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VOICES OF THE EARTH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN IN THE NATION OF GODS AND EARTHS

by

AHMON J. KEILER-BRADSHAW

Under the Direction of Dr. Cora Presley

ABSTRACT

Historically, Black women have often been excluded from the discussion on leadership. This thesis argues that the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths are consistent with the concepts of both Africana womanism and Black women's leadership. However, through an analysis of Earth's oral testimonies, this research concludes that though racism is the most pervading obstacle faced by Black people, The Nation of Gods and Earths must address and

reevaluate the sexism that exists within its doctrine and practice. By doing so, the group can begin to recognize Black women's leadership and utilize it more effectively. The Nation should collectively transform its gender inequality, in a way that does not compromise its culture, as a means of successfully sustaining and strengthening itself and the communities of which it serves.

INDEX WORDS: Nation of Gods and Earths, Five Percenters, Leadership, Leadership roles, Black women's leadership, Africana Womanism, Womanism.

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by

AHMON J. KEILER-BRADSHAW

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2010

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2010

VOICES OF THE EARTH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN IN THE NATION OF GODS AND EARTHS

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May 2010

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Original Woman of the earth.

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First, I wish to acknowledge the One Source of which my beloved elder, Baba Medaho-chi Zannu, called "The Ultimate Reality." I wish to acknowledge the forces of nature, which were born from that Source. I acknowledge my Ancestors, parents, and all my living family and friends. I acknowledge all the elders who have provided me guidance. I wish to acknowledge the Earths who participated in this research. I would like to acknowledge the African-American Studies Department at Georgia State University. I would like to give special thanks to my committee members, Dr. Davis, Dr. Maparyan, and Dr. Presley, for all of their guidance, patience, and constructive criticism. Finally, I must thank Dr. Denise Davison for all of her positive affirmations, expertise on Black women's leadership, and friendship.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There exists a group that has influenced the culture and ideologies of young Black and Brown people around the world. Much of the semantics and attitudes found within hip-hop culture came directly from this organization. This group is known as the Nation of Gods and Earths.[1]

This group, whose teachings are largely based in the ideology of the Nation of Islam, has been considered both controversial and blasphemous because Father Allah, the founder of the Nation of Gods and Earths, taught underprivileged Black youth in Harlem that their nature was divine.[2] He taught that every Black man is God, and therefore supreme to all in existence. He taught that the sun symbolized God, which is the center of the solar system. The Black woman is symbolized by the earth, which gives birth to life and revolves around the sun. Father Allah's aim was to uplift his students in a time when Black people were considered inferior.[3]

Historically, there has been a tendency for scholars and authors who study Black liberation movements to ignore, belittle, or leave out the positions and perspectives of its women members due to pervading male dominance.[4] Sadly, like most male dominated

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[1] Wakeel Allah**.** *In the Name of Allah* (Atlanta, GA: A-Team Publishing, 2007), 3.
[2] Ibid, 137-40.
[3] Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Five Percenters* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2007), xi-xv.

[4] Maulana Karenga. *Introduction to Black Studies (3rd ed.)*(Los Angeles, CA: Sankore Press, 2002), 49-54.

scholarship and literature, writings on Black women in The Nation of Gods and Earths have followed this same tendency of exclusion and/or de-emphasis.[5] The particular perspectives and roles of the women in this Nation have mainly been unrevealed. This void in the literature gives an unfair outlook and perspective on the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths, who were and are instrumental in the group and its effect on the Black community.[6] This work will focus on the leadership roles of these women from their perspective. The study aims to help give voice and agency to a segment of the population that has not enjoyed equal recognition. It will further the scholarship on Black women's leadership, which is essential in understanding and progressing the Black community as a whole.

Chapter 1 describes the purpose of this study, which was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths.The background of the problem explains the history of The Nation of Gods and Earths and the research, or lack there of on the women in this group. Chapter 1 also explains the significance of exploring this topic, which is to add to the body of literature on Black women's leadership, the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths, and to give needed attention to an important part of the Black community. The nature of the study, which is qualitative, will be discussed. An introduction to the conceptual framework is also included in this chapter. The chapter ends with a list of definitions important to the study, the assumptions of the researcher, and the scope, limitation, and delimitations of the study. A summary of the chapter has also been included.

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[5] Knight, 215.
[6] Eboni Joy Asiatic. "Letters From The Staff of The 14th Degree and Beyond." *The 14th Degree and Beyond, September*, 2008, 8-10.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Because of racism and male dominance in academia and society in general, there has been a tendency for writers who document Black organizations to ignore or deemphasize the leadership roles of Black women. Due to this exclusion, it becomes necessary for the researcher to describe what these roles were.[7]

The leadership roles of the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths, which emphasize the communal and holistic progression in leading people, are also overlooked in the majority of the literature.[8] Because the Nation of Gods and Earths is male-centered, the story of the Earths is rarely heard. In order to properly assess the leadership roles of these women, research was conducted in order to help give them voice and agency in both the women's lives and the academic world.

BACKGROUND OF THE NATION OF GODS AND EARTHS

The History of the Nation of Islam

In order to understand the history of the Nation of Gods and Earths, it is incumbent upon the researcher to examine the history of its predecessor, The Nation of Islam. If it were not for the Nation of Islam, the Nation of Gods and Earths would be nonexistent as Father Allah, its founder, maintained much of the basic tenants of the Nation of Islam while forming his own nation. It must be stated that much of the literature on the Nation of Is-

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[7] Karenga, 49-50.

[8] Beloved Allah**,** "The Greatest Story Never Told*,*" Glinenation.com, http://glinenationwear.com/nation_of_gods_and_earths_Allahs_history.htm (accessed October 20, 2008).

lam is male centered, as the group is patriarchical in nature.[9] The purpose of this section is to reveal the beginnings of the Nation of Islam, its belief system, and its role in the creation of the Nation of Gods and Earths.

The beginnings of the Nation of Islam date back to 1930. This was the first year of the Great Depression, which was a time of hardship and despair for Americans in general, and Black people in particular.[10] Black communities around America were suffering. According to Beloved Allah, in some cities the infant mortality rate was twice as much as the white infant mortality rate. The Black Death rate often exceeded the white birth rate. Homelessness, disease, and several other negative factors plagued the Black community.[11]

During this very challenging time, the founder of the Nation of Islam surfaced in Detroit, Michigan, according to Nation of Islam teachings.[12] His name was Master Farad Muhammad. Though it has been suggested by some writers that Farad Muhammad may not have existed, for the purposes of this discussion, Farad Muhammad is treated as an actual historical personage as his existence is the cornerstone of Nation of Islam cosmology.[13] The date was July 4th, 1930, which is ironically the day that America celebrates its independence from British rule. This was the first time that Master Farad Muhammad was said to publicly announce the independence of the Black race. Farad Muhammad was known as a peddler of items in the poor Black communities in Detroit. He was said to be

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[9] Knight, 215.
[10] Wakeel Allah, 25.
[11] Beloved Allah, 1.
[12] Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Black Man* (Atlanta, GA: MEMPS Publishing, 1964), xiv.
[13] Allah Jihad, *The Immortal Birth* (Southhampton County,VA: UBU Com., 2007), 88.

very light skinned. In fact, it would later be revealed that Farad Muhammad was indeed of mixed heritage.[14]

According to the documented history, Muhammad began spreading his message of liberation theology by going door to door in Detroit, Michigan, posing as a peddler of eastern merchandise. He taught his customers that the bible was used to oppress Black people. He taught that Black people were Muslims and that their true religion was Islam.[15] He also taught that white people were the natural enemies of Black people. These teachings began to attract Black people who felt subjugated by the white supremist society. Farad Muhammad began meeting with Black people in their living rooms, basements, and anywhere he could get his message across. He increasingly encouraged Blacks to reject the white man's Christianity, as it was this religion, which mentally enslaved Black people. According to the literature, Farad Muhammad taught that Armageddon, the biblical term for the last battle on Earth, was to occur.[16] The battle was to be the white race against the Black race. Embracing Islam, according to Muhammad, was the only way in which Blacks could triumph in this final battle.

Of the reported hundreds of people who followed Master Farad Muhammad, one man surfaced who would later become known as "The Messenger of Allah." This man was once known as Elijah Poole. Master Farad Muhammad later gave him the name Elijah Muhammad. While several Black people in Detroit knew Farad Muhammad as "The

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[14]Muhammad, 23.

[15] Allah Noor, *The Supreme Understanding* (Lincoln, NE: Writers Club Press, 2002), 57-8.

[16] Elijah Muhammad. *The Fall of America.* (Newport, VA: The National Newport News and Commentator, 1973), 18-9.

Prophet,"Elijah Muhammad would insist that Farad Muhammad was actually "The All-Wise and Living- God."[17]

Elijah Muhammad, whose father was a Baptist preacher,was born in 1897 in Sandersville, Georgia. Elijah encountered severe racism all his life, being from a poor southern town in Georgia. Elijah Muhammad was forced to quit school at a very young age in order to help his family financially.[18] As he came of age in segregated Georgia, he married a woman named Clara Evans who eventually bore him eight children. In order to obtain a better life for his family, he eventually moved to Detroit Michigan in 1923. Muhammad worked for several companies for many years, soon realizing that Northern racism was just as alive as southern racism. When the Great Depression hit Detroit, Elijah Muhammad and his family were strongly affected. Muhammad lost his job and was unable to find work. It was at this time that his brother, Charlie Poole, introduced him to a man who would change his life forever. This man was known as Master Farad Muhammad.

Elijah began attending Master Farad Muhammad's lectures. Elijah Muhammad was very impressed by the level of insight and intelligence displayed by Farad Muhammad. Remembering the biblical verses taught to him by his father at an early age, Elijah was convinced that Master Farad Muhammad was the coming of "The One" that the world had been waiting.[19] Elijah Muhammad later claimed that Master Farad

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[17] Ibid, 38-9.
[18] Wakeel Allah, 38.
[19] Muhammad.

Muhammad was both the Christ returned as taught by the bible and the Mahdi, a savior figure found in Islamic teachings.[20]

Farad Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad became extremely close. Farad Muhammad disclosed secrets to Elijah that he shared with nobody else. He and Farad Muhammad co-authored a manual called *The Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam.*[21] This manual was in question and answer format. This manual is still used today by both The Nation of Islam and The Nation of Gods and Earths. The manual has been known as "The Lessons" since its disclosure. They are core to both of the previous organizations mentioned. The lessons contain both exoteric and esoteric teachings designed to liberate the minds of Black people.[22] Among these teachings are the ideas that the Black man is divine by nature and the white man is the devil by nature. The Lessons also gave information on the different measurements of the Earth, the weight of the Earth, the number of Black people on the planet, and other scientific figures, which were to give Black people an accurate perception of their place in the world. Farad Muhammad taught that Black people were of the Tribe of Shabazz, which was the original Black nation of the planet.[23]

The two Muhammads began to see membership of the Nation of Islam grow in a rapid manner, and they decided to add more structure to their organization. They established "Temples of Islam" and began opening schools called "Universities of Islam." These independent Black institutions existed at a time when most Blacks had little ownership of any significant property. Within the Temple of Islam, there existed two units that would

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[20] Ibid, 31.
[21] Wakeel Allah, 51.
[22] Ibid, 51-2.
[23] Muhmmad, 11.

focus on the gender roles in the group. The group that was exclusively for the men was called "The Fruit of Islam." The group that was exclusively for the women was called "The Muslim Girls Training Class (MGT)."[24] Because of the focus of this thesis on women, the later unit will be briefly touched upon. The MGT instructed women on how to cook, clean, raise family, and "be civilized" at home and abroad. Women were not encouraged to be leaders in any way other than in domestic affairs.

Farad and Elijah began traveling, setting up Temples of Islam in Chicago, Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. All three of the temples thrived. The police began harassing the organization, placing Farad Muhammad in jail on several occasions due to trumped up charges. The police found Farad to be a threat because he was encouraging self-reliance amongst Black people. Despite the harassing actions of the police department, the Nation of Islam remained successful. By 1934, The Nation of Islam claimed to have over 25,000 members.[25]

It took about three years for Farad Muhammad to create a group that was functioning well enough for him to step back almost completely from active leadership. According to the literature, Farad began preparing The Nation of Islam for life without him. In June of 1934, Master Farad Muhammad totally disappeared from Detroit, never to resurface in America again. His disappearance remains a mystery to this day.[26]

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[24] Five Percent Homepage, (n.d.) "Supreme Mathematics", Sunsite.edu, http://sunsite.unc.edu.nge (accessed October 15, 2008)

[25] Wakeel Allah, 54.
[26] Ibid, 55-6.

Things became increasingly difficult for Elijah Muhammad once Master Farad Muhammad departed. He was forced to relocate to the Temple in Chicago due to threats on his life by outsiders and those of the group that began to resent Elijah Muhammad. Though faced with constant danger, Muhammad immediately returned to spreading his message of Black liberation across America. In the next couple of years Elijah Muhammad came in contact with an imprisoned convict who would come to be known by the world as Malcolm X. Before encountering the teachings of Muhammad, Malcolm X was known as Malcolm Little. At the time, Malcolm X was serving a sentence for robbery. While Malcolm was incarcerated, his brother began sending Malcolm letters that told him of Elijah Muhammad's teachings. The letters encouraged Malcolm to give up cigarettes and pork, which the Muslims taught was poison. Malcolm's brother, Philbert, had claimed that he found the true religion of the Black man. Malcolm X began incorporating the teachings of the Nation of Islam into his daily prison life. He became disciplined and took responsibility for his own education by constantly reading and studying.[27] In August of 1952, he was finally released from prison and decided to move to Detroit to be near his family and the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X was so dedicated and devoted in his membership to the Nation of Islam that he was promoted to assistant minister of Temple #1 within one year of his prison release. Malcolm X began spending the majority of his time recruiting members from the Black community in Detroit.[28]

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[27] Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, NY: Ballatine Books, 1964).

[28] Beloved Allah, 1.

Elijah Muhammad was so impressed by Malcolm's loyalty and work ethic that he assigned Malcolm X to establish Temples all along the east coast. Malcolm X had established at least five temples in different cities by the year 1954. In June of the same year, Elijah Muhammad appointed Malcolm X as minister of Temple #7 in Harlem, New York. The membership began to grow amongst the Muslims. Malcolm X was very charismatic in speaking to Harlem's Black population, often successfully challenging the racism of police and other government officials. It was this expression of strength that drew people of Harlem like Dora Smith and her husband Clarence Smith, eventually known as Father Allah.[29]

The History of Father Allah and The Nation of Gods and Earths.

Father Allah, the founder of the Nation of Gods and Earths, was born as Clarence Smith on February 22, 1928 in Danville, Virginia. He experienced all the racial prejudice indicative of a small southern town in the 1930's and 1940's. He and his family had several incidents with racist whites in the segregated south. The Smith family decided to move to Harlem, New York due to racial incidents and a need for more financial security.[30] In Harlem, Clarence Smith took on several odd jobs from selling fruit to shining shoes. By 1946 and Clarence Smith was becoming known in the pool halls as a "pool shark." During his teenage years, Smith developed a love of gambling, which would become a life long habit. Smith had two children by 1951. It was not until he met his wife, Dora Smith, that he settled down and produced four more children.[31]

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[29] Beloved Allah, 1.
[30] Ibid, 2.
[31] Ibid, 3.

Clarence Smith joined the armed service in October of 1952, during the Korean War. Smith was known as a very heroic soldier who put his life on the line in battle several times. He received several medals for his acts of bravery in the war. Once he returned to America, he completed his time in the army, which ended in 1960.[32]

Returning to Harlem, Clarence Smith immediately became aware of important changes that had taken place during his time in the army. His wife, Dora Smith had joined Temple #7 and declared herself a Muslim. This temple was led by Malcolm X, the spokesperson for the Nation of Islam at the time. Smith's wife invited him to service at the temple. Clarence Smith was impressed by the discipline and military-like presence of the Nation of Islam. The captivating speaking of Malcolm X further impressed him. Clarence Smith was fascinated by the teachings of the Nation of Islam, which emphasized that the Black man was divine and the white man was the devil. He was also impressed with the history of the Nation of Islam and its devotion to Black people. [33]

Malcolm X was so eloquent in describing the plight of Black people and the need for practical solutions to Black problems, that Clarence Smith felt compelled to join the Nation of Islam. While attending classes, Smith learned the rules of Islam according to Elijah Muhammad. He learned of the separation philosophy developed by the group. The Nation of Islam taught that Black people must separate from whites, whose ingrained racism made them impossible to live with. He learned of the gambling, drug, and diet restrictions of the Muslims. He also learned of the theology of the Muslims, which professed that Master Farad Muhammad was God and Elijah Muhammad was the messenger

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[32] Wakeel Allah, 67.
[33] Knight, 34.

of God.[34] After going through the proper initiation steps, Clarence Smith was accepted into the Nation of Islam. In the Nation of Islam, one is given an "X" to replace one's last name. This was done because The Nation of Islam rejected the European names that were forced upon Blacks during slavery. Because Clarence Smith was the 13th Person named Clarence to join Temple #7, he was given the name Clarence 13X.[35]

This induction into the organization presented a major shift in 13X's life. The Nation of Islam proved to be more morally strict than the U.S. military. It was a new day for 13X, and he was willing to adhere to the strict rules of Elijah Muhammad. He found employment as a painter in the organization and became a very active member. The temple became a secure foundation for Clarence and Dora.

13X moved quickly through the ranks of the Nation of Islam, memorizing the core lessons of the group while he progressed. In order to be a part of the male unit of the temple, the Fruit of Islam, 13X was expected to recite long passages of The Lessons at any time. This internalization of The Lessons was very influential to 13X's mental growth. After passing several examinations, 13X became an official member of the Fruit of Islam. He worked loyally for the Nation of Islam in many capacities, the most important being security.[36]

With the growth of the Nation of Islam, due largely to Malcolm X's work and popularity, many things began to change. Malcolm X was suspended in 1963 from the Nation of Islam for comments he made about President John Kennedy's assassination. Malcolm

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[34] Wakeel Allah, 70-1.
[35] Ibid, 80-2.
[36] Ibid, 89-92.

X was already being criticized by other members for deemphasizing The Lessons and the importance of Elijah Muhammad. During this same period, 13X would find himself in conflict with the Nation of Islam.[37]

Clarence 13X was eventually expelled from The Nation of Islam just as Malcolm X was. The reason for his expulsion is up for debate. There are a few theories that exist on this topic. Some of these theories will be discussed. First, it has been suggested that 13X was expelled for his gambling practices. A second suggestion of why 13X was expelled was for having parties where drinking and smoking occurred. A third theory is that 13X was expelled because he extended God-hood to all Black men, not just Master Farad Muhammad. A final theory put forth is that Clarence 13X left because he no longer wanted to work with Malcolm X, whom many felt was straying from the teachings of the Nation of Islam. Whatever the case, the fact remains that Clarence 13X separated from the Nation of Islam in 1963.[38]

Clarence 13X "hustled" and gambled to make ends meet. It was very difficult to survive in those days in Harlem. He and a former member of The Nation of Islam named Justice felt that they were obligated to bring the teachings of the Nation of Islam to the people of Harlem. 13X never denied these teachings even after he left the Nation of Islam. He felt that all Black people could benefit from The Lessons and began exposing The Lessons to the adults in the Harlem community. Unfortunately, the adults proved too set in their ways. They were largely uninterested in what he had to say.[39]

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[37] Beloved Allah, 1-2.
[38] Wakeel Allah, 102-3.
[39] Ibid, 126-8.

In1964 Clarence 13X decided to change his name to "Allah." He did so according to the Nation of Islam's teaching that the Black Man was indeed God (Allah in Arabic). Allah, as he shall be called from now on, decided that he would target the youth. He felt that the children would be more receptive to his wisdom. Allah believed that the children were the key in establishing any nation. Allah knew that in order to attract the youth, he needed to speak a language that would interest them. It was at this time that Allah and some of his peers created what is known as "Supreme Mathematics" and "Supreme Alphabets." These systems of "understanding the universe" gave "divine" attributes to the numbers 0-9 and the letters of the alphabet.[40] The Supreme Mathematics and an example of its application will now be illustrated:

0=cipher, 1=knowledge, 2=wisdom 3=understanding, 4=culture freedom, 5=power refinement, 6=equality, 7=God, 8= build/destroy, and 9=born.

A Supreme Mathematics equation would look like this:

Knowledge + wisdom = understanding.[41]

According to the literature, there are several ways of interpreting this type of equation. For this review, it is not necessary to delve into the particulars of these two systems.[42]

Allah brought the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets, as well as the core lessons of The Nation of Islam to the poorest parts of Detroit in order to recruit young

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[40] Ibid, 132-4.
[41] *The Five Percenter* Homepage.
[42] Knight, 52-3.

people who society had forgotten and neglected. He chose nine young men known as the "first born." These young men were charged with the responsibility of memorizing Allah's teachings and spreading them to other youth. These youth, who were often delinquent and detached from their immediate family, began to call their teacher "Father Allah" as a term of respect and endearment. Allah named to his newly formed group, "The Five Percenters." This name derived from one of the core lessons of The Nation of Islam, which divides the world into three groups of people based on three percentages. The first group is the 85%, considered to be the dumb, deaf, and blind. These people have no knowledge of themselves and thus are easily manipulated. The second group is the 10%, who are "the bloodsuckers of the poor." These people have enough knowledge to control the 85% and do so in every capacity. The final group is the 5%, who are "the poor righteous teachers." This group is not misled by the 10% because they have knowledge of themselves. The 5%'s responsibility is to free the 85% from the 10%'s rule by giving the 85% the proper knowledge of themselves.[43] Allah taught his students that they were the 5%, hence the name Five Percenters.[44]

The role of women in the organization according to Father Allah will now be explored. First, Allah taught that the Black man was the creator of existence. He likened the Black man to the sun because, according to Allah, the Black man was the center of his family in the same way that the sun was the center of the solar system. Allah taught that the Black woman was likened to the earth in that she gave birth to life and revolved around the

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[43] Farad Muhammad, The Five Percent Homepage. "Lost Found Muslim Lessons Nos. 1 & 2", Sunsite.edu, http://sunsite.unc.edu.nge (accessed November 20, 2008).

[44] Allah, B., 1.

Black man. Thus, Black men were "Gods" and Black women were "Earths." Though patriarchical in nature, Allah's ideology insisted that Black women were "mothers of civilization" and "Queens."[45] Though Allah recognized the Earths, the literature is often negligent in giving descriptive accounts of their roles within the organization.

Until Allah was killed on June 12, 1969, he and The Five Percenters were active participants in the community while spreading their ideology to other boroughs in New York and eventually to other cities as well. Allah's entire focus was to "teach the babies." He accomplished much in the five years that he led The Five Percenters. Allah developed a school for his students in Harlem that still exists today. This school is known as "Allah's School in Mecca." Allah also formed a relationship with the mayor, John Lindsay, and thus involved his students in government programs designed for youth.[46] The Five Percenters were put in summer programs, volunteer workshops, and they were even enrolled in a program that allowed them to take complimentary plane rides. All of these accomplishments gave underprivileged boys and girls the chance to have experiences they never could have imagined. The mayor thought that by reaching out to Allah, he could better understand the disadvantaged youth of Harlem. The Five Percenters were accused of being criminals and anti-white. Rather than indulge in these negative accusations, the mayor soon realized that the work of Father Allah was actually reforming delinquent youth.[47]

Allah also introduced gatherings called "Show & Proves" and "Parliaments." These gatherings were a chance for the young Five Percenters to socialize and further develop

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[45] Knight, 34.
[46] Beloved Allah, 3.
[47] Jihad, 317-18.

their memorization and understanding of their teachings. Allah had created a family out of the young Black people who were often isolated and rejected by society.[48]

After Allah was shot and killed on June 12, 1969 by an unidentified shooter, the Five Percenters went through a period of crisis and transition. Allah had tried to prepare his youth for his eventual passing. He told them that once he was gone, it would only take his Five Percenters to come together and they would see him. Allah expressed his desire for The Five Percenters to change their name to "The Nation of Gods and Earths" once he passed away. His reasoning behind the name change is Allah's assertion that once he died, his students would become a full nation. Unfortunately, many of the youth he had taught Godhood had turned back to drug abuse and crime out of sorrow and a lack of leadership.[49]

The Nation of Gods and Earths from Allah's death until contemporary times.

Though Allah passed and the Nation of Gods and Earths went through a dismal transitional period, the seeds he planted began sprouting in the North Eastern part of the United States. Initially, the numbers of Gods and Earths attending the gatherings instated by Allah had dwindled. It was not until 1970 that a party was thrown that attracted Gods and Earths from different areas. This party along with the holding of a well-attended "Show & Prove" gathering were signs that the Nation of Gods and Earths was being revived.[50]

From the mid-seventies to the late eighties that the Nation of Gods and Earths began gaining popularity amongst young people all around the country. They were intrigued

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[48] Ibid, 36.
[49] Beloved Allah, 1-2.
[50] Wakeel Allah, 302-7.

with the teachings of Allah. His teachings were a sort of liberation theology for young People of Color. The youth were attracted to the message of Godhood and the teachings that white society was inherently evil. Their everyday experiences in a racist society aligned with Allah's teachings.

The Nation of Gods and Earths were and are known for their unique teaching methods. In the eighties, the group gained recognition for their public displays of teaching their lessons. The young Gods were known for their street savvy and captivating speech. Often they would form into a circle known as a "cipher." In this circle, they would express their knowledge of Allah's teachings. The Earths were not included in these ciphers, as the teachings of Allah did not encourage this.[51]

This method of sharing knowledge in a cipher attracted many youth. In fact, the beginnings of the Hip-Hop culture, which has now become a global phenomenon, are largely attributed to the influence of The Nation of Gods and Earths. Hip-Hop culture was created by Black urban youth in New York during the seventies. "Rap music," the musical element of the Hip-Hop culture became the voice of urban Black America. The same mastery of language and street savvy that was indicative of the Nation of Gods and Earths was found in the lyrics of rap music.[52] Many of the earlier rap performers were either influenced by the verbal delivery of the Gods and Earths, or were members of the group itself. Some of these rappers include Rakim, Public Enemy, Lakim Shabazz, and

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[51] Ibid, 314.
[52] Ibid, 315-17.

Just-Ice. It would also be through this art form that the ideology of the Gods and Earths would be spread worldwide.[53]

In the nineties, many rap groups were born that claimed membership in the Nation of Gods and Earths. These artists include Brand Nubian, Digable Planets, Wu-Tang, Poor Righteous Teachers, and Pete Rock and C.L. Smooth. At this time, we see the emergence of female artists who also promoted the teachings of Allah. Both Erykah Badu and Lady Bug of The Digable Planets had been influenced by Allah's teachings and included them in their music. These two women were extremely successful and earned popularity worldwide. The nineties was perhaps the first time that we heard the Earth's point of view on a large scale, showing that The Lessons did help to influence and give voice to some women.

In contemporary times, The Nation of Gods and Earths have changed in some key areas. The members of the group from the sixties, seventies, and eighties are much older now. Many of them have children of their own. What once was a nation of young people has blossomed into a nation of all ages. The older Gods and Earths now find themselves in a similar position to their Father Allah. They are now the teachers of the youth.[54]

According to Wakeel Allah, the Nation of Gods and Earths is no longer made up of only poor and disadvantaged youth. Gods and Earths are found in all walks of life and hold several different occupational positions. There are even Gods and Earths in the military, though the group does not encourage enlistment. Because there exists no official roster of the group, it is hard to calculate the exact number of Gods and Earths in America.

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[53] Ibid, 326.
[54] Ibid, 326-9.

Their membership is no longer limited to the eastern part of the United States. The Nation of Gods and Earths can be found in most of the major cities in the U.S. and even some smaller cities, According to authors such as Wakeel Allah. There also exist many grassroots publications that are distributed by the group's members, which promote the philosophy of The Nation of Gods and Earths.[55]

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The women of the Nation of Gods and Earths have been given little focus in the literature on the group. The leadership positions and perspectives of these women have been largely ignored by the available literature. The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths, filling a void in the literature on both the group and the role of the Earths in the group. The study seeks to get a better understanding the nature of leadership displayed by these women, who like women in other Black organizations, have been deemphasized.

This thesis is a non-experimental descriptive study.[56] Eight women who play leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths were personally interviewed in order to assess their leadership roles. The women were selected based on whether they see themselves as playing leadership roles in the organizations. The Earths interviewed were chosen based on the snowball method.

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[55] Ibid, 320.

[56] William M.K. Trochim and James P. Donnelly, *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* (Mason: Atomic Dog, 2008), 187.

PURPOSE

This thesis argues that the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths are consistent with the concepts of both Africana womanism and Black women's leadership. However, through an analysis of Earth's oral testimonies, this research concludes that though racism is the most pervading obstacle faced by Black people, The Nation of Gods and Earths must address and reevaluate the sexism that exists within its doctrine and practice. By doing so, the group can begin to recognize Black women's leadership and utilize it more effectively. The Nation should collectively transform its gender inequality, in a way that does not compromise its culture, as a means of successfully sustaining and strengthening itself and the communities of which it serves.

The primary method utilized in this study, personal interviews, is qualitative in nature.[57] The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. Qualitative methods are the most appropriate means to collect and analyze this data. Because this study will include data that is not numerical, quantitative methods have not been incorporated.

The research phenomenon in this study is leadership. The leadership paradigm for this study is based on the unique aspects and concepts particular to Black women's leadership. Black women's leadership tends to be proactive in nature, group-centered, and makes a linkage between theory and practice. Black women's leadership utilizes both

[57] Trochim and Donnelly, 143.

traditional and non-traditional methods, which differs from traditional leadership paradigms that tend to be hierarchical and ego-centered.[58]

The research design selected for this study is non-experimental. Because there are no control groups and multiple measures were not used, a non-experimental approach is most appropriate for this study.[59] Eight women who consider themselves leaders within the group were selected from communities in The United States of America. The method of interviewing reflects a non-experimental design in the case of this study.

SIGNIFIGANCEOF THE STUDY

This study explains the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths from their point of view. This study is significant because it explores little known territory about these women and their effect in their organization and the Black community as a whole. This research is important in that it helps give voice to Black women who are rarely heard. The results of this study shed light on the significance of the women in the organization in relation to the group, their families, and their communities. This thesis will show that the women of the Nation of Gods and Earths play an instrumental role in the organization and the communities of which they live, though their accomplishments and views have often been neglected or ignored primarily because of elements of racism and sexism.

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[58] Melina Reimann Abdullah, "Self-defined Political Leadership Among Black Women: Proactive Group-centered Activism Beyond The Confines Of Liberal Reform." (PhD diss., American Political Science Association, 2003), 1, 4-21.
[59] Ibid, 186-7.

Historically in academia, the study of Black women has been either negligible or non-existent. Unfortunately, this same exclusion or de-emphasis of Black women can be found in the field of Black studies as well.[60] In studies of organizations such as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers, many writers have painted a picture of female submissiveness. This limited viewpoint has been challenged by scholars in the area of Black Women's studies, which emerged in response to the inaccurate portrayal of, and missing literature on Black women in the academy. This study will aide in further illuminating the roles and accomplishments of Black women in social organizations, helping to fill the void in the literature concerning women in the Nation of Gods and Earths.

This study can also serve as a tool of agency for Black women currently and in the future. With more concrete examples of the indispensible part that Black women have played in maintaining and progressing the Black community, Black females will have even more examples of the legacy and efficiency of Black women's leadership.

The research offers suggestions for an active addressing of the gender inequalities within the organization. It is argued that the ideas and perspectives of the Earths be recognized and utilized to further the success of the group.

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[60] Karenga, 49-52.

NATURE OF THE STUDY

The qualitative approach selected is phenomenology. Phenomenology allowed the researcher to find the core meaning of the connective leadership roles of the women in the group.[61] According to Creswell, "…a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or phenomenon."[62] The researcher intended to approach this subject from a subjective viewpoint, meaning from the viewpoint of the women being studied. Phenomenology entails discovering what is "reality" from the point of view of the people being studied. Because this research is interested in the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths, the method of personal interviews was conducted with eight Earths. The method of personal interviewing provided the means of ascertaining the perceptions of the subjects in this research. [63]

The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. Qualitative methods were the most appropriate means to collect and analyze this data. Because this study included data that is not numerical, quantitative methods have not been incorporated.

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[61] John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 57-8.

[62] Ibid, 57.
[63] Ibid, 57.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study entailed finding the answers to the following research questions:

1) What principles and practices of the Nation of Gods and Earths appeal to women?

2) How do the Earths conceptualize issues of gender inequality within the Nation of Gods and Earths?

3) In what ways have racism, classism, and sexism influenced the Earth's leadership roles?

4) How do the Earths define, perceive, and demonstrate leadership roles?

These research questions were chosen because they aim to get to the essence of the participants views on their organization, their leadership roles, and ideas on their lives in relationship to those roles. Included are questions which seek to reveal the participants' attraction to the Nation of Gods and Earths, the aspects of the doctrine that inspire the participants, their views on various topics concerning the group and larger society, and their roles as leaders. The questions are used in chapter five as categories of analysis.

DESIGN

The design for this phenomenological study was non-experimental in nature. A non-experimental design is appropriate for this study as there is only one group being researched. Unlike experimental designs, there was no random assignment. A non-experimental design is often utilized in descriptive studies such as this one in order to

gather and assess exploratory research. Because the women in this study were interviewed in a non-comparative fashion, a non-experimental design was the most appropriate design for this study.[64]

RESEARCH STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The research on the women in question has been negligent, as most focus in the literature has been on the men in the organization. This study sought to put women and their contribution to the organization and their communities in the proper context.

Many Black organizations formed in the 1960's have been guilty of putting women in a secondary position.[65] It is possible that the Nation of Gods and Earths, also formed in the 1960's, has followed suit in this area.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Phenomenology and Africana Womanist Thought

As previously stated, this study was approached from a phenomenological viewpoint. Phenomenology focuses on several members of a group and describes the commonalities of their experiences. A phenomenon is chosen in order to understand the core

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[64] Trochim and Donnelly, 186-7.
[65] Karenga, 49-52.

importance, or essence of that phenomenon. The two types of phenomenology are hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology focuses more on the perceptions of the researcher. It emphasizes certain themes and attempts to describe and analyze the data based on those themes.[66]

The second type of phenomenology, which will be utilized for this research, transcendental phenomenology, focuses on identifying a phenomenon and collecting data from many people who have that shared experience. The researcher identifies relevant quotes and makes them themes that describe both what the participants experienced and how they experienced the phenomenon.[67]

In choosing the primary framework for this study, the literature on Africana womanism as presented by Clenora Hudson-Weems, was the most appropriate. According to Hudson-Weems, "*Africana womanism"* is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women."[68]

In the tradition of Maria Stewart, modern scholars like Hudson-Weems, Layli Phillips, and Alice Walker have furthered the research, which highlight the unique phenomena of Black women's experiences. Hudson-Weems, in particular, distinguishes Africana womanism from philosophies such as feminism and Black feminism. The primary distinction between classical feminism, womanism, and Africana womanism, according to Hudson-Weems, is that though Africana womanism notes the importance of fighting

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[66] Creswell, 59.
[67] Ibid, 59.
[68] Clenora Hudson-Weems, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers, 2003), 24.

gender oppression, "Africana women and men dismiss the primacy of gender issues in their reality, and thus dismiss the feminist movement as a viable framework for their chief concerns." The primary oppression faced by Black women is that of existing in a white supremacist society, according to Hudson-Weems.[69]

Black feminism does recognize the triad of oppression faced by Black women as racism, classism, and sexism. Black feminists and some womanists see all oppressions as having equal weight in their effect on Black women's lives. Conversely, Africana womanism, as presented by Clenora Hudson-Weems, is quite clear in its assertion that racism is the primary force that suppresses and exploits the Black family and thus, the Black woman.[70] She says, "If our goal in life is to be achieved- that is the survival of our entire race as a primary concern for African women- it will have to come from African men and women working together.[71]

A commonality amongst Womanist scholars is the consensus that traditional feminism as defined by white women is inappropriate in assessing the lived experiences of Black women. Historically, white women's fight for equal rights was one initiated by upper class women for other upper class white women. According to Hudson-Weems, poor women and women of color were rarely even considered in the plight for "gender equality." Africana womanism continues to have stark differences from traditional feminism, being that black women face a myriad of challenges that are unique to their realities. Further, Africana womanism tends to be more universal in nature in that it demands

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[69] Ibid, 25.
[70] Ibid, 28.
[71] Ibid, 31.

the eradication of all forms of oppressions that affect Black women, not just sexism.[72] In explaining what a womanist is, Layli Phillips says, "A womanist is triply concerned with herself, other Black women, and the entire Black race, female and male- but also all humanity, showing an ever-expanding and ultimately universal arc of political concern, empathy, and activism."[73] Some elements of Phillips' womanism were used in this research as a means of analysis, as several of her concepts on womanism overlap with Africana Womanism. Again, the main distinction between Africana womanism and Phillips' womanism is that Africana womanism identifies race as the primary concern for Black women. Both writers.

DEFINITIONS

The Nation of Gods and Earths- (Also known as The Five Percenters) - An organization started in the 1960's by Father Allah. The goal of this group is to give "self knowledge" to young Black people who are often subjugated by a racist and classist society.[74]

God- The Black man who has knowledge of self according to the teachings of Father Allah. In The Nation of Gods and Earths, God is often represented by the sun.[75]

Earth-The Black woman who has knowledge of self according to the teachings of Father Allah. In The Nation of Gods and Earths, the Black woman is represented by the earth, which revolves around the sun and gives birth to life.[76]

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[72] Ibid, 31-3.
[73] Layli Phillips, *The Womanist Reader*, ed. Layli Phillips (New York: Routledge Taylor and Frances Group, 2006), xxiii.
[74] Beloved Allah, 1.
[75] Jihad., 35.

Leadership- The term leadership in this sense is defined by the unique characteristics of Black women's leadership. Black women's leadership tends to be proactive in nature, group-centered, makes a linkage between theory and practice, and utilizes both traditional and non-traditional methods. Black women's leadership differs from traditional leadership paradigms, which tend to be hierarchical and ego-centered.[77] According to Abdullah, "the key difference between these traditional models and the one utilized by Black women is that where the traditional model includes a component of asymmetry as a requirement for leadership, Black women's leadership derives its legitimacy from symmetrical relationships among movement members."[78]

ASSUMPTIONS

One assumption presented by the researcher in this study was that the women being interviewed would provide honest responses to the questions asked. In any interview, the possibility that the interviewee will lie, exaggerate, or withhold viable information exists. A second assumption was that the researcher's understanding of the answers given would be concise and unbiased. In interviewing, it is possible to miss important actions made by the interviewee. There was a possibility that the researcher's bias or personal outlook affected the results of interviewing individuals. A third assumption was that the sample population of eight women was sufficient to ascertain the general perspectives of

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[76] Asiatic.
[77] Abdullah, 1.
[78] Ibid, 4.

the women in the group. A fourth assumption was that the women in this study wanted to be interviewed, and that the researcher would have access to the proposed population.

SCOPE, LIMITATIONS, AND DELIMITATIONS

The scope of the research in this study was to assess the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths based on their point of view. Personal interviews were used to ascertain these women's perspectives. One limitation may have been that the researcher interviewed more women from one region of the country than another. For instance, the imbalanced focus on the women in Atlanta may affect the accuracy of the results, as women in Harlem may have different and more direct experiences with the Nation of Gods and Earths.

The interview questions posed to the women in this study were both personal and broad. Therefore, some of the results could be generalized to women in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The more personal questions presented to the women produced non-generalized results.

One of the delimitations in the study is that this was not a study of the men in this organization. Further, this was not a study of Black women in general. This study specifically examined the viewpoints of Black women in the Nation of Gods and Earths.

SUMMARY

Chapter 1 was an introduction to the study. This study explores the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The chapter introduced the problem statement, purpose, significance, and nature of the study. A research statement, the conceptual framework of Clenora Hudson-Weems, and the definitions of important terms are also included in chapter 1. The chapter ends with the description of the assumptions of the researcher and the scope, limitation, and delimitations of the study. This chapter is meant to give a brief overview of this study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which is pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

In order to properly research and analyze the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths, it was necessary to explore the relevant history, documentation, and theory that pertain to Black women's ledership. It was also necessary to review and assess the seminal works on the Nations of Gods and Earths. This literature review is divided into four sections. The first explores seminal works on Black Women's leadership, its aspects, uniqueness, and definition. The second section is a review of the literature on the history of Black women's leadership of the club movements, the civil rights era, and the Black power time period. The third section is an exploration of the seminal literature on womanism and the chosen framework of this thesis, Africana womanism. This section reviews the different ideas of womanism and Africana womanism. The fourth section examines three seminal works on the Nation of Gods and Earths. This section reveals the content of the literature and its relation to the women in the group.

DEFINING BLACKWOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The phenomenon of leadership must be explored and defined in order to properly measure the role it plays amongst

the Earths in their lives. Some of the core works on Black women and leadership were explored as to offer an understanding on the key aspects of Black women's leadership.

According to Melina Reimann Abdullah, self-defined leadership among Black women is comprised of four key elements: "1) it is proactive in nature, 2) it is group-centered, 3) it requires a linkage between theory and practice and 4) it utilizes both traditional and non-traditional methods."[79] The author insists that traditional leadership paradigms emphasize the separation of the leader and the led. Conversely, Black women's leadership erases the line between leaders and the people. Because of this inclusive practice in leadership, Black women's activism is often overlooked. Abdullah insists that, "For Black women, politics is power and all genres are in some way related and therefore can be defined as political if one so chooses."[80]

The author makes clear distinctions between Black women's leadership and white male, white female and Black male-centered leadership, all of which tend to be hierarchical in nature. Interesting enough, Abdullah claims that the first three forms of leadership share more similar elements than not. Black women take on a "group-centered" sort of leadership. According to the author, the issue with other progressive movements and groups is that they follow a white male paradigm. She states, "The problem with most feminist and race-based movements has been the desire to achieve the status of the oppressor. In essence, such movements are largely reformist rather than revolutionary. Those that make efforts toward fundamental transformation often limit their analyses of power systems and activities to empower a single, narrowly defined group as opposed to

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[79] Abdullah, 1.
[80] Ibid, 3.

working to end oppressions in all its forms."[81]

Another unique aspect of Black women's leadership is its flexibility. Black women's leadership embraces both traditional and non-traditional tactics depending on the circumstance. Hence, Black women can serve in traditional leadership roles such as a politician, while still incorporating the four elements of Black women's leadership.[82] As the author points out, "Black women leaders are defined not so much by the titles that they hold or the public recognition received, but the actual contribution that is made to the collective." [83] Traditional (White male) leadership does the opposite -putting titles, personal gain, and public position over the welfare of those being led. Black women's leadership, more often than not, is community based and purposely so.[84]

Abdullah's piece is relevant to this research as it gives a broader paradigm of leadership based on Black women's particular forms of leadership. This research entails extracting and accessing Black women's viewpoints of leadership within the Nation of Gods and Earths. Abdullah's four aspects of Black women's leadership help give this study an applicable lens through which to the view the phenomenon of leadership.

Allen also challenges classical "Eurocentric notions and meanings of leadership."[85] According to the writer, Black women have been historically placed in "subordinate positions." Allen argues that Black women had to discover other methods of leadership. Black women's leadership in America "is a history of collective struggle to main-

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[81] Ibid, 21.
[82] Ibid, 32.
[83] Ibid, 33.
[84] Ibid, 35.
[85] Beverley Lundy Allen, "A Re-articulation of Black Female Community Leadership: Processes, Networks and a Culture of Resistance*."* (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida), 1.

tain cultural traditions in the black community."[86]

Allen gives three areas in which Black women's leadership exists: 1) "Black female leadership exemplifies survival techniques in family, church and community organizations that encompass the creativity and commitment for group well-being."; 2) black female networks are dynamic and interrelated entities that form a matrix of reinforcements that hold the black community together while developing leadership for a better future; and 3) Black female leadership represents the collective experience and action toward community empowerment."[87]

Allen insists that many Black women do not embrace the term *leader* as it has elitist implications. Unlike traditional ideas of leadership, Black women's leadership is not based on concepts of individual power and domination.[88] The writer suggests her own definition of what she calls "Black female community leadership. That definition is,

> The struggle for group survival whereby group *collective experience*, and group socioemotional supports, as well as the instrumental aspects of developing and maintaining internal female networks for institution building, merge to form *collective action* for cultural maintenance and black *community empowerment*.[89]

Allen's research, like Abdullah's emphasizes the unique type of leadership that Black women have exhibited throughout history. Her definition on this unique type of leadership gives a broader understanding of the variable in this particular research on the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths. A classical analysis based on traditional concepts of leadership is irrelevant in that they are not based on the values, tactics, and experiences of Black women. This "re-articulation" of the ideas dealing with leadership is

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[86] Ibid, 1.
[87] Ibid, 2.
[88] Ibid, 2.
[89] Ibid, 3.

necessary in describing and analyzing the Earths interviewed in this study.[90]

Rosser-Mims, another writer on the details of Black women's leadership, claims that Black women's leadership emerged from the advent of white supremacy. The leadership roles that have defined Black women's leadership include, "serving in nontraditional leadership roles in the church, serving as matriarchs of families, leading their families out of poverty, and leading behind the scenes in political and civil rights activist movements for social change."[91]

Rosser-Mims suggests that the goal of Black women's leadership is to uplift the entire Black community. The ego-centered ideas of traditional leadership are rejected by Black women's leadership's ideals of collective growth.[92]Rosser-Mims also criticizes traditional Black leadership, which tends to be male dominated. The writer says, "Black women have been silenced because of the cultural expectations of the primacy of racial solidarity and racial loyalty over gender issues."[93] The writer feels that Black women have been "demonized" and "ridiculed" for bringing the sexism of Black male leadership to light. The subordinate roles that Black women are forced to play have caused Black women to have to take nontraditional means of leading.

Rosser-Mims, Allen, and Abdullah all call for a re-evaluation of both the phenomenon of leadership and the types of leadership roles that Black women have undertaken. Rosser-Mims includes raising families and behind-the-scenes service as legitimate

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[90] Ibid, 3.
[91] Dionne M. Rosser-Mims, *An Exploration Of Black Women's Political Leadership Development* (Athens, GA., 2005), 12.
[92] Ibid, 19.
[93] Ibid, 21.

forms of leadership. The seminal literature agrees upon the basic tenets of Black women's leadership. In this research on the Earths, Abdullah's description of Black women's leadership serves as the primary tool of analysis. Again, the four elements of Black women's leadership, according to Abdullah are, "1) it is proactive in nature, 2) it is group-centered, 3) it requires a linkage between theory and practice and 4) it utilizes both traditional and non-traditional methods."[94]Allen's descriptions of Black women's leadership overlap with Abdullah's in many ways and have also been utilized in this study.

What seems to be missing is further analysis of some of the elements of Black women's leadership that have or would exist outside of oppressive forces. In other words, are there aspects of this type of leadership that would exist amongst Black women despite white male oppression? The writers fail to link Black women's leadership to pre-colonial Africa and the methods of Black women leaders at that time. Though the focus of the literature and this study are on black women in America, it would be more revealing to put the topic of Black women's leadership in context of ancient Africa.

THE HISTORY OF BLACK WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

In order to put this study in proper context, the history of Black women's leadership must be noted and analyzed. The works written on the Earths must also be reviewed, understood, and put in context. Further, the concept of leadership and the framework of Africana womanism must be discussed and comprehended as they relate to

[94] Abdullah, 1.

this study. The following literature review achieves all of these tasks in order to provide a thorough literary background in discussing the leadership of the Earths.

Black women's leadership has historically been a cornerstone of Black organizations and social movements. This phenomenon can be traced back to the days of enslavement and well before that time period. For the purpose of this study, the Black women's clubs of the period between 1850 and 1920 will be the first examples of black women's leadership reviewed.

In Knupfer's work, Toward A Tenderer Humanity And A Nobler Womanhood, the author documents African-American women's clubs in "turn of the century Chicago."[95] Knupfer analyzes these women's leadership and activism from a "multilayered" analytical perspective which includes an examination of social stratification and community ethos, but also relies heavily on a Black feminist framework that combines the triple oppressions experienced by Black women; racism, classism, and sexism. She relies primarily on primary research, as the clubwomen wrote their perspectives on a variety of topics. Records, speeches, letters, articles, and addresses were obtained and analyzed in order to give an accurate portrayal of the women in the club movements in Chicago Illinois.[96]

The author discovered a significant number of women's clubs in Chicago, totaling more than 150.[97] These clubs, created and led by black women, tackled such issues as

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[95] Anne Meis Knupfer, *Toward A Tenderer Humanity And A Nobler Womanhood* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 2.

[96] Ibid, 3.
[97] Ibid, 1.

women's suffrage, "progressive maternalism," community poverty, and emphasized their roles as community caretakers. The ideologies of the Black women's club movement were diverse, yet the concept of actively uplifting and supporting the communities in which they resided was central to them all.[98]

Clubwomen displayed leadership aspects in various ways, according to the Knupfer. The women often viewed themselves as living examples to other black women and Americans in general. Leaders such as Ida B. Wells insisted that Black women form institutions that pooled their money and invest in Black businesses.[99] This focus on wealth building allowed for the funding of other club interests, such as creating shelter for the elderly and orphans, local and national marches for Black women's rights like suffrage, and the fierce fight against segregation. Knupfer points out those club leaders such as Wells utilized a holistic approach, emphasizing cooperative economics, collective Black solidarity, and practical political action in unifying and mobilizing Black women.[100]

Another author, Terborg-Penn, further illustrates the leadership, which mobilized Black women during the days of the club movements. In her book, African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920, she examines the reasons why Black women worked toward women's right to vote and the challenges they faced in doing

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[98] Ibid, 11.
[99] Ibid, 62.
[100] Ibid, 61-4.

so.[101] Terborg-Penn has two chapters in her work that directly address Black women's leadership and their actions and viewpoints concerning suffrage.

In the fourth chapter of the book, the author writes of the trying forty years that Black women and Black people in general were experiencing from the 1870s until the period in which the Nineteenth Amendment, securing women's right to vote, was passed. White women in the club movement were seen as leaders in their communities and thus their ideas were circulated to both a local and national audience. This time was the end of the nineteenth century, and according to the author, African-American suffragists were "more concerned about solving problems in their own communities through the political empowerment of their women." [102] Thus, Black women leaders sought to use their positions to strengthen other Black women.

Terborg-Penn emphasizes that often the press was used as a means for Black women suffragists to empower their people politically. Carrie Langston, mother of the legendary Langston Hughes, was one such writer. Langston focused on changing the sexist attitudes of Black men in her community who often held "traditional notions" of the role of Black women.[103] Another noteworthy journalist and community activist was Mary McCurdy, who served as president of the Black women's temperance union and was an official in the state temperance organization. McCurdy openly criticized white and Black men for hindering Black women's political progression. She addressed both race and gender in her critique, claiming that the collective conscience and "moral

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[101] Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Blookington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 1.
[102] Ibid, 55.
[103] Ibid, 58-59.

authority" of Black women would not allow their votes to be bought, as she believed many of the Black men had sold their votes to white racists.[104]

There were several spokeswomen during this time period according to Terborg-Penn. These spokeswomen served as leaders in the suffrage movement for three generations. The author goes as far as claiming to have "recovered twenty-eight new names" of Black suffrage spokeswomen during this time period.[105] She concludes that the women of the club movements and suffrage movements "aspired to the same goal." The tactics, ideologies, and methodologies of these leading women in the black community proved to be extremely diverse and often contradicted the stances of their fellow comrades in the struggle for Black women's rights. Terborg-Penn cites the Washington network, which consisted of nine Black suffragist leaders, the biggest organization of active Black women suffragists recorded. These women's views shifted, changed, and diversified over the twenty years that the network existed, showing the plethora of positions embraced by Black women who were concerned with Black women's rights. These community leaders viewed their differences as strength rather than a weakness, and used a myriad of strategies to help liberate Black women as a whole. The concept of unity in the midst of diversity was the essence of the Black women's suffrage movement, in which the consensus was "that Black women needed the ballot in order to help themselves and their communities."[106]

The period of the club and suffrage movements leads this discussion to Black women's leadership of the civil-rights and Black Power era. In Sisters in the Struggle:

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[104] Ibid, 59.
[105] Ibid, 79.
[106] Ibid, 79-80.

African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement, several authors take on the challenge of exposing and analyzing the roles and activities of Black women primarily from the 1950s until the late 1970s. This book has numerous articles, which highlight leadership roles of Black women in the movements[107]. The most noteworthy and applicable of the chapters will be discussed and analyzed.

In Jacqueline A. Rouse's article, We Seek to Know… in order to Speak the Truth": Nurturing the Seeds of Discontent-Septima P. Clark and Participatory Leadership, Clark's dynamic leadership is highlighted, discussed, and analyzed. Like many of the dynamic Black women leaders of the Civil Rights era, Clark was "Without formal title or formally recognized leadership."[108] She is known mostly for developing Citizenship Schools, which many claim were the model and foundation of the civil rights movement.[109] Clark, a tireless worker for her people, was also known for her contributions to voter registration, women's rights, and her love for literacy programs.[110] Clark was a grassroots leader who possessed a "group centered ideology," training others to be leaders and teachers of literacy in several rural towns.[111]

Rouse documents Clark's life growing up in Charleston, South Carolina. The author writes that Clark, daughter of an ex-slave and whose mother was of Haitian and

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[107] Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds., In *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001).

[108] Jacqueline A. Rouse, "We Seek to Know… in order to Speak the Truth": Nurturing the Seeds of Discontent-Septima P. Clark and Participatory Leadership," In *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement,* eds. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 95-6.

[109] Ibid, 96.

[110] Ibid, 98.

[111] Ibid,96-7.

Native American descent, was inspired by her Father's ideals of community service and education. Soon after earning her teaching license in 1916, Clark began teaching in the poorest communities in Charleston and she soon was known for her generosity, nursing skills, and her passion for teaching literacy.[112] She began fighting for Black people's rights in several ways in Charleston, which would eventually led to her working closely with the NAACP, working with the SCLC, leading literacy workshops, and eventually creating Citizenship schools.[113]

Rouse extensively documents the details of Clark's involvement with political movements and the unique elements of Black women leadership at the time. Rouse ascertains that though Black male ministers were recognized as the leaders of the Civil-Rights movement, Black women were often the grassroots leaders due to their hands-on activism in the communities in which they served.[114] Rouse claims that women such as Clark displayed a different type of leadership; one based on empowering the local residents so that they could determine their own destiny, rather than male minister leaders who were often out of touch with the Black masses. Clark herself challenged the "hierarchical leadership" displayed by many male leaders of the civil rights movement.[115]

Rouse exposes Clark as a woman who was more concerned with collective leadership than with merely being a leader and maintaining power for personal gain. Rouse expands the definition of leadership beyond the classical ideas of the charismatic male-dominant view of the civil-rights movement. Though Clark challenged sexism within the

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[112] Ibid, 97-9.
[113] Ibid, 101-6.
[114] Ibid, 115.
[115] Ibid, 116-7.

movement, she refrained from airing her critiques in public, displaying her devotion to the movement.[116] Rouse illustrates the contributions of Clarks "group-centered" ideology as one central to the leadership tactics and ideas embraced by Black women in the civil rights era.[117]

Barbara Ransby's work, Behind-the-Scenes View of a Behind-the-Scenes Organizer: The Roots of Ella Baker's Political Passions, documents and analyzes the profound effect of Baker's leadership in the civil rights movement, and in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in particular. Ransby notes that Baker was also the national director of the Southern Leadership Conference SCLC prior to her engagement with SNCC. However, according to Ransby, it was her leadership in SNCC that was her most noteworthy accomplishment.[118]

Like Septima P. Clark, Baker was a grassroots activist who would become the "physical and psychological anchor" for SNCC.[119] Though she humbly considered herself a "mere facilitator," Baker was responsible for constructing SNCC's first meeting, wrote many of the group's initial documents, and gave guidance and "political leadership" to the organization.[120] In addition, like Clark, Baker fought against both the politi-

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[116] Ibid, 116-17.
[117] Ibid, 96.
[118] Barbara Ransby, "Behind-the-Scenes View of a Behind-the-Scenes Organizer: The Roots of Ella Baker's Political Passions," In *Sisters in the Struggle: African Ameri can Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement,* eds. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001).
[119] Ibid, 42.
[120] Ibid, 43.

cal and economic oppression imposed by white supremacy and the sexism that existed within the civil rights movement.[121]

According to Ransby, though Baker's most transparent political connections were with well-known men, such as A. Phillip Randolph, Martin Luther King, and Thurgood Marshall, her behind-the-scene friendships with dynamic women activists were her inspiration. Baker formed alliances with women from the Harlem Nurses Association, the Harlem Housewives League, and Emma Lance, the president of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).[122]

What is very interesting about Ransby's depiction of Baker is that she presents the leader as being very down to earth and personally concerned with the emotions and feelings of those she worked closely with, unlike some of her male counterparts. Baker traveled all over the South meeting and forming lasting friendships with common folk. Poor Blacks embraced Baker because she criticized the leaders in the movement who leaned more toward elitist attitudes. She rejected her upbringing as a middle class person by literally refusing traditional education and material wealth.[123]

Ransby writes, "For Ella Baker the ultimate triumph of a leader was his or her ability to suppress ego and ambition and to embrace humility and a spirit of collectivism."[124] From close analysis, the previous statement gets to the core of what Ransby ultimately tries to convey; that Ella Baker, in the tradition of Black woman's leadership, was willing to forsake prestige and economic gain in order to empower her people as a

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[121] Ibid, 46.
[122] Ibid, 47.
[123] Ibid, 52-4.
[124] Ibid, 54.

whole. This concept of self-sacrifice is evident throughout the history of Black women in organizations and liberation movements.

Indeed this theme of grassroots leadership is pervasive in the literature. Vicki Crawford further expounds on this theme in her chapter, "African Women in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party."[125] Crawford's aim is to examine the positions and activism of Black women in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The MFDP was one of the better-known groups of the civil rights movement.[126]

Crawford's assessment of the leadership in the civil rights era is that men held more of the national and regional positions, while women tended to lead on local levels, organizing church societies and other groups for the sake of political and social advancement.[127] The women of the MFDP represented one example of the latter form of leadership. In the wake of the founding of the organization in 1964, Mississippi's Black population was arguably the most socially, economically, and politically oppressed in the South. According to Crawford, the MFDP "was formed to supplant the state's regular Democratic Party, which had excluded black voters, openly defended segregation in party planks, and repudiated national party platforms."[128]

There were several initial leaders and founders of the organization, with Fannie Lou Hamer, Annie Devine, and Victoria Gray being the women representatives of

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[125] Vicki Crawford, "African Women in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party," In *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement,* eds. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001).
[126] Ibid,121.
[127] Ibid, 121.
[128] Ibid, 124.

MFDP. These three women leaders were responsible for creating many of the group's philosophies, strategies, and political actions. It is Crawford's claim that there was "egalitarian participation" in the organization due to the powerful existence of female membership.[129]

Crawford consistently proclaims that Black women's leadership was core to the "cultivation of indigenous leadership and the significant changes in Mississippi society."[130] The author reveals that leaders such as Hamer, Devine, and Gray were affiliated with church and community organizing long before they entered into the political realm. According to Crawford, it was this familiarity with the common folk of the Black community that allowed them to organize successfully on a grassroots level. The author goes as far as to say that the grassroots and "decentralized style of decision making" "diminished the gender and class divisions which typified the older, more established civil rights organizations"[131]

One of the strong points of Crawford's article is the recognition of the behind-the-scenes or "bridge leadership" unique to Black women, giving due credit to women who often are not recognized as the leaders they were. She also points out that the belief systems (doctrines) of the female leaders also drove their moral and inspirational proclivity to leadership, which the author concludes must be further researched. Fannie Lou Hamer's speeches were full of inspirational biblical verse.[132]

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[129] Ibid, 125.
[130] Ibid, 135.
[131] Ibid, 135.
[132] Ibid, 135-6.

The one discrepancy found within the piece, is that the author's seeming romanticism of the "egalitarian" state of the MFDP. Her suggestion that gender and class discrimination was "diminished" within the ranks is unfounded in that Black men remained the final decision makers and visible leaders of the MFDP and SNCC. The gender and class divisions may have been lessened, but the concept that they were non-existent is quite ideal.

Black women's leadership in the Black Power Movement will now be explored. Trayce A. Matthew's chapter, *"No One Ever Asks What a Man's Role in the Revolution Is": Gender Politics and Leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-71"* examines the role of women in relation to leadership in the Black Panther's organization. The author argues that the gender politics of the Party was as pervasive as it's "analysis of race and class dynamics."[133]

The author argues that the gender politics within the Party were non-linear and impossible to classify as either "sexist" or "pro-black feminist/womanist." Matthews's intention is to give an understanding of both the "sociopolitical context" and the "day-to-day" gender struggles in the Party. She cites the competing philosophies of feminism, cultural nationalism, and the black matriarchy/tangle of pathology thesis.[134]

These ideologies were all products of the 1960s and 1970s, and Matthews argues that the Party's debates on race, class, and, gender were influenced by the larger society.

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[133] Trayce A. Matthews, "No One Ever Asks What a Man's Role in the Revolution Is": Gender Politics and Leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-71" In *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement,* eds. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 231.
[134] Ibid, 234.

According to Matthews, the Party often perpetuated the same oppressive tendencies that they professed to oppose, such as sexism and capitalism. Several of the women who were in the Party that were interviewed acknowledged that members would discuss gender inequalities, "yet basic contradictions remained between theory and practice."[135]

According to Assata Shakur, a well-known leader within the Party, The Black Panther Party was ahead of its time when it came to "the woman question." Shakur believed they were more progressive than most of the Black Nationalist groups and many white mainstream and leftist groups. For Shakur and other Black women seeking position in the Black Power movement, the Black Panthers were considered to be less sexist than many of the other organizations at the time.[136]

The author uses the ideas of ex-Panther, Connie Matthews extensively throughout the text. Matthews claims that women held important positions and leadership roles in most chapters of the Party, even though day-to-day sexism was pervasive in the group. Matthews emphasizes the leadership positions these women had in core Party programs such as the free breakfast programs, liberation schools, and medical clinics. These leadership positions, which are traditionally considered to be associated with women's roles, were not only taken by well-known leaders of the Party such as Kathleen Cleaver and Elaine Brown, but by "local female rank-and-file."[137]

The author's assessment is that the gender roles within the Party were complex, contradictory, and fluid. While the Party was rhetorically progressive when it came to

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[135] Ibid, 248.
[136] Ibid, 248-9.
[137] Ibid, 245.

women's rights, women in the party often had to battle for respect and to maintain their authority as leaders.[138] Matthews concludes by challenging the Black progressives of today to call out and critique the oppressive elements within the Black community.[139] Though the author makes a strong case, Matthew's argument would have been more persuasive if she had given more examples of particular women leaders. The pertinent point in this piece on Black women's leadership is that the gender issues, which were apparent in male-dominated Black organizations such as the Black Panther Party, clearly affected the ways in which and the capacity in which Black women led.

This section of the literature review is meant to shed light on Black women's leadership in different times, in diverse context, and throughout various time periods. Though The Nation of Gods and Earths began in 1964, little research has been done in describing the leadership roles of the women in the group. Because the Nation of Gods and Earths share much of the same core lessons as the Nation of Islam, Cynthia S'thembile West's piece, *"Revisiting Female Activism In The 1960s: The Newark Branch Of Islam"* will be reviewed and critiqued.

West's intention is to present the reader with a more in depth understanding of the Black Muslim women in the Newark Branch of the Nation of Islam (NOI) during the 1960s. She argues that the submissive and often non-exclusive image of women in the NOI is imbalanced. The work includes responses from 16 women who were in the NOI. Their understanding of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's teachings made them better

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[138] Ibid, 251.
[139] Ibid, 250.

mothers, more disciplined, and more responsible towards the progression of the Black community.[140]

West contends that though Muslim women were encouraged to be homemakers, they were also leaders within the home. She states, "As the central most important figures in domestic life, Black Muslim women were taught that they were the key to the black man's success."[141] The women interviewed actually felt empowered by being "the mothers of civilization" and being an example of love to their husbands and leaders to their children. Further, the MGT classes, which were specifically for women, encouraged the ideas of extended family and the notion of "the whole community raising a child." Mothers were in charge of being the children's first educator and the teachings of the NOI encouraged women to set the tone for the education of the children, who would in turn grow into the next generation of leaders.[142]

West also reveals that most of the Muslim women in Newark were independent businesswomen. They created catering, sewing, and babysitting businesses. The author attributes much of the economic growth of the Newark Branch of the NOI in the 1960s to the Black Muslim women, whose businesses provided the necessary economic stability for their families as well as employment for other Black people in the community. This entrepreneurial leadership displayed by the women is also attributed to the teachings of the NOI.[143]

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[140] Cynthia S'thembile West, "Revisiting Female Activism In The 1960s: The Newark Branch Of Islam," Black Scholar Vol. 26 Issue ¾ (2001): 41.
[141] Ibid, 42.
[142] Ibid, 44.
[143] Ibid, 44-6.

West, like most of the writers mentioned, expands the ideas of what leadership is and means in reference to Black women. Her ideas of leadership include home management, educating children and the community, creating Black businesses, and seeking higher education.[144]

West clearly insists that Black Women in the NOI were following the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and therefore had the strength, love, and inspiration to be active leaders in their homes and community. West seems to somewhat idealize the NOI and the lessons directed towards Muslim women. There is no mention of any sexism or any negative elements of the NOI, for that matter. Her portrayal of the NOI as an almost flawless institution, which only uplifted Black women, is imbalanced.[145] Though West does a good job of documenting the viewpoints of the Black Muslim women, the study may have been more telling if the interviewees were asked about some of their objections to or negative experiences with the NOI and its ideas of Black women's roles.

It is evident from the literature that Black women have historically been active leaders in their communities and in the work they deemed important. From the club movement, the beginnings of the civil rights movement, and the height of the civil rights movement and the Black power era, Black women played indispensible roles in the progression of their people.[146] The areas in which Black women led and the capacity in which they lead is undisputed in the literature, though there seems to be different ideas on what constituted leadership. Rouse uses the term "Participatory Leadership" and "group-

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[144] Ibid, 47-48.
[145] Ibid, 48.
[146] Thomas and Franklin, 2.

centered ideology" in describing Black women's leadership.[147] The core essence of the previous terms denote that Black women tend to be more inclusive of community when making decisions, devising tactics, and taking action. At any rate, the leadership of Black women in the literature is fluid, multifaceted, and complex. Black women lead households, independent businesses, organizations, schools, and entire movements. Black women served leadership roles from grassroots activists, such as Ella Baker, to very vocal positions of leadership such as Elaine Brown and Ida B. Wells. From journalists and educators to community organizers and mentors for other leaders, the literature is clear that though Black women have often been portrayed in a more submissive manner or in a way that is less important, the opposite is true.

The relevance in exploring and determining the past roles of Black women leaders to this research on the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths is in the consistent theme of Black women's indispensible yet undervalued leadership. There remains a huge gap in the literature on the Earths in particular, and their leadership roles specifically. The position of these women in the Nation, what their leadership capacities are, and their viewpoints on their leadership roles have barely been revealed or examined. As Thomas and Franklin clearly state in their introduction, "Over the last two decades historians and other scholars have begun to document and interpret the unique experiences of African women in the New World in general, and in the United States in particular."[148] This re-

[147] Rouse, 95-96.
[148] Thomas and Franklin, 2.

search intends to add another chapter to the ongoing narrative, which is that of Black women, their voices, and their "Participatory Leadership."[149]

WOMANISM AND AFRICANAWOMANISM

This part of the literature review focuses on the different views of several womanist scholars. Womanism is a new framework and includes points of view from an array of Black women intellectuals. First, seminal writings on womanism will be reviewed and analyzed for their content concerning Black women's experiences, especially in the realm of leadership. Secondly, the framework of Africana womanism will be explained and put into context of womanism as a whole. The relevance of this theoretical framework to this study on the Earth's leadership roles is also explained and justified.

The acclaimed Black woman author, Alice Walker, initially coined the term "womanism" in 1979.[150] Walker gives four parts to her definition. For the purposes of this paper, the four parts will be condensed in order to give a general understanding of Walker's philosophy. The first part of the definition stems from what Walker calls "womanish," meaning being "willful," "responsible", "serious, and "in charge." The second part of the definition emphasizes that a womanist loves women and prefers the ways, actions, and "strength" of that which derives from women. Walker makes sure to

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[149] Rouse, 56.
[150] Alice Walker, "womanism" In *The Womanist Reader*, ed. Layli Phillips (New York: Routledge Taylor and Frances Group, 2006), 19.

add that a womanist is "not a separatist" and "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people." The third element of womanism emphasizes love once more. This love is universal, includes self-love, and is unconditional. The final definition is simply "womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender."[151] This last description seems to express the close connection between feminism and womanism.

Since Walker's coining of the term, several Black women have expounded and shaped the ideas around womanism. According to the editor of The Womanist Reader, Layli Phillips, a commonality amongst womanist scholars is the consensus that traditional feminism, as defined by white women, is inappropriate in assessing the lived experiences of Black women. Historically, white women's fight for equal rights was initiated by upper class white women for other upper class white women. Poor women and women of color were rarely even considered in the plight for "gender equality." Womanism continues to have stark differences from traditional feminism, being that black women face a myriad of challenges that are unique to their realities. Further, womanism tends to be more universal in nature in that it demands the eradication of all forms of oppressions that effect Black women, not just sexism. In explaining what a womanist is, Layli Phillips says, "A womanist is triply concerned with herself, other Black women, and the entire Black race, female and male- but also all humanity, showing an ever-expanding and ultimately universal arc of political concern, empathy, and activism."[152]

Further, Phillips gives five characteristics of womanism that prove to be explanatory. The editor says that womanism is "antioppression," vernacular, "nonideological,"

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[151] Ibid, 19.
[152] Phillips, xxiii.

communitarian, and spiritualized.[153] According to Phillips, Black Women "have been at the bottom of every social hierarchy of man." Therefore, they have a unique human experience that incorporates a sense of compassion and struggle for all of humanity.[154] The writer also emphasizes the holistic and inclusive nature of womanism, claiming that anyone who embraces the five previous characteristics mentioned can also be a womanist.[155]

Another womanist, Delores S. Williams wrote a chapter entitled, Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices.[156] Though this article appears to focus on Christianity based on womanism, there are more universal moral and "spiritual" values implicated in the piece. In the beginning of her chapter, she qualifies her conception of womanism as being "intended to be suggestive and not conclusive," leaving a sense of openness to the growth of her concepts.[157]

Williams elaborates further on the definitions of womanism, as presented by Alice Walker. She points to the "codes and contents" within Walker's definitions. Williams analyzes the in-depth meaning of Walker's suggestions. Walker's quote, "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of slaves with me" suggests to Williams that Walker is referring to historic heroines such as Harriet Tubman and other Black women who exercised "female models of authority." Williams advises that it

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[153] Ibid, xxiv.
[154] Ibid, xxix.
[155] Ibid, xxxvii.
[156] Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices" In *The Womanist Reader*, ed. Layli Phillips (New York: Routledge Taylor and Frances Group, 2006), 117.
[157] Ibid, 118.

would be beneficial for womanist theologians and scholars to explore the roles of Black women who often sparked revolutionary movements and social mobilization.[158]

Williams also applauds Walker's connection of feminism to womanism, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of Black women telling their own story despite white feminist ideas of womanhood.[159] In the spirit of Walker's original ideas of womanism, Williams also expresses her appreciation of Walker's inclusiveness of the non-heterosexual community, Black men, and the nurturing and mothering aspects of womanism.[160] Finally, Williams poses her desire for Black women, in a collective and communal fashion, to reassess the bible from a womanist viewpoint, emphasizing the roles of notable women in the book in order to eventually reflect "the divine spirit that connects us all."[161]

The seeming weakness of Williams' piece is its emphasis on Christianity in discussing her concept of womanist theology. [162] In doing so, she inadvertently excludes the masses of Black women and women of color who are of different religious and spiritual backgrounds. This exclusion poses a critical flaw in her analysis, being that womanism is inherently inclusive of all Black women. By elevating Christianity, Williams is unconvincing in her claim that womanist theology can be a path that truly "connects us all."[163]

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[158] Ibid, 119.
[159] Ibid, 120.
[160] Ibid, 121.
[161] Ibid, 124.
[162] Ibid, 118.
[163] Ibid, 124.

In Clenora Hudson-Weem's book, Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves, the author outlines the key aspects of the theory in which she created in 1987.[164] Like the previous womanist writers, Hudson-Weems distinguishes between the various feminisms and womanism, citing the uniqueness of Black women's experience and the need to include the community in any form of legitimate liberation.[165] Unlike the previous writers, Hudson-Weems makes it clear that traditional feminism is not related to Africana womanism in that the history of feminism is wrought with the individual concerns of racist white women.[166] Hudson-Weems also deems it necessary to make other distinctions of Africana womanism from the classical definition of the term womanism itself. She criticizes Alice Walker's definition for being exclusively female-centered. Hudson-Weems is adamant that the term feminism is completely inappropriate in discussing Black women's lived experience.[167] The author points to the "general consensus" that Black people are adverse to feminism, seeing it as a white woman's movement, rather than a movement for the benefit of the Black community.[168]

Though cognizant of the multitude of oppressive forces that effect Black women, Hudson-Weems is clear in her assertion that racism is the primary enemy of black women. While feminists and many womanists insist that gender inequality is of primary concern to black women, the writer insists that Black women have never seen Black men

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[164] Ibid, 22.
[165] Ibid, 9
[166] Ibid, 21-2.
[167] Ibid, 24.
[168] Ibid, 25.

as their adversary, unlike white feminists who view male dominance as their greatest obstacle.[169]

Africana womanism is clearly a "race first" framework, which requires African descendants to solve their issues, such as sexism and classism, within an African context and exclusively within the Black community. This emphasis on African culture also distinguishes Africana womanism from both feminism and womanism. While feminism focuses little on culture, especially African culture, and womanism does not specifically acknowledge the primacy of African culture, Africana womanism suggests that Black women's liberation lies in embracing and utilizing African culture.[170] Speaking on the plight of Africana women, Hudson-Weems says, "the problems of these women are not inflicted upon them solely because they are women. They are victimized first and foremost because they are Black; they are further victimized because they are women living in a male-dominated society."[171]

In Africana womanism, gender, race, and class oppression are recognized as important factors, which effect Black women in a unique way. However, the framework calls for a hierarchical arrangement of these factors. These "antagonistic forces" are prioritized "as racism, classism, and sexism, respectively." This prioritization is the basis of Africana womanism.[172]

Hudson-Weems ends the theoretical part of her book with eighteen characteristics of Africana womanism. For the purposes of this paper, the primary characteristics appli-

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[169] Ibid, 25-26.
[170] Ibid, 27-30.
[171] Ibid, 30.
[172] Ibid, 30

cable to the research in this thesis will now be listed. The Africana womanist is family-centered, plays flexible roles, is respected and recognized, and is mothering and nurturing.[173]

In looking at the differences in womanist thought, one may view Africana womanism as being too hierarchical and "African-centered." This assessment may be true for those who, like Walker and Phillips, focus on the expansiveness of womanism in its intentions of being a liberation force for all humanity.[174] Africana womanism is a framework that is primarily concerned with Black people, and therefore more specific in its scope. Though Hudson-Weems recognizes that humanity can benefit from the application of Africana womanism, she asserts that the Black community should be the primary concern of Black women.[175]

It could be argued that Phillips' concepts of womanism are too inclusive. Conversely, it could be argued that Hudson-Weems' concepts of Africana womanism are too exclusive. Both schools of thought could benefit from the strengths of each other with hopes of finding a middle ground.

Now that different concepts of womanism have been examined, the selection of the primary framework of Africana womanism will be explained. In choosing a framework for this thesis, the literature on Africana womanism as presented by Clenora Hudson-Weems, seems to be the most appropriate due to its focus on the primacy of race and culture in assessing and aiding black women. According to Hudson-Weems, "*Africana*

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[173] Ibid, 55-73.
[174] Phillips, xxix.
[175] Hudson-Weems, 31.

Womanism" is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women."[176] Though it could be argued that the culture of Islam adopted by the Earths is not "African," it must be considered that this brand of "Islam" is only loosely related to classical Islam and is considered a Black way of life, rather than a religion. The women in the Nation of Gods and Earths are of a Black centered ideology, as their lessons directly address the primacy of race. The Earths, as all Black women, face the dilemmas of classism and sexism, as well. Yet, because the concepts of the inherent evil of white supremacy is so emphasized, and the poverty of Black people is so prioritized in the Earth's cosmology, Africana womanism is the primary lens in which this research views their leadership roles.

Certain elements of Phillips' definition of womanism overlap with or parallel Africana womanism, and were also utilized in understanding the Earths. Specifically, those elements that emphasize the nonideological, nurturing, and communal aspects of Phillips' womanism were used as means of analysis in this research.[177]

LITERATURE ON THE EARTHS

The literature on the Earths to date is minute, and the literature explaining their leadership roles in any detail is even smaller. Men, most of whom are or were members of the Nation, wrote all of the books on the Nation of Gods and Earths reviewed in this study. Three of the seminal works on the Nation of Gods and Earths will be reviewed for

[176] Hudson-Weems, 24.
[177] Phillips, xxxvii.

their content, or lack there of, on the Earths and the roles they have played in the Nation to date.

Michael Muhammad Knight's book, The Five Percenter: Islam, Hip Hop And The Gods of New York, gives a history of the Nation of Gods and Earths, deriving most of his writing from interviews, articles and other works by Gods. Of the 18 chapters, only one, "Mothers of Civilization", discusses the Earth's in any detail at all, which is not surprising being that only the Gods are mentioned in the sub-title. The Earths are not mentioned in either the title or sub-title.

In the chapter, Knight paints an extremely patriarchical picture of Father Allah and many of the Gods. Women are mainly depicted as carriers of children. It is common to hear Gods say that they did not come from a woman, but *through* a woman, nearly discounting the role of the Earth in reproduction. Knight admits that much of the history of the group is passed down orally, so the accuracy of the founder, Father Allah's words is often debated.

According to Knight, both men and women with "earth friendly attitudes" have challenged these male-dominant ideas.[178] Some women have stepped forward exposing the unfair inequalities found in the Nation. Goddess Earth Equality challenged the common expression, "the woman is secondary, but most necessary."[179] Equality claims she is Goddess and that her role in the family is equal to God. She pleads for recognition as one who is sincerely valued, and not just a vessel for life and a caretaker. According to Knight, the issue of Earths calling themselves a Goddess remains a highly controversial

[178] Knight, 221.
[179] Ibid, 221.

issue in the Nation, for it puts the woman in unison with the man, rather than beneath him.

According to Knight, Gods, such as Prince A. Cuba, have publicly expressed their views that "Original Man" means the entire Black race, not just women. Cuba's highly controversial stances on women in the Nation also include "Dismissing the question of 'Goddess vs. Earth' as semantics." Other Gods, such as Divine Prince, challenge the idea that women cannot be leaders, citing several instances in which Black women have led their families, economic ventures, and communities in the absence of men.[180]

Though Knight includes members of NGE who have positive and egalitarian ideas about the roles of the Earths in his study, the author points out that sexism still abounds in the culture. He also points out that much of the culture was developed amongst incarcerated men, who survive in a reality with no women. Knight feels that as the culture of the Nation of Gods and Earths becomes more diverse, some of the sexist ideas be challenged furher.

Though it does not totally exclude the role of the Earths, Knight's work is limited in its detail. Knight depicts some unnamed Earths as being leaders in the home and gives few examples of Earth's writing in their own words. This lack of detail gives even more justification for my research on the Earth's leadership roles.

Wakeel Allah's book, In The Name Of Allah: A History of Clarence 13x And The Five Percenters is the longest and arguably most thorough of the books on the Five Percenters. However, this book fails to address the topic of the Earths and their role in the

[180] Ibid, 221.

group. Unlike Knight's book, there is no single chapter devoted to the Earths in Allah's work.

The times that the Earths are mentioned in Wakeel Allah's book are few. The author mentions Allah's wife Dora in some leadership capacity, as Dora was the first to join the Nation of Islam. Because of her membership, Father Allah joined the group upon his return from the Vietnam war. This was the beginning of Father Allah's journey as founder of the Nation of Gods and Earths, being that his group's foundational lessons would grow out of the Nation of Islam.[181]

Another instance in the book where women are briefly mentioned is in the description of the definition of what an Earth is, according to Father Allah. The Black woman was the Earth, for she gives birth to life and receives her power from the sun, who is the Black Man. This brief and elementary description was followed by assertions that the Black woman should be respected and loved, though she submits to the Black man.[182]

The last place women are mentioned with any length was in the books appendices, in which Father Allah is interviewed. In the section of the interview on marriage in the United States, the founder is said to have expressed his feelings that women have been put in a position of power over men. He cites his belief that women have been given the unlimited power to put men in jail. This small part of the interview is brief and telling only of a small part of Father Allah's teachings on women.[183]

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[181] Wakeel, A., 68.
[182] Ibid, 141.
[183] Ibid, 418-19

Wakeel Allah's book does not highlight the roles of women and barely mentions them at all. This type of exclusion is typical of much of the historical texts on Black women, which until relatively recently have not highlighted the several leadership roles of women. This gap in the research on the Nation of Gods and Earths is blatantly apparent and gives even more justification for the research conducted in my study.

In Supreme Understanding's book, Knowledge of Self: A Collection of Wisdom On The Science of Everything In Life, Gods and Earths from all around the nation give their viewpoints on life through personal essays. This book's importance lies in these personal accounts, giving a more intimate perspective on the Nation. There are at least seven accounts given by Earths in this book. Thus far, this book shines more light on the women in the organization than most of the other books produced by male authors. Examples of some of these women's perspectives in the book will now be given.

One Earth, Beautiful SeeAsia of Newark, New Jersey, writes of the "feminization" of the male in Black society. From her perspective, the growing amount of effeminate Black men is damaging the Black family and the Black image in society. She gives examples of movies such as *Beverley Hills Cop* and the numerous *Madea* movies to back up her assessment of the current trend to emasculate Black men.[184]

In an essay titled "Miss Independent: Shattering the Illusion", I Medina Peaceful Earth of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania explains how she feels that Black women have been encouraged to be overly independent, thus negatively affecting the Black community. She feels that "interdependence" between man and woman has been lost, and that "inde-

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[184] Supreme Understanding Allah, ed., *Knowledge of Self* (Atlanta, GA: Supreme Design Publishing, 2009), 37-8.

pendence" has been encouraged amongst Black women to an extent of imbalance. Peaceful Earth does not discourage women from being their own individuals. Rather, she points out what she sees as the danger in a trend that sees Black men as obsolete.[185]

A third example of the Earths' voice in Supreme Understanding's book is in Queen Necessity Born Earth's article, "Married at The Age of Sixteen." This article is a testament to the commitment of being a mother.[186] Born Earth speaks of "marriage" in the sense of her union with her child, rather than the classical sense of being married to a man. Her message is one of encouragement to young single Black mothers, who are often overwhelmed by their circumstances. The writer offers advice on breast-feeding, education, and familial leadership to young Black mothers.[187]

Following in the footsteps of the Black clubwomen writer, Ida. B. Wells, and other Black women writers of the past, the Earths in this book express their feelings on issues in the Black community. Though the term "leadership" is not mentioned often, their messages of male/female unity, motherhood, and self-love are meant to encourage others in their personal growth. Their writings are personal testaments to their way of life and how it has influenced their thoughts and actions.

Admittedly, men wrote the majority of these essays. What makes this volume unique is that it is much more inclusive of Earths, their ideas, and roles than any of the other books written on the Nation of Gods and Earths to date. This book, published in 2009, paints a more holistic picture of the group than previous books that emphasize a

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[185] Ibid, 45.
[186] Ibid, 112.
[187] Ibid, 113.

more patriarchical viewpoint. This most recent book publication may indicate a growing interest and more balanced representation of Earths in research yet to come.

This study intends to reveal more of the viewpoints of the Earths, focusing directly on, not only their views, but on their leadership activities. What is missing from all three of the previous texts mentioned is an in depth analysis of the Earths in contemporary society. This thesis will reveal not only the views and leadership roles of the Earths, but will extract the core meaning of their involvement and ideas in the Nation of Gods and Earths.

The Earths interviewed are carrying on the legacy of their foremothers by applying their ideals and principles in practical ways that aide the Black community. The Earths are organizers, mentors, teachers, independent businesswomen, "other mothers," and nurturers of the communities in which they are active. They exemplify the principles of Africana womanism and Black women's leadership by working for the benefit of the collective Black community as means of survival and progression.

The literature on Black women, their leadership, and Africana womanism show clearly that Black women transform the consciousness and experiences of those in the Black community. The concept of unity is key to Black women's efforts in the community, which surpasses ideology and perspective and erases the rigid lines of separation so common in organizations.[188] The Earths embody this concept, offering service to those in need regardless of affiliation or belief. This collective-centered outlook provides an alternative example of leadership to those they touch.

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[188] Phillips, xxv.

SUMMARY

Chapter two explored the literature relevant to this study. In exploring the leadership roles of the women in the Nations of Gods and Earths, the literature reveals key points on the history, aspects, theory, and definition of Black women's leadership in general and the Earth's leadership in particular. The seminal works on Black women's leadership illustrate the communal, flexible, practical, pro-active, and community-centered nature of Black women leaders.[189] Further, Black women's leadership is non-hierarchical and less ego-centered than traditional leadership paradigms.[190]

The history of Black women's leadership revealed several examples of individual and collective Black women who have maintained invaluable leadership positions. These women's leadership methods and ideology verify the literature, which emphasizes the uniqueness of Black women's leadership.

In researching Black women's ideas and actions on leadership, the literature on womanism further reveals the nature of Black women's leadership. Though the authors agree that womanism addresses the multitude of oppressive forces that affect Black women, and emphasize the liberation-centered nature of womanism, Clenora Hudson-Weems' Africana womanism is more hierarchical in grouping those oppressions; placing race as the most oppressive, class as the second most oppressive, and gender as the third most oppressive.[191] Traditional womanism proves more "nonideological" than Africana

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[189] Abdullah, 1; Allen, 2; Rosser-Mimms, 19.
[190] Rosser-Mimms, 19.
[191] Hudson-Weems, 30.

womanism, which is more focused on Black people's liberation than the freedom of all peoples.[192] The Black-centered ideology of Clenora Hudson-Weems includes limitations on the idea of womanism, which are more practical from a "race first" perspective, yet there are limitations nonetheless. Though more focused on the Black community specifically, Hudson-Weems' Africana womanism is more applicable to study women who obviously view racism as their primary enemy.

The racism of white America and its subjugation of the Black race lead to the creation of the Nation of Gods and Earths. Two of the works reviewed on the Nation are historical and explanatory in nature, documenting the advent and growth of the group, and exploring its beliefs and values. The third book reviewed was an anthology of testimonies given by members in the Nation. All three of these works gave minimal exposure to the Earths, and even less exposure to their leadership roles. This large gap in the literature on the women in the group is a key factor that has lead to the writing of this thesis.

[192] Phillips, xxiv; Hudson-Weems, 27-30.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

INTRODUCTION

This phenomenological study examined the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The women of the nation of Gods and Earths have been given little focus in both the literature on the group and the academic realm. The positions and perspectives of these women have been ignored or minimized in much of the available literature. The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The following section also elaborates on why the proposed research design fulfills the goals of the study.

Chapter three presents the details of the population being researched. The rationale of the sampling methods utilized, personal interviews and participant observation are explained in detail. The methods of data collection are explained and the instruments selected will be discussed in detail. The internal and external validity are explored. Elaboration on the data analysis used in the study is also discussed, explaining the appropriateness of the research design.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods of this study were qualitative in nature. Qualitative methods are most appropriate for this study because they intend to interpret the meaning of certain phenomena that occur in the world. Qualitative research attempts to ascertain the

feelings and perspectives that a group has about "a social or human problem."[193] This study is interested in the phenomenon of leadership as it pertains to the women interviewed; therefore, qualitative research methods were applicable in this research.

As previously mentioned, the phenomenon used in this study was leadership. The chosen leadership paradigm is one based on the unique characteristics of Black women's leadership. Black women's leadership tends to be proactive in nature, group-centered, links theory and practice, and utilizes both traditional and non-traditional methods. Black women's leadership differs from traditional leadership paradigms, which tend to be hierarchical and ego-centered.[194]

In a study conducted by West on the female activism within a Newark branch of the Nation of Islam, the qualitative method of personal interviews was utilized in her research. She found that Black Muslim women were not submissive or passive in their relationship with the organization. West's conclusions came strictly from qualitative data. Though the concept of Black women's leadership was not mentioned in so many words, the elements of cooperation and non-competitive means of leading were noted throughout the paper. In exploring the activism of these women, quantitative methods were not necessary, as statistical data would have been inappropriate.[195]

West's study is parallel to this study in that qualitative methods were the best means to address her research problem. The attribute of "activism" was best assessed

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[193] Creswell, 37.
[194] Abdullah,1.
[195] West.

qualitatively.[196] In a similar fashion, the attribute of "leadership" in this study is suitable, as quantitative methods are used specifically in analyzing data that can be represented numerically. Both West's research and this study are appropriately qualitative in nature.

DESIGN

The design selected for this study was phenomenological and non-experimental. This design was chosen because non-experimental designs do not require random selection. [197] The method of random selection was not appropriate in this study, as the access to Earths is not readily available. Earths initially contacted by the researcher suggested the other Earths interviewed.

A phenomenological design accomplished the goal of exploring the women's leadership roles in The Nation of Gods and Earths. Phenomenology seeks to study the subject from a philosophical point of view, which allows the subjects to define reality for themselves. Eight women who identify as members of the Nation of Gods and Earths were allowed to express their personal stories and feelings about their roles and experiences in the group and in their respective communities.

This design was also selected because it complimented the theoretical framework of Africana womanist thought, which emphasizes the viewpoint of Black women. Phenomenology is concerned with a phenomenon from the worldview of the subjects being

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[196] Ibid, 1.
[197] Trochim and Donnelly, 187.

researched. Both phenomenology and Africana womanism focus on extracting true meaning of the people interviewed in this study.[198]

POPULATION

In choosing the appropriate population, both the theoretical population and the proposed population were considered. The theoretical population in this study is any woman who claims to have played leadership roles in The Nation of Gods and Earths. For purpose of this study, "leadership" is defined according to the definitive elements of Black women's leadership. Black women's leadership is unique in that "1) it is proactive in nature, 2) it is group-centered, 3) it requires a linkage between theory and practice and 4) it utilizes both traditional and non-traditional methods."[199] Because there is no official roster of the organization, the exact number of members, male or female, is impossible to calculate. The proposed population in this study was any Earth who claimed to have exhibited leadership in the group in the United States of America. The sample was eight women who played a leadership position with the group. The initial interviews were of Earths that the researcher met previously at different community events. The Earths interviewed referred the writer to other eligible Earths.

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[198] Creswell, 156-7.
[199] Abdullah, 1.

SAMPLING

Justification for the Number of Interviewees

In interviewing and ascertaining the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths, the researcher was more concerned with getting the core meaning of the subject matter with collecting a large amount of classically measurable data, as qualitative research tends to do.[200] "Essence" in this sense means the true nature and underlying meaning of the subject. Qualitative research, as that which phenomenology entails, is concerned with getting an in-depth understanding of the issues.[201] Generalizing was not the aim of this study. Rather, the aim is to get a deeper perception of women leaders within the group. Having a large number of interviewees would not be practical as it is desirable in phenomenological research to not neglect quality for the sake of quantity.[202] Therefore, the researcher concluded that 8 women be interviewed for this thesis.

The sample of this research was women who consider themselves to have played leadership roles within The Nation of Gods and Earths in the United States of America. Therefore, it was not sufficient to merely be an Earth, the interviewee had to be be an active member in some sort of leadership position. The women must have shown elements of planning, organizing, and/or execution within the group and/or the community. Only those women who spearheaded such goals were eligible to be interviewed, limiting the number of women who were included in this research. The women interviewed were

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[200] Ibid, 156-7.
[201] Trochim and Donnelly, 142-3.
[202] Creswell, 157.

considered to have displayed leadership by Earths previously interviewed. The interviewees had to verify that they have played leadership roles.

Another factor in determining how many women in the group was to be interviewed was the researcher's access to the population required for the study. Several Earths were contacted in order to ascertain the number of Earths that reside in the United States and Atlanta, Georgia specifically. Not one Earth could give this information or direct the researcher to an individual who had accurate access to this information. This presented a challenge in extracting the women leaders that were eligible for interviews.

The researcher had to rely on "snowball sampling," meaning that other women in the organization provided the prospective interviewees contacted.[203] In connecting with these women, only few have considered themselves or exhibited leadership roles. Because the researcher was dependent on this method of getting in touch with the population desired, it somewhat limited the access that was required to interview the maximum number of subjects for a phenomenological study.[204]

A final factor in interviewing the sample was that having eight interviewees is acceptable according to Polkinghorne.[205] The acceptable number of interviewees for a phenomenological study is between 5 and 25. Therefore, the suggested number of this study does not deviate from the classic requirements of phenomenological research.

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[203] Trochim and Donnelly, 50.

[204] D.E. Polkinghorne**,** Phenomenological research methods. In R.S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (New York; Plenium Pres., 1989).

[205] Ibid, 41-50.

In conclusion, the research sought a deeper comprehension of the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths from their personal viewpoint. Factors such as, 1) access to the specific population, 2) The unknown number of members, and 3) the eligibility of the women sought must be taken into account in choosing the appropriate number of interviewees. The previous factors coupled with the fact that the number of interviewees suggested by the researcher fell within the range expected by most phenomenological studies, justifies the number of 8 interviewees for this thesis.

DATA COLLECTION

Before any data was collected, measures to protect the confidentiality of the participants in the study were taken. The participants were fully informed of the nature of the study and the purpose of their participation in the study. The interviewees were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. An informed consent form was provided to each participant explaining the study. Without a signature, the particular woman could not participate in the study.

The primary data for this research came from personal interviews. The method of recording the personal interviews selected was the traditional procedure of asking specific questions of the interviewee. The interviewer digitally recorded the answers given. The data was recorded using a digital audio recorder and paper and pencil. At the end of the interview, the participant was given the opportunity to offer any additional comments.

This data aided the researcher in describing and assessing the behavior and rhetoric of the women discussed, in relation to the phenomenon of Black women's leadership.

DATA ANALYSIS

The methodological approach utilized in this analysis consisted of analyzing themes based on "clusters of meaning." The answers of the various women who were interviewed were compared and contrasted. The concept of leadership was the phenomenon in this case. Important quotes made by the interviewees were highlighted. How the participants experienced the phenomenon was noted. The meanings of significant statements were formulated and clustered into themes, which mirrored the study's interview questions. From these statements, themes, and overviews of those themes, a description of the participants' viewpoints were described. From an in depth analysis of the important themes put into proper context, a final discussion of the women's views on the subject was written to get to the "essence" of this phenomenon. This final analysis describes what the participants experienced in relation to their leadership and the way in which leadership was carried out by the interviewees.[206] An overview of common theoretical elements, implications, and suggestions for future research follow the final discussion.[207]

[206] Creswell, 159.
[207] Ibid, 62.

VALIDITY THREATS

According to Trochim and Donnelly, validity is "The best available approximation of the truth of a given proposition, inference or conclusion."[208] A threat to that "approximation of the truth" is known as a validity threat.

An internal validity threat is one that could compromise approximate truth in the case of causal relationships.[209] There were two relevant internal validity threats in this study. The first threat was the possibility that the researcher would fail to ask appropriate questions that would fulfill the purpose of the study. Included in this threat is also a possibility of asking leading questions, which could affect the accuracy of the answers provided by the interviewees.

The researcher attempted to mediate these validity threats by researching interviews that have an emphasis on Black Women's leadership roles. This gave some guidelines in forming the questions for this particular study. The interview questionnaire was thoroughly read and examined by the researcher to flush out any unnecessary or leading questions.

An external validity threat "is an explanation of how you might be wrong in making a generalization."[210] It could be argued that because random selection was not used in this study, that the findings might be limited to the ideas and opinions of only the women interviewed, rather than Earths in general. Interviewing Earths from different regions, of different ages, and who played different leadership roles mediated this threat.

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[208] Trochim and Donnelly, G-10.
[209] Ibid, 22.
[210] Ibid, 36.

SUMMARY

Chapter 3 discussed the research methods of the study. The design, which was non-experimental, was explained, as well as a detailed description of its appropriateness in this study. The theoretical population, which was all the women in the organization who played leadership roles, and the proposed population, which was the women in the organization who played leadership roles in North America was also presented. The sampling methods were explained and justified. The data collection methods of personal interviews were also explained and justified. The possible validity threats, both internal and external were given, as well as ways of reducing them. Finally, the data analysis methods, appropriateness for such methods, and the field notes were discussed. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that the leadership roles of the women in the Nation of Gods and Earths are consistent with the concepts of both Africana womanism and Black women's leadership. The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in the Nation of Gods and Earths. The interview questions in this study were as follows:

1) How long have you been a member of The Nation of Gods and Earths (N.G.E.)? How were you introduced to the N.G.E.?

2) What are some of the elements in the N.G.E. that encouraged you to become a member?

3) The lessons of the N.G.E. teach that the Black man is God and the Black woman is Earth. Could you give your understanding on these claims?

4) Some in the N.G.E. claim that the woman is "secondary but most necessary." Do you agree with this notion? Why or Why not?

5) What is the N.G.E.'s view of the dominant society and the oppressions there of (race, class, gender)? Are these views consistent with your personal ideas?

6) Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not? How do you lead?

This research utilized a qualitative design. It is a non-experimental phenomenological study. The researcher approached women at different community functions who were members in The Nation of Gods and Earths. The initial Earths interviewed referred other Earths to the researcher. This snowballing method was used to select the eight interviewees. Three of the eight women interviewed were interviewed in person in different settings. These settings include Georgia State University's library and one of the interviewee's place of business. The other five were interviewed via phone. The women interviewed lived in North America. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. Participants signed an interview consent form, informing them of the study and their rights as interviewees. The participants who were interviewed by phone either provided their signature by fax or provided an electronic signature via email. All of the interviews were audio and were digitally recorded and transcribed.

Chapter 4 includes three separate sections. The first section presents the profiles of the interviewees in the order that they were interviewed. In order to keep the identities of the women confidential, pseudonyms were chosen for each of the eight women. The second section includes data from the interviews. The different interview questions were categorized as themes with supporting statements and an analysis of the interview questions. The fourth chapter also highlights the two most pertinent questions to the research, including a table to offer a simple categorization explaining the meaning of the questions. The final section includes a summary of the chapter.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Eight black women who have taken leadership roles in The Nation of Gods and Earths were interviewed. The initial interviewees suggested other women in the organization who have displayed leadership. The suggested Earths who identified themselves as playing leadership roles were interviewed. These women hail from different parts of the United States. The requirement for participation was to be a woman, to have exhibited leadership, and to be a current member of The Nation of Gods and Earths.

The interviewees were between 25 and approximately 46 years old (two of the women would not reveal their ages). One of the Earths refused to give her age. The participants were born in different parts of the United States, with varying backgrounds. The women indicated they had been a part of The Nation of Gods and Earths for different amounts of time. Below are personal profiles of the individual women. A demographics table detailing some of the particular characteristics of the Earths interviewed is included in appendix D of this study.

Infinite. Infinite is a 30-year-old, single Black woman who received a Bachelor's degree in Arts and Sciences at a state school approximately one year ago. The participant is currently a bartender. Infinite plans to go to school for her Masters degree in the near future. The participant lives with her two children and her mother.

Infinite grew up as an "army brat," traveling from city to city. The participant rarely saw her father due to his military line of work. Infinite grew up with no "cultural base." It was this lack of a cultural identity that made Infinite gravitate to The Nation of

Gods and Earths, which gave her knowledge "about our history as black people, about our history of us being the mothers and fathers of mankind."[211]

Infinite has been in The Nation of Gods and Earths for approximately ten years. She has served on various Earth councils and has planned several events including the groups' "Family Days." The participant, along with other Earths, has held a daycare summer camp for a few years, which is based on the lessons of The Nation of Gods and Earths. Infinite is currently a mentor to seven "at risk" youth. Speaking on her students, Infinite says, "I have 2 young men that are getting their GED from a military academy and I'm working with a couple of females on building up their self-image." Infinite also has written on the Nation for various publications. The participant also works independently with other organizations concerning projects such as feeding the poor.[212]

Natural. Natural is a 34-year-old woman who lives with her husband and newly born baby boy. The participant has her own catering business. Natural is married to a career political activist who is not a part of The Nation of Gods and Earths. Natural went to school at a community college, where she first came across the lessons of The Nation of Gods and Earths.[213]

Natural and her female siblings grew up in a single parent home. The participant rarely saw her father. Her mother worked different jobs at different times "to make ends

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[211] Infinite, interview by researcher, 16 November 2008, Atlanta, GA, recording.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Natural, interview by researcher, 22 December 2008, Atlanta, GA, recording.

meet." She said she learned her love of history and culture from her mother, which led to a "natural attraction to The Nation of Gods and Earths."[214]

Natural has been in The Nation of Gods and Earths for 12 years. When she first came across the group's number system, "supreme mathematics," she was studying independently. Natural is an extremely active Earth in the group, serving as secretary, organizing "countless" Nation functions and programs; she is a frequent writer and editor in one of the group's publications, and co-founded the daycare where Infinite works. Others who observe her leadership have called Natural the "ring leader." Natural claims that she never tries to lead, she is just "outgoing" and "does not wait for others to get what is needed done."[215]

Queen. Queen is a 31-year-old Earth. She is married to a God in The Nation of Gods and Earths. Queen is currently pregnant and has a few months before giving birth to a boy. Queen is a college graduate. Queen grew up in a Christian family. She grew up with both parents in the home. She describes her upbringing as "middle class."[216]

Queen is currently a local representative for the organization in a major Northeastern city. She began organizing in her community in 2003 when she came across "her God and educator." After four years of learning from her mate/educator, Queen officially identified with The Nation of Gods and Earths. She became a "local representative"

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[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Queen, interview by researcher, 13 January 2009, Atlanta, GA, recording.

when fellow Earths asked her to take the leadership role. Queen plans events for the group, organizes the details of many functions, and aids in cooking for the events.[217]

Queen is currently a supervisor for several daycare centers. The participant is also a writer and has created Internet blogs. The participant has written essays for different Nation of Gods and Earths publications. Queen describes herself as a "community activist." Further, the participant takes pride in "providing reassurance for women who are cultural and even religious… Letting them know they can be beautiful in their modesty."[218]

Freedom. Freedom is 30 years old. She is a Black woman who was born and raised in a Northeastern city. Freedom's mate is currently incarcerated. Freedom lives alone and has no children. She attended a university in her hometown when she was 19-years-old. During that time, she encountered The Nation of Gods and Earths through her cousin.

Freedom grew up going to Catholic school on the west coast before moving to the east coast for college. Because she was disappointed in the "lies and deceit" found in Christianity, she "stopped believing in God, but I was not an atheist." Her male cousin introduced her to a school in which The Nation of Gods and Earths taught. Freedom received her Bachelor's degree in psychology and received a Masters degree in social work.[219]

Freedom is now a council member of an Earth organization, in which she leads and mediates. She is in charge of "Earth security." Freedom and other Earths serve as

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Freedom, interview by researcher, 3 March 2009, Atlanta GA, recording.

security at Nation of Gods and Earths functions. They are responsible for "checking all the women that come into the cipher," meaning they make sure no illegal substances or weapons are brought into the functions.[220]

Moonlight. Moonlight would not give her exact age. The participant has been in The Nation of Gods and Earths for twenty-seven years. Moonlight has been with the same God for at least that long. The couple has conceived five children in that time. The oldest is the only male and is twenty-five years old. The girls are twenty-three, eighteen, nine, and eight respectively.

Moonlight talked quite lovingly of her upbringing, praising her mother and grandmother as "super extra strong women." Both she and her mate come from stable households with both parents present. Moonlight now serves as an advisor and mentor to younger Earths in the Nation. The participant has served the group in several capacities, but her primary focus has been on the youth. Moonlight created a celebration specifically for the youth in her community. It is celebrated annually on her firstborn's birthday. Moonlight has organized food and clothing drives over the years. Speaking on her love of children, Moonlight says, "I was the house on the street where the kids knew they could come and be safe and happy. There would be 20 or 30 kids at my house after school!"[221]

Moonlight is also an independent businesswoman. The participant sells clothing, jewelry, and other products. Moonlight has recently opened a new store in the town to which she has relocated.

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Moonlight, interview by researcher, 14 September 2009, Atlanta, GA, recording.

Love. Love is a 25-year-old single woman. She lives by herself in a mid-western metropolitan city. Love was a devout Christian. "I was saved at age 16," says Love.[222]

Love grew up with both parents in the home. She has four older brothers and one younger sister. Love first came into contact with the lessons of The Nation of Gods and Earths when she was a girl. Her uncle was in the Nation of Islam, so Love was briefly exposed to the core lessons at a young age. In her college years she came across those same teachings again. The participant became distraught when her father died, and the participant began "searching within… I gave upon Christianity because of the hypocrisy, but where to go?" Love's professor at the time taught her that "religion makes you a mental slave" and referred her to a 5% website. That moment began her journey within the Nation.[223]

Love is still in college and will graduate soon. She will get her degree in criminal justice. Her goal is to be a court administrator. She plans to do research that would help imprisoned members of The Nation of Gods and Earths. With the money she earns, she will build a school based on the Nation of Gods and Earth's cosmology.

Asia. Asia is a 25-year-old single parent of one girl. She sells crocheted items, handmade jewelry and is an entrepreneur. Asia's older brother introduced Asia to the teachings of The Nation of Gods and Earths when she was a junior in high school.

Asia grew up with her brother in her mother's two-bedroom apartment. Asia never knew her father. The participant's mother was not religious. Asia was not exposed to any formal doctrine that interested her until her older sibling taught her the lessons of

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[222] Love, interview by researcher, 19 September 2009, Atlanta, GA, recording.
[223] Ibid.

The Nation of Gods and Earths. Asia says, "It just made sense, the teachings, I mean. No invisible thing put food on our table. My mom worked hard for that. A mystery God always seemed farfetched to me."[224]

Asia is an artist and designs all of her wares herself. Asia designs and produces fashion shows and vends at various functions. Asia also designs flyers for the Nation of Gods and Earth's programs. She promotes and organizes benefit concerts. These concerts raise money for and awareness about homeless children.[225]

Jewel. Jewel is an older Earth, who like Moonlight, will not reveal her age. She is single. Jewel has had 3 children, all of whom are grown with children of their own. Jewel lived most of her life in the Northeast, but now lives in a major Southeastern city.

Jewel was exposed to The Nation of Gods and Earths in 1980 as a junior in high school. The participant became friends with female classmates "whose diet, dress, and demeanor were divine." Jewel, who was raised by a single mother, was always encouraged to think for herself. "My mom taught me that Black was beautiful and that we should be proud of who we are…. So, naturally, I was drawn to mathematics, which teaches us we are the Mothers of Civilization."[226]

Jewel has been a registered nurse for 15 years. She attributes her career path to the lessons of The Nation of Gods and Earths, which taught her, "to do for self and help others." Jewel holds health workshops for Earths, teaching them about basic health, nutrition, and child rearing. Jewel advises younger Gods and Earths on marriage issues,

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[224] Asia, interview by researcher, 30 October 2009, Atlanta, GA, recording.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Jewel, interview by researcher, 3 November 2009, Atlanta, GA, recording.

economic matters, and organizational tactics. Jewel also volunteers in public schools, educating teenage girls on health and safe sex.[227]

OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership roles of the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths from their viewpoints. From the six interview questions asked, six headings were created. Under each heading are significant quotes and an analysis of the key answers given to the questions.

1) *How long have you been a member of The Nation of Gods and Earths (N.G.E.)? How were you introduced to the N.G.E.?*

In order to get a time frame of which each member was a part of the organization, the participants gave the number of years they have been affiliated with the group. The way in which the participants were introduced to the group was also asked in order to put the participant's leadership roles and experiences into context.

Three of the women were introduced to the Nation between 3 and 7 years ago. Three of the women were introduced to the Nation between 10 and 12 years ago. Two of the participants were introduced to the Nation for over 25 years.

The participants came into contact with the Nation in various ways. Infinite, Natural, and Love actually came into contact with parts of the lessons initially through means of researching and reading on their own. Infinite says,

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[227] Ibid.

> …especially at that time in my life when I was like 19. I was wondering why am I working like a slave. Why am I experiencing such turmoil? Who am I really? I was really wondering a lot of things. A friend of mine would listen to my concerns and one day he just gave me a pamphlet called the five percent concepts, and some literature about noble drew Ali all the way up to the Father Allah. That began my journey….[228]

Natural has a similar account,

> My friend at the college I was attending had the supreme mathematics and supreme alphabet scribbled in her journal. At the time, I was reading Stolen Legacy and Ra U Nefer's MtuNtr, so I was already searching for my identity. You know, my roots. When I copied those notes that my friend had down, I applied them to my astrological chart and what I already was studying, and it just hit me. It all added up. I began reading all I could on the Five Percenters, which was hard cuz it wasn't a lot on them at the time. This was before I met any Gods or received my official lessons.

Male members of the group introduced Freedom, Queen, and Asia into the clture. The Earths will tell you that most Earths come in The Nation of Gods and Earths through male members. Freedom says,

> My cousin who is four years younger than me told me he wanted me to come build with the Gods. Before we got off the phone he was like 'please don't wear a short skirt.' I heard things I never heard before. I was impressed by the level of knowledge they had on history and life, you know? So I started to listen to my cousin more intently. I was hanging with the Gods as much as I could. That's when I decided to join…[229]

Her "God" introduced Queen to the Nation. The participant says,

> I began organizing with young people in 2003. I encountered a brother who became my educator. He is now my God. I did the knowledge for a year before I fully considered myself a part [of NGE]. Previously, I only heard of it thru hip-hop. Rakim, Wu-Tang. I was always independent. I felt I did not need others to help me. But, just being around my God and learning math. It was not a forced situation. He was not like, 'sista I'm gonna teach you…'[230]

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[228] Infinite.
[229] Natural.
[230] Queen

The two participants who have been exposed to the Nation for over 25 years had different stories about how they joined The Nation of Gods and Earths. Other young Earths while in high school introduced jewel into the Nation. The participant says,

> I was like wow! These young girls was changing their names to Queen Asiatic this and Lovely Earth that… They were swift with the tongue, you know? Smart! They made it so if you ate swine, you were a straight fool… Their heads stayed wrapped and revealing clothes was a no no! All I knew is I had to get with them sisters.

Moonlight recalls having to receive "pieces of the knowledge for mad (many) years." The participant recalls,

> I'm old school! (Participant laughs) On my block we didn't have any elders. We was all young. So we would just get pieces. We was close to New York, so sound just traveled. Information would come from here and there. We would get papers, but we ain't know if it was right and exact. I can't tell you this God or that God brought me into this Nation. Me and my people were getting what we could get when we could get it, know what I'm saying?[231]

Six out of eight of the Earths interviewed were introduced to The Nation of Gods and Earths between the ages of 16 and 20. The recruitment of women at this age is consistent with male recruitment, as most Gods were introduced to the group as teenagers. In fact, Father Allah's original students, known as "The First Born" were youth. It was Father Allah's belief that the youth were more apt to accept his teachings than older people in the community who were set in their ways.[232] All of the Earths interviewed were younger than 30 when they joined The Nation of Gods and Earths. These women were seeking an ideological foundation. The Nation provided them with an identity and platform on which they could build their ideas and further their community involvement.

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[231] Moonlight.
[232] Beloved Allah, 1.

2) *What are some of the elements in The Nation of Gods and Earths that encouraged you to become a member?*

When the participants were asked about the elements of The Nation of Gods and Earths that attracted them, there was a consensus that the group's ideology was liberating and applicable to their daily lives. The themes of "looking for something that makes sense" and "looking for my true self" were common amongst all the Earths.

> I was attracted to the stories of Father Allah. How he was very knowledgeable yet very down to earth… How he was active with the youth. I felt it was an opportunity to embrace a form of knowledge… to bring me from good to great, as well as giving me something specific and particular to teach to young people and other sisters… As an opportunity to know myself through a medium that was practical and logical to me… it appealed to my intellect…[233]

Other participants further expounded on the actual example of the founder of The Nation of Gods and Earths. Natural says,

> The stories about The Father impressed me. I felt like if The Father went out and saved the babies then that's what I'm supposed to do too. He sacrificed his life like they said Jesus did for the progression of his people. He could have just went for his own interests. My mother left her church because they raised two hundred thousand dollars and bought the preacher a limousine! (laughs) Father Allah lived like a pauper so that he could reach a wide span of people. I take that as an example and apply that to my community work. The Father's love; that's what drew me to this culture.[234]

All of the members mentioned the practicality of the "Supreme Mathematics" in their daily lives. Supreme Mathematics is a number system, which gives "divine attributes" to the numbers 0 thru 9. This system is ritually applied to the date on a daily basis. The numerical attribute for the day is, gives an "understanding of what ways to move for

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[233] Freedom.
[234] Natural.

the day." The Supreme Mathematics are also applied to other areas of life in which numbers play apart. Jewel said it this way,

> Lets just take knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. 1,2,3 respectively. Just these three concepts allow me to put my life in order. It's the order of the universe. Mathematics is always right and exact, you know? When you knowledge something, you look, listen, and observe the situation. Once you have done the knowledge, then you can enter the wisdom. Wisdom is action. Motion. This is one's wise ways words and actions based on one's knowledge, understand? Now, 1 always comes before 2. Always. If you do the wisdom. If you act before you do the knowledge, you are putting 2 before 1, which is against the rules of the universe. Whenever you act or open your big mouth before you have a thorough knowledge of a thing, you mess up…. Destruction! (Shakes her head). Nine times outta ten, we put the wisdom before the knowledge. And you wonder why things don't add up in this effed up world….. Oh, and 3 is the understanding! Once you get the knowledge and apply it, which is wisdom, life, God! How can I lead a Nation if I don't know the order to make moves (laughs)?[235]

In their journey for self-knowledge and belonging, the Earths found a home in the ideology and methodology of The Nation of Gods and Earths. The humanitarian efforts of Father Allah were mentioned by all of the Earths as a motivating factor in their attraction to The Nation of Gods and Earths. His organizing of underprivileged youth provided the women with an example for their volunteer activities and career choices, such as teaching and mentoring. The harmful effects of white supremacy on Black society, especially Black youth are explained in the ideology of The Nation of Gods and Earths as a methodical means of suppressing the original people. The Earths utilize their understanding of white supremacy as a further motivating force in their leadership and as a means of carrying on Father Allah's legacy.

The application of the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabet also served as a means for the women to understand their world and the ways in which to navigate

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[235] Jewel.

through life. The Supreme mathematics in particular were mentioned as a major factor that intrigued the women. The association of positive attributes with numbers gave these women a process to follow on a daily basis. Like prayer in religious organizations, the Supreme Mathematics provided the women with a ritualistic means of being centered and in accord with the nature of life.

3) The lessons of the N.G.E. teach that the Black man is God and the Black woman is Earth. Could you give your understanding on these claims?

One of the key teachings of The Nation of Gods and Earths is that the Black male is a God and the Black female is an Earth. The group vehemently criticizes the idea of an invisible creator. According to the ideology, Black people have always existed. It is only because of "devil," or the white race, that Black people believe in "that which is not real. A spook God."[236] According to the dominant narrative of the ideology, the Black male is the Creator and the sun symbolizes him. The Black woman is the Earth. She is a "planet" that receives light from the sun and orbits around the sun. This idea puts the male as the center of the family, and places the female in the role of a "bearer of life." The participants all agree with this ideology, but they have different perceptions on some of its implications. Asia puts it in this way,

> The black woman is a twin in nature to the planet. The things the planet does like synthesize sunlight or provide nutrients essentially to the entire planet. To be a support system. In relationship to the sun and being able to be nurtured by the sun. But, the way that I view it, which could be an aspect of the lessons, to my greatness as a black woman as far as being the source of mankind and having, just looking at it in my daily life, having so much to do. The way the earth rotates and all the things that are happening in the planet 24 hours a day, 365 days a year is reflected in my life. So, I can see a direct relationship. Going to school, taking

[236] Infinite.

> care of the kids, taking care of elders, doing community service. You know, it's so much….[237]

Natural gives a similar testimony on how understanding herself as Earth affects her self-image and life choices:

> If you look at the earth, it has habitable properties. Properties that generate life. Properties that can generate and maintain life. Water, oxygen, all those things. So women having a uterus, a womb, eggs, fallopian tubes, all of that. We have habitable properties. So I definitely see the correlation. Us being the nurturers, we are able to sympathize and show compassion and nurturance to others needing assistance. That definitely propels the kind of work that I do being a community activist.[238]

Infinite gives her ideas on the role of the Black man,

> The perspective of the NGE is God is the Asiatic black man. The first being to exist. The most supreme. Y chromosome. The 92 elements. All of those different things from what I can understand. A God that can be physically seen, not mysterious. To me what that concept does is encourage black men to stand up and take responsibility for their life and their people. Yeah that's it. That's the God.[239]

Though the participants "understand the science of life," they all rejected the idea that Black men have the right to do anything they want to women because of their status as God. Seven of the eight participants even had issue with the idea of "submission" to a man. The participants view the relationship between the sun (the Black man) and the Earth (the Black woman) as complimentary rather than hierarchical. This re-interpretation of the core concept that the Black man is God (sun) and the Black woman is Earth, challenges the male-dominant framework so indicative of the group. Africana womanism echoes this concept of egalitarianism between Black men and women as a means for family cohesiveness and Black liberation. The concept of the place and role of the Earth will now be looked at through the lens of the participants.

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[237] Asia.
[238] Natural.
[239] Infinite.

4) Some in the N.G.E. claim that the woman is "secondary but most necessary." Do you agree with this notion? Why or Why not?

There is a common saying amongst the Gods, which is, "The Black woman is secondary but most necessary." The saying is based on a concept within the numerical system of Supreme Mathematics. The number 1 or knowledge is also considered equivalent to the Black man. The number 2 or wisdom is considered equivalent to the Black woman. While the man is the foundation of the family as the sun is the foundation of the solar system, he is also considered knowledge (1) or "logic." The woman is the Earth, also considered wisdom (2), which is looked at as being "in motion," for the earth rotates. The earth is looked at as being "emotional" rather than "logical."

The sexist implications are apparent. In fact, seven of the eight participants felt uncomfortable with the saying due to its suggestion that women are inferior. This objection to such sexist phrases on the part of the Earths shows that the women are not simply submissive followers within The Nation of Gods and Earths. The older Earth, Moonlight expresses her feelings on the saying,

> I never liked that saying! Why? Because, what is secondary you can do without. How does that sound? Is your mother secondary? Did you not come through her womb? Now Cipher! [Now Cipher means "no"] I don't knowledge that statement. I am mother of civilization. That means I gave birth to this Black Nation. I know who I am. Me and my God deal with equality. That don't mean I want to be no man! (laughs), but, he respects me as his other half. Naw, I don't teach the babies that crap.[240]

Moonlight's sentiment is echoed by Freedom:

> I don't deal with that phrase. How can someone be necessary but secondary? That don't even make sense. Not only that, I ain't never seen no proof that The

[240] Moonlight.

> Father Allah even said that. A lot of these things you hear came after The Father died. People try to bend things their way to get what they want. I would never teach a little girl that she is secondary![241]

Queen, though careful in her words, also refuses to use the phrase:

> (Laughs). Well, I don't utilize that phrase, but I don't knock it or others that use it… Mathematically it makes sense. However, in day-to-day application, I don't use it. For some it's egalitarian. For some the woman just adds on to God. In short, I don't say that phrase. I've heard it but I don't teach it. It is a confusing statement.[242]

The words of the participants are clear on the subject of the mentioned phrase. The objection to a concept so common in The Nation of Gods and Earths shows that there are definite discrepancies concerning the "place" of the female gender in the organization. Again, it becomes apparent that there is discord between some of the ideology in the group and the ideas of the Earths interviewed. As women who have maintained leadership roles in the group, it is necessary that the women challenge this sexist notion in a more aggressive fashion. The issue of male dominance, as well as other factors, which uniquely effect Black women will be further covered later in the next section.

The next two questions get to the crux of the thesis topic, which are the leadership roles of the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths. These two headings stem from the last two interview questions concerning race, class gender, as well as the variable of leadership. The following table includes these two headings, an example of statements that address the questions, and the meaning of the statements given.

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[241] Freedom.
[242] Queen

TABLE 1

Question	Significant Statement	Meaning of Statement
What is the N.G.E.'s view of the dominant society and the oppressions there of (race, class, gender)? Are these views consistent with your personal ideas?	(Race) This is the most racist society on earth! Our Nation is a safeguard from the lies and mis-education that plagues this, this, this wretched country. (Class) That's what our Nation is about, you know? We must save the babies from poverty. (Gender) … I definitely see elements of patriarchy in The Nation of Gods and Earths… It also is a reflection of this society.	Racism is a motivating factor in the leadership roles of the Earths. Classism is a motivating factor in the leadership of the Earths. The recognized male dominance in The Nation of Gods and Earths is seen as an extension of white male domination.
Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not? How do you lead?	"I don't see myself as the head of anything. I just want to see the Black family grow in a positive direction. For that to manifest, we all must lead ourselves."	Though the women may not see themselves as "leaders," they display obvious leadership roles in order to uplift the Black community.

Again, the table above included the two headings that will be discussed. An example of statements that address said headings and the essence of the statements given were also included in the table.

5) What is the N.G.E.'s view of the dominant society and the oppressions there of (race, class, gender)? Are these views consistent with your personal ideas?

Race.

All of the participants are clear on their love for Black people and their interest in the progression of Black people. One of the core teachings of the doctrine of The Nation of Gods and Earths is that the white man is "devil," meaning evil by nature. This teaching should not be dismissed as either elementary or racist. The lesson was a tactic utilized by Elijah Muhammad to give awareness to Black people that they were living in a world of white supremacy. When this lesson was first revealed in the 1930s, it was common for Black people to feel inferior and succumb to self-hate, being that they lived in the most "racist society on earth." This teaching expressed the oppressive nature of white supremacy while simultaneously erasing the myth that Black people inferior.

Though Father Allah taught the inherent supremacy of the Black race, he also said, "We are not pro-Black or anti-white. We are pro-righteousness and anti-devilishment." The previous statement implies that it is not enough to be Black to be God or white to be devil. Actions and character are important.

Even when expressing discontent with some of the things that occur within the Nation, the Earths stand firm on their passion for Black liberation, and their loathing of the white ruled society in which they live. Love expresses her views on race as such,

> The reason why The Father had to go into the ghetto and relate and rescue the babies is because of this devilish society. This is the most racist society on earth! Our Nation is a safeguard from the lies and mis-education that plagues this, this, this wretched country. People dis us, you know? People say the Five Percenters be drinking and cursing and beating they women, etc., etc.. Can't they see that all

> of that is a bi-product of colonization and slavery? The whole Black community falls victim to those… vices. They say 60% of the prison system is made up of Black men, and the population of sisters in the system is growing and growing. This is all by design. Our people still don't know who the devil is. (Shakes her head)… Because I am aware of the level of oppression heaped on these babies' heads, I can help them. They need to know that the country they live in keeps them in the conditions they in…[243]

Jewel's sentiment echoes Love's but in a calmer tone. It is clear that she has a "race first" point of view, but she does not seem to feel it is impossible for white people to be "civilized."

> Throughout history, you can point out examples of white men destroying people of color, stealing land and resources… However, I think white people can be civilized and taught. We have a white guy here getting knowledge… There is an opportunity for them to change, so I acknowledge they should be taught. Original people come first with me, but Allah taught us to teach all the families of the planet earth.[244]

Natural speaks more on the genetic and behavioral differences she feels white people posses:

> I'm not mad at white people. They can't control their devilishment most of the time. They are recessive. Devil is that which is weak and wicked. It's true… They traits are all recessive. White skin, light eyes, thin lips, straight hair… They can't go into the sun without sun lotion. The sun literally kills them! It kills them! If you can't go into the sun, you are deficient in vitamin D. Being deficient in vitamin D causes depression and a whole host of other diseases, you know what I'm saying? They are a part of the human family but they are like my sickly babies... (laughs)…. Yeah, they are Earth's diseased children. (smiles). It's just that we have let the patients run the damn hospital![245]

Finally, Angel briefly expresses her views on race,

> When I first heard that the white man was the devil… man! That struck me harder than the Black man being God. I always thought it was some bad luck demon or some shit that was messing Black folks up, you know? The TV makes it seem like the white people are so beautiful and wonderful. Hell… see,

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[243] Love.
[244] Jewel.
[245] Natural.

> I'm a headstrong person anyway... I would fight these devils right out, you know? (laughs)...But, one of the Gods was like 'no Queen, if you want to kill the devil, raise a God. Fuck the devil. Make moves to get the babies free.'[246]

The Nation of Gods and Earths is by definition a group that sees itself as a freedom force for unaware Black people. The Earths interviewed definitely viewed their race as a positive reinforcement in their motivation to be active in their communities. The consensus of all eight participants was that the state of living in "the devil's uncivilization" was the major oppression faced by the Nation and Black people as a whole.

Class.

The Gods and Earths often call themselves "poor righteous teachers." This term comes straight out of their core lessons. In the interviews, the consistent theme of advocating for and aiding the poor was apparent. The participants show their preference for uplifting the poor, in their career choices, volunteering, and economic investments. In fact, all of the participants have at one time or another worked directly with poor Black children. Further, all of the women interviewed saw Father Allah as an inspiration in their work in helping underserved communities. Father Allah devoted his life to the Black youth in the most underprivileged neighborhoods. The participants are clearly walking in the steps of the man who founded their Nation. Queen tells of her ideas on how and why she is passionate about serving lower-class children, saying,

> The children I work with are lower class... Father Allah did very practical things. He built a school, took them on trips, he loved them, taught them… He was a great example of sophistication for the time… His approach was simple in they taught others. That methodology is so umm… imperative; turning children actually spread the knowledge. He gave us a great example of pedagogy and methodology to reach underprivileged children. He taught us institution building and or-

[246] Angel.

> ganizing. That's what our Nation is about, you know? We must save the babies from poverty.[247]

Infinite further expands on the emphasis of The Nation of Gods and Earths teachings as they relate to class. She also talks of her own upbringing and the sacrifices that she had to endure due to her father's line of work:

> The lessons? um… I see it as something that speaks to the disenfranchised; People who are lower on the socio economic scale. Because they don't always necessarily understand how they came to be that way. They don't understand what social forces are affecting their life and so becoming exposed to The Nation of Gods and Earths and the sociology of it is one aspect of becoming aware of these obstacles. I personally, my father was in the service. I wouldn't necessarily say we were poor, quote unquote, but I remember those cans of peanut butter, you know what I mean? I remember ramen noodles on a regular basis, and I also remember, and this is something I never noticed until I got into the NGE, him being in the service. Like they would take us away from our extended family and then take our father away from us. So, it was more like an isolation type of thing where I didn't develop any type of culture…So my experience growing up and watching my people in the hood every day…. Well, I have to do something. If the babies are hungry, feed them. If they are ignorant, teach them. I'm about action, you know? If not me, then who?[248]

This compulsion to aid those of the "lower socio economic scale" is echoed repeatedly in the testimonies of the Earths interviewed. The idea that it is their duty to be leaders in their communities is ever present, and so is the fact that the Nation's principles and values encourage that idea of responsibility. Moonlight embodies that responsibility, saying,

> I'm not a good historian. I can't remember all the things I do for the community. See, I just do what has to be done, boom. I used to pick the kids up in the ghetto and bring them to our picnics. I used to go to the prisons and support the Gods there. This is my life! I'm out here trying to save myself and the entire family. I ain't looking for no pat on the back. Coat drives, city councils, whatever... I do

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[247] Queen
[248] Infinite.

> what's right and exact, man… The lessons of the Nation made it so I had no fear… People be afraid of those in need…[249]

Gender

Much has been written on the challenges Black women have faced within the context of Black organizations and the larger society, as illustrated in the literature review contained in this thesis. The leadership roles of Black women have often been overlooked or deemphasized. Further, the ideas of leadership have often been limited to hierarchical definitions. Black women experience sexism and gender discrimination from both society and members of their own race. Several of the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths have faced obstacles due to their gender, according to the women's testimonies.

There were varying ideas on gender issues amongst the participants. Some were very forthright in their assertions of gender discrimination. Others recognized the issue, but attributed it to the reality of living in a patriarchical world, rather than specifically The Nation of Gods and Earths. When Natural was asked why the efforts of the Earths are over looked and undocumented, she replied,

> Because it's a patriarchical society, more than anything else…. I think one thing about the Nation, um. I think the Father's intentions and even the first Gods' intentions were to pull up their brothers. So, I think there is still an idea that it's about men. I mean, initially it was about saving these young men. Getting them back into leadership positions in their homes and with their women… I think it's one of the Earth's roles to support that because I did not have a father. I watched my mother work her butt off to take care of three children and I know the effects of, umm, not having a male leadership role model in my life. It's not good! Since the late 60s, the welfare system was kicking brothers out the home…[250]

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[249] Moonlight.
[250] Natural.

In the previous quote, Natural takes a compassionate stance concerning the sexism found in the Nation. She blames "the patriarchical society" and other outside societal forces such as "the welfare system" for much of the issues faced by Black men and women. Further, the participant finds the focus of the Nation in its early years on Black men as a positive. However, as Natural continues, some of the negative aspects of male-centeredness are exposed.

> A lot of times in building up these brothers, unfortunately… hmmm... A lot of them have superiority complexes. I think they feel that their roles become endangered when sisters are given props and sisters are recognized for what they do. And when women take leadership roles and are assertive, they feel like their position on the throne becomes endangered and so sisters become oppressed, rather than allowed to blossom, and grow and work as a team…[251]

Natural has had encounters with Gods at group meetings in which she was told to be silent in voicing her opinions about certain undisclosed issues in the group. Natural has had to "take hiatuses" from the group gatherings at different times due to the often-blatant disrespect she received from some Gods. While some Gods came to her privately and expressed their support of her thoughts, they would never show this support in a group setting. The unfair treatment Natural experienced was due to her being female in a male-dominated organization. Natural, who has been vocal in her objection to the sexism, yet has received little support from other Gods and Earths. Though Natural "will be an Earth for life," she has "given up on talking to brothers. They don't listen. I have been talking for years." The discontent with the sexism in the group expressed by Natural gives a clear example of why The Nation of Gods and Earths must re-evaluate their treatment and exclusionary actions towards women. Natural is a clear example of an Earth directly challenging the male-dominance in the group. Infinite too recognizes the

[251] Ibid

inequalities in gender. Infinite, like Natural mentions "patriarchy" as a societal force that has affected the Nation.

> I definitely see elements of patriarchy in The Nation of Gods and Earths and it's not just because of the Islamic influence. It's also is a reflection of this society. It's a reflection of the cultural change in ideas that came about as a result of our introduction to world culture. Cuz if you look at some cultures prior to that on the continent of Africa, you'll see that women play a large leadership role. But just to bring it to now, I think it's an issue because even the things that I'm saying right now, if you don't hear it come out of every Earth's mouth, it is a thought that takes place in the mind of every Earth. I can say that without fear of contradiction! Every Earth that I ever talked to has talked about issues with inequality within their household. With issues of inequality within their immediate cipher. They talk about putting in a lot of work and then their ideas and opinions are not being taken into consideration. So I definitely think that there needs to be some consideration, and this might be unrealistic, about the way the Earths are treated. The way that they are viewed and the method they use to teach women should ensure they are uplifted and have a positive self-image and not just think they have negative sex powers…. Earths start to deny their intuition and deny their power to change things and deny their influence and power in the household…[252]

According to Infinite, Natural, and Love, the idea that women are some sort of negative force meant to "bring down" Black men has been perpetuated in the Nation. Gods often ignore women's thoughts and may even "force feed" the Nation's doctrine due to this gender bias. Natural says,

> Gods have to understand that it's a woman's choice to change and refine. And that's why a lot of sisters don't stick around in this nation because it's force-fed. It should be intuitive. If brothers would allow the sisters to grow in their own time and according to their own knowledge and their own understanding it would be a stronger Nation, rather than just take in everything that's being said to them. The foundation of our culture is not to take anything on face value, you know? We got to dig deeper. But, there is a double standard because an Earth is supposed to take what a God says on face value. Some of us were leaders in the community before we came into the Nation. Women have to study on their own.[253]

Again, the participants proved far from docile or submissive, as often it is encouraged for Earths to be by some Gods. Queen maintains that being an Earth does not ne-

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[252] Infinite.
[253] Natural.

gate her importance in any way. She values the gender roles of the Nation as being "a balance."

> Well, equality does not mean we are the same… Culturally, yes my god did give me the knowledge. He brought the sun to my planet. The sperm is brought to the egg. Within this knowledge, the God is the foundation. The male is the dominant aspect. Does it mean that my worth is less or I'm not intelligent? No. I don't take on a subservient role. There is a balance that's present between Earth and Sun. They are not in conflict. They work together to bring forth life. My God respects me as well…. He does have more knowledge than I do, and I respect that. We play different roles that balance out.[254]

In recent years, some women within the Nation have challenged the issue of the primacy of the male, which is traditionally promoted by The Nation of Gods and Earths. Infinite explains the controversy:

> The controversy within The Nation of Gods and Earths is on whether if it's the black man alone who is God. Because we were not there when the first atom was created. We were not here when that first being was here. And also, you know it begs the question "what comes first, the chicken or the egg?" We talk about Mary not being able to have an immaculate conception with Jesus because we have never seen a child born without a uterus and testes and all the other physiological things that are present to make children come forward. So if humankind comes from out of a womb, there has to be both elements there. So it's difficult to say without fear of contradiction, which one existed first.[255]

Though Infinite admits that only a few within the Nation, such as Goddess Earth Equality, have been vocal on this subject, it is a topic that begs more attention. Adding to the controversy is the discussion in the Nation whether it is acceptable for an Earth to call herself a Goddess. Women's use of the term Goddess to refer to themselves has been shunned by most Gods, as it puts women on equal par with men. Infinite goes into more detail on this topic saying,

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[254] Queen.
[255] Infinite.

> ……well, its controversial because there is an Elder Earth that claims the Father told her that she was a Goddess…. and she was the first Earth and the only Earth that I know of, besides his sisters, that was directly taught by him. She actually walked with him. But, that's as far as I know. Um…a lot of this history is oral. The elder Gods will speak about how she misunderstood what The Father was saying. But, whether he said that to her directly or not, it is basically their word against hers. It's basically become controversial because the more you study and learn you wonder how it's possible that the Black man alone is God. The Father used to say 'if you want to see me all you have to do is come together', and what that says is that the collective that comes together is Allah. And the collective comes together and they make things and their making change and their affecting the world. That is Allah.[256]

Unfortunately, those such as Prince A. Cuba and Goddess Earth Equality, who have written articles that encourage the acceptance of the word "Goddess," have been ignored or dismissed by most Gods, furthering the concept of male superiority in the group.

The older Earth, Moonlight also speaks of the dual nature of God. The participant was fervent about her being the other half of God.

> There are two parts of God. You have man and 'womb-man.' The universe is both what? Feminine and masculine. I told you, I'm from the old school. I don't take nothing on face value. There is no man without woman, period! Some Gods don't like this type of talk, but when they see me, they know. They don't challenge me. I've been in this Nation a long time and I speak my mind regardless. My God been with me for going on 30 years. Honestly, the topic don't come up.[257]

When Moonlight was asked about gender equality and the "Goddess question," she replies,

> Every God and Earth got they own thing. They got they own cipher. We are taught that all things in the universe are equal. My God treats me with equality. I'm not having anything less! I know some Earths have real issues with their God. It's their choice to rotate around whatever sun they want. If he ain't showing and proving that he's God, then its just talk……. You know that Goddess

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[256] Infinite.
[257] Moonlight.

> stuff is something new. I don't know about that. The young Earths talk about that. I don't have a problem with the word. Call yourself anything you damn well want! What are you doing? What fruits have you produced?[258]

The participants interviewed all were employed, most had attended or graduated from college and/or Masters programs, and all were active in their communities. The gender issues they experience in the Nation and in the larger society have not prevented them from progressing. Though most of the Earths admit that male-centeredness abounds in the group, they insist on being respected and acknowledged for their value. Freedom is very self-assured and hopeful for a more positive and egalitarian change within her nation. The participant says,

> A lot of Earths are starting to question things that have been accepted. Things are changing. Culture is transitive. It is always growing and changing. Yeah, I get frustrated sometimes because the changes I want to see are not happening quick enough. So I just chill and observe and do the works my mind directs me to do. If this Nation is going to sustain and grow (which it will), the Earths have to be treated correctly. If not, there will just be The Nation of Gods. (Laughs loudly). And I don't know of any nation that can thrive with just men. That is definitely not right and exact![259]

6) *Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not? How do you lead?*

The requirements for participation in this study were that the participant must be a woman in The Nation of Gods and Earths, and the participant must consider herself as playing a leadership role within The Nation. The participants displayed leadership in several ways. Some of these ways were not even considered "leadership" by the Earths. As Black women's leadership tends to be inclusive, practical, and non-hierarchical, many of the leadership positions adopted by the Earths were based on intuition and the benefit

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[258] Ibid.
[259] Freedom.

of others in their community. These leadership positions include organizing food drives, creating educational institutions, leading mentor programs, and organizing/promoting functions for The Nation of Gods and Earths. Some of the pivotal quotes of the participants will now be given in context. When asked about why she "always ended up in leadership positions," Natural says,

> Ever since I was a girl, I took the initiative. I was always an independent thinker. I was never like, 'Hey, follow me', but people always gravitated to what I was doing. I think it's because I just wasn't a follower. I think that is why I ended up in leadership positions because I questioned authority. I never just took anything on face value ever, you know what I mean? Later on, what I learned from The Nation of Gods and Earths is that we are all leaders. I don't see myself as the head of anything. I just want to see the Black family grow in a positive direction. For that to manifest, we all must lead ourselves. I never ever called myself the leader. I just do what is necessary…[260]

Natural has led political prisoner campaigns and "feed the homeless" programs. The participant has created summer programs and recently began a catering company that promotes healthy living. Natural also has organized Nation of Gods and Earths functions and served on the group's advisory council. Obviously, the participant's leadership expands past her involvement with the Nation. Queen also sees her leadership roles as "natural," saying

> I met my God while doing community organizing for children. The focus on the community attracted me to the Nation. The love for the babies, you know? I have always been concerned about my people. What I think makes me a leader is that I am willing to do something about that concern. I was told, "love is action." So I got to show forth my love… I'm a supervisor for ten people. I supervise 3 daycares so I have to be practical and not emotional. Supreme math and the lessons has helped me with my career and how to deal with different people. I care about all the children that I am responsible for, you know? Leadership? Like, I never asked to be a representative for the Earths. The sisters put me in that posi-

[260] Natural.

> tion. I'm just like food has to be cooked, people to be contacted, workshops have to be planned…[261]

Queen sees her writing as "community activism," as well. The essays Queen writes are meant to uplift Black females and "teach them the beauty of their natural selves." The participant's focus is mainly on Black girls' health and self-esteem. Though Queen does not call her writing 'leadership', it is plain that she is doing practical work for the collective. In the following dialogue between the interviewer and Jewel, the participant reveals her ideas on leadership and the responsibility to lead that comes with being in The Nation of Gods and Earths:

> Interviewer (I): What is a leader?
>
> Jewel (J): um… I guess a leader is someone who takes the initiative to do what it takes to get a task done. And a leader knows why they are doing something and what they are doing it for. They fully comprehend their purpose in doing… like, who needs their services.
>
> (I): So, what's a follower?
>
> J: A follower is a person who is just doing it because it seems right or their friends are doing it, you know.
>
> I: So would you say you initiate things in The Nation of Gods and Earths?
>
> J: Yeah. Definitely, definitely. Because even though other people are a part of the 5 percent, you have some people who are just here because its what's the thing for them right now, or maybe because it speaks to them in some kind of way. But, they don't understand the community service that's involved in being in The Nation of Gods and Earths. You are not here just for recruiting purposes, but you have a duty to fix the ills of society, in my opinion.
>
> I: is that just something you personally feel or is that an element of the Nation?
>
> J: um... I think its something that can be interpreted in the lessons. I don't know if there is a direct script that says…. But we know we are about helping original people. We are about putting food in a hungry child's mouth. We're about trying to clothe them. It can be implied from certain degrees, if you view it from that

[261] Queen.

> perspective. Some people view it as it just being their responsibility to their household. But, if you study the history than you will understand that there is a greater issue going on worldwide. It stretches beyond your individual household.[262]

In this dialogue, Jewel speaks on the "responsibility" a leader has to "fix the ills of society." The participant sees The Nation of Gods and Earths as more than a culture or group, but also as an entity devoted to "community service." The participant also emphasizes applying the study of history to give more reason for justifying practical community involvement. For Jewel, neither membership in the organization nor knowing the doctrine is enough. One must also actively participate in the community. All of the Earths had a similar outlook on the responsibility they felt towards aiding those in need. Their leadership in the area of community service was found in their relationship with the Nation as well as other aspects of their lives. When asked about spreading their doctrine while participating in community service, the Earths were unanimous in their responses. Asia gives a good example of her ideas on this issue.

> I have no intention of making others believe what I do. We are not proselytizers. We are not missionaries. Please! We love all parts of the human family. You have to meet people where they are at mentally, you know? I teach based on the level of understanding that a person has. A hungry child don't need no lessons! They need food. An 8th grader who can't read can't be expected to swallow this kind of knowledge. It ain't going to happen, you know? There is no hidden agenda with the five percent. If someone asks me, you know, 'why you don't eat pork?' or 'why you wrap your hair', then I answer. I use the lessons and the math for me to understand my cipher better. When I give, I give, period. I don't care what you believe. I try to embody the lessons I have learned.[263]

According to Abdullah, Black women's leadership is proactive and provides a bridge between praxis and application.[264] The Earths utilized their convictions to "save

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[262] Jewel.
[263] Asia.
[264] Abdullah, 1.

the babies," as Father Allah professed, by creating practical methods to serve and uplift their communities. This same proactive approach could also be used in addressing the gender inequality within The Nation of Gods and Earths in order to strengthen the group and their works in the community.

SUMMARY

Chapter four gave the results of the study presented under categories, which mirrored the interview questions. The participants in this study came from different parts of the country. They come from various family backgrounds. They are of a variety of ages. Within all of this diversity, there are similarities, which should be highlighted. The overwhelming consensus amongst the Earths interviewed is the importance of serving others, especially the Black community. The participants describe themselves in terms of being independent, self-motivated, and as an invaluable part of the Black community.

Seven of the eight participants had some level of higher education. As Infinite suggests, "Getting knowledge of myself as an original woman definitely inspired me to go forward with my education."

Many of the participants were active in their respective communities before coming in contact with The Nation of Gods and Earths. Those women were largely drawn to the organization because of the principles that encouraged the upliftment of the Black race. Though the interviewees were quite clear about the inconsistencies and often-sexist tendencies of many of the Gods, their focus on the positive aspects of the Nation outweighed the negative. The interviewees addressed race, class, and gender within the con-

text of their ideology and their experience, openly voicing their concerns about the intersection of the three issues.

The doctrine of The Nation of Gods and Earths has served as a liberation cosmology for the participants, which they apply to their everyday lives and over all personal missions. As Infinite explains, "The Nation helps me to maintain righteousness and keep on my goal and not be distracted by some of the things that I consider pitfalls to the changing condition of the original people of the world."[265]

Chapter five will discuss the analysis of the findings, recommendations, and the researcher's perceived limitations.

[265] Infinite.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in The Nation of Gods and Earths. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1) What principles and practices of The Nation of Gods and Earths appeal to women?

2) How do the Earths conceptualize issues of gender inequality within The Nation of Gods and Earths?

3) In what ways have racism, classism, and sexism influenced the Earth's leadership roles?

4) How do the Earths define, perceive, and demonstrate leadership roles?

Eight Black women who were active members in The Nation of Gods and Earths were selected and interviewed. Participants were recruited using the snowball effect. All the participants were interviewed individually for approximately one hour. Three were interviewed face-to-face, and five participants were interviewed via the phone. These interviews served as the primary data for this phenomenological study. Leadership served as the phenomenon of this qualitative research. The data was analyzed by extracting the significant statements from the interview questions asked, which were clustered by meaning and utilized in answering the research questions of the study.[266]

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[266] Creswell, 61-2.

In exploring the leadership roles and viewpoints of the participants, it was ascertained that the participants took on various leadership roles, which were based on the collective upliftment of the communities they serve. Aspects of the doctrine of the Nations of Gods and Earths inspired much of the activities of these leaders, though several were leaders in their communities prior to their involvement in the group. Though aspects of race, class, and sex, as imposed by either the larger society or by males in the Nation existed, the participants excelled in their leadership.

Chapter 5 includes four sections. The first section includes a detailed discussion of the conclusions of the research. The second section explores the implications of the leadership roles played by the participants. The third section will discuss the limitations of the study. The final section offers recommendations for future study.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISSCUSION

The conclusions and discussion are listed under categories, which derived from the research questions that guided the study. The answers to the research questions are based on the significant statements given by the Earths interviewed. The essential meaning of these statements have been extracted by the researcher and analyzed based on concepts of Africana womanism and Black women's leadership.

1) Principles and practices of the group that appealed to the Earths.

As mentioned in chapter four, six of the eight women interviewed were introduced to The Nation of Gods and Earths between the ages of 17 and 20. The other two interviewees became members of the group in their mid to late twenties. The ages of most of the women when recruited are consistent with the founder's recruiting practices,

which targeted the younger generation. Father Allah was passionate about transforming underprivileged city youth into productive members of society.[267]

This passion for uplifting youth was mirrored by all of the Earths interviewed, of which all were found to be deeply concerned with the plight of urban Black youth. All of the Earths interviewed were actively aiding Black youth and/or had plans for doing so. Earths such as Queen demonstrates leadership in her career position as a supervisor for several daycare centers. Earths such as Infinite and Natural created a summer camp for youths in their communities. Still, the older Earth Moonlight created an annual celebration specifically for the children in her lower income neighborhood. The participants cited the principles of The Nation of Gods and Earths as motivating forces in their leading activities aiding Black youth. The ideas professed by the group's teachings such as focusing on youth and being responsible for one's own "cipher" or community were vital in inspiring this type of leadership.[268]

According to Beverley Lundy Allen, "black female leadership represents the collective experience and action toward community empowerment."[269] The women in this study exemplify Allen's assertion in that their career choices and volunteer efforts are specifically aimed at progressing the youth in their respective communities. Jewel professes, "….we know we are about helping original people [people of color]. We are about putting food in a hungry child's mouth. We're about trying to clothe them." Jewel goes on to explain how the values of The Nation of Gods and Earths encourage this proactive approach. Black women's leadership is more than just conceptual. Their leader-

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[267] Wakeel Allah, 136.
[268] Ibid, 168-72.
[269] Allen, 2.

ship entails a connection between their theory and their action.[270] The Earths in this study actively apply their ideological convictions in their everyday efforts to strengthen and nurture Black communities. This concept of nurturing the Black community is a key aspect in the framework of Africana womanism, which requires the Africana womanist to nurture children, as well as humanity in general.[271] This Africana womanist perspective mirrors the principle of The Nation of Gods and Earths, which emphasizes that its members are responsible to "teach all parts of the human family."[272]

In becoming a member of The Nation of Gods and Earths, the first thing one learns are the Supreme Mathematics.[273] Supreme Mathematics gives the members of the group a numerical means of understanding their reality. Any aspect of reality related to numbers could be understood based on the particular number's assigned attribute. The Earths used the language of Supreme Mathematics in their interviews as a distinct means of communication. For example, Moonlight uses the number system in telling how many years she has been in The Nation of Gods and Earths. She has been in the group for wisdom (2) God (7) years. One way in which this number can be understood and perceived is by adding the two and seven together to get nine (born). The meaning of this equation may be understood as; it took the wisdom (2) of God (7) to come to completion (9), indicating the beginning of a new cycle in the participant's life. Wisdom is also a name that represents the Black woman, while God is a name that represents the Black man. So the equation may be understood as it takes the woman (2) and the man (7) in order to give birth (9). The participants see Supreme Mathematics as their culture and as a science. It

[270] Abdullah, 1-2.
[271] Hudson-Weems, 72.
[272] Infinite.
[273] Wakeel Allah, 153.

is common to hear the phrase, "Islam is mathematics and mathematics is Islam" in five percenter rhetoric, which comes from the theology of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.[274] In Africana womanism, culture is core to the lens through which Africana women view the world.[275] This concept is evident in that the Earths interviewed were clear that Supreme Mathematics was a system that is inseparable from their cultural cosmology, which often motivated their leadership.

The participants were drawn to the principles and practices of the Nation for numerous reasons. Because most of the women were recruited in their teenage years, it may be inferred that they were seeking their own identity as is common for blossoming adults. Most of the Earths did indeed indicate that they were in search of a community and way of thinking conducive to their reality.

The two main aspects of The Nation of Gods and Earths that drew the women interviewed were: 1) the emphasis the group has on community service and helping youth, and 2) the Supreme Mathematics, which provided the women with a cosmology to understand the world and their place in it. Both of the mentioned elements are practical means of interacting with the world. As expressed by several of the participants, the responsibility for the Black community and the search for a cosmology that was logical and applicable, were already imbedded in the minds and actions of the interviewees. The Nations of Gods and Earths provided a foundation and framework that was conducive to their values and activities.

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[274] Ibid, 132.
[275] Hudson-Weems, 24.

2) Issues of gender inequality within the Nation of Gods and Earth.

The gender division in The Nation of Gods and Earths is evident in the very name of the group. The idea that the Black man is indeed the God of the universe and that the Black woman is the Earth is not disputed by any of the women in this study. What is disputed is what these assertions mean to The Nation of Gods and Earths, particularly the Earths. The women embraced the name of Earth. They see themselves as nurturers, mothers, producers, and sustainers of life. The participants see all of these descriptors as aspects of both the planet and the Black woman. The women, proud to identify themselves as Earth, reflect the Africana womanist concept that, "Cultural identity supersedes self-definition for the true African womanist."[276] In other words, the Africana womanist confidently connects with the name she is known as in her culture, which demonstrates collective identification. Both Allen and Abdullah concur that Black women's leadership is for the benefit of the entire community, rather than the individual.[277]

The Earths also agree that the Black man is God, being that this concept is central to the group's cosmology. The Black Man, who is also considered the sun, represents the "light" or life-giving energy, which allows the earth to flourish. Most of the women see this relationship as symbiotic, rather than hierarchical. The sun gives light to the earth and consequently, the earth gives birth to the life in the solar system. This compatibility between the sun and earth, the Black man and woman, is characteristic of Africana womanism, which emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships between Black women

[276] Ibid, 58.
[277] Abdullah, 1; Allen, 2.

and Black men. This relationship is one that is "mutually supportive."[278] This is what the women interviewed overwhelmingly believed in and sought within The Nation of Gods and Earths. Unfortunately, the historical patriarchical nature of the group has not allowed for such egalitarian ideas.

The Nation of Gods and Earths is almost exclusively lead by men. Many of these men do not see the relationship between sun and earth, man and woman, as an equal relationship. The idea that the Black man is God is generally interpreted as the Black man has the right to rule over anyone or anything in his reality, including the Black woman. This ideology often forces women to conform to blatant sexism or be banished from the group.[279] All of the participants in this study have been privy to or have witnessed some sort of sexism based on interpretation of the Black man being God. The very idea expressed by males in the group that the woman is "secondary but most necessary" shows the hierarchical tendencies of the group. Seven out of eight of Earths rejected this idea vehemently; asserting the equality they believe should exist between the sexes.

The group's ideology, which is mostly interpreted from a male-dominant viewpoint, has been used to suppress the actions and ideas of women in the group, according to one of the Earths, Infinite. Infinite was the most vocal about experiences she had of being ignored or insulted by Gods at different functions. She says, "And when women take leadership roles and are assertive, they [men] feel like their position on the throne becomes endangered and so sisters become oppressed, rather than allowed to blossom

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[278] Hudson-Weems, 66-7.
[279] Knight, 14-5.

and work as a team."[280] The previous statement implies an insecurity that exists in certain Gods. There is a seeming fear that exists within these men; a fear that the Earths may bring new ideas and actions to the table. This aversion towards women's ideas and leadership stems from the general patriarchical view that women, their ideals, and their voices are unimportant. These sexist tenets stifle the viewpoints of beneficial members who have expressed and shown loyalty to The Nation of Gods and Earths.

Indeed, the fear of women's ideas and leadership is unfounded, in that the Earths have expressed their intentions to be seen and respected as valued individuals who only wish to progress the Nation and the communities that it serves. This idea of shared leadership is indicative of Black women's leadership, which emphasizes a "common claim to leadership made by all who are committed…"[281]

3) Race, Class, and Gender.

In researching Black women's leadership and theory, the intersection of race, class, and sex is frequently mentioned as three themes that effect Black women in a unique way.[282] The participants' testimonies were consistent with these three themes, as much of their answers show. What is evident is that for the Earths, the concerns for their race and the effects of racism are primary. This "race first" ideology is consistent with Africana womanism, which suggests that Black women are oppressed primarily because they are Black and living in a white-male dominated world.[283]

This allegiance to the overall progression of the Black race is seen throughout the literature. From the club movement to the civil rights movement, to the Black power movement, Black women have done that which was necessary to unify and progress the

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[280] Infinite.
[281] Abdullah, 3.
[282] Hudson-Weems, Phillips, William.
[283] Hudson-Weems, 30.

race despite other serious concerns. It is not that sexism and classism were of no importance to them. In fact, Black women leaders such as Marry McCurdy, and Carrie Langston, both journalists in the early 1920's, were very vocal in condemning sexism in Black liberation movements.[284] Ella Baker, noted civil-rights activist and SNCC advisor, was known for her fight against sexism and, even more, her abhorrence for classism.[285] Though these women found themselves confronted with the ills of oppression on many levels, all of them were concerned with the welfare of their race first and foremost. The participants in this study share the sentiments of their foremothers. Their answers to the research questions were specific in the idea that racism was the core cause for the other social ills experienced in The Nation of Gods and Earths and in the Black community in general. Even Jewel, who was more open to the idea of whites being able to be "civilized" than the other participants, admitted that, "Original people come first with me." "Original people" translates to all people of color.[286]

The participants' main concern with classism was the effect it had on Black children. All of the women were actively involved in efforts that helped underprivileged youth. Most of the women devoted the majority of their days to teaching and caring for underprivileged Black youth. In speaking on class, Queen says, "His [Father Allah's] approach was simple in addressing class. He went to the children with the most issues. They became so effective they taught others. That methodology is so... imperative." Again, the example of Father Allah's plight to nurture and educate poor Black youth is highlighted. The importance of education is also noted. Like Septima P. Clark, an avid promoter and creator of numerous literacy programs during the civil rights era, the participants saw it as their mission to "teach the babies," as commonly professed by the organization.[287] According to Africana womanism, classism, as it pertains to Black people, is an extension of white supremacy.[288] The Earths echo the previous viewpoint in that their thoughts on Black upliftment are simultaneously mentioned with the aid of the poor.

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[284] Terbotg-Penn, 59.
[285] Ransby, 52-4.
[286] Jewel.
[287] Rouse, 96.
[288] Hudson-Weems, 39.

The issues of gender and gender discrimination were of definite concern to the participants. Most of the Earths considered the sexism found in The Nation of Gods and Earths as an element of "patriarchy" and the oppression that Black men have experienced. Infinite puts the issue of gender into a historical context saying,

> It [patriarchy] is also a reflection of this society. It's a reflection of the cultural changes in ideas that came about as a result of our introduction to world culture. Cuz if you look at some cultures prior to that on the continent of Africa, you'll see that women play a large leadership role.[289]

Still, Natural and other Earths proclaim that Earths deal with a sense of inequality within their households. Natural sees this phenomenon as a "superiority complex." According to the participant, some Gods try to force their doctrine on women instead of allowing them the "choice to change and refine."[290] The Nation was initially begun to uplift Black males, and the male still becomes central in most scenarios. This male-centered ideology was challenged by most of the participants. The Earths spoke of the importance of equality often, viewing themselves as the Black man's counterpart, rather than just an extension of him. This sentiment is threatening to the primary perception of the lesson that "The Black Man is God." The emphasis on the maleness of God poses issues of inequality within the Nation.[291] Moonlight says this of the God question, "There are two parts of God. You have man and 'womb-man.' The universe is both what? Feminine and masculine."[292] Other participants, such as Natural and Infinite, question whether it is the Black man who is God alone. This suggestion that the Black woman could share Godhood with the Black man is considered very objectionable to most in the Nation.[293] These particular Black women had no problems with expressing their true feelings on the matter, at least in these personal interviews.

Still, participants such as Queen and Jewel prefer not to use the term "goddess" or challenge the man's role in the Nation. In fact, Queen sees the gender roles emphasized

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[289] Infinite.
[290] Natural.
[291] Knight, 218-19.
[292] Moonlight.
[293] Ibid, 219.

in the group as a balance between the male and female. Queen says, "There is a balance between earth and sun. They are not in conflict…. My God respects me, as well..."[294]

Though some of the Earths did not feel particularly hindered by the gender discrepancies (at least that is what they expressed in these interviews), the contention that women were at times undervalued or disrespected due to gender bias was expressed several times by most of the interviewees. Natural, who seemed the most discontented with the sexism in the group, has actually given up on talking about such issues with the Gods. She and Infinite in particular expressed their undying love for the lessons and influence of the organization, though they had doubts of the sexism ever truly subsiding.

While different Earths have differing points of view on gender, it is obvious that gender remains a heated issue within The Nation of Gods and Earths. A consensus of all the participants is the need to heal as one unit. The Earths mention the gender dynamics within the group not as an attack, but a critique meant to make the Black family stronger. Even in expressing the pain, she feels due to gender oppression, Natural still desires to work within the context of Black male-female relationship, as it is the "Building block of the community." The participant says, "And when women take leadership roles and are assertive, they [Gods] feel like their position on the throne becomes endangered and so sisters become oppressed, rather than allowed to blossom, and grow as a team…."[295] This sentiment is in harmony with Hudson-Weem's characteristics of an Africana womanist. Namely, that Africana women are family-centered and male compatible. The author says, "The Africana womanist desires positive male companionship, a relationship in which each individual is mutually supportive, an important part of a positive Africana family."[296]

The intersecting elements of race, class, and gender were evident issues in the lives of the Earths. The pervading concern of the effects of racism, classism, and/or sexism had tremendous influence in their life choices. It is concluded that the experience of

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[294] Queen, Jewel.
[295] Natural.
[296] Hudson-Weems, 58, 66-7.

living in a racist society was of most concern to the Earths. Like the founder of the group, their mission is to educate, serve, and heal Black youth who face a dehumanizing reality under white supremacy. The elements of classism and sexism were largely considered extensions of the underlying issue of white supremacy. It is imperative that The Nation of Gods and Earths address the multiplicity of obstacles experienced by women members as to strengthen the group, its families, and its communities.

3) The Earths' Leadership Roles.

The participants in this study were women in The Nation of Gods and Earths who have taken leadership roles. The importance in looking at the leadership roles of the Earths lies in the fact that the literature is significantly negligent when it comes to any information concerning these women. In order to assess the movement and significance of this group, it is imperative to look at the invaluable roles of these women.

According to Abdullah, "Black women leaders are defined not so much by the titles that they hold or the public recognition received, but the actual contribution that is made to the collective."[297] This assertion by Abdullah is evident in the ideology and actions of the participants. The participants have organized functions, lead workshops, created summer schools, edited publications, held rallies for the poor, began clothes drives for homeless children, and the list goes on. What is interesting about the participants is that most claim that they never requested to be "leaders." Natural is a prime example of this phenomenon. The participant says, "I just want to see the Black family grow in a positive direction. For that to manifest, we all must lead ourselves. I never called myself the leader. I just do what is necessary."[298] According to the literature, Black women have a tendency to reject the term leader, in that it has elitist implications.[299] The participants would admit to playing leadership roles and "taking the lead," yet were uncomfortable with being called a leader, which as mentioned before, is indicative of Black women's leadership. Of her leadership in the community, Moonlight says, "This is my life! I'm out here trying to save myself and the entire family. I ain't looking for no pat

[297] Abdullah, 33.
[298] Natural.
[299] Allen, 2.

on the back."[300] Again, it is noted that the women initiated activities that would be considered leadership by the given definition. The rejection of the word "leader" by many of the participants is due to the traditional implication of what a leader is, which is one who maintains a position of power and separateness from group efforts. Thus, there is a distinction between enacting leadership roles and being a "leader" from the Earths' standpoint, which is in alignment with the elements of Black women's leadership in general.[301]

Abdullah insists that Black women break the rules of traditional leadership paradigms, which emphasize the separation of the leaders from the people. Black women's leadership is inclusive and non-hierarchical, blurring the line between the leader and the community.[302] Natural is an example of a leader who was placed in that position by the community. The participant says, "Leadership? Like, I never asked to be a representative for the Earths. The sisters put me in that position. I'm just like food has to be cooked, people to be contacted, workshops have to be planned."[303]

In the literature, Allen says that one of the unique aspects of Black women's leadership is, "Black female leadership represents the collective experience and action toward community empowerment."[304] This idea of community empowerment is key in understanding the viewpoints of the participants. The very mission of the participants in their everyday lives and in The Nation of Gods and Earths is to truly make a practical change in the Black community. The change the participants work for is inclusive as it is meant to aid all original people regardless of religion, class, ideology, etc. Dr. Layli Phillips claims that womanism is "nonideological," meaning that the work of the womanist is not limited by doctrine or belief.[305] The participants, though rooted in the teachings of The Nation of Gods and Earths, consider themselves universal in their application of the lessons they embrace. Asia speaks on this nonideological perspective, "I have no intention of making others believe what I do. We [Earths] are not proselytizers. We are not missionaries. Please! We love all parts of the human family… When I give, I give, period. I

[300] Moonlight.
[301] Abdullah, 1.
[302] Ibid, 1.
[303] Natural.
[304] Allen, 2.
[305] Phillips, xxix.

don't care what you believe."[306] The leadership efforts of the Earths far surpass the work they do within The Nation of Gods and Earths. The participants have positively helped to transform lives despite divisions based on doctrine and identity.

EARTHS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The Earths have made valuable contributions to their organization and their communities, especially since the group was initially interested in recruiting young men. The Earths have helped to transform people's lives on many levels. For instance, the creation of the publication, *The14th degree and beyond*, has offered a platform for Earths to express themselves on a variety of issues. This magazine is specifically catered to informing and enlightening women and girls of color, targeting a population that has been historically underrepresented.[307] Publications encouraging the mental health and physical well-being of Black females can only strengthen the black family unit and Black people in general. Education is highly valued in The Nation of Gods and Earths, and the Earths exemplify this through their varied works. For example, the older Earth, Jewel, is helping to heal the Black community through the education of Black girls on health matters, especially safe sex. With HIV/AIDS being one of the leading killers of Black women, this type of education has life-saving potential. Jewel gives her students the information needed to be healthy and survive, changing the minds and lives of Black girls in her community.[308] The Earths promote education in a plethora of ways, showing flexibility and diversity in their leadership.

Earths such as Natural and Infinite, who created a summer camp for Black youth, are still actively mentoring young people, particularly young girls. This mentoring provides "othermothers" and positive role models that help guide underprivileged Black youth through a world that has been set up against them.[309] Older Earths like Moonlight have influenced a new generation of Earths, helping to create more leaders who will in

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[306] Asia.
[307] Infinite.
[308] Jewel.
[309] Phillips, xxix.

turn influence the young women that will follow their example.[310] This responsibility for the next generation of Black women is necessary for the survival of the race.

Interview after interview revealed conscious efforts made by the Earths to practically enact change in their communities. The Nation of Gods and Earths is transforming with the growing presence, influence, and leadership of its female members, who are fulfilling the plan of Father Allah in their unique way. The Earths represent a power for progressive growth in their Nation, families, and communities. They also offer an example to others in the community who wish to uplift Black people in a communal fashion.

The power of the nurturing element within the leadership of the Earths can be viewed in terms of womanism. Much of the leadership displayed by the Earths is in the realm of activities that are traditionally considered feminine. Historically, educating and engaging youth is seen as work relegated to women. From a womanist perspective, this type of "motherhood" is a legitimate and effective means of changing society.[311] Because the Earths lead in a manner unrecognized by those who understand leadership from a traditional standpoint, they are able to teach and influence in a way that is more subtle and undetected. Verily, the mother (biological or otherwise) being the primary guide in children's lives, may be playing the greatest of leadership roles, as she is able to mold minds on a very intimate level. The Earths are not just caring for the physical needs of the youth they engage, they are also nourishing the minds and souls of those who will be leading in the future. They are fulfilling the legacy of both Father Allah and their foremothers by concentrating their efforts on poor Black young people.

Interestingly, most of the initiatives taken by these particular Earths were done in spite of the Gods' leadership or permission. This puts into question how much influence the males in The Nation of Gods and Earths truly have over the movements of their counterparts. The women spearhead much, if not most of the activities and events that take place in the community. Even within the circle of The Nation of Gods and Earths, the men may make decisions on certain issues and events, but it is the Earths who often put

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[310] Moonlight
[311] Phillips, xxix.

those decisions into action. The Nation of Gods and Earths can only thrive if it recognizes, honors, and encourages the legitimate leadership roles of the Earths.

The Earths display significant ways that Black women change circumstance and consciousness through their perspectives, activities, and leadership. In a time where single parenthood is the norm, diseases such as obesity and herpes are increasing, and violence amongst the youth abounds, the Earths take it upon themselves to actively address these types of issues. All of the interviewees considered it their duty to both engage and progress the neighborhoods in which they live, showing the tendency for Black women leaders to work on a grassroots level.

This research, which explored the leadership roles of the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths, concludes that the Earths are not only instrumental to the group and the growth of the Black community, but that their stories and viewpoints are valid and deserve to be told. The Earths exist in many major cities, and according to Natural, "…reside in London, Japan, South Africa…. We are worldwide."[312] This research furthers the theories on Black Women's leadership by giving yet another solid example of Black women collectively working for the betterment of humanity. The Earths have largely been missing from the Black history books, from the Women's studies books, and from the historical texts of The Nation of Gods and Earths. The body of research on Black women's leadership is growing. The Earths offer an approach to social change, in that they simultaneously transform the consciousness and circumstances of Black youth, and thus the Black community as a whole. This approach, which deserves more research, is a necessary addition to the literature on Black women's leadership. This study is just the beginning of research yet to come on the effects of the group's women on their Nation, families, communities, and the world.

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[312] Natural.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and better understand the nature of Black women's leadership roles in The Nation of Gods and Earths. The methodology used in this exploration was qualitative in nature. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested for future research:

1) Further explore the elements, experiences, and doctrines, which inspire Black women's leadership in contemporary times.

2) Further explore the details of the Nation of Gods and Earth's doctrine in order to better understand its appeal to young Black people.

3) Develop an applicable methodology for aiding underprivileged youth based on the ideology and tactics of the Earths.

4) Explore the connection between the ideology and tactics of women in ancient Africa with those of the Earths.

5) Further explore the connection between the Gods and Earths and hip-hop as it pertains to the Earths specifically.

A discussion of these recommendations are listed below:

1) Further explore the elements, experiences, and doctrines, which inspire Black women's leadership in contemporary times.

Black women's leadership proves to be more collective, flexible, and inclusive than traditional leadership paradigms.[313] The reasons for the development and embracing of this type of leadership must be further explored. Is it simply the experience of enduring racism, classism, and sexism that drives Black women to lead in a more egalitarian, non-hierarchical manner? Is it practical to apply such a unique form of leadership in areas where Black women do not traditionally hold positions of power? In what ways has

[313] Abdullah, 1.

this form of leadership been adopted by people who are not Black women? The answers to the questions may give deeper insight concerning better methods of leadership.

2) Further explore the details of the Nation of Gods and Earth's doctrine in order to better understand its appeal to young Black women.

One of the interesting findings in this research was that the example of Father Allah, the patriarchical founder of The Nation of Gods and Earths, inspired the participants to lead in such a grassroots and proactive manner. All of the Earths spoke of the ideology and tactics of Father Allah in high respect and as an inspiration to their leadership roles.[314] What is it about this doctrine and ideology that appeals to women who are so progressive in their thinking and actions? How can an ideology that professes that, "The Black man is God" be considered liberating to Black women? Is it possible that some of the more sexist concepts of the Nation will change as more women take leadership positions? This study touches on some of these questions, but a more in depth look into these issues from a liberation theology perspective is necessary to get an understanding of the relationship between The Nation of Gods and Earths and the women it attracts.

3) Develop an applicable methodology for aiding underprivileged youth based on the ideology and tactics of the Earths.

Another interesting finding in this study is the fact that all of the participants had a history of working to uplift underprivileged Black youth. There seems to be a connection between the ideology of The Nation of Gods and Earths and the active role Earths play with inner city children.[315] Further research on this connection could benefit in creating paradigms to educate and empower children who remain at risk for several societal iniquities. Research should be done to assess the methodology of both the Nation in general and the Earths in particular.

4) Explore the connection between the ideology and tactics of women in ancient Africa with those of the Earths.

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[314] Infinite; Natural; Freedom; Moonlight; Jewel; Love; Asia; Queen.
[315] Infinite; Natural.

In the interview with Infinite, she asserts, "If you look at some cultures prior to that on the continent of Africa, you'll see that women play a large leadership role."[316]"Sankofa" is a Swahili word that suggests that African descendants look to their past in order to create a brighter future. The framework of this study, Africana womanism, is grounded in African culture.[317] Further research could be done to find the similarities and differences between the ways and actions of the Earths and the ways and actions of African women in pre-colonial Africa. What morals, values, concepts, and tactics do the Earth's have in common with their African foremothers? Can the Earths benefit from affirming their connection with ancient African culture and principles? These questions may give a more in depth understanding of the Earths leadership roles, as well as the leadership roles of other contemporary Black women.

5) Further explore the connection between the Gods and Earths and Hip-Hop as it pertains to the Earths specifically.

As mentioned in the review of literature, the Five Percenters were instrumental in creating and expanding hip-hop, which is now arguably the largest youth sub-culture in the world.[318] The written history of the Earths in relation to hip-hop is virtually non-existent. Because hip-hop has had such an influence on the world, specifically the youth, it would be beneficial to understand the role of Earths in the culture. Further, incorporating aspects of the hip-hop culture in reaching and educating Black youth may be an effective method that could be better utilized in the community.

RESEARCHER'S POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS

The researcher had been interested in and exposed to the lessons of The Nation of Gods and Earths for several years before embarking on this research. Though not officially a member of The Nation of Gods and Earths, the researcher has had an intimate relationship with the Supreme Mathematics, Supreme Alphabet, and many of the core

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[316] Infinite.
[317] Hudson-Weems, 24.
[318] Wakeel Allah, 315-17.

tenets of the organization. Indeed, it is the researcher's conviction that Black people are naturally divine and that Black people collectively are the originators of that which is. Further, it is the researcher's conviction that white supremacy is wicked by its very nature and is therefore the greatest enemy to people of color. This interest in the doctrine of The Nation of Gods and Earths and Black liberation cosmology in general could have possibly affected the researcher's outlook.

The researcher also assumed that the modern world is a patriarchical one, which would make The Nation of Gods and Earths naturally male-dominant. This assumption could have also affected the type of questions asked, the chosen theoretical framework, and even the very choice of topic. Further, the researcher had an admitted affinity for the history and current plight of Black women, as well as an affinity for spirituality centered in African-woman primacy.

The researcher handled these preconceived biases and affinities by taking care not to ask leading questions during the interviews of the participants. The researcher also carefully transcribed the interviews as to not put words in the mouths of the participants.

In any personal interview, it is possible that the participant may answer in a way that they think the researcher would prefer. It is also possible that the participant would answer in ways in order to make the organization or their self look "favorable." The two said possibilities are largely uncontrollable and must be accepted as possible validity threats.

SUMMARY

Chapter five concludes this research study. This chapter detailed the conclusions based on the analysis of the data in chapter four. Chapter five offered implications based on this analysis. Chapter five also gave five recommendations for future research. Finally, chapter five listed the researcher's perceived limitations and the methods used to address the limitations.

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the nature of Black women's leadership roles in The Nation of Gods and Earths. The theoretical framework proposed that Africana women should be viewed based on a lens that is unique to their experience and culture. The literature implied that Black women have a unique form of leadership that the history of Black women's leadership is extensive and relative to the Black experience, and that the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths were largely missing from that literature. A study of eight black women in The Nation of Gods and Earths, who claimed to play leadership roles, was conducted based on one-on-one interviews. The participants were found to be largely well educated, self-determined, and inspired to uplift the Black race in a practical and communal fashion. The core lessons of The Nation of Gods and Earths and the number system of Supreme Mathematics proved influential in the leadership roles adopted by the participants. In the interviews, the Earths challenged the inconsistencies based on race, class, and gender in the Nation and in the larger society. The participants' loyalty to the Black community, namely the Black underprivileged youth, superseded their objections to these inconsistencies found within The Nation of Gods and Earths.

EPILOGUE

I grew up in the Hip-Hop culture. I love this culture as an extension of African culture in general. Hip-Hop offered me a means of expression through dress, music, lingo, and self-identity. Being drawn to consciousness raising Hip-Hop artists, such as Poor Righteous Teachers, Brand Nubian, Rakim, and other Gods, I further became interested in my history and identity as a Black person. Hip-Hop music provided a means for me to obtain knowledge and perspective from those who shared this modern existence of being young, Black, and gifted. This love for Hip-Hop, Africa, and Blackness has become a driving inspiration in my life.

I embrace liberation cosmology, particularly Black liberation cosmology. The Nation of Islam, Rastafari, Black Sufism, Haitian Voodoo, Ifa, The Nation of Gods and Earths, as well as other Black cosmologies, which incorporate culture, metaphysics, and resistance against oppression, have influenced me. I adhere to the truths and principles of which I have learned from all of these systems of understanding.

The Nation of Gods and Earths offers a beautiful path for Black people to trod. It reminds us of our identity as divine beings. It reminds us of our primacy in the universe. It reminds us who are enemy (white supremacy) is. It gives a chance to name ourselves after divine attributes, think mathematically, and devote our lives to uplifting the consciousness of humanity.

My relationship with the Nation of Gods and Earth's doctrine and praxis is one I value. I have lived with Gods, done community work with members of the group, and have developed close friendships with Gods and Earths, as I have with various members

of groups focused on Black liberation. I have not memorized the lessons of the group. I have not had one exclusive personal educator from the Nation. I cannot trace my "lineage" to one of the nine first born. For these reasons, I would not be considered an official member by most in the group. I am fine with that. I have never been one to seek acceptance by any intentional group. I will say that I do utilize the lessons, Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets in my everyday life. I am grateful to Father Allah and his great Nation for their influence on my consciousness.

From a young age, I concluded that the nature of the universe was primarily feminine. All life comes through the womb, which lead me to ascertain that all originate from a grand cosmic womb. As darkness is the mother of light, the cosmic womb of which I speak is also Black. For me, the Black female, being the mother of humanity, mirrors this cosmic Black femaleness, which is the nature of what is. The Black woman is the physical manifestation of the source, according to my personal understanding.

Interestingly, the people of the earth have taken the origin of humanity for granted for several thousands of years. Women and those of African descent remain the most oppressed people in the world. The world has not only forgotten its roots, but has attempted to dismiss and destroy those who are responsible for humanity's existence in the first place. As one who resists white supremacy, which is also inherently anti-woman, I am interested in the primacy of Blackness and "womaness" as a means of understanding my truth and as a means of crushing the system of my oppressors.

I became interested in the perspectives and practice of the Earths because of my love for The Nation of Gods and Earths, Black people, and Black women specifically. I was

always impressed by the work I saw the sisters doing in the community surrounding the upliftment of Black folk. However, like the vast majority of groups, I found that the women's positive efforts were often ignored or undervalued. In researching the literature on the group, I also found that little was even mentioned about the Earths and their contributions. These discoveries lead to this research.

I want to see The Nation of Gods and Earths continue to thrive and expand so that it may reach more of our people who have lost touch with their divine selves. I feel the group is an important force in the consciousness-raising of Black youth in particular. The following suggestions are not meant to disrespect or downplay the group or its members, though I imagine that many members will disagree with my perspective. These are ideas, based on this study's analysis, that I feel can strengthen and progress the group exponentially.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRESSION

1) A Re-evaluation Of The Lessons

"One word can change a nation"
-Nation of Gods and Earths Proverb

The Nation of Gods and Earths offer an effective foundation for black people to build upon the knowledge of themselves. The doctrine of the group re-articulates the idea of God, the Earth, and the universe by taking power away from the concept of an

invisible creator. Rather than the divine being an untouchable spirit, God becomes the tangible force one sees in the mirror. This perspective can offer a freeing awareness to people of color historically oppressed by white supremacy. The realization that the path to the creator begins and ends with self is not new to humanity or its varying cultures. What is distinguishing about this particular path is that while most paths towards awareness ease one into his/her true identity slowly, the Five Percenter path teaches one his/her nature in the beginning. With the understanding that one is divine, it causes a sense of responsibility, accountability, and the necessity to explore one's history and current reality from a "self first" perspective. Displaced Africans remain in need of reconnecting with their true selves, history, and cosmology as defined by their own reality, for white supremacy continues to attack the Black consciousness.

Father Allah introduced this liberation cosmology to poor Black youth who were infected by the ills of white supremacy. The women interviewed had life changing experiences due to Allah's teachings and his example as an activist. The women interviewed had little issue with Allah's cosmology. The issue they had was with the interpretation of the lessons in a way that put them in an inferior position.

These women saw the title of "Earth" as uplifting and empowering. Though most of the Earths interviewed had no conflict with the term "Goddess," they did not feel compelled to apply the title to themselves. The intention of these women is not to "corrupt" the original teachings. The intention of these women is to put the Black woman in proper context as to encourage, enlighten, and strengthen the Black family as a whole.

One way that women may find more equality within the group is a reinterpretation of some of the core lessons. When the Honorable Elijah Muhammad first introduced "The Lessons," the terminology was different from the language used currently. For example, the term "man" was often used to address all humans of a particular race. In the "first degree," one is taught, "The Original man is the Asiatic Black Man…" It should be noted that in this context "Asiatic" means "of the earth." In any case, "Man" could very well be translated as "human." This reinterpretation could elevate the Black woman to the status of equality with her male counterpart. This reinterpretation would call for no change to the original words. Unfortunately, as long as the desire to put women in a secondary position exists, the acceptance of this type of interpretation is not realistic.

2) A Proactive Approach

"If Africana men and women are fighting within the community, they are ultimately defeating themselves on all fronts"[319]

According to Beverlyn Lundy Allen, "black female networks are dynamic and interrelated entities that form a matrix of reinforcements that hold the black community together while developing leadership for a better future."[320] The Earths interviewed worked with other Earths as writers of publications, organizers of Nation of Gods and Earth programs, as community activists, and as caretakers and educators. Therefore, it is concluded that these "black female networks" do in fact exist amongst the Earths.

With the support of each other, utilizing their power as a unit, the Earths can address the issues of gender inequality within The Nation of Gods and Earths. This effort would take loyalty and persistence amongst the women in the group. According to Hud-

[319] Hudson-Weems, 31.
[320] Allen, 2.

son-Weems, the Africana woman "is her own person, fully equipped with her own problems, her own successes, her own priorities."[321] Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Earths, alongside non-sexist Gods (if they are willing), to address the gender inequalities present in their organization. The grievances held by Earths are unproductive if they are not addressed on a national and international scale. The Earths do themselves a disservice by not addressing gender issues in a direct and proactive manner.

This argument is not to suggest that the Gods are absolved of the responsibility of addressing sexism within the group headon. If the group is to survive and strive as a force in the Black community, there must be a consensus amongst the Gods and Earths to overcome detrimental divisions within their group. The Earths have clearly demonstrated their competency and leadership ability. These women deserve the recognition and respect for the invaluable work they do for both the organization and the Black community at large. The group professes a desire to free Black youth from the psychological and physical brutalities of the dominant society. This tremendous feat can only be accomplished if the Gods and Earths are in unison with each other. Hudson-Weems echoes the previous statement saying, "If our real goal in life is to be achieved-that is, the survival of our entire race as a primary concern for Africana women-it will have to come from Africana men and women working together." As the Earth Freedom asserts, "Culture is transitive. It is always growing and changing… If this Nation is going to sustain and grow (which it will), the Earths have to be treated correctly. If not, there will just be The Nation of Gods… And I don't know of any nation that can thrive with just men. That is

[321] Hudson-Weems, 72.

definitely not right and exact!"[322] Again, the advancement and very survival of the Nation of Gods and Earth will take a collective approach including both Gods and Earths.

[322] Freedom.

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APPENDIX A

DESIGN

Non-Experimental Design Notation:

O

O = Measures

O1 = Interviews

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

2) How long have you been a member of The Nation of Gods and Earths (N.G.E.)? How were you introduced to the N.G.E.?

3) What are some of the elements in the N.G.E. that encouraged you to become a member?

4) The lessons of the N.G.E. teach that the Black man is God and the Black woman is Earth. Could you give your understanding on these claims?

5) Some in the N.G.E. claim that the woman is "secondary but most necessary." Do you agree with this notion? Why or Why not?

6) What is the N.G.E.'s view of the dominant society and the oppressions there of (race, class, gender)? Are these views consistent with your personal ideas?

7) Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not? How do you lead?

8) You are invited to participate in a research study that explores the women in The Nation of Gods and Earths as they relate to leadership concepts. You are invited to participate in this study because of your involvement in the organization.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Georgia State University

Department of African American Studies

Interview Consent Form

Title: The Connective Leadership Roles of the Women in The Nation of Gods and Earths.

Principal Investigator: AhmonKeiler-Bradshaw

Sponsor: Georgia State University

I. Purpose

II. Procedures

If you decide to participate, you will be asked personal interview questions regarding your affiliation with the said organization, gender roles, and leadership roles.

The interview could be posed in your home, another home approved by you, or at a private space in your neighborhood. The interview will take about 60 minutes and will occur during the day at a time that suits you.

III. Risks

We will do everything that we can to maintain confidentiality. If confidentiality is broken, there is a minimal risk of embarrassment. However, if you experience any discomfort or concern about your participation, you may contact the researcher at any time during or after the completion of the study.

IV. Benefits

Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. It may give a clearer understanding of the women in your organization to the world.

Initials _____

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality

We will try to keep your personal information private. Your privacy will be kept to the extent allowed by law. The information you give us will be used in this research study. We will remove all information that can identify you. We will share it with other people for this research study.

If you decide you want to be in this study it means that you agree to let us use and share your personal information for the reasons we have listed in this consent form. While we are doing this research, the research team may use only the personal information.

We may also share your information with the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your personal information may be shared by the people or places we have listed, but it will be shared in a way that does not fall under the protection of federal regulations that apply to the privacy of health information. This research may be shown to other researchers. This research may be published, but we will take steps to make sure that you cannot be identified.

If you sign this consent form you are letting us use your personal information until the end of the study. You have the right to say that you do not want us to use your personal information after we collected it. If you decide or don't want us to use your information anymore you must write a letter asking us not to use your information. You will need to send the letter to the investigator who received your completed questionnaires. If you don't want us to use your information anymore, we will stop using it, but any information that we have already used in the study will not be removed. You may not be able to look at or get a copy of your information that you gave us while we were doing the research; however, you will be able to look at or get a copy at the end of the study.

Initials _____

VII. Contact Persons

Call AhmonKeiler-Bradshaw at 404.207.6330 or e-mail me at ahmonj@yahoo.com. if you have questions about the study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office or Research Integrity at 404.413.3513 or svoghner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of consent Form to Subject

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

_____

Participant Date

_____

Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Initials _____

PART I: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Year of birth: _____

2. Zip code: _____

3. Ethnicity is African American (1) Yes (2) No

4. Gender is female (1) Yes (2) No

PART II: LOCATING INFORMATION

Primary contact:

Participants Name:_____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Secondary contact:

Relatives name:_____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

APPENDIX D

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Participant	**Age**	**Years in Group**	**Level of Education**	**Occupation**
Infinite	30	10	Bachelors	Bartender
Natural	34	12	Bachelors	Owns catering company
Freedom	30	11	Masters	Social worker
Queen	31	3	Masters	Daycare supervisor
Moonlight	? (Estimated late 40's to early 50's)	27	High school	Shop owner
Love	25	3	High school	Full-time college student.
Asia	25	8	High school	Artist, fashion designer
Jewel	? (Estimated late 40's to early 50's)	Around 30 years	Nursing School	Registered nurse