Lessons in spiritual leadership from Kenyan women

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explicate spiritual leadership lessons of beneficence, courage, hope and ubuntu/humanness that are derived from the experiences of women leaders in Kenya. The paper seeks to connect African data with existing literature on spiritual leadership, to demonstrate where African spiritual leadership is similar to, or different from, western conceptualizations of spiritual leadership.

Design/methodology/approach – The study from which this paper is derived employed qualitative methods, specifically interviews with supplemental archival data and observations. Four major themes are explored: beneficence, courage, hope/forbearance and ubuntu/humanness as emerging from the women's leadership stories. These four themes are compared and contrasted against existing literature on spiritual leadership.

Findings – It is found that beneficence, courage, and hope are comparable to existing western conceptualizations, whereas ubuntu is unique to the African context.

Research limitations/implications – The paper and the larger study were derived from interviews with 16 participants; as such, generalization was not a goal. The paper provides a deeper understanding of spiritual leadership as enacted by African women, with implications for the need for increased research on non-western, non-white perspectives on the phenomenon.

Practical implications – Readers may relate to the women’s stories and be both informed and inspired towards their own social justice leadership.

Originality/value – Whereas the paper is derived from field research conducted in 2005 and published variously in other sources as cited, this paper takes an original perspective in comparing and contrasting African and western understandings of spiritual leadership, and expanding the understanding of the same in a novel way not done in previous publications.

Keywords Social justice, Leadership, Kenya, Women

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Whereas there are growing numbers of leadership studies about women from North America and other Western countries, there remains a dearth of literature about women’s leadership in Africa (Ngunjiri, 2009, 2010; Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009). As Nkomo and Ngambi argued, African women leaders are missing from the discussions, necessitating concerted efforts to study and publish about them. Furthermore, the two authors posit that there is a tremendous need to capture and develop all available talent in order to resolve the myriad of issues facing the African continent:

Thus, scholars cannot afford to neglect understanding the status and experiences of African women who occupy leadership and management roles in African organizations, or the barriers to their success (Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009, p. 50).

With this call to action in mind, the paper aims at explicating the leadership experiences of select women from Kenya, who occupy leadership positions in various institutional types, and whose leadership also involves an educational and social
justice perspective. However, the focus of this paper is not on the barriers or challenges per se. Instead, taking an appreciative inquiry perspective, the paper demonstrates how select women utilize Africana spirituality in articulating leadership for social justice. In that sense then, the paper focuses on “what works” in the midst of, rather than the absence of challenges and barriers (Jones, 2003; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997; Ngunjiri, 2006, 2007).

Social-historical context
Kenya is a small East African country that is only about 583,000 square kilometers or twice the size of the state of Nevada, US. It is a former British colony that attained independence in 1963, and has experienced tremendous social, economic and political changes in its five decades of existence as a country. The twin factors of colonialism and Christianity helped to interrupt traditional communities and their ways of life, including their gender roles and social arrangements, with effects that are still felt today. Whereas the country has been stable for most of its history, the beginning of 2008 dawned with the worst political unrest and violence ever experienced within its borders. Prior to that, the political unrest of the late 1980s and early 1990s were much less chaotic, resulting in Kenya advancing into an emerging democracy. Many of the leaders who were interviewed for the larger study of which this paper is derived advanced into leadership within that tumultuous political environment which had an impact on all organizational types – be they government, business, education or civil society (Ngunjiri, 2010).

Methods
This paper is derived from data collected for my dissertation in the summer of 2005 which was based primarily on qualitative interviews with supplemental archival data and observations of 16 women who I describe as being “broadly educational leaders” – meaning that whether their leadership was within an educational institution or a different type of organization, they considered themselves as responsible for educating their constituents and those within their spheres of influence formally or informally on issues relevant to social justice. Each interview lasted between two to four hours, and I transcribed them verbatim, coded them and analyzed them utilizing appropriate qualitative methods (e.g. open coding, axial coding). I hand coded all the data. For this particular paper, I have re-analyzed the data with a view to understanding how the type of spiritual leadership exemplified by the women leaders was similar to, and different from, western conceptualizations of leadership, particularly those described by management scholars (e.g. Fry, 2003; Kriger and Seng, 2005; Reave, 2005; Whittington et al., 2005) and education scholars (e.g. Dantley, 2003a; Keyes et al., 1999; Woods, 2007). For more on the methods employed in the larger study, please see Ngunjiri (2006), available free on the internet.

Theoretical framework
In the review of literature by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009), the authors discussed the published sources, including journal articles and book chapters, on women and leadership and management in Africa, from 1990-2008. Most of the sources appear to come from Nigeria and South Africa, with not a single source from the East African region. However, they did indicate that one limitation of their paper could be that they
missed some available published sources (see for example (AAWORD, 1998; Ngunjiri, 2007; Ngunjiri and Lengel, 2007; Nzomo, 1997; O’Barr and Firmin-Sellers, 1995; Sweetman, 1984; Tamale, 2000). Still, this demonstrates that there is a dearth of published works on women and leadership in any of Africa’s many countries, and more so from Kenya. Whereas there has been a few dissertations on women in Kenya and Africa, most such works focus on women’s agency in the informal sector (Ndunda, 1995) as opposed to their leadership and management involvement (Ngunjiri, 2006). For an excellent exploration of the literature on women in management and leadership in Africa, see Nkomo and Ngambi (2009).

**African feminism/womanism**

One of the conceptual frameworks proposed by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) that could be used in explicating the experiences of African women leaders is African feminism. African feminism was articulated by African scholars who argued that western (particularly first wave) feminism did not represent African realities. Recognizing that most studies on African women and leadership tend to use western theories to explicate African realities (Ngunjiri, 2006, 2010; Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009; Nnaemeka, 2003; Oyewumi, 1997, 2002), this paper uses African feminism and African spirituality as the conceptual frameworks undergirding the exploration of Kenyan women’s leadership experiences. Broadly speaking, African feminism is opposed to how western feminism dichotomizes human relations placing males against females, as well as the individualism and competitiveness inherent in first wave conceptualizations of feminism (Arndt, 2002; Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009; Nnaemeka, 2003; Oyewumi, 2002). African feminist and womanist scholars recognize that African women’s realities demand a more holistic perspective that does not pit men against women; instead, such a perspective must root out the unjust social arrangements between men and women, particularly those involving abuses of culture, traditions and contemporary economic compacts. As such, African feminism and womanism are African conscious, recognizing the realities of the social, cultural, historical, economic and cultural context of African women (Kolawole, 1997; Mikel, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Oyewumi, 2003). African feminism and womanism scholars then recognize the desperate need for African perspectives, theories and concepts in the academic marketplace of ideas, to ensure better interpretations of African realities (Amadiume, 1997; Arndt, 2000, 2002; Hudson-Weems, 1997; Ntiri, 2001). Central to any understanding of African social realities is the recognition of the African worldview that should be reflected in our interpretation of data on women and leadership.

**African spirituality and worldview**

The African worldview has been described as “notoriously religious”, a worldview that involves the relationships between the physical, material world and the spiritual, immaterial world (Kasambala, 2005; Mbiti, 1969; Paris, 1995). In this worldview, the physical world is understood to be imbued with spirits – including God, other deities, ancestral spirits – thus being sometimes described by missiologists as an animistic worldview (Miller, 2001). Specifically, “religion permeates every dimension of African life. In spite of the many and varied religious systems the ubiquity of religious consciousness among African peoples constitutes their single most important common characteristic” (Paris, 1995, p. 27). As such, life events, natural phenomenon, the sacred
and the mundane are all understood as being impacted by the spirit world including God and/or spirited ancestors otherwise described as “the living dead” (Mbiti, 1969). Life, death, birth, circumcision, business success, educational attainment, a good harvest, and a successful marriage can all be explained in terms of blessings from, or disfavor with the spiritual realm. As Paris (1995) asserted:

A distinctive feature of African and African American ethics is its grounding in a cosmological spirituality that unites three interdependent realms of life, which are usually ranked in hierarchical order – spirit, history, and nature. Thus, all life is sacred [emphasis added]. This is a fundamental principle for all African peoples. Unlike in most western thought, the sacred is not separated from human and natural life but permeates both. As a consequence, the function of human life is a sacred vocation, namely, to preserve and promote the life of the community (p. 135).

With this in mind, African spirituality adds unique dimensions to the practice of spiritual leadership, particularly the aspect of the collective experience of spirituality, the holistic nature that does not dichotomize between spiritual and material, and the goal which is always the sustenance of relationships in community.

**Spiritual leadership**

Spiritual leadership is:

An observable phenomenon occurring when a person in a leadership position embodies spiritual values such as integrity, honesty, humility, creating the self as an example of someone who can be trusted, relied upon, and admired... it is also demonstrated through behavior, whether in individual reflective practice or in the ethical, compassionate, and respectful treatment of others. Spiritual individuals are perhaps more likely to demonstrate spiritual leadership (Reave, 2005, p. 663).

The study of spirituality in relation to leadership and management has been growing in popularity in both the academy and popular press, particularly within the US, with a lot of the literature appearing in the last decade. Most of this literature on spiritual leadership has involved the study of individuals and organizations in the US (Benefiel, 2005; Bolman and Deal, 1995; Delbecq, 2005; Fairholm, 1997; Fry, 2003). Studies have been conducted; theoretical/conceptual papers as well as popular management and leadership books written looking at defining, describing, measuring, conceptualizing and analyzing the impact and expression of spirituality at work and amongst leaders, but as Fry (2003) argued, there is a need for non-western perspectives on spiritual leadership to join the marketplace of ideas. In the last few years, a growing body of literature has emerged on spirituality from an Eastern perspective, particularly from India (Pandey and Gupta, 2008; Parameshwar, 2005). Some of the literature has involved comparing the major world religions with a bid to understand the common spiritual values that could be employed in leadership, such as humility, trustworthiness, and care for others (Kriger and Seng, 2005) or looking at spiritual values in leadership (Reave, 2005). Some authors have attempted to look at spiritual leadership from the perspective of a particular religion such as Christianity (Whittington et al., 2005), Judaism (Pava, 2009) and other world religions. In the early years of studies on spiritual leadership, there was a large focus on defining spirituality, and demonstrating the differences between religion and spirituality, as well as operationalizing the terminologies for empirical study (Lund Dean et al., 2003). What is
needed now is introducing African spirituality into the spiritual leadership literature, to both connect with existing conceptualizations as well as expand our current understanding (Ngunjiri, 2010). This paper then helps to bridge that gap between western and African understandings of spiritual leadership.

Introducing the women leaders
This paper is derived from a much larger study of women’s leadership in Africa which focused on 15 Kenyan and I Sudanese woman; their leadership had both an educational and a social justice perspective (see Ngunjiri, 2006, 2010, for deeper explication of other themes relating to women’s leadership in Africa). The women’s spheres of influence ranged from grassroots to global – from the principal of an elementary girls school to president of a global organization, from national politicians to pan-African leaders. Each of the women described their role in terms of leading for social justice – whether this be in the form of economic, legal, educational, or political justice for the marginalized. In addition, each woman understood her role as broadly educational, such that even those whose position was not as “head in command” of an educational institution, they still recognized their educational leadership role in the community, nation and international spheres of influence. In that sense, their leadership involved being both institutional leaders and opinion leaders, with the ability to influence change from within organizations, communities, and the nation and for some pan-African and Global organizations. The women ranged in age from early forties to early eighties, thus providing a rich diversity of ideas and experiences in leadership from the pre-independence to contemporary times. Their stories provided rich lessons in spiritual leadership, helping to expand our current understanding of the phenomenon by adding African data, particularly the critical perspective derived from practical wisdom, and the cultural values inherent in ubuntu philosophy.

Lessons in spiritual leadership
African spirituality imbued with practical wisdom amongst these African women lead to a desire to engage in social justice leadership. Practical wisdom is the ability to make wise decisions that is a product of experience “excellence of thought … measure of cognitive discernment … the fully developed capacity of a free moral agent” (Paris, 1995, p. 144). This practical wisdom is also variously described as critical spirituality thus:

The element of critique and deconstruction of undemocratic power relations is blended with spiritual reflection grounded in an African American sense of moralism, prophetic resistance, and hope in order to form the viscera of this hybrid theoretical construct called critical spirituality (Dantley, 2005b, p. 5).

This practical wisdom or critical spirituality is part of what makes African spirituality as connected to leadership unique from other forms of spirituality. Specifically, it makes for an element of critique in leadership – critique of unjust social arrangements and activism towards justice. As Dantley proffered:

It establishes and prods our sense of justice and fairness and constructs for us our notions of calling, mission or purpose (Dantley, 2005a, p. 6).

In this sense, the Kenyan women leaders studied here offer an understanding of critical spiritual leadership that is a product of maturity and deeply held spiritual values.
within a particular cultural context. These lessons in spiritual leadership include beneficence, hope/forbearance, courage, and ubuntu/humanness aimed at building and sustaining community.

**Beneficence**

Paris (1995) observed that beneficence is a highly valued virtue amongst African peoples, “because it exemplifies the goal of community as it is internalized by individual persons and community leaders” (p. 136). In other conceptualizations of spiritual leadership, beneficence could be comparable to altruistic love (Fry, 2003, 2008). It therefore appears that beneficence or altruistic love would be a common feature between African and western conceptualizations of spiritual leadership, though in the African context, it is derived from culturally mandated virtue and connected to the goal of preserving and perpetuating community.

Beneficence enables these Kenyan women leaders to choose to serve towards social justice ideals, particularly for people marginalized by social, economic, cultural and economic factors. For example, Ms Priscilla Nangurai who was the principal of Africa Inland Church Girls School in Kajiado chose to work in this environment so as to help rescue Maasai girls from malpractices such as forced early marriages, and the ravages of economic hardships. Through that school and in her later work with an non profit organization that continues to rescue and educate girls, Ms Nangurai serves her Maasai people by ensuring a steady stream of girls are able to pursue their education. Her mission of educational equity for this pastoralist community is bearing fruit as some of the earlier graduates from her school return to also serve their community as teachers, nurses and in other development work. For more on Ms. Nangurai’s work, see Ngunjiri(2010). The virtue of beneficence has meant giving up the comforts that could have been hers had she chosen a less controversial area of work that would not have involved clashing headlong with some of the Maasai elders who felt that she was interfering with their “traditions”.

The virtue of beneficence in spiritual leadership could also be the reason behind Professor Esther Mombo’s choice to return to Kenya after her graduate studies in the UK, to serve within the Christian Higher Education environment, in spite of the fact that her previous experience had been particularly difficult. Her beneficence towards other women meant that she felt compelled and convicted to return, to ensure a steady stream of theologically trained women through her teaching and administrative work at St Paul’s University. Professor Mombo is a highly regarded African theologian, whose work in educating women, and also preparing pastors to be responsive towards the scourge of HIV/AIDS in Africa is commendable. She could have chosen to work within the higher education sector in the UK where she had been offered a job, but instead, she returned to help root out unjust arrangements within the Anglican Church in Kenya, particularly in relation to the ordination of women. Beneficence or altruistic love for her community of Kenya and her church community compelled her to engage in challenging and difficult work at St Paul’s; her reward has been the numbers of women graduating from the university with theological degrees. As of my last conversation with her, 60 women had gone through the programs at the university and were serving in various churches (not just Anglican), even though many still faced challenges to their pursuit of authority through ordination.
Whereas each of the other women studied could be used to illustrate beneficence and altruistic love as part of spiritual leadership, these two snapshots suffice to demonstrate how it impacts the choices women make as far as context and content of their leadership. Altruistic love demands of the individual a sense of caring and concern for others, a compassion towards meeting their needs. Changed lives become the measure of the leaders success (Kriger and Seng, 2005) as demonstrated by these two women’s stories.

Hope
From the Christian scriptures that most of these Kenyan women leaders cited, “without hope, people perish”. Indeed, without a sense of hope, the kind of social justice leadership that many of these women practice would not be possible. Fry’s (2003, 2005) conceptualization of spiritual leadership included hope as one element. Hope leads to endurance and perseverance in the midst of challenges, and resiliency to persist until the goal is accomplished. Hope leads to forbearance, which as Paris (1995) argued, is a virtue gained from African’s many struggles against man-made and natural forces including their dehumanization under racial and colonial oppression, economic injustice, political disenfranchisement and harsh natural conditions.

Mrs Shiprah Gichaga, who was the executive director of the Kenya chapter of African Women Educationalists worked towards educational equity of access for girls, ensuring those from marginal and frontier communities had access to basic education. Her hope that her work would bear fruit kept her motivated, even when the statistics showed only modest progress.

Similarly, hope and forbearance helped Dr Agnes Abuom, who served for one term as Africa’s president of the World Council of Churches, the first woman to serve in that role – and later as Vice President for the World Religions for Peace to persist in each of her roles within these global organizations.

More importantly, her forbearance while she was facing persecution as a university student in the 1970s (along with others who agitated for political justice in Kenya) helped her to forge a way forward, including moving to Uppsala, Sweden to continue her education. In spite of those early struggles, she returned to Kenya as soon as she completed her PhD in history, to serve as a lay leader within the Anglican church, gaining credibility to the point of being appointed to those global bodies as a representative for Africa. Her work in peace building and conflict transformation locally and in other African countries has been tremendously important in bringing about peace to war torn regions. Her educational role of translating the African palava (a consensus form of decision making practiced in many pre colonial African communities) into the conflict transformation process is commendable. Without a hope for the future, the young Agnes Abuom might have given up the fight for justice back in the 1970s; the older and wiser Dr Abuom would not have been around to serve the nation, the continent and the globe with her particular brand of peace education.

Reflecting on women’s forbearance and the resiliency that comes with it, Dr Abuom commented:

Due to the many struggles that women have to endure, they have had to learn to be resilient, to survive against the odds so that they can bring up their children and sustain their communities. Struggle refines like gold through a furnace, and African women have been thoroughly refined to a point of resiliency and strength.
Rather than treat the struggles that women face from a pathological perspective, she opts to find the good that comes out of it – the forbearance that helps women continue to endure, persevere, and persist to the end. In addition to hope, forbearance and resiliency, spiritual leadership for these Kenyan women also necessitates a dose of courage to act in the face of challenges and opposition.

**Courage**

Kriger and Seng (2005) include courage as one of the values that is shared amongst the five major religions as far as spiritual leadership is concerned. Similarly, Whittington et al. (2005) include boldness to act amidst opposition as one of the characteristics of legacy leadership which is a type of spiritual leadership. Paris (1995) observed that Africana people believe that human beings are the cause of misery and oppression, which:

... upset cosmic equilibrium [thus] the realm of spirit must be engaged in order to restore balance. This is as good a reason as any for explaining the importance of the spirit realm in the African struggle for survival and social change. Consequently, both on the continent and in the Diaspora, religion has maintained a central place in the struggle for social justice (p. 46).

Furthermore, [African American] prophetic spirituality which is an African spirituality in essence infuses leaders with boldness to engage structural injustices and challenge the status quo (Dantley, 2005a). For leaders whose work involves a social justice perspective, courage is a necessary ingredient. Amongst these Kenyan women, a dose of courage is necessary to enable them to speak out and act against social, economic, political and “cultural” injustices meted out against their constituents.

For example, Ms Judy Thongori, formerly the Executive Director of Federation of Women Lawyers (Kenya chapter) and now in private practice discussed how it required great courage on her part to speak out and act on behalf of marginalized women. Her work at FIDA and 10 percent of her private practice now is devoted to those who could not pay lawyer’s fees – widows and other disenfranchised women who needed her help with issues of property rights, inheritance rights, divorce, domestic abuse, and other gender-related injustices. When she joined FIDA, she had not been in that kind of practice before, having come from corporate litigation. But in short order, she educated herself on women’s rights as human rights, and lead FIDA for five years in fighting for the rights of marginalized women. Beyond going to court on their behalf, Ms Thongori continues to educate people through churches, community meetings, and in the media on issues of women’s rights and human rights, helping to assure that as many people as can be reached learn that they have options when faced with legal matters.

Similarly, Ms Wahu Kaara, a “lifelong educator” who was a teacher, then school principal, before retiring early to become a debt relief campaigner was another exemplar of courage under fire. Ms Kaara had faced many adversities in her life, including living under government surveillance after her husband went into exile to escape government injustice during the second liberation movement in Kenya. She talked about how she needed to be courageous to continue working as a school principal knowing full well that her every step was being observed as the wife of a “dissident”. However, this did not stop her from serving effectively, until such a time as it was prudent to retire and more openly engage in activism work. In her current roles as a debt campaigner and one of the leaders of Global Campaign Against Poverty
(GCAP) and the World Social Forum, she continues to speak out against the economic injustices meted out to developing countries by the Bretton Woods institutions (e.g. World Bank, International Monetary Fund). In describing courage, Ms Kaara had this to say:

You have to arm your conscience as with steel, you have to determine that you will make it, encourage yourself that you can do it. I saw that courage in my grandmother and my mother after her. I see that courage in many African women… the will to stand up and speak out, to act in spite of challenges and barriers…

This courage enables Ms Kaara to stand up before dignitaries and power brokers in places as diverse as the United Nations in New York to speak on behalf of African women, and in Glen Egles and such other locations where the G8 meets to speak out against unjust economic arrangements. As she noted, only by having strong guts could she be able to speak truth to power without fear. She further argues that this courage is not merely a virtue that is passed on, but rather:

The courage comes from the spirit within… who empowers me to be what I am… the spirit gives me the capacity to pursue the truth without illusion. The spirit emboldens me within the parameters of my Christian faith to seek liberation until I die…

Ubuntu
The African worldview is sometimes described in terms of ubuntu – that is, the essence of being fully human. Ubuntu is a term derived from Bantu languages that means humanness, or in an oft-quoted slogan I am because we are, and because we are, I am. What this means is that, the African worldview demands that people recognize and relate to each other as people who share a common humanity. This theological anthropology is a human-centered yet spiritual view of what it means to be human – to be human means to be in relationship with others. In Ubuntu, the individual’s identity is wrapped up in his/her collectivity, as Desmond Tutu observed:

As a human being through other human beings, it follows that what we do to others affects us through the interwoven fabric of social, economic and political relationships… (Tutu, 1999, p. 34).

Slavery, Colonialism, Western education and missionary Christianity all but destroyed this cultural worldview, but conscious African men and women are finding a way to renegotiate their spiritual and African identity with Ubuntu in mind.

One of the results of Ubuntu as far as women’s spiritual leadership is concerned is women’s ability to connect with others, to be in solidarity with others going as far as collective problem solving and resource sharing. According to Dr Abuom, this solidarity is part of the strength that African women bring into leadership praxis:

The other source of resiliency is the solidarity that is never really brought to the fore between women. That there is a collective mass of oppressed people, and they see others who have made it, and say ‘why not me?’ That is always under-estimated by the prejudice of women are their own worst enemies, which is not true… the collective mass of the oppressed creates solidarity and economy of association within women giving them strength.

In this sense then, ubuntu creates in the women a sense of solidarity with each other, such that they gain resiliency and strength from their associations and collectives.
Ms Kaara expanded further on ubuntu as solidarity, explaining how African women are able to resolve their economic and social problems including how to feed, clothe and educate their children in spite of limited resources by engaging in collective action:

So that is the strength that Africa has, that together we can make it. That spirit of human solidarity, that commitment to not just exist but living, because living is participating . . . it is the essence of being.

Ubuntu values include solidarity, mutuality, generosity, and a commitment to the community wellbeing (Battle, 1997; Mbigi, 1996; Nafukho, 2006; Tutu, 1999). As such, it is an overarching spiritual philosophy that is concerned with human relationships whose purpose is to strengthen community. Ubuntu is Africa’s contribution to our understanding of spirituality, by adding the collective identity to individual identity such that the purpose of spiritual leadership is connected to the community’s wellbeing.

Implications for research and practice
These four values: beneficence, hope, courage and ubuntu together add to our understanding of leadership praxis as far as the integration of spirituality with leadership is concerned. These stories demonstrate how leaders can employ their identity – including their spiritual identity – in their leadership practice, thus becoming more authentic leaders by being able to act from deeply held spiritual values. In particular, these four values contribute to the leaders’ ability to build and sustain community. As the literature on spiritual leadership and spirituality in organizations demonstrates, people are searching for community within their organizations and workplaces (Benefiel, 2003, 2005; Fairholm, 1997; Fry and Whittington, 2005). As such, educational leaders can learn from these snapshots of Kenyan women leaders how to articulate a leadership that enables them to be effective in creating community within their educational institutions, thus enabling their constituents to experience a deeper sense of belongingness (Fry, 2003; Keyes et al., 1999).

The role of spirituality in leadership practice can therefore not be overemphasized – perhaps it is time for those in educational leadership to catch up to those in the management disciplines in researching about spiritual leadership in educational administration. So far, there are a few such studies and conceptual papers available (for example, Dantley, 2003a, b, 2005a, b; Dillard et al., 2000; Keyes et al., 1999; McClellan, 2006; Murtadha-Watts, 1999) but there is room for more, particularly those studying non-western forms of spiritual leadership.

Concluding thoughts
At the present time, there is a greater need for effective international and cross cultural communication, collaboration and cooperation, not only for the effective practice of management, but for the betterment of the human condition (House et al., 2004, p. 1).

With this in mind, studies on spiritual leadership and gender from many diverse perspectives, including those utilizing non-western theories and non-white populations are welcome for both expanding knowledge and improving human relationships across differences. Stories such as those used to demonstrate the four themes of courage, hope, beneficence and ubuntu/humanness help to remind us that there are
leadership lessons to be learned from the margins and the frontiers; that there are important contributions to knowledge and praxis that can be derived by studying those that have historically been excluded from theorizing. The value of such studies is immense in expanding our understanding of leadership theory and practice beyond the current canon. Even cultural worldview such as Ubuntu with its African roots has applicability on a global scale, because its values of solidarity, generosity, mutuality and commitment to community are values that can find resonance well beyond Africa’s borders.

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