened transnational feminist paradigm encompasses the cultural and spiritual understandings and histories of Anne Fletcher and I. As a self-identified African American woman researcher, I was chosen by Anne Fletcher, an African woman leader, to be informed by her African theories and experiences. This move away from the Western epistemological discourse and the dominant worldview, allowed me to approach my research with the sacred serving as the means of accomplishing it. My

research honored the wisdom and spirituality brought on by the necessity of using a different discourse and epistemology.

My research focused on one individual, Anne Fletcher as she shared her perspective on leadership praxis developed from her formative years through her service as a Member of Parliament. Her account gives voice to an individual seldom represented in research as to how leadership is understood and practiced in Africa, specifically Malawi. Given the limited representation of women leaders on the continent of Africa, this study constitutes a compelling addition to the body of scholarship in indigenous African leadership.

My study posed the following research questions: How does the participant's story illustrate her development as a woman entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political leader in Malawi? How might the participant's account inform leadership development emerging from Africa?

My research concludes that Anne uses one of the most popular approaches to leadership, transformational leadership. I gleaned from the interviews, as well as observed, that Anne is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, while motivating others, satisfying the needs of her family and community, and treating all who encounter her, as full human beings.

The findings from this investigation further inform an endarkened transnational feminist paradigm in that it strengthens a sacred responsibility to bring forward Anne Fletcher's story. A narrative inquiry methodology (Chase, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was employed to create an interpretive framework with which to analyze interviews, stories, and field notes along the intersection of gender, class, and race. This yielded rich detailed stories of Anne's personal, educational, social, and economic trajectories.

One could make some basic assumptions about Africa; for example, the climate and temperature is very hot, whereas Malawi has a very mild climate; the 70 degree temperature was very comfortable, as it was the cool/dry season. The weather would be comparable to our spring season in NC. The assumption that native animals are running wild throughout the villages and communities is farther from the truth. Guided safaris are available to remote locations to encounter the animals. On our safari trip N.C. A&T students had the best tour guide. We came in close contact with the hippo's and elephants. The zebras were quite shy; it was as if they knew you wanted that perfect picture, and would quickly turn to pose for a rear shot instead. Our guide landed the perfect location to get an up close and personal shot with an elephant. The picture looks almost as if the elephant was just above my head. The guide also gave us a wealth of knowledge on the animals, including the *"Big Five"* in Africa representing the five most difficult animals in Africa to hunt on foot, the degree of danger involved in the hunt, rather than their size. The *"Big Five"* refers to the African Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard, lion, and rhinoceros. The talented and master wood carvers make beautiful paintings and wood carvings representing each animal. Malawi is one country where all the members of the *"Big Five"* can be found.

Conclusions Addressing the Research Questions

How does the participant ground her praxis of leadership?

Emerging from Anne's narrative account is her cultural and spiritual groundings, coupled with her parental upbringing. Major competencies ground Anne's leadership including creating a shared vision, developing and empowering women through her Women's Support Network group.

Anne's recognized talents in the development of African women in business is similar to the determination shown by Adja Dior Diop as she made her way in the entrepreneurial trade sector and created the African Network for the Support of Women's Entrepreneurship. Anne and Adja share common strength of determination. Their limited education did not pose a barrier to either of them. Other similarities that they share include the development of women's support networks and creating a sense of solidarity among all women. They both support women via seminars, and travel around the country to meet women and tell them about their organizations.

What led the participant to become an entrepreneur?

To begin with, Africa is a rich continent, but its people are poor for several reasons. Africa would have been very rich as other European countries had it been the resources from these countries were properly used. In this regard, most of the resources in Africa are being channeled to Europe in one way or the other. Mineral resources have been taken from Africa in the name of helping the poor countries such as Malawi, therefore, its people are not able to understand their potential in developing themselves or to be empowered economically. It was from this background that led me to venture into industrial thinking as a woman. It was a new story to men when I started my small business in Lilongwe. However, after realizing my potential in business, I realized that I could do more if engaged in a hospitality business—like a lodge. After I succeeded in establishing the lodge, the drought for women to be only housewives was eradicated. Women were economically empowered and followed suit by setting a pace in poverty reduction amongst women in Malawi.

What prompted the participant to run for a seat in Parliament?

Due to Anne's business success, there were no laws protecting women's rights to develop and own businesses. Anne had experience the independence which could bring many women out of poverty and the dependence on their husbands. Anne's perspective

> *I thought of joining politics to achieve the following goals; to help to disseminate information to people about their rights in doing any business that can empower them economically and help their families at household level and to fight for women's rights in Malawi to bridge the gender gap between men and women.*

How did the participant lead in Parliament?

> *While in Parliament, men took the lead in most of the proceedings, leaving women to accept everything. I helped a lot to make my fellow women in Parliament to think big in terms of getting things right for fellow women. One of the things I did was to propose a bill that allowed women to do business of any kind. Through cultural beliefs, men took women as housewives and not leaders at all. The issues of violence against women took me to countries like Sweden, South Africa, and other African countries to fight for 50-50 women in Parliament. That again took me to Sweden to attend courses on Risk and Conflict Management to enhance my understandings in women's rights issues. In this regard, I also empowered my local leaders to understand the issues of their rights and responsibilities in their families and wards. Lastly, to voice out for the voiceless.*

What cultural and spiritual values grounded the participant's practice of leadership, whether as leader of family, country, business, or philanthropic endeavors?

Anne recounted her cultural and spiritual values that ground her practice of leadership in her family, country, business, and philanthropic endeavors:

Culturally I understand the values of people's beliefs. Cultural values bring about identity of people in a country. I personally helped the people in my area about how to conduct their cultural activities so that each and every individual was not infringed by such belief, but to learn moral values about their own culture. Instead they should love one another and work hard for their own benefit by providing them the necessary skills, such as using local materials in producing goods and services as an economic activity.

What competencies does the participant view as essential for women leaders in Africa?

As a woman leader Anne faced many challenges, she expressed:

There are numerous challenges that I am facing as a woman entrepreneur in the sub-Saharan African region. The first is the scarcity of resources to reach out to many people in Malawi as well as in Africa. I general[ly] share the same economic women empowerment. Sub-Saharan Africa has the potential to prosper in development, economic and natural resources, but the resources management is a big challenge. Capacity building is one of the areas that people and women in Africa may need most for them to understand the whole framework of women empowerment and self-reliance. Leadership skills, education for all women, making women to be leaders in their respective professional background will make Africa a rich continent and be able to use its resources well. Most of African women are helping to develop Europe and Asia simply because they were trained in those countries and do not want them to leave and come back to their motherland, Africa. Africa is waiting for women empowerment in all areas of human development.

The findings consisted of Anne's account of leadership praxis developed while growing up in her village. Her parents' strong influence and her spiritual grounding are characteristics embedded in her development as a leader.

You can see throughout Anne's narrative that she is motivated by what she believes, and what she believes springs from what she does and her experiences. "*What people do is motivated by what they believe, and what they believe springs from what they do and experience. So then, belief and action in African traditional society cannot be separated: they belong to a single whole.*"

How would my knowledge as a woman leader in Malawi inform and be put into practice to support other indigenous people?

> *Firstly, getting support from both local leaders, stakeholders in development, human rights organizations, and other institutions in Malawi to support my initiative to promote women economically is essential. Advocating for minority groups by educating them on their role as minority groups in Malawi as well as in Africa. Bridging the gap between leaders and their subjects is necessary and that will promote development. To achieve this task I setup Women's Support Network as an organization to put women together to work and achieve their economic freedom. Sub-Saharan Africa needs such networking initiatives for them to be empowered.*

Anne has been to America; she shared these words of her observation:

> *I see America, in the future, as a world on its own with different types of people. So more understanding of people and a lot of education is needed. Even in school children must be told . . . a topic that covers different ethnic groups to understand different people. There must be a subject whereby children must know who they are mixing with in this*

country because they are all mixed. And at the end of the day, they marry each other; they are mixed; people are mixed. You know, people must travel; they must be able to understand others; to be good leaders and in order to cover the rich and the poor; in order to position across the country to suit everybody else. Leaders struggle and they come from different cultures. And your cultural group tells you what's right or wrong.

Implications for Leadership

Anne, a woman with power in a leadership position is making great strides in building the bridge for future women. Leadership from women of color within the global community is scarce; however, as international relationships extend from the US, leaders are realizing that sustainable economic development depends on women. Male-dominated leadership includes biases in distribution and control of resources which continues the path of indigenous people vulnerability to economic poverty and marginalization.

- Demand for insights about women and leadership as it continues to increase.

- Advocate for women and children by educating women on their role to establish their own businesses and feeding and educating the children in Malawi as well as in Africa

Implications for Practice

This study's findings presented implications for practice including the following:

- Develop a socio-cultural consciousness of your own life.

- View differences from an affirming perspective to understand differences as strengths. This may lead you to be more reflective about your own biases and ways of knowing.

- History is important and impacts our lives and world views. It is important to acknowledge the past even as you carry on into the future.

- Teach students to see wisdom in the importance of naming their reality, particularly to race work.

- Learn to honor the wisdom inherent in all the experiences that learners bring to the classroom. The relationship-building necessary for critical conversations can then be achieved.

Implications for Policy

- President Obama made permanent the Office of Global Women's Issues. Further research required to verify that women's rights are part of our foreign policy and validate the impact and influence, if any.

  On the 44th President of the United States, Barack H. Obama, she shared:

  I'm quite fascinated with Obama. Why? Obama is an African born as an African man, but he is American because of the way he was brought up by his mum. God did it that way for a reason.

  And all the way from Africa because America is mode of African people and different European groups who actually came to live here—Irish, English, German, and African people. So really when you look at America it is a world on its own; it covers all the continents. America is all about different people. America is all different ethnic groups. The leader must have a heart for the people and must understand the people, different types of people. The leaders should be from different ethnic groups. To make a government, you should have a mixture of all and different people playing a part in the different positions. For children to be good leaders and able to accept others, they should know their beginning. They should know about religion to be able to accept others.

Implications for Future Research

  This study will:

- Help scholars of color to construct and nurture paradigms that encompass and embody our cultural and spiritual understandings and histories and that shape our epistemologies and ways of being (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011, p. 147).

- Add to the knowledge about the leadership of people and women of color within our global community.

- Help advance the next generation of research related to women's leadership and leadership development for girls and women.

- Offer new theories on women's leadership. There are many leadership frameworks, models, and theories; there is clearly a gap in the literature in terms of individual and organizational leadership theories that focus on women.

- Offer further studies for a comparative analysis of leadership styles of pre-colonial and post-colonial African leaders.

Summary of the Findings

  The African world is still a very male dominated world. It is the men who first embrace the colonial practices, with the women either strongly opposing the infiltration of colonial ideals, or meekly following their men and internalizing their opposition. The discussion addressing the related research questions within the backdrop of Black Feminism, via class struggle, has been an integral part of feminism. This is an integral part of the ideological inheritance of which an endarkened transnational feminist theory is partially composed. The endarkened theory embraced the struggle of African and African American women, as well as the uniqueness of Anne Fletcher and her ascent to leadership despite the odds.

Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (2005) posit that there is evidence that social science research "needs emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one color" (p. 212). The endarkened transnational feminist paradigm involves spiritually which is needed in social science research. Spiritually was necessary during this research process and was a main component of the endarkened theory. The process meant respecting the communal forms of living that are not Western and created space for this inquiry based on relational realities and forms of knowing that was predominant among the non-Western other/s still being colonized. Whereas the Pan- African ideology that former leaders such as Nkrumah, Fanon, and others embraced lacked essential African centered perspective by its exclusion of the female gender role in African leadership, it did not deviate sufficiently from the European thought that has informed knowledge and discussions on women's leadership in Africa.

Studies of women in leadership continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions. The exclusion of women and the lack of recognition of the role of the female gender in African leadership ideology do not differ much from the European thought. The problem is that often Euro-Western feminisms have used their experiences as the norm and basis against which all other non-Western women's life experiences are judged.

It seems correct to conclude that women and Anne Fletcher of Malawi, Africa, can be found in leadership positions and face many constraints to their ascent into any leadership position. However, adding to the body of knowledge on African leadership and women's leadership will help close the existing gap in the literature.

In order to provide the reader with a narrative account about a woman leader from Africa and the emerging themes that illustrate elements of the conceptual framework, I employed

endarkened transnational feminist paradigm in this narrative approach. I aimed at celebrating

and learning from the strength and resilience of one woman leader in the face of adversities and

challenges to her authority as a leader rather than concentrating on inadequacy or insufficiency

of her experience. "Focusing on women who occupy such leadership positions should not cause

us to forget that women have always exercised leadership, particularly in families and throughout

communities" (Carli & Eagly, 2001, p. 629).

My Development and Transformation

 "The darkest thing about Africa has always been our ignorance of it." ~ George Kimble, Africa

Coming from a culture which prioritizes individuality, Malawi's communal mentality

was a pleasant shift in my way of thinking. It is true that events that have occurred during my

time there have help bind me to the country.

The initial preparation for the trip was as if we were going to save this special part of the

world. The Malawians do not need to be saved. My Western perception of lack, in terms of

basic needs, food and shelter, was evident in some areas. However, the greatest thing is that

Malawians are content, meaning that they keep their desires and expectations in check; whereas,

as an American a hard thing to teach is being content. This principle is not being grasped by the

younger generation, or our culture. For example, the schools we visited in Malawi and

specifically, the Demonstration Primary School which NC A&T has adopted to assist with

teaching, projects, and supplies on our yearly study-abroad opportunity, has 100+ students in one

classroom. The classrooms are not all equipped with desk, books, pen, paper, and needless to

say, computers. What the students bring with them is a persistence to learn. These students have

great minds and abilities. They all speak different cultural languages, but some understand

English. With this constraint on these students, they are still expected to take exams in English,

so they learn the best way they can. The teacher's use books and materials that have been collected through the years of the study-abroad students and faculty, but this does not reach the masses. The Malawians are very kind, patient, and loving people. I was almost immediately magnetized to that warm spirit. They are hard workers and travel for miles to sale their goods—paintings, wood carvings, and jewelry. The vendors meticulously display their goods to the point you want to purchase every piece.

Trying new things, like nsima, the native dish allowed me to experience more of the beautiful flavors and textures that life has to offer. Going to Africa and trying something different has allowed me to experience new music, different types of food, words in a new language, and a different approach to time to name a few.

I thought I would have a problem with communicating in the Chichewa language, but the majority of Malawians encountered, speak English as well. I packed everything but the kitchen sink for my first trip to Malawi. The majority I left behind bring back my treasures.

So What?

> *"Pray, Work Hard, There is a way God wants us to live."* ~ Anne Fletcher

Anne does not compromise on her principles. She has consistently been recognized for her sacrifice on behalf of women. Throughout her life, Anne continues to work to gain civil rights for women of Malawi; which they so desperately seek. She represents the best ideals of a phenomenal woman leader.

Over the course of this project, I began to see more clearly the nature and character of an endarkened transnational feminist view that Anne and I share as we engaged with each other. I have come to know that the people of Malawi take comfort in their faith and each other. I introduced each section with an accompanying proverb that formed a communication system that

preserves and transmits the accumulated cultural and spiritual values of the people. Each proverb had depth and meaning and applied to Anne's stories that followed each one.

Over the course of her life, Anne overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The values she lives for—selfless service and sacrifice, putting her family, the people, and her country above her own. She is a transformer, a fighter, advocate, and speaker for justice. She represents a perfect fusion of a great leader with a strong foundation and strong faith. She is an effective leader. Her commitment to humanity is an inspiration to her own country. During her years in office, Anne set a course to improve access to education and built the infrastructure. She has devoted herself to her lodges, family, community, and church which have become a vital thread in keeping with who she is. Her philanthropic deeds include feeding the hungry, supporting small business, donating food to orphanages, donating clothing to orphanages, and employing her family and community.

Anne Fletcher's voice is the next one the world will hear.

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