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Colorism and Women Who Self-Identify as Black in Leadership Roles

Alyse Poitier Gardner-Kennedy
Walden University

Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Alyse Gardner-Kennedy

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Review Committee
Dr. Douglas McCoy, Committee Chairperson, Human Services Faculty
Dr. Nicole Hamilton, Committee Member, Human Services Faculty
Dr. Andrew Carpenter, University Reviewer, Human Services Faculty

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Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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Abstract

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MPhil, Walden University, 2022

MA, Oklahoma University, 2001

BS, Mississippi Valley State University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency are still experiencing colorism in the workplace. Color-based bias, also called colorism, within the Black community centers on advantages and disadvantages for people of the same race. Colorism typically allows more benefits for lighter-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black than darker-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. The research question investigated the emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency that experienced colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. Basic qualitative research design using interviews was the chosen method. Data were collected using semi structured interviews with eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and who had experiences with colorism in the workplace. NVivo was used to analyze the data. Critical race theory and structure of colorism as the theoretical frameworks related to the color spectrum within the Black race regarding women who self-identified as Black. The study's findings may support positive social change by bringing awareness that there is an emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black stemming from colorism. This study may assist counselors, education institutions, and human resources in resolving conflicts that might arise in the workplace.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my husband, John, I thank you for being my best friend. You were my motivator and prayer partner throughout this journey. Your unconditional love and support will always be cherished. To my children, thank you for your encouragement and support. You are such an important of my life. To my parents, I thank you for giving me life. Although you are not able to share at this moment, I am still very grateful.

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13

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my chair. I will always be thankful for the time you dedicated to me in pursuing this

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Colorism is a form of same-group discrimination based on skin tone that allows more advantages for lighter-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black than darker-skinned individuals who self-identify Black (Gasman & Abiola, 2016). Colorism is a legacy based on slavery and racism that has contributed to the racial identities of individuals who self-identify as Black (Lemi & Brown, 2020). A seminal study by Berry (1998) stated that not enough focus had been placed on the phenomenon of colorism (i.e., prejudicial, or preferential treatment based on skin color). Color-based bias, also referred to as colorism, within the Black community centers on advantages and disadvantages for people who identify as the same race. These biased experiences are based on the lightness or darkness of their skin tone and other external traits such as hair texture and facial features (Keith & Monroe, 2016).

Perhaps the most preeminent implications of colorism are its impact on how individuals who self-identify as Black define and evaluate themselves (Harvey et al., 2017). However, understanding the dimensions of skin color is significant for people of African descent; therefore, what may be considered light-skinned in one context may be darker-skinned in another (Lemi & Brown, 2020). In addition to macro (societal) influences, colorism is also imparted at the micro level as one's family shapes a person's identity, perspectives, and life experiences, materializing within the socialization process (Mathews & Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, colorism serves as a social stratification

mechanism that typically puts lighter-skinned group members on the top and darker-skinned group members on the bottom across many outcomes (Harvey et al., 2017).

Complexion privilege and color bias have long acted in concert with racism to foster intraracial forms of status among individuals who self-identify as Black, including the tendency for educational levels and other measurable outcomes (e.g., income) to correspond with skin tone (Gasman & Abiola, 2016). The implications of colorism extend across various levels of analysis for individuals who self-identify as Black; this includes the intrapersonal to the interpersonal to the intragroup, and eventually to the intergroup. In addition, it is significant to convey and recognize that individuals (both within and outside communities of color) embrace the ideology of colorism (Harvey et al., 2017). The legacy of White supremacy and the perpetual degradation of dark bodies has associated lightness with attractiveness; however, darkness, especially blackness, with marginalization remains in the national imagination (Keith & Monroe, 2016). Colorism is part and parcel of institutional racism and White privilege that operates on two interrelated levels: race and skin color (Lemi & Brown, 2020). Research has shown that the distinctions between persons of light and dark skin tones have maintained their course such that people's impressions of individuals who self-identify as Black still heavily depend on their skin tone (Harvey et al., 2017).

African American Women and Leadership

In the United States, there is a disproportionately low representation of women who self-identify as Black in leadership roles. Their struggles with the visibility of women who self-identify as Black has indicated that most influences come from family,

culture, and spiritual beliefs (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). There are few women who self-identify as Black represented in leadership roles, and very few have successfully advanced in their careers (Mitchell, 2019). However, findings in another study suggested that even though the number of women who self-identify as Black working in the corporate workforce has increased, at senior levels, very few women who self-identify as Black are represented (Green, 2019).

Women who self-identify as Black in leadership and professional roles are part of the underrepresented minorities in one of the world's largest employment sectors, the United States federal government (Pierce, 2020). Further, a recent Air Force inspector general article found that minorities and women are underrepresented in leadership and officer positions, especially at the senior levels, and get promoted less frequently (Baldor, 2021)—leadership roles for women who self-identify as Black appear to be a recurring problem in education. Based on current research, few women who self-identify as Black. are represented in the roles of community college presidents in the United States; this is found to be based on their race and gender (Tanner, 2019). Because women who self-identify as Black lack mentors and role models, there is a significant problem with cultural barriers in their workplace.

Moreover, this population of women has expressed that those opportunities for advancement in their jobs were possible but only easily attained if they relocated or accepted a lower position to align themselves with other prospects (George, 2020). However, prior researchers discovered that investigations on skin color revealed a form of discrimination in the workplace that affirmative action policies were intended to

remove. Also, affirmative action policies, as litigated, have failed to meet the overwhelming demands of skin color discrimination because there is a preference for race in everyday discourse (Hall & Johnson, 2013). In this study, the term *women who self-identify as Black* is used interchangeably with *African Americans* and *Black Americans* to reflect the variance in the literature referenced throughout this study. Chapter 1 includes the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, and definition of terms. Next, I explain the study's assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. Finally, a summary concludes the chapter.

Background

Previous findings have indicated that colorism is practiced worldwide; however, its origin in the United States has been connected to how individuals who self-identify as Black was first introduced into this country. For centuries, enslaved individuals who self-identified as Black recognized that white and light were more valued than dark skin, and the results of this indoctrination persist today (Norwood, 2013). Slavery, as the system was established in the United States, cultivated intraracial division (Keith & Monroe, 2016). Slavery in the United States and the Americas and European colonialism around the globe highlight the historical roots of colorism in the United States (Hall, 1994,1995, 1997; Horne, 2018; Hunter, 2013). Prior research has indicated that the history of race in the United States has resulted in a psychologically fragile, albeit resilient, Black community who has adapted to a system that privileges white, light, or fair skin color (Thompson, 2013). In addition, variations linking skin tone gradients have been noted as a criterion of group differentiation and stratification between people of color, especially

those who self-identify as Black. This phenomenon has been generically labeled colorism across various disciplines (Harvey et al., 2017).

Based on global literature on skin color and colorism, surveys have been used to identify each color category. Dixon and Telles (2007) used spectrometers to assess skin color by measuring the amount of light reflected by the skin area being evaluated. The findings in the study were consistent with the color hierarchy in which white or light skin was seen as still desirable and modern, and darker skin was found to be less valuable and primitive (Dixon & Telles, 2017). Colorism is historically state-sanctioned and based on imposed external definitions of group membership codified into law; visible body markers and descent have been used to impose social control and justify exploitation (Ortega-Williams et al., 2021; Scales-Trent, 2001). These phenotypical markers are still practiced in navigating systemic violence, especially for Blacks with darker skin tones (Ortega-Williams et al., 2021). For example, in the workplace, those with African features like skin color, full lips, hair texture, and nose width are more likely to experience hiring discrimination than those with European features (Goldsmith et al., 2007; Ortega-Williams et al., 2021).

According to the National Study of Black Americans, with 2,107 respondents, individuals with lighter skin earned $777 more annually, per level of skin tone lightness, compared to darker-skinned individuals of similar social and economic status (Allen et al., 2000). Previous researchers Hall and Johnson (2013) stated that affirmative actions were initially used to address a history of workplace disparities where race became the most critical complaint. As a historically tenacious iniquity, this power imbalance still in

the workplace today fosters an "us against them" mentality. Moreover, this mentality

could contribute significantly to workplace discrimination, both then and now, based on

race and skin color (Hall & Johnson, 2013).

Women who self-identify as Black are still experiencing the impact of colorism,

according to Hall and Crutchfield's (2018) study on Black female sororities (Sigma

Gamma Rho, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Alpha Kappa Alpha) at four

historically Black colleges and universities in South-Eastern Tennessee. The study

revealed that women between the ages of 18 and 72 with dark to very dark skin

complexions felt they were at a disadvantage and that men did not tend to want

relationships with darker-skinned women. Thus, recent studies have acknowledged that

skin color difference is still an emotional and dismissive issue in the Black community.

Moreover, recent research has indicated that colorism is still a widespread phenomenon

within the Black community; the conversation between individuals who self-identify as

Black continues concerning the extent to which this is a natural and vital issue.

Problem Statement

This phenomenon of the standard on beauty based on skin complexion has created

bias within Black communities in the United States since slavery (Maxwell & Johnson,

2015). Skin tone is perceived as a problem for culturally embedded prejudices and

stereotypes that may lead to race-based discrimination (Adams et al., 2016). Skin tones

vary from light to dark in the Black community, but some shades are considered more

acceptable than others (Mathews & Johnson, 2015). Researchers have suggested that

individuals who self-identify as Black with lighter skin tones face fewer challenges with

skin tones and prejudices/stereotypes in White America or interracially and within Black

communities (Mathew & Johnson, 2015). Walker (1983) the first coined the term

colorism, described as prejudicial and preferential treatment by same-race people solely

based on their color. Walker further suggested that there may be as great of a difference

experienced between women who self-identify as Black African with varying shades of

color as between Black and White women.

Gray (2017) revealed that women who self-identify as Black ranging from 21 to

25 years of age, who attended California State University and the University of

California, experienced white colorism or discrimination by Whites based on skin

lightness. Due to the gendered nature of colorism, women who self-identified as Black

with darker skin tones were more susceptible to the adverse effects and outcomes of

colorism attitudes (Gray, 2017). While other studies have advanced the literature in this

domain, there are still relatively few studies related to colorism and even fewer related to

women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles and their

experiences with colorism in their workplace, thus leaving a gap in the literature. The

problem that I sought to examine was how women who self-identified as Black in

executive director leadership roles in non-profit agencies experienced colorism (i.e.,

intragroup discrimination) in their workplace.

Purpose

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the experiences of women who self-

identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who

have experienced colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. According

to Gray (2017), skin color bias has caused difficult experiences for women who self-identify as Black, especially darker-skinned women. The proposed study may contribute to understanding how skin tone, hair, and facial features relate to the attitudes displayed by women who self-identify as Black in leadership roles (see Gray, 2017).

Significance of Study

Regarding the effect of social change on a broader level, this study may raise awareness of the impact of colorism on women who self-identify as Black and their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The significance of the study is to potentially promote social change in a workplace setting by providing human resource administrators, faculty, and professional counselors with a better understanding of colorism's effect on women who self-identify as Black. The study may be a training tool for educators on the importance of preparing for any issues surrounding intragroup and intergroup prejudices that could produce a long-term effect within a workplace setting for people with different ethnic backgrounds. The study on colorism may also add to the knowledge base on cultural sensitivity, diversity, and inclusion by providing a better conceptual understanding of individuals' biases and their impact on others. In addition, the current research can be used as a resource for mental and healthcare practitioners' cultural understandings of their clients who self-identify as Black.

Theoretical Framework

To gain a better understand the impact of colorism on women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies in the workplace, literature was examined on critical race theory (CRT) and the structure of colorism as the

theoretical framework for this study. Howard-Hamilton (2003) suggested that it is essential to select theories that understand the needs of women who self-identify as Black based on their culture, personal, and social contexts, which differ significantly from those of men and women who have not experienced racial and gender oppression.

It is, moreover, understanding why the experiences of women who self-identify as Black are different from those of other women and those of men who self-identify as Black men are steeped in the historical progression and ideology of Black people in the United States (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). However, Howard-Hamilton (2003) described CRT as a theoretical framework generated by scholars of color studying law and legal policies concerned about racial subjugation. In addition, CRT was designed to be race-neutral, but instead, it perpetuated racial and ethnic oppression (Hamilton, 2003). However, Reese (2019) explained that CRT teaches racism and racial inequality as part of America's history that stands outside of the prejudices of individuals.

CRT references that those structures and institutions are blamed for maintaining racial inequality (Reese, 2019). The development and socialization of women who self-identify as Black has been molded and understood within the framework of perceptions; and agendas of members of the dominant society (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Baxley (2014) case study with dark-skinned adolescent girls focused on skin color stratification within Black communities. The findings of the study revealed that discrimination is still based on an individual physiognomy (judging someone's behavior based on their facial features).

CRT uses counter-narratives to recognize and legitimize the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups of people. In addition, CRT has been used as a platform for Black girls to name their reality and express their stories. Although CRT focuses more on systemic racism, for this study, I used CRT to explain the intersecting identities of women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies' experiences with colorism and explain how their needs can be addressed effectively.

Even though studies on colorism are becoming more common, there is no unifying theoretical framework; critical race theorists opt to lean on ideas about prejudices and preferences over the advantages of individuals who self-identify as Black with lighter skin tones than individuals who self-identify as Black with darker skin tones (Reese, 2019). Seminal research has indicated that lighter-skinned individuals' colorism preferences are generally favored over darker-skinned individuals across racial and ethnic minority groups (Landor et al., 2013). However, suggested that colorism is intragroup discrimination in which people of color with lighter skin tones are treated better than people with darker skin tones.

Skin complexion is the primary physical attribute associated with racial classification when engaging others (Keith & Monroe, 2016). A structure theory of colorism supports that those individuals who look more stereotypically White are more favorable and tend to be more privileged than individuals who self-identify as Black with darker skin tones (Reese, 2019). In this qualitative study, I used the CRT and structure of

colorism to understand the data and findings from this study. In addition, each theory is

defined in Chapter 2.

Research Questions

The research study was guided by the following research question on women who

self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles and their experiences with

colorism in nonprofit agencies in the workplace:

Primary research question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-

identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who

have experienced colorism in the workplace (i.e., intragroup discrimination)?

Nature of Study

The nature of the study was qualitative, with an interview method. This method

addressed the purpose of the study and provided data for the research question. The study

was to investigate the experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive

director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism (i.e.,

intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. A qualitative approach is used to understand

a problem, a concept, a phenomenon, a new topic, or a topic that has been addressed with

a particular group of people (Creswell, 2003).

According to Moser and Korstjen (2017), a qualitative study is based on

participants who share experiences but vary in characteristics and experiences. A

qualitative study with an interview method allowed me to explore and understand women

who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies

and who have experienced colorism in the workplace. The research was conducted was

conducted using semi-structured, phone interviews with open-ended questions with women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace.

According to previous Berg (2007) research, web-based interviews are like face-to-face interactions. They allow back-and-forth communication of questions and answers close to real-time settings. Regarding the research, ethical guidelines via informed consent were explained and given to research participants. I used an interview guide to provide a detailed analysis of experiences and descriptions of the interview's themes. Transcripts from the audio recorder and hand-written notes were used to collect research data during the interview.

In the study, purposeful and snowball sampling were used. The sample size consisted of 8 women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles and who had experiences with colorism in the workplace. Participants' ages ranged from 37 to 57. A purposeful sampling strategy was used for selecting participants for data sources. Also, purposeful sampling was based on the richness and relevance of information concerning the study's research question (see Gentles et al., 2015).

Moser and Korstjen (2018) suggested that purposive sampling allows participants to be selected according to the researcher's judgment and which potential participants will be most informative. In addition, for research, snowball sampling was used as a means of recruitment. Snowball sampling in this study was a selection of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies by previously selected participants who shared the same experiences with colorism in the

workplace. This approach was used as a follow-up for recruitment (see Moser &

Korstjens, 2018).

Definitions

African American: Of African and especially of Black African descent (Merriam-

Webster, 2021). However, Meng's (2019) definition is that African Americans were

simultaneously born as African and American. Based on Lexico (2021), through the

1980s, the more formal term African American replaced Black in much usage, but both

are generally accepted. Berlin (2010) described African Americans as men and women

whose shared past binds them together, even when different circumstances and

experiences create diverse interests. Also, this integrates Black people's history into the

American story of seemingly inevitable progress.

African American beauty: Recent scholarship on Black beauty culture confronts

the conundrum over the relationship of beauty culture and hairstyles to Black women's

social identities (Gill, 2010). According to White beauty standards, women of color

internalize beauty, focusing on physical features associated with race, including skin tone

and hair texture. White beauty standards (i.e., light skin tone and smooth and straight hair

texture) are ideal (Harper & Choma, 2019). Although beauty and body image are related,

beauty is a broader term because it encompasses body image. Moreover, skin tone is one

crucial factor that needs to be considered (Awad et al., 2015).

African American women: A Black American woman. (Meng, 2019). African

American girls and women have simultaneous membership in multiple stigmatized

groups based on their racial and ethnic background and gender (Brown et al., 2017).

Traits such as economic independence, confidence, strength, self-reliance, community leadership, and nurturance are characteristic of gender roles emphasized among African American women (Brown et al., 2017). Lin et al. (2020) suggested that portraying African American women as physically and psychologically stronger compared to European American women and equal to African American men enabled European Americans to justify their enslavement and inhuman treatment.

Black: Any human group having dark-colored skin, especially of African or Australian Aboriginal ancestry (Oxford Languages, 2021). Black, designating Americans of African heritage, became the most widely used and accepted term in the 1960s and 1970s and is now heard primarily in anthropological and cultural contexts (Lexico, 2021). Black is related to various population groups, especially African ancestry, often considered dark skin pigmentation but with a wide range of skin colors (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Colorism: A system where individuals of color with lighter skin are perceived more favorably than their darker-skinned counterparts (Awad et al., 2015). Scholars of the West have often traced light-skin color preferences, sometimes called colorism, to the origins of race and racism associated with Western racism (Dixon & Telles, 2017). Stalnaker-Shofner (2020) defined *colorism* as a bias based on an individual's skin tone compared to others of their race. Colorism constitutes an ideological and structural system of inequality that affords unique advantages to lighter-skinned minorities because of their closer phenotypic resemblance and presumed genetic similarity to Europeans and,

therefore, to Eurocentric standards of beauty, morality, intellect, and status (Hargrove, 2019).

  Cultural identity: Chen (2014) defined cultural identity as identification with, or sense of belonging to, a particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. Collier and Thomas (2014) explained culture as values, beliefs, thinking patterns, and behavior that are learned and shared as characteristics of a group of people. Moreover, identity is the definition of oneself. An integral connection of language, social structures, gender orientation, and cultural patterns constructs identities.

  Emotional well-being: According to past research, emotional well-being is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the everyday stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to their community (Langeland, 2014). Misheva (2015) defined *emotional well-being* as the emotional quality of everyday experiences and the positive and negative affect that makes one's life pleasant or unpleasant. Emotional well-being is the ability to practice stress management and relaxation techniques, the emotions that lead to good feelings (Davis, 2019).

  Psychological effects of colorism: Individuals who self-identify as Black and their experiences with colorism can be more hurtful than racism because colorism produces adverse treatment not only from non-African Americans (interracial) but also for those of their race (intraracial) and sometimes even from immediate family members (Hairston et al., 2018). The psychological effects of colorism can cause aggressive behavior within

the Black community. The desire to resort to aggression when presented with issues surrounding social and color-influenced hierarchy and discrimination provides an understanding of the adverse experiences. It illuminates the onset and trajectory of aggressive behavior (Glover, 2018).

Racial identity: A multifaceted constellation of one's feelings, thoughts, and attitudes related to membership in an ethnic/racial group (Yip, 2018). Racial identity beliefs reflect cognitions and attitudes regarding the importance and meanings of a racial group membership. Furthermore, racial ideology is an individual's philosophy of how members of their race should engage in society politically, culturally, and economically (Hope et al., 2019). However, gendered racial identity is a term that has emerged in recent literature to describe the intersectional racial and gender identity of women who self-identify as Black in the United States (Jones & Day, 2018).

Racism: The racially informed disregard for another racial group (Lentin, 2018). Adkins-Jackson et al. (2021) defined *racism* as "beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation." pg. 140. Racism is the doctrine that stably inherited characteristics determine someone's behavior to stand to one another with superiority and inferiority (Banton, 2018). According to Waever and Buzan (2020), racism should be treated as systemic, not individual. However, they defined *individual racism* as prejudice and bigoted individuals.

Skin tone: The color of the surface of someone's skin (Cambridge, 2021). *Skin tone* is a status characteristic used in society to evaluate and rank the social positions of

minorities (Hargrove, 2019). Skin tone discrimination from Black Americans had a more substantial effect on self-rated mental health than perceived skin tone discrimination from White Americans (Oh et al., 2021).

Social well-being: The ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others, and maintain a support network that helps overcome loneliness (Davis, 2019). Keyes and Shapiro (2019) defined *social well-being* as an individual's self-report of the quality of their relationship with other people, the neighborhood, and the community. The World Health Organization has identified prior research on social well-being as a central component of individuals' overall health. The concept has been conceptualized and operationalized in many ways (Cicognani, 2014).

Standards of beauty: A variable standard of attractiveness contingent on feminine beauty, ideals present in each culture (The Beacon, 2018). Beauty standards are arbitrary and vary significantly from one culture to another and over time (The Body Project, 2021). Sanders (2018) suggested that different cultures worldwide have different beauty standards; however, it is essential to remember that people are all beautiful just as they are, and beauty does not necessarily come from the outside.

Assumptions

I had several assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that participants would answer interview questions honestly and truthfully to the best of their abilities. The next assumption was that the participants for the study would have experiences with colorism, and their experiences could better enhance the body of knowledge for this research study. The third assumption was that participants would be eager to participate

in the study with the hope that the study would benefit them and others. The fourth assumption was that at any part of the study, participants would communicate possible concerns about the research question to me. Finally, I assumed that the data collection would be sufficient for saturation.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I explored the experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace. This study focused on women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and who had experiences with colorism in the workplace. Participants' ages ranged from 37 to 57. Due to COVID-19, participants participated virtually rather than face-to-face. In addition, participants for the study were more open to discussing their experience with me virtually rather than in an unfamiliar place. Conducting the interviewers using a recording device allowed me to replay the recordings for accuracy and trustworthiness in interpreting data.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study were due to COVID-19. One-on-one interviews were conducted via phone as a protection measure for the participants and me. Conducting face-to-face interviews using the internet could have created an issue with data collection for the study because some participants may need access to the internet. Also, this may have limited the recruitment of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace to participate in this study. Also, I was aware that these women

who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles may have hesitated to

participate because of possible painful memories stemming from colorism. Finally, I

needed to acknowledge and address my biases about the study. Bracketing and member

checking helped clarify that my notes reflected only the participants; voices; furthermore,

the participants were allowed to review notes from the interview process.

Summary

Colorism developed when Europeans displayed preferential treatment to

subjugated people who were more like them in physical appearance, often displaying a

negative feeling for darker skin tones (Keith & Monroe, 2016). Even though a more

authentic standard of beauty is being acknowledged and appreciated in the United States,

color consciousness is still present among individuals who self-identify as Black. There

remains a strong association between skin tone and one's social status. A recent study

indicated that those with light and fair skin tones earn higher incomes in the workforce,

which increases social dominance (Tibbs, 2020). When considering the various indicators

of socioeconomic status among individuals who self-identify as Black, studies have

indicated that opportunity contexts are more beneficial for individuals with light skin

tones. Income and occupational differences between light-and-dark-skinned individuals

who self-identify as Black can be as comprehensive; as differentials between individuals

who self-identify as Black and those who self-identify as White (Keith & Monroe, 2016).

Thus, preferential treatment based on skin tone is referenced as colorism. Colorism is the

allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's

skin (Harvey et al., 2017).

My aim in this study was to seek an in-depth understanding of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace. The findings of this study can give a better understanding of the impact of colorism on women who self-identify as Black and their relationships within their workplace and social environments. In Chapter 1, I identified the problem statement, and the gap for the study was established. An explanation for the study's theoretical framework was provided. The study's assumptions, scope and delimitation, and limitations were also described. I also explained the significance of the study in detail. Chapter 2 provides literature to support the impact of colorism on women who self-identify as Black in leadership roles in nonprofit agencies in the workplace.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. Colorism is the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin (Harvey et al., 2017). Colorism within the Black community can be a significant problem because it can affect one's self-concept, well-being, and overall life outcome (Fultz, 2014). White (2020) stated that colorism could cause stress in African American lives.

Historically, colorism has been considered one reason for intraracial (same-group discrimination) and interracial (different-group discrimination) discrimination in many communities (Tharp, 2016). According to Gray (2017), skin color bias (also referred to as colorism from now on) has contributed to difficult experiences for women of color, significantly darker skinned (dark pigment) women. In this study, I discuss how skin tone, hair, and facial features, all which Gray indicated are under the auspices of colorism, may contribute to how women who self-identify as Black perceive themselves as individuals. The problem is that women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofits and who have experienced colorism (I. e. intragroup discrimination) may face adverse emotional and psychological effects.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the literature search strategy. I then provide the theoretical framework of CRT and the structure theory of colorism. The history of colorism, public perception of colorism, women who self-identify as Black, colorism, racism, and women who self-identify as Black in leadership and racism and colorism will follow. Next, I discuss standards of beauty among African Americans, racial challenges and skin tones, and the psychological effects of colorism. Afterward, I provide insights into the cultural and racial identity and social and emotional well-being and African Americans and Black women in management. The following discussion will follow with racial microaggressions, racial microaggressions among Black women, intersectionality, intersectionality among Black women in the workplace, and gender inequality. Finally, I give an overview of the chapter with a summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using Walden University's research library for this study. The database searched was EBSCO Host, focusing on PsycINFO, Soc INDEX, ProQuest Central, APA database, Black Journals, and SAGE Journals. Additional searches were completed using Google and Google Scholar. Most of the literature was gathered from scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals within the past 5 years, except for authoritative or seminal sources and government sites such as Walden Dissertations and Wright University Library. Search parameters were extended to include seminal literature from decades prior, particularly for information on current research theories. Key terms used to locate relevant literature included, *Black women in management, colorism, racism, and women who self-identify as Black, critical race theory, cultural and racial identity, history of colorism, gender inequality, gender inequality among Black women, intersectionality, intersectionality among Black women in the workplace, psychological effects of colorism, public perception of colorism, racial challenges and skin tone, racism and colorism, racial microaggressions, racial microaggressions among Black women, social and emotional well-being, standard of beauty, structure theory of colorism, women who self-identify as Black,.*

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework comprised CRT and the structure theory of colorism (see Reese, 2019). Colorism was the primary theory for this study. Combined, these two theories provided a framework for the research question to be viewed and better understood.

CRT

CRT was the framework for this current study, with racism and racial inequality as the principal concepts. CRT is not a diversity and inclusion "training" but a practice of interrogating race and racism in a society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship (George, 2021, pp. 2-5). However, Crenshaw (1989) coined CRT as a verb instead of a noun. Crenshaw also indicated that CRT could not be confined to a fixed and limited definition but is considered a developing and workable operation. It tells how the social structure of race and established racism in American culture created a racial caste system that dismisses people of color to the bottom of the tiers. Further, George (2021, pp. 2-5) confirmed that CRT race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others, and acknowledged that racism is still alive today and not just a part of the past. Also, within the context of CRT is the heritage of slavery and segregation, which have created the view of individuals who self-identify as Black and other people of color as second-class citizens. This view continues to permeate the social fabric of America (George, 2021, pp. 2-5).

CRT has been used in research to better understand racial and racist dynamics in ways that help researchers and others to develop a means of eradicating racial oppression (Golash-Boza, 2016). Reese (2019) reported that CRT's tenets are constant in American society and extend outside individuals' prejudices. Based on Curry's (2017b) study, CRT can help explain the racial inequality that emerges from social-economic differences created between races to maintain elite status for Whites in the labor markets and politics. Reese (2019) indicated two central beliefs to CRT; the intractability of racism and racial

disparity and the structural view of racism that associates individual prejudice as the leading cause of inequality. However, Omi and Winant (2015) suggested that racial inequality is the result of more than the collective pathology of individuals; there are structured institutions, policies, and norms that reproduce and maintain inequality.

Carlsbad (2017) implied that today's society of civil rights advocates such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado believed the CRT movement's interests were to become educated and knowledgeable of racial issues in the United States. However, researchers have examined the intraracial colorism phenomenon and have instead focused on Black and White inequality due to the belief that it was more important (Dixon & Telles, 2017). Instead, Curry (2018) suggested that the American civil rights tradition held embedded tenets of CRT through the works of men like M. L. King Jr. and W.E.B. DuBois, including nationalist thinkers such as Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and Frantz Fanon.

Due to these civil rights advocates' radical Black and nationalist thinking, they may have advanced the CRT framework by infusing the concepts in law, politics, and American sociology. Reese (2019) argued that critical race theorists had been disregarded from formal studies when theorizing colorism, a direct offshoot of racial domination. Although these studies of colorism are becoming more popular, there has not been a unifying theoretical framework established; instead, critical race theorists opted to lean on prejudice and preference to explain the perceived advantages that lighter skin individuals who self-identify as Black are afforded compared to darker skin individuals who self-identify as Black (Reese, 2019).

Skin color or tone is a major cause of discrimination in colorism. It is a reality of today. However, Emirbayer and Desmond (2015) indicated that the issue must be politicized in the United States to eliminate racial oppression. Also, Keyes (2019) found that through socialization, the hierarchical stratification of racial minorities based on skin tone revealed the pervasive impact of oppression and white privilege on society. Hence, CRT can be transformed to serve a greater purpose for future generations.

Structure Theory of Colorism

Colorism is a form of intra-group discrimination based on skin color that indicates lighter-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black are given more opportunities and privileges than darker-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black (Gasman & Abiola, 2016). In 1984, the term colorism was coined and defined by Walker as "prejudice or preferential" treatment of same-race people based solely on their color (as cited in Webb, 2019); however, Norwood (2015) viewed it as being similar instead of being the same as racism. A clear example of racism, as stated by Norwood, is when an individual who self-identifies as Black is denied services or employment based on no other reason than being Black. When the phenomenon of colorism is present, it could determine if services or employment are permitted based on preferential treatment for a person with a lighter skin tone compared to a person with a darker skin tone. Researchers have described this phenomenon as skin color bias or complex (Webb, 2019).

Furthermore, *colorism* is defined as existing within same-race discrimination and occurs within other race groups. Even though Walker coined colorism, Wynn (2017) revealed that past researchers have also acknowledged the existence of colorism and the

problem with skin color stratification within Black communities. DuBois (1994)

spotlighted color line issues related to race relations in the United States and abroad

before a theory of colorism was established. In his writings *Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois

used the concept of double consciousness to explain the phenomenon of always looking

at the self through the lens of others and thinking of the self as having a two-ness: being a

person of color and an American, but not being viewed as part of the larger society

because of one's darker hue/skin complexion. DuBois also noted that in the 20th century,

color line-related issues would be a root cause of problems that society would have to

confront.

      According to Painter et al. (2015), to establish a theory of colorism, which is

referenced as "preference of whiteness," a combination between psychology and

anthropology revealed that White men and women preferred to be associated with human

beings with the same similarities. However, Norwood and Foreman (2014) suggested that

a lack of explicit color-based policy allowed racial progress to mask ongoing, perhaps

even increasing color stratification. Furthermore, Webb (2019) suggested that color-

based stereotypes, implicit biases, economic disparities, educational inequalities, and

other forms of social discrimination are reasons for more in-depth conversations on

colorism. Reese (2019) indicated that more research on colorism is being explored;

however, more work is needed to explain a comprehensive theory of this phenomenon's

workings. Even though a theory of colorism does not exist, researchers in different fields

have conducted studies on colorism to support the phenomenon's work to address

intraracial and interracial discrimination. In addition, a theory of colorism can be used in

a higher educational institution to address color-based social inequalities regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, and cultural background (Wynn, 2017).

History of Colorism

Discrimination against people of color by Whites has been a vital feature of social relations throughout U.S. history, and this remains the case today (Thornhill, 2015). Mathew and Johnson (2015) argued that colorism is the cause of negative embedded images, deep-rooted stereotypes of Black and White beauty, and subordinated racial relationships that have grown to separate the African American community in ways that have muddled the establishment of society. Therefore, colorism still affects the African American community based on others' past behaviors. Dhillon-Jamerson (2018) explained that colorism is not a phenomenon originating within the Black community; it stemmed from White Americans' continued practice of separating Blacks based on skin color. Moreover, colorism discrimination is also based on physical traits, such as hair texture, eye color, and the shape or size of one's nose or lips (Webb, 2019).

Hence, all these features have been historically racialized (categorized or divide according to race) in the United States, meaning that these features are typically associated with specific racial categories and certain ethnic groups. Historical research supported the notion that lighter skin individuals who self-identify as Black are afforded more opportunities and a higher living status than darker skin individuals who self-identify as Black, which is a form of colorism (Hunter, 2007). However, the general pattern is that society extends greater privileges to people of color who appear less like their racial archetype and more like the European racial archetype (Webb, 2019). As

stated, advancement and privileges are granted and determined by skin tone. *Skin color* is a primary marker used to categorize people by race, with light skin being compared to Whiteness, medium skin tone to Latin, and most significant dark skin to Black (Feliciano, 2016).

According to Wilkinson et al. (2015), skin tone is considerably different among Whites, Latinos, and Blacks. These skin tones play an important role in significantly shaping racial attitudes. During those past times, skin tone was used to distinguish the value of individuals who self-identified as Black. Blacks and Whites can agree that any conversation on colorism can be an uncomfortable topic due to the pain it has caused. Therefore, Smith (2015) indicated that discussions on colorism in the African American community are considered too taboo to discuss. However, Keith and Monroe (2016) showed that although outcomes based on race relations have documented some general improvement paths, progress and success can be considerably uneven with people of the same race. Also, there is an incredible amount of pain felt by individuals who self-identify as Black due to colorism. Culbreth (2016) stated that regardless of the many discriminatory acts afflicted by people outside of the Black community, discriminatory acts based on skin color are just as insidious.

Public Perception of Colorism

The topic of colorism has gained the interest of major television networks with the hopes of having national discussions on intraracial discrimination in Black communities. Keyes (2019) shed light on a documentary based on *Light Girls* on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN), where light skin women who self-identified as Black

voiced that their darker counterparts would refer to them as a yellow girl or light bright (you think are cute; you are not Black). Lighter skin women who self-identified as Black voiced that they felt detested and viewed as unique in the Black community. For example, in a seminal study, Hunter (2005) interviewed a dark skin woman who self-identified as Black who stated,

In terms of female-female relationships, color affects how we treat each other. If you are lighter and think you're better, and think the guys want you, then I will not treat you nicely. I will take every opportunity to ignore you, or not tell you something, or keep you out of my little group of friends because I feel threatened, so I want to punish you because you have it better than me (pg. 72).

Frisby (2019) indicated that colorism continues to be a barrier for individuals who self-identify as Black living in the United States. The normalization and ignorance of colorism in society represent the historical legacy surrounding American society's racial prejudices that have yet to be relinquished (Hagan, 2019). Many researchers' studies on colorism have revealed that colorism for people of color still exists and has significantly impacted their lives and communities.

Women Who Self-Identify as Black

Even though both men and women who self-identify as Black are affected by skin complexion bias, past researchers have suggested that women who self-identify as Black has experienced a more negative effect from colorism going back to their preschool years (Mathew & Johnson, 2015). The impact of colorism on individuals who self-identify as Black was demonstrated in three seminal studies. In Clark and Clark's (1939) landmark

study using Black and White dolls, Black children favored White dolls over Black dolls because they perceived White dolls as pretty and nice. The Black dolls were associated with being ugly and disgusting, so they were rejected. On the contrary, Katz and Zalk (1974) administered a similar doll choice task to 96 White and 96 Black nursery and kindergarten children. The dolls were male and female with different skin colors. This study rebutted other research findings that White dolls were preferred and found that skin color was not a significant factor. In contrast to the above research, Jordan and Reif (2009) performed a study in Alabama with Black and White preschoolers and demonstrated a Black child cartoon as the hero in a story; the results of their study were similar to Clark and Clark's doll research that Black children preferred the White cartoon over the Black child hero cartoon. Based on past research by Snider (2011), this in-group bias is known as the "halo effect," which means any good deeds and actions are overlooked, and opinions of good are based on skin color.

Moreover, some women who self-identify as Black has had trouble with friendships because of their skin tone (Gray, 2017). Dhillon-Jamerson (2018) suggested that women who self-identify as Black is more scrutinized within sociocultural settings; however, women who self-identify as Black with darker skin tones have been profoundly impacted. Chaney and Perkins (2018) indicated that, historically, skin color had played a significant role in the dislike displayed with dark skin toward light skin individuals who self-identify as Black; this includes how other ethnic groups perceived and classified people of color. However, during the "Black is Beautiful" era of the late 1960s and 1970s, inter- and intra-racial discrimination declined among Black Americans due to the

weakened dominance of light skin Blacks because darker skin was preferred (Davis Tribble et al., 2019).

Colorism, Racism, and Women Who Self-Identify as Black

There appears to be a relationship between colorism and racism among women who self-identify as Black. Colorism is the divisive practice of assigning human value and worth to individuals based on skin color, resulting from internalized racism (Adkins et al., 2015). Internalized racism is a potent and crippling consequence of bondage, persecution, and discrimination (Adkins et al., 2015). Wynn (2017) suggested that overt colorism or skin stratification between individuals who self-identify as Black began during the Jim Crow era because skin color was a requirement for prestige in the Black community.

Based on Canada (2017), colorism originated from racism, using skin color tones to evaluate individuals who self-identify Black behavior and interactions. Hayes's (2021) findings determined that colorism has negatively impacted the career outcomes of women of color, including contributing to lower perceptions of social justice in higher education and their coping mechanisms. Moreover, redressing skin tone bias from a human resource and conflict resolution perspective can help develop more inclusive organizational teams across diverse workplaces (Haynes, 2021).

Workplace bullying is another concern for women who self-identify as Black. According to Hollis (2020), workplace bullying happens in intersecting elements such as race, gender, and sexual orientation; also, colorism could be a factor in the frequency of workplace bullying. Thus, Black managers face scrutiny in the workplace, and these

women of color in leadership face higher penalties for an agency, possibly weakening

their ability to lead competently (Sanders Muhammad & Halkias, 2019). According to

Baldor (2021), a recent study on the United States Air Force revealed that women and

minorities stated there is a "lack of people that look like us that can mentor us and advise

us." Also, women and minorities must work harder to prove their competency (Baldor,

2021). In addition, qualified women who self-identify as Black remain excluded mainly

from leadership consideration despite superior ability and performance (Sanders

Muhammad & Halkias, 2019).

Racism and Colorism

Based on Ray and Seamster (2016), racism is one of the fundamental causes of

social inequality. The terminology often used to describe racism and color dominates the

associated discourse due to the everyday use of designations such as "Black" and

"White." Based on Harpalani (2015), color is used as a synonym for race, but when the

two overlap, color is distinct from race, as colorism is from racism. According to Adkins

et al. (2015), America's maltreatment of Black people has caused profound wounds to

their minds, bodies, and souls, including injury with personal acceptance and

internalization of the dominant culture's racist views.

Underhill and Luke (2017) suggested racism is woven into the cloth of American

life and its institutions in ways that ensure White society or those with white-pigmented

skin dominate the racial hierarchy. Dixon and Telles (2017) stated that most empirical

research focuses on skin color concerns; however, colorism is developed as a separate

concept from racism. Webb (2019) explained critical differences between racism and

colorism; people of the same racial category can have different skin tones and hair textures, while people of different racial categories can have similar skin tones and hair textures. The belief is that color and colorism are distinct from race, and racism depends on histories and linguistic understandings. Furthermore, Middleton's (2020) findings indicated racism and colorism were rooted in bigotry that undergirded American slavery, the codification of slave codes, northern black laws, and southern black codes in the colonies and later in the states profoundly shaped individuals who self-identify as Black lives from the 17th century through the 20th century. However, Wynn (2017) suggested that the black community still functions as if it is enslaved regarding skin color.

Standard of Beauty Among African Americans

Discrimination stemming from colorism affects women of color in the United States and globally (Norwood & Foreman, 2014). Norwood (2015) indicated that women in Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, and the United States use bleaching creams to make their skin tone lighter because light skin represents beauty. Moreover, beauty is a struggle over class, caste inequality, racism, and respectability (Jha, 2016). Also, beauty provides access to higher income, higher education, and more financial security in a capitalist economy. Both women and men are willing to go to great lengths to alter their skin color, hair color, and other features to compete in a global consumer economy (Jha, 2016).

Furthermore, Dixon and Telles (2017) implied that color consciousness and white supremacy appeared to have been increasingly united, globalized, commodified, and exemplified by a global multi-billion-dollar skin-lightening industry. Van (2017) stated that it is essential to investigate the cosmetic industry and women who self-identify as

Black relationships. Reoccurring negative experiences may indicate systemic oppression, illustrating that women who self-identify as Black personal experiences reached a political sphere. Moreover, there is a reason for women who self-identify as Black to doubt when it comes to the cosmetic industry due to the history of White Europeans' perceptions of beauty. Based on Akinro and Memani (2019), African magazines' portrayal of beauty did not display any diverse body sizes, skin tones, and hair types common to women who self-identify as Black. However, beauty representations are consistent with White, Western, and Eurocentric beauty standards.

Colorism is a global ideology denigrating darker skin and tightly coiled hair, two specific physical traits associated with African heritage (Tribble et al., 2019). Rodriguez (2019) confirmed that individuals who identify with a majority group might be more vulnerable to external influences to match the majority's ideals of beauty and outward appearances, which through colorism, may exacerbate internal dissatisfaction with one's outward appearance and maybe a motivator to actively change one's skin color through cosmetic products and procedures. However, colorism's adverse effect could cause harmful behaviors like changing their physical appearance; this is becoming a major social problem (Keyes, 2019). Based on Rodriguez (2019), internalized racism is a common cause of the use of skin bleaching and skin-lightening creams to improve dark skin.

Colorism is global discrimination, and some cosmetic industry has convinced women from different backgrounds that physical beauty is most important. The cosmetic industry has caused women of color to invest in expensive products to alter their

appearance to be accepted and considered beautiful. Finally, women who self-identify as Black with darker skin complexions reported experiencing skin tone discrimination from other ethnic groups than women with lighter skin complexions. This type of discrimination is called racial phenotypicality bias, which states that women who self-identify as Black with darker complexions are treated worse by other ethnic groups (Uzogara & Jackson, 2016).

Racial Challenges and Skin Tone

In the United States and abroad, people are discriminated against based on skin color (Norwood, 2014). Baxley (2014) supported the concept that dark skin has adverse effects in a post-colonial society in the United States. Moreover, data from the American National Election Study in 2012 on White interviewers' perceptions of minority respondent skin tone and intelligence revealed that Africans and Latinas with lighter skin tones were classified as more intelligent than those with darker skin tones (Hannon et al., 2017). Past researcher Norwood (2014) indicated that over the past two decades, Americans have made some progress toward resolving racial discrimination issues. However, there needs to be more evidence in the literature that this progress demonstrates attention toward resolving racial disparities regarding skin tone.

Harpalani (2015) does show that race and racism are complex phenomena, and discrimination based on skin color and colorism are aspects of the racial hierarchy. Also, color is the most common visual feature and symbol associated with race. Dixon and Telles (2017) indicated that throughout the world, white or light skin might represent supremacy ideologies associated with class, social status, and privilege (especially among

lighted-skinned individuals) and disdain for dark-skinned ones. Scholars of the West

often trace light skin color preferences, sometimes called colorism, to the origins of race

and racism associated with European colonization, Western slavery, and white supremacy

(Dixon & Telles, 2017). Curry (2018) indicated that race is socially constructed to

maintain White people's interests. However, Kelly (2019) stated that addressing race is

still a problem in the United States, but colorism stems from the nation's past.

Psychological Effects of Colorism

There is a possible connection between colorism and the psychological effects of

those who experience the phenomenon. A seminal study by Thompson and Keith (2001)

implied that skin tone negatively affects self-esteem and self-efficacy but operates in

different domains for men and women. Skin color is an essential predictor of self-esteem

for Black women but not for men. However, color predicts self-efficacy for men who

self-identify as Black but not women who self-identify as Black. In a past study,

researchers concluded that the psychological effects of skin tone biases caused more

concern in women who self-identify as Black (Maxwell et al., 2015). Based on Wilkinson

et al. (2015), skin color affects how individuals view themselves and others.

Maxwell and Johnson (2015) indicated that individuals who self-identify as Black

men and women with darker skin complexions might experience greater self-hatred

feelings, skin color discontent, and racial rejection. While in another study, Maxwell et

al. (2015) found that individuals who self-identify as Black with darker skin did not

dislike their skin tone. Davis (2017) stated that colorism produces continuous tension and

pressures in the lives of women who self-identify as Black. A past study by Lutz (2014)

indicated different skin tone shades to describe women who self-identify as Black; their experiences are based on skin tone, how they feel about themselves, and how they interact with others. West (2018) implied that there is bias misrepresentation toward women who self-identify as Black. They engage in "shifting," an emotionally taxing psychological process where they "change or alter various parts of themselves, such as speech or dress, to appease mainstream society and their communities.

Previous research by Ashley (2014) found that very little has changed toward women who self-identify as Black since abolishing slavery, as they are still victimized and stereotyped by their communities and mainstream American culture. However, positive characteristics are attributed to lighter skin, while darker complexions are frequently placed into stereotypical categories and judged severely by their physical appearance (Mathews & Johnson, 2015). Previous research described how skin tone biases' have more of a psychological effect on women of African descent (Maxwell et al., 2015).

Past researcher Rossetti (2014) described women who self-identify as Black exposure to skin tone hierarchies, bias, and stereotyping were first introduced by mothers, family members, communities, and social media. Further, Mathew and Johnson (2015) suggested that skin complexion has significantly influenced women who self-identify as Black lives, life chances (a way to improve one's life), and life choices. Barwick (2015) stated, in 1929, in Thurman's work *The Black the Berry* detailed the disadvantage and emotional pain associated with dark skin, more so for women than men. Hence, this affected their identity and how they perceived themselves.

Researchers Uzogara and Jackson (2016) suggested that skin tone is gendered judging based on physical beauty, which is judged critically. This research could bear the truth. According to Wilder (2017), actress, Lupita Nyong'o shared, at a Hollywood luncheon, during the 2014 Essence Awards for Black Women, she did not feel attractive or beautiful as she grew up because her skin tone was darker than her lighter-skinned sister's. Gray (2017) indicated that African American women expressed negative and emotional responses such as anger, frustration, and discomfort toward colorism.

In general, the psychical impacts of colorism have been found to affect men and women. It is possible that racial socialization can influence both intraracial and interracial colorism and consequently affect a person's physical and mental health and social stratums (Keyes, 2019). Void's (2019) interview with twelve men who self-identify as Black expressed, as fathers, their role was to protect their daughters from negative messages surrounding colorism, especially if they had dark skin. Moreover, most researchers on colorism found it continues to have a lasting effect on women who self-identify as Black. Watson (2019) 'Black Women Own the Conversation' on OWN Network, with a panel of women who self-identify as Black, with different skin shades of color, confirmed that colorism still affects women who self-identify as Black lives, from Hollywood to the average Black woman living in the United States. Furthermore, these personal experiences give an insight into how colorism can affect both light-skinned and dark-skinned women who self-identify as Black.

From a psychological perspective, there are many intraracial issues involving how people of color think about each other and how they, in turn, treat each other. All

these issues continue to interfere with and hamper the overall psychological growth, emotional well-being, and happiness of people of color (Benson, 2016). As described by Benson (2016), there are many negative influences toward individuals who self-identify as Black in society that promotes racism, colorism, prejudice, bigotry, and negativity toward people of color, especially women of color, in both work environment and academia. In addition, Gray (2017) also suggested that colorism is a social issue affecting self-esteem, self-efficacy, social processes, and intergroup interactions. However, Kansky and Diener (2017) indicated that cognitive (how we think about ourselves and feel about ourselves) are components of overall well-being.

Based on Heckstall's (2018) study, ten self-identified dark skin women who self-identify as Black residing in Virginia over the age of 25 revealed they experienced colorism during their teenage years amongst their peers, their adult years of employment, and romantic relationships. Colorism can cause psychological trauma to one's image and self-esteem; also, colorism affects one's overall well-being and life experiences (Keyes, 2019). However, psychological effects stemming from colorism are not the only emotional challenge women who self-identify as Black face daily; other problems include racism, classism, sexism, and cultural identity (Mathew & Johnson, 2015). Hibbs (2020) stated, "internalized racism is harmful to a person of color's mental health, resulting from Whites opinions and views which produces "self-perpetuating cycle of oppression," and feelings of self-doubt, eroding self-esteem, and worth and generating helplessness and hopelessness.

Past and present researchers have acknowledged that psychological distress due to discrimination has been vital in women who self-identify as Black lives. Racial identity and colorism significantly impact women who self-identify as Black mental status, also causing anxiety and depression. Skin tone bias can still affect women who self-identify as Black regardless of their status or position in life. The psychological distress that individuals who self-identify as Black experienced due to racism, colorism, and discrimination, is a nontrivial matter, so much so that in comparison to Whites, individuals who self-identify as Black experienced higher levels of mortality, disease, comorbidity, and impairment (Tibbs, 2020).

Cultural and Racial Identity

Hoare (2013), in previous literature, implied culture resides deep in the conscious and subconscious of oneself and being, which is central to their construction and perception of reality; therefore, it is inseparable from personal identity. A seminal study by Nagel (1994) revealed that individuals attempt to address issues surrounding ethnic boundaries and meanings according to how they feel about their identity and culture. However, Matei (2017) found that personal traits, society, and culture depend on one another, mold one another, and proceed together as one equally important aspect of individual identity. Further seminal research by Crocker et al. (2004) indicated that one's identity is shaped by individual and cooperative encounters across the life cycle, from early attachment relationships with caregivers to interactions within family, neighborhood, schools, community, and culture. Watson (2015) indicated that colorism plays a role in developing dark-skinned women's identities.

Racial and ethnic identity is essential and marked in the workplace because most people spend a significant portion of their days at work (Sanders Muhammad & Halkias, 2019). Although very little research has been established on what racial and gender minority groups are experiencing in the workplace, how they cope, and how they relate to others in their social settings concerning these issues. However, there is evidence showing the adverse effects of interracial discrimination. However, in a post-racial era, intra-racial discrimination is emerging in work settings different in nature due to research on colorism (Sanders Muhammad & Halkias, 2019).

Previous research by Mgadmi (2009) suggested that racial stereotypical discriminatory representations of Black women were established in the antebellum era around four central figures: the "inept domestic servant" (the mammy), the "domineering matriarch," the "sex object" (the jezebel), and the "tragic mulatto." Tillman-Meakens (2017) expressed that discriminatory representations toward women who self-identify as Black was developed to promote indigence, racism, sexism, and other forms of social intolerance to appear as a regular part of everyday life.

Based on Helms's (1990) seminal research, women who self-identify as Black and other women of color should recognize, question, and reject societal definitions that describe Black women. However, a study by University Wire (2017) indicated that light skin individuals who self-identify as Black expressed that their skin tone is not dark enough to be African, nor was their skin tone light enough not to have African roots. This study concurs that light-skinned women who self-identify as Black are discredited based

on skin complexion. Based to Farmer et al. (2016), women who self-identify as Black and multiracial are privileged to identify with different multicultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, Gray (2017) insisted it is essential to explore colorism with Black, Black biracial, and Black multiracial women because colorism or skin bias negatively impacts people's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Women who self-identify as Black cultural misrepresentation so widespread; they may embrace these misrepresentations as authentic characteristics and behaviors and make them a part of their daily lives (West, 2018). Welang (2018) confirmed that women who self-identify as Black use three lenses, America, Blackness, and womanhood, as a guide to view themselves—colorism's impact on individuals who self-identify as Black has caused significant doubt regarding racial and cultural identity. For most women who self-identify as Black, this impact could have possibly begun in their childhood because their identity was based on generations of cultural insights experienced by the women and the communities that are a part of their upbringing.

Social and Emotional Well-Being and African Americans

Colorism is complex; it occurs interracial and intraracial, affecting people of color's psychological well-being (Keith & Monroe, 2015). Uzogara and Jackson (2016) supported that colorism's impact from out-groups (Whites) and in-groups (Blacks) on women who self-identify as Black is based on the shade of their skin tone. Lighter and medium skin tones seem to experience colorism less than darker skin tones experience when it comes to both in-group and out-group colorism. To further explain colorism discrimination, Steele's (2016) review of the popular children's animated series, The

Proud Family, demonstrated that colorism still exists through its view of the traditional Black family. Attributes of wealth, beauty, and intelligence are applied to characters with Eurocentric features, while deviance, stupidity, poverty, and unattractiveness is represented to characters with Afrocentric features.

Researcher Hunter (2016) expressed that discrimination based on skin tone affects many life areas, including education, employment, housing, spousal status, criminal justice sentencing, and even depression and self-esteem. Experimental research performed by Uzogara and Jackson (2016) found skin tone was fundamental to white people's prototypicality judgment of Black males; in addition, women with dark skin complexion endured stereotyping of low attractiveness and intelligence, but they were not perceived as threatening or dangerous. Colorism is biologically based on skin tone and conceptually distinct from race, which is socially constructed, towards racial and ethnic identity, which are social and psychological constructs (Ozaki & Parson, 2016).

In the Black community, most have grown up hearing familiar phrases such as "If you're White, you're right, / If you're yellow, you're mellow, / If you're brown, stick around, / If you're Black, get back" (Hall, 2017, pp. 71-78). However, this form of psychological abuse continues to sustain internalized racism, which influences the physical, psychological, emotional, educational, financial, and relational effects on individuals who self-identify as Black African. Colorism, or in-group bias on skin tone, is a persistent phenomenon within the Black community that may influence the family dynamics resulting in a significant negative psychosocial effect on individuals who self-identify as Black (Void, 2019). Tribble et al. (2019) pointed out that women with darker

complexions suffer poorer mental health, physical health, self-esteem, and lower socioeconomic status than their lighter-skinned counterparts. Moreover, Hall's (2017, pp. 71-78) belief is that the experience of dark-skinned women sometimes creates a position of quadruple jeopardy: Race, class, gender, and dark skin can lead to mutually intersecting oppressions, shaping the experience of dark-skinned women. Also, it is essential to identify and understand the consequences of these experiences.

Based on Keyes' (2019) interview with eight focus groups, consisting of 67 women who self-identify as Black, on skin color stratification's psychological impact on their daily lives, they are revealed that women with darker skin tones reported being described as unattractive and more aggressive. Also, findings of men who self-identify as Black consciously and unconsciously practice bias concerning skin complexion. This form of intraracial discrimination creates relationship conflicts between men and women, further devaluing women who self-identify as Black self-esteem through rejection and humiliation (Hall, 2017, pp. 71-78). Further, Keyes et al. (2020) insinuated that colorism and social stratification based on skin complexion have significant sociological effects on individuals who self-identify as Black. In addition, individuals who self-identify as Black with darker skin are profoundly impacted by prejudice solely because of their skin color.

Black Women in Management

Women who self-identify as Black represent most of the population, but they fall significantly behind white women and other groups in their population in the labor market (Canham & Maier, 2018). In the United States, the focus on women who self-identify as Black emerged with the political movement on Black feminist thought, driven

by seminal researchers Hooks (1989) and Collins' (2000) challenges on White feminism according to (Moorosi et al., 2018). In this work, Collins' commitment to giving voice to women who self-identify as Black recognizing the interlocking nature of the systems of oppression of racism and sexism made the experiences and social positions of women who self-identify as Black as leaders unique (Moorosi et al., 2018). Based on Moorosi et al. (2018) Collin's additional focus on social class as a compounding system of oppression contributing to the marginalization of women who self-identify as Black was confirmed earlier in Hooks' (1989) assertion that 'even when women who self-identify as Black can advance professionally and acquire a degree of economic self-sufficiency, it is in the social realm that racist and gendered stereotypes are continually used as ways of defining women who self-identify as Black identity and behavior.'

Researchers Moorosi et al. (2018) suggested that women who self-identify as Black leaders success constructions are shaped by overcoming barriers of their own racialized and gendered histories to being in a position. Smith et al. (2019) suggested that women who self-identify as Black have unique and complex experiences, and challenges tied to their intersecting marginalized identities have been mostly overlooked in management research. Also, women who self-identify as Black are physically visible because they are different from most of their colleagues. Smith et al. (2019) study on invisibility found that women who self-identify as Black could be simultaneously invisible, easily overlooked, or disregarded because of being non-prototypical members of their gender and racial identity groups. However, McCluney and Rabelo (2019) argued that these visibility conditions are gendered, racialized, and reinforced through

hierarchies that systemically normalize organizational whiteness and maleness. Also, visibility undermined the careers and well-being of women who self-identify as Black women.

Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are an insidious form of racism with devastating mental-health outcomes, but all scholars have not embraced the concept (Williams, 2021). Racism and its many forms and manifestations are defined and clarified, drawing attention to the linkages between racial microaggressions and systemic racism. Racial microaggressions are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (Williams, 2021 & Sue et al., 2007). In Pierce's (1970) body of work, the term initially coined racial microaggression to describe the more subtle types of racial maltreatment commonly experienced by African Americans (Williams, 2021 & Pierce, 1970).

However, many racial and ethnic groups are subject to microaggressions as well, including those of Asian, Hispanic, and Indigenous ancestry, to name a few. Also, Pierce's seminal description of the construct of microaggressions laid the groundwork for Sue, Capodilupo, and colleagues (2007), who defined *racial microaggressions* as subtle, daily, and unintentional racial slights committed against members of racialized groups. Even though microaggressions may be considered harmless by dominant individuals, they are a form of everyday discrimination (Williams, 2021 & Williams, 2020). Seminal research by Essed (2002) uses the term "everyday racism" to describe the concept of

racial microaggressions, noting that "Everyday racism is everyday racism. From everyday racism there is no relief" (p. 202).

Consequently, microaggressions and everyday discrimination have been linked to numerous mental health problems, physical health problems, and poor quality of life (Williams, 2021 & Williams, 2020). Further, because of the complex social racialization processes, dominant-group members are typically unaware of microaggressions occurring around them or that they may even commit themselves (Williams, 2021). Past researchers Sue et al. (2007) proposed the following nine categories of racial microaggressions: assumptions that a person of color is not a true American, assumptions of lesser intelligence, statements that convey colorblindness or denial of the importance of race, assumptions of criminality or dangerousness, denials of individuals racism, promotion of the myth of meritocracy, assumptions that cultural background and communication styles are pathological, being treated as a second-citizen, and having to endure environmental messages of being unwelcome or devalued.

Williams et al. (2021) suggested that people "inherit" biases from their parents, grandparents, and ancestors. For many, this inheritance may lead to conscious or unconscious racism or pro-White views expressed regularly through everyday encounters as microaggressions (Williams et al., 2021; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Despite an apparent overall decline in overtly offensive racist actions, these aggressive slights toward targeted racial or ethnic groups persist and have been found to correlate to aggressive tendencies in offenders (Williams, 2021 & Williams et al., 2021). Further, the frequency and impact of microaggressions may increase with the intersectionality of

gender, sexual orientation, and other stigmatized identities (Williams et al., 2021;

Capodilupo et al., 2010; Weber et al., 2018).

Racial Microaggressions Among Black Women

Recent research suggested that racial microaggressions exist in the workplace

against women who self-identify as Black (Thomas, 2021). Racial discrimination on the

job continues to be problematic for women who self-identify as Black despite the long

fight for racial equality in the past (Thomas, 2021). Based on Thomas's (2021) study with

103 respondents of diverse nationalities, it was revealed that there is an uneven

distinction in how corporations treat women who self-identify as Black in the workplace.

Additionally, this study revealed that women who self-identify as Black also faced

prejudicial bias and shared analogous microaggression in their jobs (Thomas, 2021).

Lewis et al. (2017) conducted a study of 231 women who self-identify as Black

on racial microaggression and concluded that gendered racial microaggressions

significantly predicted self-reported mental and physical health outcomes. In addition,

women who self-identify as Black and who have experienced a greater frequency of

gendered racial microaggression reported lower levels of gendered racial identity and

centrality and tended to use greater disengagement coping mechanisms, which was

negatively associated with mental and physical health outcomes. Thus, higher levels of

gendered racial identity centrality can buffer against the adverse mental and physical

health effects of gendered racism for Black women.

Rabelo et al. (2021) suggested that some organizations practice *the white gaze:*

seeing people's bodies through the lens of whiteness. The white gaze distorts perceptions

of people who deviate from whiteness, subjecting them to bodily scrutiny and control. A critical discourse analysis of 1169 tweets containing the hashtag #BlackWomenAtWork has identified four mechanisms of the white gaze whereby whiteness is *imposed, presumed, venerated,* and *forced* on Black women's bodies. This study concluded that the white gaze encourages gendered racialized hierarchies vis-à-vis the body. Including in this is how foregrounding whiteness deepens our understanding of marginalization at work (Rabelo et al., 2021).

Researchers McCluney and Rabelo (2019). Ramarajan and Reid's (2013) findings revealed that people's bodies and 'nonwork roles affect how they navigate social norms in the workplace. Another research indicated that women who self-identify as Black race and gender are visible 'nonwork' identities that inform how they work (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019; Harris-Perry, 2011). For example, their hairstyles affect their likelihood of being hired, perceived professionalism, and job stability (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019; Opie, 2018; Opie & Phillips, 2015; Roberts & Roberts, 2007; Rosette & Dumas, 2007). In addition, McCluney and Rabelo (2019) found that perceptions and evaluations of women who self-identify as Black visible identities inform how they are seen and treated at work.

Seminal research by Lewis and Neville (2015) developed the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for women who self-identify as Black, which includes four factors: Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification (focused on appearance and sexual objectification), Silenced and Marginalized (being unheard and unseen in professional settings), Strong Black Woman Stereotype (being seen as sassy,

independent, and assertive), and the Angry Black Women stereotype (being perceived as angry or told to calm down). Women who self-identify as Black represent most of the population, but they fall significantly behind white women and other groups in their population in the labor market (Canham & Maier, 2018). The focus on women who self-identify as Black emerged in the United States with the political movement on Black feminist thought, driven by seminal researchers Hooks' (1989), Collins' (2000) challenges on White feminism according to (Moorosi et al., 2018). In this work, Collins' commitment to give voice to women who self-identify as Black recognizing the interlocking nature of the systems of oppression of racism and sexism, which made the experiences and social positions of women who self-identify as Black as leaders unique (Moorosi et al., 2018). Based on Moorosi et al. (2018) Collin's additional focus on social class as a compounding system of oppression contributing to the marginalization of women who self-identify as Black was confirmed earlier in Hooks' (1989) assertion that 'even when women who self-identify as Black are able to advance professionally and acquire a degree of economic self-sufficiency, it is in the social realm that racist and gendered stereotypes are continually used as ways of defining women who self-identify as Black identity and behavior.'

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Racial Microaggressions Among Black Women

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workplace (Thomas, 2021). Racial discrimination on the job continues to be problematic

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Intersectionality

Intersectionality focuses on the specified identity process of subordinated groups

and contemporary renditions that experience intersectionality as inclusive of multifaceted

social categories that occupy various ranks along differing social hierarchies (Rosette et

al., 2018, pp. 1-22). However, Rosette et al. (2018) and Collins and Bilge (2016)

referenced intersectionality as a tool that provides people with "better access to the

complexity of the world and themselves" (p. 2). Further, Rosette et al. (2018); Acker

(2012) indicated that intersectionality provides a "way to conceptualize the complex

interweaving of analytically separated processes" (p. 219). Researchers Rosette et al.

(2018); Cole (2009) found that "intersectionality is not only a tool to understand the

experiences of minority group members" (p. 173) because they are propagated via

historical, political, and materially derived hierarchies.

In Crenshaw's (1991) body of work, the term first coined intersectionality to

express the multi-layered forms of discrimination experienced by women while being

Black (Moorosi et al., 2018). In its original sense, intersectionality as a theoretical lens

addresses the gaps exposed by feminist and anti-racist dialogues in the experiences and

struggles (for empowerment) of 'women of color' (Moorosi et al., 2018; Crenshaw, 1991).

Crenshaw argued that by viewing gender and race separately, legal frameworks tend to

ignore the experiences of women who self-identify as Black (Moorosi et al., 2018).

Intersectionality has since gained momentum as it acknowledges the interlocking nature

of not racism and sexism but a range of other social identities, including social class, and

the effect their interaction has on the lives of women who self-identify as Black and other

marginalized groups (Moorosi et al., 2018 & Crenshaw, 1991). Also, intersectionality

provides some scholars with a "critical analytic lens to interrogate racial, ethnic, class,

ability, age, sexuality and gender disparities and to contest existing ways of looking at

these structures of inequality" (Harris & Patton, 2018; Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009;

Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991).

Since 1989, intersectionality has become a "traveling theory," that has crossed

into and influenced almost every academic discipline, including higher education (Harris

& Patton, 2018, pp. 347-372). The continued travel, notoriety, and use of intersectionality

across academic disciplines have contributed to "the intersectionality wars" (Harris &

Patton, 2018, pp. 347-372; Nash, 2017, p. 117), in which scholars dispute "nearly

everything about intersectionality" including "its histories and origins, its methodologies,

its efficacy, its politics, its relationship to identity and identity politics, its central

metaphor, its juridical orientations, its relationship to 'black woman' and to black

feminism" (Harris & Patton, 2018; Nash, 2017; Crenshaw, 2011; Bartlett, 2017; Davis,

2008; Tomlinson, 2013). Scholars debated to whom and what intersectionality should

apply (Harris-Patton, 2018; Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Carbado, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011). In

contrast, some argued that intersectionality should explore only women who self-identify as Black womanhood (Harris & Patton, 2018 & Alexander-Floyd, 2012).

Seminal research revealed an additive approach that frames multiple identities as isolated and results in summative inequities. An intersectional approach focuses on how inter-reliant sociohistorical systems influence interdependent identity-specific experiences (Bowleg, 2018). Moreover, Rice (2019) suggested employing addictive approaches to consider the characteristics of two or more social makers without considering the complexities that emerged at these junctures and without acknowledging the broader social context in which identities and differences are considered and constructed. Within the social sciences, intersectionality has been used to study micro-level experiences and macro-level interactions between groups, their structural placement, and their representation in discourse (Rice et al., 2019).

Many scholars' war-wage over intersectionality stifles the intentions underlying intersectionality to work toward transformative and racial social justice (Harris & Patton, 2018; Bartlett, 2017; Bilge, 2013). Furthermore, the continued debate over intersectionality deters scholars from exploring what has been done with intersectionality (Harris & Patton, 2018 & Bartlett, 2017). Clarity about what intersectionality can do will not arise from debating the theory. Instead, scholars must explore how intersectionality has already been done to address what it should and can do (Harris & Patton, 2018; Bartlett, 2017; Bilge, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011). Further, Crenshaw (2011) agreed, "I've consistently learned more from what scholars and activists have done with intersectionality than from what others have speculated about its appeal" (p. 22).

However, to explore the possibilities of intersectionality and engage in transformative

social justice, individuals and organizations must focus on how scholars do

intersectionality.

Intersectionality Among Black Women in the Workplace

Intersections imply two dimensions passing through a common point

simultaneously or two categories sharing a common element (Rosette et al., 2018). In

organizational scholarship on social categories, we regard that common point as

qualitatively different from a simple addition or overlap (Rosette et al., 2018). The

intersection is an emergent property often represented in data analytics as a multiplicative

feature. Race and gender are two distinct social categories- but not two independent

experiences-at work (Rosette et al., 2018; Horry & Terry, 2000). Studies of the two

categories, particularly as fundamental diversity variables, in organizational research,

continue to emphasize and investigate them one at a time, as membership in isolated

demographic groups (Rosette et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). Also, how individuals see

themselves at work is experienced as 'and,' not 'or.' They are conjunctive, not disjunctive.

They are intersectional (Rosette, 2018).

To better understand how women who self-identify as Black are viewed in their

workplace, and the associated consequences for their personal, professional, and

community well-being, awareness of their social location concerning organizational and

societal hierarchies must first be acknowledged (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019). Sojourner

Truth's 1851 speech at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, spoke on her experience

as a woman who self-identify as Black with the benevolence directed toward White

women and the expectations of physicality and strength of Black men (Rosette et al., 2018; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Hooks, 1981). Truth concluded that differential treatment based on gender and race did not adequately capture the struggles she encountered due to her gender and race throughout her life (Rosette et al., 2018, pp. 1-22).

Previous research by Lewis et al. (2017) and Greer (2007) on women who self-identify as Black coping strategies concluded that there are different ways that Black women cope with the unseen stress of intersecting forms of oppression. Past findings in qualitative research referenced that women who self-identify as Black typically engages in four types of coping strategies: active/engagement strategies (i.e., cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with the situation, approach coping; resistance strategies), social support/interconnectedness (i.e., seeking support from friends and family), religion and spirituality (prayer or ritual-centered coping), and disengagement/avoidance strategies (i.e., not doing anything to resolve the situation; denial and desensitization (Lewis et al., 2017; Everett et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2013; Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

However, past findings in a quantitative study by Thomas et al. (2008) explored the mediating role of culturally specific coping strategies on the relations between gendered racism and psychological distress among women who self-identify as Black. This study's findings revealed that cognitive/ emotional debriefing (i.e., coping with stress by avoiding thinking about the situation) partially mediated the relationship between gendered racism and psychological distress. More extraordinary experiences with gendered racism were positively related to cognitive and emotional debriefing. In that turn, this contributes to higher distress.

Gender Inequality

To fully understand intersectionality experiences, it is critical to investigate how women are viewed in organizations (Rosette et al., 2018, pp. 1-22). Stereotypes describing essential differences between men and women have been discussed in psychological research since before seminal researcher Bakan (1966) proposed the concepts of agency and communion as the two fundamental dimensions of human nature. Bakan (1966) explained agency as the trait governing individuation, self-focus, and achievement and described communion as the human quality that allows for connection, congregation, and relation (Rosette et al., 2018, pp. 1-22). However, past researchers Fiske et al. (2002) explicitly included the gendered nature of this distinction in their stereotype content model, with oversight to a central role to competence and warmth attributions in-group stereotypes. Moreover, Rosette et al. (2018) stated that agency and communion had understood the defining differentiators of masculine versus feminine stereotypes.

Grounded in the early psychological work on gender stereotypes, organizational scholars began to relate these conceptions of feminine communion and masculine agency to various workplace phenomena. Seminal research conducted by Schien (1973) and Schien (1975) suggested the "think manger-think male" paradigm was one of the first to explore the conflicting nature of the communal stereotypes ascribed to women with the agentic stereotypes attributed to managers (Rosette et al., 2018, pp. 1-22). Research on backlash posits that the opposing dominance prescriptions for leaders and communal prescriptions for women created a double bind (Rosette et al., 2018, pp. 1-22).

Past researchers found that women seeking advancement in organizations must disconfirm their gender stereotypes to be viewed as sufficiently dominant and competent while facing reprisals for behavior deemed too counter-stereotypical based on communal prescriptions (Rosette et al., 2018; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Past studies revealed that women who self-identify as Black with dominance (e.g., aggressive or controlling behavior) deemed it necessary for continued advancement and success in high-status roles. However, they were penalized throughout organizational life in hiring (Rosette et al., 2018; Phelan et al., 2008; Tyler & McCullough, 2009), in salary negotiation (Rosette et al., 2018; Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007), job promotion (Rosette at al., 2018, Fiske et al., 1991; Heilman, 2001), and even everyday interactions at their workplace (Rosette et al., 2018; Heilman et al., 2004; Koch, 2005).

Gender-differentiated outcomes result from the behavior of individual people, but organizational characteristics like other social structures constrain specific individual actions and enable or instigate others. As a result, patterns of gender inequality vary across different organizations (Goman & Mosseri, 2019). However, the most prevalent stereotype attributed to Black dominance is distinct from the typical communal qualities ascribed to the superordinate category of women (Rosette et al., 2018). Previous researchers suggested that despite the communal nature of the general female stereotype, stereotypes of women who self-identify as Black are referenced as overbearing and domineering and have persisted for decades in the United States (Pratt, 2012). Popular portrayals of the "angry Black woman" (Childs, 2005, pp. 544-561) or "strong Black woman" (Collins, 2005; Radford-Hill, 2002) defined broad cultural stereotypes.

Also, perceptions of women who self-identify as Black are viewed as angry, hostile, and rude have persisted due mainly to the Sapphire subtype, named because of a character on network television in the 1950s (Townsend et al., 2010). The Sapphire subtype of an "angry Black woman" characterizes this interaction of gender and race as threatening, confrontational, domineering, and angry (Walley-Jean, 2009; West, 1999; West, 2008). On the other hand, the Strong Black Woman stereotype originates from the Matriarch subtype, which describes a woman who is the strong, self-reliant head of the household (Fleming, 1983; Sewell, 2013; Wingfield, 2007). The Matriarch subtype derived from Black women's experiences leading households due to the adverse situations that frequently prevented Black men from entering the labor force (Moynihan, 1965; Sewell, 2013). Due to the frequent demands placed on Matriarchs, when this subtype is activated, women who self-identify as Black are viewed as hard-working and motivated but still intimidating and antagonistic because of their perceived responsibilities (Wingfield, 2007). These depictions of women who self-identify as Black as dominant and firm stand in contrast to depictions of women in general and White women, specifically, as communal (Eagley & Steffen, 1984).

Gender Inequality Among Black Women

Although much progress has been made in race relations, a problem with discrimination persists in the workplace. As a result, women who self-identify as Black, among individuals from other underrepresented groups, develop identity skills for coping (Dickens et al., 2018, pp. 153-163). Dickens et al. (2018, pp. 153-163) found that leadership development is often touted as the solution to help women "break through the

glass ceiling' invisible systemic work barriers that hinder advancement for women and marginalized people. Women are presented with an achievable work milestone, with promotions, but often indefinite barriers loom. However, researchers Dickens et al. (2018), Green and King (2001), and Kumar (2016) found that women who self-identify as Black experienced a "concrete" rather than "glass" ceiling in advancing to CEO or c-suite level positions due to the double marginalization of being Black and a woman.

Grace et al. (2017) confirmed that the education levels of women who self-identify as Black has increased over the past decade, and the number of firms owned by Black women also increased by 67% between 2007 and 2012. However, women self-identifying as Black remained invisible and underrepresented in corporate leadership (Dickens et al., 2018; Hewlett & Jackson, 2014; Holder et al., 2015). Seminal research by (Kanter, 1977) expressed that those women who self-identify as Black in leadership positions are the only Black women in their environment who are considered numerical "tokens." Women who self-identify as Black and are tokenized in the workplace experience race and gender-based discrimination and shift identities to mitigate the adverse outcomes associated with discrimination (Dickens et al., 2018, pp. 153-163).

Women who self-identify as Black that are referenced as "token women" in their workplace may experience feeling isolated. In addition, women who self-identify as Black may receive additional pressure to perform well (Dickens et al., 2018; King et al., 2010; McDonald et al., 2004; Thomas & Hollenshed, 2001; Whitfield-Harris et al., 2017). Also, their numerical insufficiency and marginalized group membership make them hyper-visible (Dickens et al., 2018; Settle et al., 2018). When women who self-

identify as Black are tokens at work, being Black and a woman has increased power, and the associated increased scrutiny may create concerns that their actions will reflect upon their entire race and gender social group (Dickens et al., 2018; Holder et al., 2015; Sekaquaptewa et al., 2007). Historical research by Bell (1990) revealed that women who self-identify as Black might shift their identities to follow professional standards of the dominant cultural values of the workplace.

Situational factors (e.g., identity) can determine whether one uses or downplays specific abilities or embraces or restrain behaviors in different environments, such as the workplace (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Spencer et al., 1997). Seminal research by West (1995) insinuated acknowledging the historically imposed stereotypes towards women who self-identify as Black of being angry, sexually promiscuous, and strong. Women who self-identify as Black sometimes shift their identity by adopting dual identities that satisfy White and Black communities (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Jones & Shorten-Gooden, 2004; McDowell, 2008). Also, previous literature supports the notion that identity negotiation among women who self-identify as Black is multidimensional and significant primarily because it occurs in their daily lives (Jackson, 2002; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Historically, European cultures have shaped women who self-identify as Black identities in particular contexts, such as the workplace (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, pp. 760-774)—investigating shifting identities when women who self-identify as Black first begin their careers is crucial, given the impact of discrimination on stress which has implications for well-being and work outcomes (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; O'Brien et al., 2016).

The shifting of one's identity can be regarded as adaptive, allowing women who self-identify as Black to explore different aspects of their self-concept and aid in their interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, pp. 760-774). When provoked by environmental cues, women who self-identify as Black who are members of an underrepresented group that takes part in identity shifting make their negatively valued identities less prominent or stereotypical (Dickens et al., 2018; Clair et al., 2005). Moreover, women who self-identify as Black may receive societal messages that speaking their Black language is inappropriate for work or academic environments. Consequently, this brings attention to their language and encourages speaking "proper" English, which is referenced as "talk white" within Black communities (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, pp. 760-774).

In this situation, identity shifting can be understood as a source of strength (Dickens & Chavez, 2017; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Jackson, 2010). However, shifting identities often produces internal conflict and contributes to distorted perceptions of the self (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, pp. 760-774). A historical study explored by Bell et al. (2003) on identity shifting revealed that Black women did not want to conceal or deny their racial identity. Further, Scott (2013) conducted research with previous focus groups. He concluded that for some young women who self-identify as Black, emotions arise when they resist portraying stereotypical actions by altering their behaviors. A past study by Parker (2003) inquired about women who self-identify as Black executives' strategies of negotiating workplace interactions and discovered executives engaged in indirect and unassertive communication to serve as a model. Further, women who self-identify as

Black executives diverted difficult situations, used humor to distract uncomfortable situations or addressed being excluded in the workplace.

It is significant to understand how women who self-identify as Black shift their identities early in their careers; this adds to the literature on the impact of shifting in the career path to upper-tier positions among women who self-identify as Black (Dicken et al., 2018, pp. 153-163). Although the number of women of color leaders in the workplace has increased, the underrepresentation of leaders remains prevalent (Dickens & Chavez, 2017; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Thus, past researchers, Bell and Nkomo's (2001) study confirmed that Women of Color experienced the *sticky floor*, barriers presented by racism and sexism, which provides challenges for advancing to and maintaining leadership positions.

Women who self-identify as Black may practice the sticky floor early in their careers to reach leadership positions (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, pp. 760-774). A battle amongst researchers exists on whether Black women participate in culturally endorsed shifting identities for professional advancement or resist assimilating to the dominant culture to portray authentic identities in the workplace. Furthermore, workplace dynamics for employers and employees can be more cooperative by understanding the experiences of women who self-identify as Black at the beginning of their careers (Dickens et al., 2018, pp. 153-163).

Summary

As noted in previous and current studies, colorism remains highly impactful in the Black community. The skin tone effect is represented as a past portrait of slavery and

racism, which is very much present today; however, acknowledging the existence of colorism is taking the first step in addressing colorist prejudices. Over many decades, Americans have made strides toward improving race relations; however, discrimination based on skin color continues to have a negative effect on the lives of women who self-identify as Black (Norwood, 2014). Mathew and Johnson (2015) stated that positive characteristics are referenced to lighter skin, while those with darker complexions are faced with stereotypical categories and judged harshly according to their physical appearance.

Abrams et al. (2020) explained that the social and psychological association of colorist practices could be profound with women who self-identify as Black and girls. In addition, women who self-identify as Black endures problems with their self-identity in the workplace. Black women shift their identities to conform to the culture in their workplace. Shifting one's identity can be regarded as adaptive, allowing Black women to explore different aspects of their self-concept and aid in their interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, pp. 760–774). Although much progress has been made in race relations, a problem with discrimination persists in the workplace.

To fully understand intersectionality experiences, it is first critical to investigate how women are viewed in organizations (Rosette et al., 2019, pp. 1-22). Reese (2019) indicated colorism continues to have an everlasting impact on society and remains crucial to understanding humankind's implicit bias. While research literature on skin tone and women who self-identify as Black acknowledged intraracial discrimination between light

skin and dark skin women, the experience of overcoming discrimination in the workplace

in a leadership role is unknown (Heckstall, 2018). Chapter Three will describe the

methodology used to explore these concerns addressing colorism.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Colorism is a form of same-group discrimination based on skin tone that allows more advantages for lighter-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black than darker-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black (Gasman & Abiola, 2016). Moreover, color-based discrimination, also referred to as colorism, centers on advantages and disadvantages for people who identify as the same race, experiences based on the lightness or darkness of their skin tone, and other external traits such as hair texture and facial features (Keith & Monroe, 2017). Perhaps the most preeminent implications of colorism impact how women who self-identify as Black define and evaluate themselves (Harvey et al., 2017). Because women who self-identify as Black are more susceptible to being emotionally impacted by colorism, this population was chosen as the primary reason for this study.

Additionally, understanding the experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies emotionally impacted by colorism in their workplace can enhance the study's purpose. In this qualitative research, I explored the experiences of eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who experienced colorism in their workplace. My goal was to answer the questions on the emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership experiences with colorism in the workplace. In this chapter, I describe the qualitative study approach I used to gain insight into the participants' experiences with colorism. I also describe the participant

recruitment process, data collection, and the process in which analyzed. Finally, the

ethical procedures are discussed as they related to my roles as the researcher and the

research participants' privacy, confidentiality, and protection rights.

Research Question

This research study was guided by the following research question on women

who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies

and who have experienced colorism in the workplace.

Primary research question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-

identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who

have experiences with colorism in the workplace (i.e., intragroup discrimination)?

Research Design and Rationale

I interviewed eight women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership in

nonprofit agencies and who had experienced colorism in the workplace. The interviews

allowed the participants to give an account of their experiences with colorism, any

emotional effects caused by colorism, barriers they faced because of colorism, and their

social support to help overcome their trauma. A qualitative research design was chosen

for this research; this allowed a better understanding of women who self-identified as

Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies' experiences with

colorism in the workplace.

Qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses how people interpret

and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals

(Mohajan, 2018). However, qualitative research can be holistic. It often involves a rich

collection of data from various sources to seek a deeper understanding of individual participants, including their opinions, perspectives, and attitudes (Nassaji, 2015). Qualitative research aims to describe and interpret the issues or phenomena systemically from the point of view of an individual or population being studied and generate new concepts and theories (Mohajan, 2018).

This qualitative research allowed me to gather in-depth insights into the problem or generate new ideas for research (see Bhandari, 2020). Qualitative research is inductive; the researcher explores meaning and insights into each situation (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research often involves an inductive exploration of the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, or concepts and then describe and interpret those categories (Nassaji, 2015). This qualitative research intent is based on people's beliefs, experiences, and meaning systems from the people's perspective (Mohajan, 2018).

Qualitative research can record data that are not numerical but consist of opinions, feelings, and experiences; however, quantitative research measures data in numbers (Clark & Vealé, 2018). The following approaches were not chosen for this study: Ethnography focuses on individuals' social interactions and historical and cultural context (Jones & Smith, 2017). Although women who self-identify as Black shared some of the same cultural beliefs, I investigated workplace experiences with colorism. The ground theory created a theory grounded in data rather than deductive logic, explaining a process or situation (Olson, 2020).

For this study, my goal was to understand the experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and

experiences with colorism in the workplace and not create a theory. A case study is an intensive study about a person, a group of people, or a unit aimed to generalize over several units (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Doing a case study was not the best choice for this study because my focus not on a case and the participant's life experiences due to an event. Phenomenology is an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Neubauer et al., 2019). However, I did not use the phenomenology because I focused on a phenomenon that participants have experienced or described. Finally, quantitative research is commonly associated with the theory of positivism, and its emphasis on unbiased observation of objective reality as statistics (Krueger, 2018). A quantitative approach was not selected for this study because data were not gathered from numerical data.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research; focus and interpretive thinking are critical (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Research requires a comprehensive study of a subject (i.e., individuals, groups of individuals, societies, or objects) to reveal information or achieve a new understanding of the subject (Neubauer et al., 2019). As the researcher, it was imperative to be knowledgeable and understand others' experiences so that others could learn new insights about a particular phenomenon. In addition, as the researcher, I investigated and interpreted the impact of the research question on women who self-identified as Black and lived experiences with colorism (see Alase, 2017).

Beck (2021) proposed putting aside past experiences, biases, everyday understanding, and presuppositions about why and what and studying to see the phenomenon with fresh eyes without any blinders. As the participant-observer, I had to be aware of the physical settings, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and behaviors during the observation were essential for the study. The description of observations should be factual, accurate, and thorough (Cypress, 2018). Also, as a participant observer, I needed to interact with participants during the interviews.

According to Cypress (2019), the research inquirer partner in the information development and the interviewing relationship is equal. I applied bracketing, reduction, and reflexivity to address bias, cultural bias, and conflict of interest. Hopkins et al. (2017) indicated that reduction and reflexivity are processed by which being the researcher, I released any "baggage" that could have been introduced into this research study, such as previous education, experiences, and personal beliefs. As the researcher, I put all preunderstanding aside and focused primarily on the research participants' experiences in bracketing.

Also, as the researcher, I did not display objectivity but remained faithful and oriented to the phenomenon being studied while avoiding any unreflective beliefs. In this study, by no means did my personal and professional relationships become a conflict of interest as the researcher; I confirmed to the participants that the study's sole purpose was for research only. Although my residence is in a community comprised of military members, including people of the same church affiliation, there was no direct relationship between the researcher and the participants. Cypress (2019) explained that ethics demand

that observations be overt and should occur in a natural setting rather than a contrived one.

Research Methodology

An interview approach was used to collect data in this study. Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly seen as a moral inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kvale, 2007). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), as the researcher, I needed to consider how the interview would improve the human situation (as well as enhance scientific knowledge). I also had to consider how a sensitive interview interaction may be stressful for the participants, whether participants have a say in how their statements are interpreted, how critically the interviewees might be questioned, and what the consequences of the interview for the interviewees and the groups to which they belong might be. Interviews (and observations) should begin from the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collection and the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

According to Hawkins (2018), interviews with key informants are the most common means of data collection in a qualitative study. Further, qualitative research can gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020). Using the interview approach helped to build discussions surrounding the research questions. Additionally, the interview was used as an assistant tool to draw out the participant to reflect on their experience and its implications in their lives (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Also, qualitative interviews allowed me to conduct semi structured interviews using the phone for collecting data that engaged in individual interviews with

eight interviewees. These interviews involved semi structured and open-ended questions intended to elicit participants' views and opinions (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Traditional methods used face-to-face interviews when conducting qualitative research. However, due to COVID-19, more researchers have opted for new platforms for collecting data using social media, such as video conferencing. While video conferencing was developed to facilitate long-distance or international communication, enhance collaborations, and reduce business travel costs, these features can be extended to qualitative research interviews (Gray et al., 2020). Video conferencing allows the researcher more access to gain more participants (Winiarska, 2017).

Moreover, researchers sometimes use email exchanges for data collection (Hawkins, 2018). According to past research, data collection via Zoom video conferencing allows the researcher to change interviews when an unpredictable circumstance happens; however, this is only possible with traditional face-to-face interviews (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). However, I used the phone for this study to interview the research participants. Due to the difference in time zones and schedules, conducting face-to-face was only sometimes feasible for the participants and me. Phone interviews were used to conduct the research interviews.

As the researcher conducting a phone interview, I gained a deeper insight into specific answers by treating the interviews like a meaningful discussion and deducing the validity of each response. More importantly, phone interviews created more flexibility for the study participants and me. In addition, phone interviews allowed the study participants to speak more openly about their experiences with colorism. Gray et al.

(2020) suggested there are strengths to conducting interviews by phone, such as the convenience and ease of use, the ability to enhance personal interface to discuss personal topics (e.g., parenting), and more accessibility (i.e., phone, tablet, and computer), and it is timesaving with no travel requirements to participate in the research and therefore more time can be spent with family.

Participant Selection Logic

The target population of this study consisted of eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace. I researched women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and who experienced colorism in the workplace, aged between 37 to 56 years. All participants were United States nationalized citizens claiming to be Black. Criteria for participants in this study met the following requirements: Women who self-identify as Black in leadership roles, between the ages of 37 to 56, and having experienced colorism in the workplace.

Before I conducted the recruitment for this study, permission and approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted. After receiving approval from the IRB, I posted recruitment flyers on the social media website LinkedIn, founded in 2003, to connect professionals toward employment opportunities in their career fields. The recruitment flyer requested interested candidates to contact by email or phone for additional information. Once participants contacted me, they were asked questions based on the screening questionnaire to ensure they met the study's criteria. Afterward,

participants received a consent form that stated the study's purpose and the research criteria.

Once I determined that the participants had met the study's criteria, the interview process was scheduled. Each interview timeframe was allotted between 30 and 60 minutes. According to Wilson (2015), participants can be as low as one to three, but normal ranges between six and 20. However, for this study, the interview process consisted of eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofits and have experienced colorism in the workplace.

However, these numbers are tentative and should be well-chosen before use (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Failure to reach data saturation can become a problem for the research quality and affect content validity (Fusch, 2015). As the researcher, I chose the sample size that offered the best opportunity to reach data saturation; hence, data saturation was met with this sample size. Fusch (2015) stated that once the researcher reaches a saturation point, the researcher most likely reaches a saturation point with themes; therefore, data saturation has been met. However, Wilson stated that the most important is to focus more on quality than quantity.

Sampling Method and Rational

In this study, a snowball was used for sampling. This research participant's criteria comprised eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and have experienced workplace colorism. The participants' ages ranged from 37 to 56 years. The participants used English to communicate, and they all lived in the United States. The interviews were conducted via

phone, in my home office, and at the participants' location of choice. Phone interviews provided privacy and a comfortable environment for the participants to speak openly about their experiences with colorism. Purposeful sampling supported the richness and relevance of information concerning the study's research questions (see Gentles et al., 2015). Snowball sampling was used for recruiting women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies by previously selected participants who shared the same experiences with colorism in the workplace; however, the intent was to use snowball as a follow-up (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Purposeful Sampling

This research participant's criteria comprised eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and have experienced workplace colorism. The participants' ages ranged from 37 to 56 years. The participants used English to communicate, and they all lived in the United States. The interviews were conducted via phone, in my home office, and at the participants' location of choice. Phone interviews provided privacy and a comfortable environment for the participants to speak openly about their experiences with colorism.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that purposeful sampling assists the researcher in better understanding the problem and the research question. A discussion of participants and the site could include four aspects identified: the setting (i.e., where the research will take place), the actors (i.e., who will be observed or interviewed), the events (i.e., what the actors will be observing or interviewed doing), and the process (i.e., the evolving nature of the events undertaken by the actors within the setting). Based on a

seminal study, purposeful sampling is the fundamental principle underlying qualitative research; cases in qualitative research are not randomly selected or selected based on convenience. Purposeful sampling was selected as the initial tool for the recruitment for reaching research participants. However, in this study, snowball samples were used to gain participants for this study.

Instrumentation

This qualitative study aimed to investigate women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in their workplace. Further, the question used for the interviews was based on the initial research question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive leadership roles in a nonprofit agency with experiences colorism in the workplace? The interview process started with demographic questions on their age, skin tone, educational background, and the current professional position. By making this approach, the participants were more relaxed with their responses to the questions and spoke freely about their experiences with colorism. The next set of questions was asked to define colorism, experiences with colorism in the workplace, challenges with colorism, and the emotional effect of colorism. Also, I asked if they received any professional help to overcome barriers to colorism. These interview questions allowed me to gain insight into the emotional impact of colorism on women who self-identified as Black and if colorism still impacts their lives.

The questionnaire was designed to see if participants met the criteria for the study on colorism. Before the interview, I produced a practical research design that originated

from the research objective and applied it to the study's problem and research questions (Billups, 2021). Furthermore, this is the interview protocol in which I planned and developed an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during the qualitative interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview protocol was two pages long, with enough space between questions for note-taking. The interview protocol should be prepared and used for the entire interview process. In addition, several critical components were part of the interview protocol; this included the basic information about the interview, an introduction, the interview content questions with probes, and closing instructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview questionnaire composed of predetermined questions, followed by probes (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). In addition, as the researcher, I must develop a good rapport with the research participants before the interview process (McGrath et al., 2019). Before conducting the interviews, I provided a consent form to the participants for permission to participate in the research and use the recording device during the interview process. The interview process allowed mutual exchanges between the research participants and me, which in turn, I could present follow-up questions based on responses allowing space for participants' responses (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide was structured as a discussion guide during the interviews; this allowed changes if needed (Kallio et al., 2016). The study invitation should be limited to one interview for each participant; however, if a follow-up interview is needed, the researcher could contact the participant for additional interviews (Alase, 2017).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Procedures

Before conducting research involving participants, I complied with the institution's ethics review process, a process referred to as procedural ethics (Baker et al., 2016). Procedural ethics is the communication process that I used to articulate the study's purpose and significance by minimizing any harm to the participants and my data management practices (Baker et al., 2016). After receiving permission to conduct the study, I posted the recruitment flyers on LinkedIn. The study included participant eligibility criteria and my contact information. Interested participants responded via email with their contact information. After the initial contact, a time and date was scheduled to connect via phone to begin the interview process. Once I determined that the participants met the criteria for the study, consent forms were sent via email to each research participant. Each research participant had to consent to participate via email by email. After receiving participants consent forms, I communicated to the research participant their rights. According to Alase (2017), researchers should seek to do everything within their power to protect each research participant's rights, dignity, and privacies. The privacy of the research participants should never be compromised.

Recruitment

Recruitment for the study consisted of eight women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles in a nonprofit agency with experiences with colorism in the workplace. The researcher used LinkedIn to possibly connect with professional women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles and who have

experienced colorism in their workplace. However, most participants were recruited

through snowball sampling. The researcher responded to interested participants by email

with basic information about the researcher and a detailed explanation of the study's

purpose. Interested participants were sent a consent form to participate in the study.

After the researcher received the consent to participate in the study, a time and

date for the screening questionnaire were scheduled to determine if they qualified. Once

the questionnaire was completed, it was determined that the participants met the criteria

for the study (referenced in participant selection). I provided the participants with a

temporary telephone number for the study. As the researcher, I emailed each participant

for a date and time to conduct the interviews. Participants were briefed again on the

purposed of study; this took place during the interview process. All interviews were

conducted via phone from my home office and the location of choice from the

participants'. I used an audio recording device and handwritten notes to collect data.

Miller et al. (2018) indicated that during the interview process, the following should be

considered: understanding and past life with colorism, current life experience with

colorism, and interpretations and meaning; before the interview, participants will be

provided notice of their protection rights as participants for the study.

Gaining Consent

After the IRB approves the study, the researcher must obtain a consent form

(Manti & Licari, 2018). Informed consent is the process of telling potential research

participants about the critical elements of a research study and what their participation

will involve. However, this is one of the essential components of the ethical conduct of

research with human beings (University of Michigan, 2020). Furthermore, a consent form and a calendar for scheduled interview dates and times were sent via email to participants. This content form was used as a guide for a verbal explanation of the study; the consent form should be the basis for the meaningful exchange between the investigator and the subject (University of Michigan, 2020). Once participants signed the consent form, which included my name, contact information, the purpose of the study, declaration of consent, and Walden University's IRB Office contact information for any questions or concerns. Also, before the interview, participants were notified of their right to or not to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Data collection for this research study was done using semi-structured phone interview formats using an interview protocol. An interview protocol was used as a guide during the interview process. Further, during the interview process with participants, I thoroughly considered with following: understanding and past life with colorism, current life experience with colorism, and interpretations and meaning making (Miller et al., 2018). However, before the interview protocol, participants were informed that their personal information would not be used in the study and that their identities would be kept confidential.

An interview protocol was used as a guide during the interview process. During the interview, the researcher will have to consider the following: understanding and past life with colorism, current life experience with colorism, and interpretations and meaning making (Miller et al., 2018). The interview questions were constructed based on the

literature review for this study. Data collection started with an ice-breaker question to help develop a positive dialogue between the researcher and the participants. However, the most crucial step in the interview process was building rapport and trust with the participants in the study.

The interview process began with the historical background of women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies' experiences with colorism (Creswell, 2009). These interviews were administered separately on a one-on-one basis. This study was conducted by phone from my home office and the location choice of the participants. These locations provided complete privacy, fewer distractions, and no interruptions for the researcher and the participants. I used semi-structured open-ended questions, which allowed the participant to provide a complete version of their experiences with colorism in the location of their choose. For example, open-ended questions permitted a better understanding of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies' experiences with colorism in the workplace. I used an audio recording device and handwritten notes to collect data. While I conducted the interviews, it was imperative to understand that the participants clearly defined each response to the interview questions to avoid follow-up interviews. I asked participants to repeat their responses to ensure accuracy. I used NVivo transcription and hand notes for transcribing the data into Microsoft Word document. This assured accuracy in the data collected. No personal identifiers were used in this process, and each participant was given a numeric identifier to protect their identity.

Data Analysis

The data analysis plan initiated the startup part of developing the qualitative study, especially the data collection and the write-up of findings (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Also, Creswell (2009) stated that data analysis is defined as making sense of text and images. Also, this involved preparing the data for analysis, conducting further analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (this is referenced as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing that data, and making an interpretation of the more significant meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). Since text and image data are dense and rich, all information cannot be used in a qualitative study. Thus, in data analysis, researchers need to "winnow" the data, determining what data to keep and disregarding other parts of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This process gathered data into a small number of themes, between five to seven themes (Creswell, 2013).

Also, the data plan should be broadly defined and open initially but become more flexible during data collection (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). According to Lester et al. (2020), the researcher should analyze data by using the following phases: prepare and organize the data by converting all audio-recorded interviews into one location, observational notes to electronic format, and scan documents retrieved in paper form, transcribing data transcripts, become familiar with data, code the data, produce categories and themes from underlying coded passages, and make the analysis process transparent.

In this study for data analysis, coding was used as a simple short, descriptive word or phrase that assigned meaning to the data related to the researcher's analytic interests (Lester et al., 2020). Also, coding helped with indexing and mapping data to provide an

overview of contrasting data, allowing the researcher to make sense of their research questions (Elliot, 2018). Coding primarily involved analyzing texts that generated themes that helped to make sense of the data (Parameswaran et al., 2020). Coding allowed me to grasp the data, understand it, spend time with it, and ultimately render it into something to report (Elliott, 2018). This process is defined as sorting, where codes are categorized, and themes are generated based on identified patterns (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Patterns increased the trustworthiness (or validity) of data. However, themes are typically longer than codes and have several embedded codes, resulting in the study's conclusion (Rogers, 2018).

For this study, NVivo was used to analyze data gathered from the interviews and coding. NVivo coding program assisted me with creating and arranging themes and producing patterns to assist with distinguishing between the data collected from participants' comments. These themes were provided with a code put in a systemic order; in return, data is segregated, grouped, regrouped, and relinked to consolidate meaning and explanation (Williams & Moser, 2019). Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that the most popular approach is using a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis, which give details in a chronology of the event. This detailed discussion consists of several themes (complete with subthemes, specific illustrations, multiple perspectives from individuals, and quotations) or a discussion with interconnecting themes. Once the codes are generated and themes are produced and reviewed, it is crucial to ensure all categories align with the research questions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness or truth value of qualitative research and the transparency of the conduct of the study is crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings (Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. Several criteria are accepted for qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016).

Credibility

Credibility can be defined as confidence in the findings' 'truth' (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce; discussing contrary information adds to an account's credibility. Past researcher Cope (2014) explained that credibility refers to the truth of the data or participant's views and the researcher's interpretation and representation. In addition, Cope (2014) indicated that credibility is enhanced by the researcher describing his or her experience and verifying the research findings with the participants. Techniques I used to establish credibility included extended engagement with participants, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In this study, I validated credibility through member checking from the beginning to the end of the interview process. Through member checking, I created trustworthiness in this study (Candela, 2019). I used member checking help to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of data. All participants were interviewed using the same questionnaire.

Interviews were used for this study as a data collection method. Before the interview, I explained to the participants that I would use a recording device and take notes. Each participant agreed to use the recording device and handwritten notes.

Triangulation is a process in which multiple sources, theories, types of data, and perspectives are used to enhance a study's accuracy and breadth of its findings (Varpio et al., 2017). Researchers use triangulation to maximize credibility or trustworthiness; they often describe what they will triangulate, interpret, and incorporate the findings of this triangulation (Varpio et al., 2017). Prolonged engagement is developing trust and rapport with the informants to encourage rich, detailed responses (Cope, 2014). Reflexivity is a process that enables the researcher to consider their position and influence during the study; a process of maintaining awareness of how the researcher constructs meaning and how the researcher imposes meaning on the research process (Varpio et al., 2017).

Member checks are the most crucial technique for establishing trustworthiness (Varpio, 2017). Kornbluh (2015) suggested that member checks consist of the researcher following up with participants to verify that the findings reflect the participants' intended meanings. Peer reviewers are considered another 'gold standard in publishing to ensure that scholarly work is rigorous, accurate, and novel. Peer review in journals is one way of validating the trustfulness and value of the grants they have funded (Brandon & McGrath, 2018).

Saturation is when a researcher can explain that their samples are adequate along these dimensions (e.g., sufficient size to allow transfer to other contexts). Appropriate (i.e., data being able to answer research questions) aligns with the researcher's research

questions and methodological orientation (Varpio et al., 2017). Saturation is reported as the point in data collection and analysis when new incoming data produces little or no new information to address the research question (Guest et al., 2020). In addition, researchers must also explain how saturation is part of their methodological orientation, state how saturation was reached in the study, and substantiate the claim of achieving saturation (Varpio, 2017).

Transferability

Transferability is how findings are helpful to persons in other settings, which is different from other research aspects. The readers can determine how applicable for findings are to their situation (Connelly, 2016). Researchers provide a 'thick description' of the participants and the research process to enable the reader to assess whether the researcher's findings are transferable; this is the so-called transferability judgment (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Authenticity is the extent to which researchers showed various realities entirely and realistically, conveying to participants' lives. The selection of appropriate participants for the study sample to provide a rich, detailed description suggests that the researcher addresses the criterion (Connelly, 2016).

Transferability was through a thick and rich description using purposive and snowball sampling. Transferability is the effectiveness (or perceptions and experiences) of an intervention in a specific setting or population like that observed in a systemic review (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). I provided a summary of the research setting, data collection process, data analysis procedure, and a finalized study outcome. Providing detailed descriptions allowed me to convey all necessary information related to the

research process in case future researchers want to pull their conclusion from the research data.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the constancy of data over similar conditions (Cope, 2014). Researchers need to verify whether the analysis process aligns with the accepted standards for a particular design. Past researcher LaBanca (2011) informed that journaling techniques could maintain an audit trail for documenting tentative study interpretations. The researcher will provide a complete set of notes on decisions made during the research process, the research team meetings, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, the emergence of the findings, and management information (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Triangulation aims to enhance the process of qualitative research by using multiple approaches. Any findings that converge from different perspectives or data types offer reassurance and corroborating evidence to support the analysis (Varpio et al., 2017).

Dependability was established; using member checking was out of the interview process. Member checking was used to interpret the informant's reality and meanings to ensure the actual value of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An audit trail was created to provide a comprehensive description of the methodological procedure for the findings obtained in the study. By providing an audit trail, future research on the topic can follow and possibly duplicate the methodological procedures in the study (Carcary, 2020). After the interview, each participant was reminded of their rights to review and request a copy

of the transcripts. Each declined to review or get a copy. (See explanation in credibility

section).

Confirmability

Confirmability is established when data and interpretation are not based on the

researchers' particular preferences and viewpoints but derived from data (Korstjens &

Moser, 2018). Strategies to establish confirmability acknowledged the importance of

being self-aware and reflexive about the researcher's role in collecting, analyzing, and

interpreting the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). During the interview, observations, and

focus group discussions, including all analytical data, need to supplement with reflexive

notes. The reflexive notes for an interview described the setting and aspects of the

interview taken during and while transcribing the audiotape and analyzing the transcript

(Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Qualitative researchers will keep detailed notes of their

decisions and analysis as they progress (Connelly, 2016).

Confirmability was ensured for the study by bracketing and an audit trail. Using

bracketing, I limited any influence on the participant's understanding of the phenomenon

(Peters & Halcomb, 2015). In addition, I acknowledge that if bracketing is not used in the

research, the risk is that data will be biased and reflect the researcher's worldview instead

the participant's (Sorsa et al., 2015). Developing an audit trail was another strategy the

researcher used for confirmability. Audit trails detail the analytical steps taken to move

raw data to the final interpretation, showing that the analysis path is based on the data

collected. In other words, audit trials contribute to the transparency of concepts, themes,

and theory that emerges from the data, grounding the findings in the research evidence instead of the researchers' preconceptions (Carcary, 2020).

Ethical Procedures

Ethical approval procedures are often viewed as a hurdle to be surmounted and arguably overshadow full consideration of the challenges of process ethics, the ethical tensions, and dilemmas that arise throughout the practice research (Reid et al., 2018). At any time in the study, ethical implications can occur during the research's recruitment, data collection, and dissemination activities, referred to as practical ethics (Baker et al., 2016). As the researcher, I protected participants, developed trust with them, promoted research integrity, guarded against misconduct; and impropriety that might reflect on their organization or institutions, and coped with new, challenging problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study followed the ethics code of standards guideline of The American Psychological Association Ethical Principals of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Including the 2010 Amendments (www.apa.org/ehtics/code/index.aspx); (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Walden University guidelines for IRB 03-23-22-0027342 was followed before data collection.

According to Clark and Vealé (2018), the researcher is responsible for the data collection and analysis; he or she must explain the ethical procedure to the participants for the study. Baker et al. (2016) suggested that in the event a question should arise concerning power differentials between the researcher(s) and participants(s). The researcher must consider whether any current or previous relationships with participants will influence the participant's decision to participate in the study and the available data

(Baker et al., 2016). Alase (2017) stated that the "Protection of Human Subjects"

requirements, as stated by and required by many higher institutions of learning, require

participant protection to include their rights, the reason for the study, the ability to refuse

to participate in the study, and refusal to answer any questions.

The researcher requested participants to sign informed consent forms agreeing to

the provision of the study before data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This

qualitative study used an interview method with participants for data collection. It is

significant to consider how the interview will enhance the human situation. In addition,

how sensitive interview interaction may be stressful for participants, whether participants

have a say in how their statements are interpreted, how critically the interviewees might

be questioned, and what the consequences of the interview for the interviewees and

groups to which they belong might be (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Harvey (2019)

explained that research requires gatekeepers who oversee the research that has access and

determines the status of the research; also, the gatekeeper acts on behalf of the researcher.

According to Kirby (2020), Walden University requires all coded data and

participant recordings to be protected and retained for five years. Alase (2017) expressed

that securing and managing data is essential for the research, and the researcher is

responsible for providing adequate security and safekeeping of the data collection. In

addition, Alase (2016) recommended deleting and destroying any video, audio, and tape-

recorded information after transcribing for the safety and protection of participants. Alase

(2017) also suggested that researchers implement a sturdy safety system that protects

participants' collected data, including a secure password system for filing and storing

research data. According to Reid et al. (2018), issues could arise when researching any specific situation; however, there are standard features in the challenge of thinking and acting ethically as a qualitative researcher. The following was considered in maintaining integrity and altruism, upholding autonomy in gaining consent and access, balancing the protection of vulnerable participants with paternalism, managing multiple roles and power relations, and avoiding harm in disseminating findings.

Summary

A qualitative research approach was chosen to explore women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles in nonprofit agencies who have experienced colorism in their workplace. This study comprised eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency who had experienced colorism in the workplace. Participants' ages ranged between 37 to 56. All participants identified as United States citizens. All participants identified as United States citizens. LinkedIn was used as a recruitment tool to connect with candidates for this study. However, all participants were recruited through snowball sampling. The use of qualitative study was useful in retaining data from the participants to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences. All aspects of the research method were presented to include research design, role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment and participation, data analysis, data collection, and issues of trustworthiness, along with ethical procedures to support in the decisions and selection made in the study. The overall goal in conducting a qualitative study is to present information that was discovered for the research on women

who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency

who experience colorism in the workplace. In Chapter 3, I discussed the data collection

method and process used to achieve this goal. In Chapter 4, I will submit my findings

from the data collected.

Chapter 4: Results

In this qualitative study, I investigated the experiences of women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. These women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and who have experienced colorism (i. e. intragroup discrimination) may face adverse emotional and psychological effects. Data were collected from the lived experiences, feelings, views, and beliefs of women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles. The research question used to investigate and understand the experiences of the study participants was the following:

Research question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in their workplace (i.e., intragroup discrimination)?

In this chapter, I explain the process used to evaluate the data collected from the eight participants' interviews, including revealing the establishment of codes and emerging themes. Thematic analysis coding was used in this study. In every step of the analysis process, data were differentiated to produce and separate established codes until themes emerged for the data. This chapter includes the tables displaying the codes and themes and the narratives from individual interviews used to feature selected themes and results. This study was conducted with eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership in nonprofit agencies and who experienced colorism in their workplace. Participants' ages ranged from 37 to 56. Furthermore, the data results are

based on the eight women who self-identified as Black and experienced colorism in their workplace. Each of the participants was asked about their work-related experiences with colorism. All participants spoke very openly about their first encounter with colorism. The initial research design remained the same, and I was able to collect enough data from the eight participants.

Study Setting

The data I retained for this study were obtained via phone interviews with eight women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofits and who had experiences with colorism in their workplace. The study criteria required the participant to be women who self-identified as Black in leadership roles in executive leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and who had experiences with colorism in the workplace. Participants' ages ranged from 37 to 56. Also, participants were United States citizens, including nationalized citizens. Due to the different schedules and time zones, participants agreed that phone interviews would be the best method for the interview process. Also, Zoom video was only sometimes conducive for the participants. Participants were able to choose a location that was comfortable and provided privacy to share their lived experiences with colorism. I conducted participant interviews in the home office, which provided privacy and a secure area. In addition, this setting prevented interruptions and promoted a quiet ambiance to ensure that I was not disturbed during the interview process.

Demographic /Sample

The recruitment sample for this study consisted of eight participants. All participants were women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and who had experiences with colorism in the workplace. All participants identified as United States citizens. The participants' ages ranged from 37 to 56. One participant self-identified her skin tone as caramel; one self-identified her skin tone as very light; one self-identified her skin tone as very dark, three self-identified their skin tone as dark, and two self-identified as medium, brown-skinned women self-identified as Black. Four participants had a Ph.D., three had a master's degree, and one had a bachelor's degree. Two participants held positions as CEOs., two were directors, and four were administrators. After the initial contact with the participants, I determined that all the interviewees met this study's criteria. Table 1 shows the participant's demographic information.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Skin tone	Education	Profession
Participant 1	53	Carmel	PhD	CEO
Participant 2	45	Dark	PhD	CEO
Participant 3	37	Very light	PhD	Director
Participant 4	50	Very dark	PhD	Director
Participant 5	48	Medium brown	Master's	Administrator
Participant 6	46	Medium brown	Master's	Administrator
Participant 7	55	Dark	Master's	Administrator
Participant 8	56	Dark	Bachelor's	Administrator

Data Collection

To recruit participants, I post a research flyer on LinkedIn. I requested interested candidates to contact me by email for additional information on the flyer. After posting on LinkedIn, I had yet to receive any interested candidates for the first month. I reached out to another researcher with a similar topic for suggestions on how she conducted her recruitment process, and she gave me several suggestions, including the Walden Facebook Pool. However, I did not use Walden Facebook Pool because I would have to have gone through the IRB process again for approval.

Another researcher contacted me about my research flyer. She said that she did not qualify for the study but knew others who possibly did and wanted to know if she could share the research flyer. After her initial contact with me, I started receiving contact information about potential candidates. Once I determined that each candidate met the following criteria for the study, women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles working in a nonprofit agency and who had experiences with colorism in the workplace, ranging in age between 37 to 56, and identified as United States citizens, including nationalized citizens, I sent consent forms via email to each participant for permission to participate in the study.

Once the participants signed and replied yes via researcher email to participate in the study, I sent a follow-up email requesting a date and time to conduct the interviews. Due to the different schedules and time zones, participants agreed that phone interviews would be the best method for the interview process. Also, Zoom video was only sometimes conducive for the participants. Participants were able to choose a location that

was comfortable and provided privacy to share their lived experiences with colorism. After the interviews were scheduled, I provided my phone contact information just in case they needed to reschedule. In addition, I sent a reminder email to each participant to confirm the interview date and time. Before interviews were conducted, I verbally reminded each participant of the purpose of the study. I also reminded each participant of their consent to participate in the study without any restrictions.

I also reiterated to all participants that their responses would be confidential and strictly used for the study, and the participants' names would not be identified or used. In addition, each participant was informed that I would use notetaking and a recording device for accuracy; however, I needed their permission to record their responses. Furthermore, I conveyed to each participant at any point during the interview that they could stop the discussion if they were uncomfortable with the questions and wanted to discontinue without any restrictions. After explaining the purpose and the participant's rights, the interview process began.

Over 4 months, from April 2022 to July 2022, I conducted semi structured interviews using open-ended questions with the participants via phone from the home office and the location choice of the participants. These locations provided complete privacy, fewer distractions, and no interruptions for the researcher and the participants. While conducting the interview, I used a notepad to write down any key points expressed by the participants. I listened and allowed the participants to verbalize their experiences regarding each question. During the interview process, when the participants' responses displayed anxious or anxiety, I would allow them to finish their answers. However,

afterward, I would ask them if they needed a break before asking the following questions. Each interview with the participants lasted between 30 to 60 minutes.

When the interview process was completed, I verbally reassured each participant that their interview responses were strictly for the study and would remain confidential. Their names would not be identified or used. I asked the participants if I could contact them again if additional information were required. Participants replied yes. All participants were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts. I also thanked each participant for their participation in the study.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical procedure guidelines were followed, as discussed in Chapter 3. I received both verbal and written consent forms before conducting the study. Before the interview, I informed each participant that the study was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to participate at any time without any adverse effect. Before conducting the interviews, participants were advised of the recording device and asked for their consent to be recorded. After I finished the interviews, each participant was asked if they had any questions or additional information to add to the study. As a reminder, I informed each participant again that their data were confidential and would only be used for the analysis. All audio recordings, interview transcripts, and prepared notes from participants for the study are stored in a safe place using password-protected files. In addition, audio recordings, interview transcripts, and prepared notes will be stored for 5 years and shredded according to Walden's ethical guidelines.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began after the interview transcripts from the audio recorder were downloaded electronically by NVivo transcription and placed into Microsoft Word documents. After completing this process, I downloaded and saved the documents to a password-protected computer. After receiving the word document from NVivo transcriptions, I listened to the recorded interviews. I reviewed the verbatim transcripts to ensure all data were transcribed correctly, including any grammar mistakes, dates and times of interviews, and participants' names not included on the transcripts.

NVivo was used to collect, organize, and analyze data for coding. Lester et al. (2020) stated that the researcher should analyze data by using the following phases: prepare and organize the data by converting all audio-recorded interviews into one location, convert observational notes to an electronic format and scan documents retrieved in paper form, transcribe data transcripts, become familiar with data, code the data, produce categories and themes from underlying coded passages, and make the analysis process transparent. I re-read the interview transcripts from the eight participants several times for accuracy and to become familiarized with the data.

I used thematic analysis for this study. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) stated that thematic analysis aims to identify themes (i.e., patterns in the data that are important or interesting) and uses these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. I analyzed the data using Creswell and Creswell's (2018) 8-step guidelines for thematic coding: The first step of the analysis was to prepare the data for coding or analysis by printing each image using a wide margin to enhance space to assign codes. In

the second step of the analysis, I gave a detailed image coding by tagging areas of the image and assigning code labels. In the third analysis step, I compiled all the codes for images on a separate sheet. I reviewed the codes in the fourth analysis step to eliminate redundancy and overlap. This step helped to reduce codes and identify possible themes. In the fifth analysis step, I grouped codes into themes representing a common idea. In the sixth step of the analysis, I assigned the codes/themes to three groups: expected codes/themes, surprising codes/themes, and unusual codes/themes. This step ensured there was diversity within the findings. In the seventh step of the analysis, I arrayed the codes/themes into a conceptual map that shows the flow of ideas in the findings section. The flow showed themes from a more general picture to a more specific image. Finally, in the eighth step of the analysis, I wrote the narrative for each theme in the findings section of the study and a general summary in the discussion section as the study's overall findings.

The narrative provided a clear, concise, and logical account of how I interpreted the data and why selected themes and data interpretation are essential and reflect the research question. Also, the discussion broadened the analysis by relating themes to more essential questions, discussing the implications of findings, and questioning the assumptions or preconditions that gave rise to the themes (see Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This process permitted me to apply transparency to my process (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and slowly identify the frequency of codes that emerged in the data. I established a list of codes from the dataset and then restructured it until 23 codes emerged. The 23 codes were prejudice, bias, division, favor, self-confidence, challenges, stress, frustration,

disrespect, mistreatment, trust, confidence, emotional support, encouragement, belief, skin tone, dark skin, light skin, medium brown skin, hair, physical features, and eye color. These codes were vital in assisting in the development of themes and subthemes. I included the eight steps to analyze data and discover themes that described women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles' experiences with colorism in their workplace. A list of codes, themes, and subthemes is displayed in Table 2. These themes and subthemes are discussed in the results section of this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

In this study, I validated credibility through member checking from the beginning to the end of the interview process. Member checking is a way to create trustworthiness in this study (Candela, 2019). I was using member checking help to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of data. All participants were interviewed using the same questionnaire. Interviews were used for this study as a data collection method. Before the interview, I explained to the participants that I would use a recording device and take notes. Each participant agreed to use the recording device and handwritten notes. All participants were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts.

During the interview, I listened quietly and took notes to ensure that each participant knew their feelings and voice had my attention. In addition, this was my way of making each participant feel comfortable expressing their voice freely. After the interview, I asked each participant if they needed to review their interview transcripts to ensure that the data collected were accurate and according to their perspective views for

this study. Participants communicated that transcript follow-up was unnecessary and trusted that all data would be accurate because some had conducted research before. Also, several had graduated with their PhDs from Walden University and could review their comments. Other participants declined and were happy to have voiced their experiences with colorism.

All recorded interviews with participants were transcribed verbatim, and hand notes were checked several times for data accuracy. By doing this, I established credibility to seek the confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, allowing me to feel confident about the observations, interpretations, and conclusions (see Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). Credibility was also substantiated through reflexivity and bracketing. As a result, I made myself aware of biases, put them aside, and devoted all attention to the data without prejudice.

Transferability

Transferability was through a thick and rich description using purposive and snowball sampling. Transferability is the effectiveness (or perceptions and experiences) of an intervention in a specific setting or population like that observed in a systemic review (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). I provided a summary of the research setting, data collection process, data analysis procedure, and a finalized study outcome. Providing detailed descriptions allowed me to convey all necessary information related to the research process in case future researchers want to pull their conclusion from the research data.

Dependability

Dependability was established using member checking out of the interview process. Member checking was used to interpret the informant's reality and meanings to ensure the actual value of data (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An audit trail was created to provide a comprehensive description of the methodological procedure for the findings obtained in the study. By providing an audit trail, future research on the topic can follow and possibly duplicate the methodological procedures in the study (Carcary, 2020). After the interview, each participant was reminded of their rights to review and request a copy of the transcripts. Each declined to review or get a copy (See explanation in the credibility section).

Confirmability

Confirmability was ensured for the study by bracketing and an audit trail. Using bracketing, I limited any influence on the participant's understanding of the phenomenon (see Peters, 2015). In addition, I acknowledge that if bracketing had not been used in the research, the risk is that data would be biased and could reflect my worldview instead the participant's see (Sorsa et al., 2015). Developing an audit trail was another strategy I used for confirmability. Audit trails detail the analytical steps taken to move raw data to the final interpretation, showing that the analysis path is based on the data collected. In other words, audit trials contribute to the transparency of concepts, themes, and theory that emerge from the data, grounding the findings in the research evidence instead of the researchers' preconceptions (see Carcary, 2020).

Results of Data Analysis

In this study, participants openly discussed their experiences as executive directors in leadership in nonprofit agencies with colorism in their workplace. I generated codes from the interview transcripts. Six main themes emerged from the findings: colorism, preferential treatment, familial relations/conflicts, adversity, trauma, and social support. Among these six themes that emerged, eight subthemes were generated. All codes and themes were generated from the research question: what is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace (i.e., intragroup discrimination)? Below I will outline the themes, subthemes, and codes aligned with the research question, displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Colorism	Stigma/discrimination
	Prejudice/bias/division/favor
Preferential treatment	Light/dark skin bias/physical/attributes
	Skin tone/dark skin/light skin/ brown skin/hair/physical features/ eye color
Familial relatives/conflicts	Prejudice/stigma/division/favor/trauma
Adversity	Self-esteem and misfortune self-confidence/challenges/stress/frustration/ job loss/emotion/disrespect/mistreatment/ treated unfair
Trauma	Self-worth and self-love Isolation/self-image/hurt/depression/rejection
Social support	Family, friends, and religious belief Trust/confidant/emotional support/encouragement/belief

Primary Research Question

What is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who experienced colorism in their workplace (i.e., intragroup discrimination)?

Theme 1: Colorism

This theme describes the participant's experiences with colorism. Participants shared their experiences during interviews under the theme of colorism and detailed descriptions of their experiences with colorism. *Colorism* is a system used to discriminate between people of color based on skin tone. Colorism has significantly affected Black women in their personal and professional journeys in their lives. This research referenced each participant's experiences with colorism on a personal level and with their careers— the theme of colorism codes prejudice, bias, division, and favor. Two subthemes emerged from the theme of colorism.

Stigma/Discrimination

Participant 1 stated that she must work with the Black community in her current position as executive director. These experiences have not been favorable for her. She said there is resistance to helping her achieve needed projects from this community. She believed the Black community refused to invite her to community events and social gatherings because her skin tone was caramel. She was the first African American to serve as the Rotary Club president. She stated it is challenging to make progress for changes needed in the community when no help is offered. Participant 2 felt she was judged based on her dark skin. However, she has not allowed negative views to stop her

from reaching her goals in life and starting her nonprofit organization. She also stated that colorism is hard to detect in the workplace because it is between the same group of people. She believes Black women do not like each, and colorism is not a factor.

Participant 3 stated that she experienced colorism in a leadership position with other Black women at her workplace. She indicated that most of her employees were from Jamaica and would refuse to follow any instructions from her. They would refuse to do any work assignments for her and go to another supervisor for their work assignments. She believed the staff did not respect her decisions because of her light skin tone. Participant 4 voiced that in a previous position at the school district, people with darker skin tones were not hired to upper management positions; instead, those with fair to lighter skin tones were promoted. Participant 4 believed that her dark skin tone prevented her from upper management.

Participant 5 commented that in her first year of teaching, the principal and staff mistreated her and were always very rude. Participant 6 asked why she and another colleague were being treated differently. Two male staff said the other female staff did not like them because of their skin tone. The other staff had very dark skin. The participant said her skin tone was lighter than the other staff. The participant said she never knew anything about colorism until she was treated differently due to her skin tone. Participant 6 indicated that colorism impacted her career, especially because her skin tone was darker than some of her coworkers. Also, there was a difference in her cultural background which caused communication barriers between her and her coworkers.

Participant 7 highlighted that darker skin people are not promoted as fast as lighter skin employees in her current leadership position. The participant felt that darker-skinned people are cheated out of higher positions and excluded when making decisions. She also referenced that colorism impacts her job and that the community treats darker-skinned people differently. Participant 8 explained that ever since her childhood, she has felt judged harshly by others due to her dark skin, and she feels that in her career, colorism remains to have a significant impact on her life.

Theme 2: Differential Treatment

This theme describes both positive and negative treatment due to colorism, and these experiences stem from their childhood to the present day. Also, in this theme, participants' feelings on society's views on lighter-skinned individuals are positive, but society views darker-skinned individuals negatively. Participants expressed that they realized throughout life that many Black women had been stereotyped based solely on their skin tone. The theme of differential treatment includes codes of skin tones, dark skin, light skin, brown skin, medium brown skin, hair, physical features, and eye color. Two subthemes emerged: light skin/dark skin bias and the advantages of physical features.

Light Skin/Dark Skin Bias

Participant 1 stated that she had been offered more prominent societal positions because of her skin tone. She also believes she would not have the same opportunities if her skin tone were much darker. Participants indicated that she first encountered colorism with her family. She noticed that cousins with lighter skin complexions were treated

differently from cousins with darker skin complexions. Participant 3 expressed that she was afforded more opportunities because her skin tone was light; however, she was not taken seriously and was disrespected. Participant 4 replied that she faced many challenges because of her dark skin. She stated that due skin tone being very dark, she was impacted by colorism with family members, so-called friends, romantic partners, and associates. She recalls taking family pictures, and a cousin said we would only see her teeth when she smiled. Participant 5 implied she was terminated based on her light skin tone because other staff had darker skin tones.

Participant 6 implied that her first experiences with colorism were in her family. She dealt with colorism because her skin complexion was much darker than her brothers, who have a very light complexion. She said her brother's and father's skin complexions were very light, and her father's family accepted him more. However, she had no interactions with her father's family until she turned 18 because of her dark skin. The participant referenced that only her light-skinned cousins were allowed in her grandmother's house. She also felt her mother favored her brother because of his light skin complexion. Participant 8 communicated that her first experiences with colorism were with her paternal grandmother. The participants' paternal grandmother's skin tone was very light. Her grandmother only wanted to interact with her grandchildren with light skin complexions. She stated that because her skin tone complexion is very dark, her paternal grandmother rejected her.

Advantages of Physical Attributes

Participant 1 believed her body size, height, hair texture, and skin tone had some effect on her relationships with other Black people in the community. Participant 1 voiced that because she has a lighter skin tone, she is afforded additional resources from outside agencies in the Black community. Participant 2 replied that she has always embraced her dark skin and is very confident with her skin tone. Participant 3 stated that because she has a lighter skin tone, and long, straight hair, people did not believe she was African American. Participant 6 conveyed she had a balance with colorism because of the texture and length of her hair people assumed she was mixed. However, the participant's belief is dark skin people with coarse hair receive different treatment.

Theme 3: Familial Relationship /Conflicts

In this theme on familial relationships/conflicts, participants described family relationships/conflict experiences associated with colorism in detail. Participants gave insight into their struggles with maintaining healthy relationships with family members due to pain caused by hurtful words or negative behaviors received from their loved ones. Thus, this pain experienced has contributed to not having any conflict resolution within their families. Colorism has also been a silent killer in unhealthy relationships that these participants have refused to share with others and their family members, which induces negative thinking about their skin tone.

Participant 4 stated that experiences with colorism started with her family, and the treatment significantly impacted her life. She recalled taking family pictures, and her cousin commented that she could only be identified in the pictures when she smiled. The

participant said that she still does not like to take pictures today because she does not want to be the darkest person in the photo. She also said going to the movies with her family was a bad experience because she would get teased that her skin tone was dark and that the white part of her eyes would only show. The participant indicated she spoke with her sister about her treatment regarding her skin tone from other family members. Participant implied that her sister denied being treated differently, and her feelings were never mentioned with any other family member.

Participant 6 said that her mother's family dealt with colorism because their skin tone was much darker than her father's and her brother's much lighter skin tone. Even though the participant and her brother had the same parents, their skin tones differed. However, the participant indicated that her father's family did not know she existed until she turned 18. Participant 6 stated that her mother took her and her brother to the mall when she was younger. However, she was left alone under a staircase, and her mother took her brother with her shopping. She said she was confused and scared after her mother did not return to get her.

The participant voiced that she could not understand why her mother left her unsupervised and alone, especially since she was a little girl. The participant had to ask the police to take her home because her mother did not return to get her. She reiterated that her mother left her behind because her skin tone was much darker than her brother's. The participant stated that she would retaliate against her brother and punish him out of anger. She recalled when she was punished for something he did, and she hit him in the head with a pair of her mother's stilettos shoes. She said the scar was still on his head.

Also, she referenced that when she and her brother were outside, her parents would put a net over her brother because his skin was very high yellow, but she would have to figure it out and did get a net for protection from the mosquito bites. The participant stated that as of today, she does not like to interact with her brother; he was favored and received special treatment based on his light skin complexion. There is no communication with her father's family because she was never accepted based on her dark skin tone.

Participant 8 referenced that her paternal grandmother's adverse treatment towards her was because her skin tone was very dark; this treatment has caused her to be very insecure and find it hard to accept her skin tone. She implied that her paternal grandmother did not want to interact with her and her brother because of their dark skin tones. She would only want to keep her sister because she had a very light complexion. Participant 8 stated that her paternal grandmother would give her sister more gifts at Christmas gatherings than she would give her. She said a problem arose between her parents and her grandmother because she favored her sister because of her light skin tone. The participant believed that her paternal grandmother excepted and viewed the lighter-skinned grandchildren as beautiful and the darker grandchildren as ugly. Also, she thought that because her paternal grandmother's skin tone was very light and she could have passed for being white, she had no positive feelings toward any person with a darker skin tone. Participant concluded that because of the treatment she received from her grandmother based on her skin tone, she does not have a positive relationship with any of her family members with lighter skin tones.

Theme 4: Adversity

This theme will give a detailed description of the participant's experiences with adversity. Participants have described their adversity experiences and how they overcame these personal challenges throughout life and overcame the odds against them—this theme of adversity codes self-confidence, challenges, stress, frustration, disrespect, and mistreatment. Two subthemes generated from this theme of adversity are self-esteem and misfortune.

Self-Esteem

Participant 1 said she had made changes to improve the Black community resources because of her caramel skin tone. She is reaching out to other agencies to provide additional resources for the community. Participant 2 stated she is very secure and confident with her dark skin tone; her father always encouraged her to love herself. However, Participant 3 implied she was confident with her skin tone but faced challenges after being terminated from her director job. She disclosed that she was punished because she was an overachiever and applied the guidelines. Participant 4 expressed that her very dark skin has significantly impacted her and has prevented her from sometimes advancing in her career. She explained that it was still hard for her to accept her dark skin tone. Participant 6 referenced that she had extremely low self-esteem and did not feel worthy because of her dark brown skin. As a child, a participant questioned why her skin was much darker and why people with lighter skin tones had options. She still struggles daily with her skin tone and must tell herself every day in the mirror is beautiful. She is made in God's image. Participant 7 implied that she had difficulties believing she was beautiful because of her dark brown skin tone.

Misfortune

Participant 1 stated that her light skin tone excluded her from different activities in the Black community. In addition, her moral support was provided by outside organizations. Participant 2 suggested that sometimes insecurity regarding skin tone is based on other people's views. Participant 3 believed that because of her personality and light skin tone, she received harsh treatment from her employees. The participant stated that when she returned from her vacation, she was told she was being suspended based on another director not doing his job. The participant decided to resign from her director position. She recalled the negative experiences with other Black females in previous jobs. One of the Black females faced challenges in her new position because of her skin tone. Another of her employees used profanity towards her and disliked her based on her skin tone. Her employee disliked that someone with a lighter skin tone was her supervisor. She said the employee disclosed that she was in a higher-level position only because of her light skin tone.

Participant 4 revealed that her dark skin still affects her emotionally, mentally, and physically. She believed her dark skin tone was the cause of adverse behavior with some of her family members, so-called friends, dating associates, and acquaintances. Participant recalled going to the movies with her family; a family member told her they would only find her way from her eyes. She said dating was also tricky for her, and most men preferred only light-skinned women in her dating years.

Participant 5 stated that she worked in a small rural community with only Black staff. She was terminated because her skin complexion was much lighter, and her hair

texture differed. Also, she had to downplay her grammar and speak like the others just to be excepted. She does not feel comfortable working in an all-Black environment because of her treatment in her previous job. She now only prefers to work in an environment that has fewer Blacks and is more diverse.

Participant 6 explained that she and her brother share the same parents. Their skin complexions were much different; she had brown skin, and her brother had very light to fair skin. The participant indicated that her mother's family has a darker complexion and feels inferior to her father's family because her father's family has light skin tones. The participant also acknowledged that her father's family did not know she existed until she turned 18 because of her brown skin. Participant 7 shared that colorism is still a persistent problem in her rural community. She feels that speaking on colorism is still taboo in this small Black community.

Theme 5: Trauma

Colorism is an issue in Black women's lives that is not spoken about within or outside of the Black community but still significantly impacts their lives with a great deal of conflict and stress. Each research participant embraced the opportunity to speak openly about their trauma; each has realized their strength through adversity. In this theme of trauma, these are the codes of self-worth, self-love, isolation, hurt, depression, and rejection.

Self-Worth

Participant 1 stated she had become an emotional eater. Due to the colorism, stress, and everyday issues with the job, she finds eating food helps with stress and issues with the job. Also, she suffers in silence because of the mistreatment from the Black

community. The participant said she suppresses her feelings to break down walls to have a positive relationship with the Black community. Participant 3 expressed that after she resigned from her job as a director, she questioned her decision. The participant stated that she was emotionally hurt and bothered her for a long time after leaving her position.

Participant 4 recalled a time when she was in grade school; she explained that it was raining outside, and a light-skinned boy asked if he could walk under the umbrella with her; after they got to the place, he replied, oh, thank you, African booty scratcher. The participant said his comments still play in her head, and she remembers all negative comments about her skin tone. While participant 5 revealed that because she worked in an all-Black school, she experienced loneliness and was confused about the treatment from other staff. She experienced feeling guilty for having long hair and a lighter skin tone. The participant feels that being older, she would have handled things differently and not downplay herself or her abilities.

However, Participant 6 referenced lashing out at people to deal with her anger and pain because of her dark brown skin. When she realized that lashing out was not minimalized or made the pain of feeling insignificant, she stopped talking for a couple of years. The participant said her parents would put a net over her brother to protect him from mosquito bites, but she had to figure out how to protect herself because her skin was much darker. She communicated out of anger that she would hit her brother in with her mother's stilettos shoes in the head. She also believed that lighter-skinned people are most likely to be chosen or selected over darker skin people even though they have the same talents and beauty.

Self-Love

Participant 2 explained that she was encouraged to love herself and appreciate her skin tone at an early age. Participant 3 reiterated that she has no problem with light skin but some people due. However, participant 4 stated she had overcome some negative comments but still does not take pictures because she does not want to be the darkest person in the picture. Participant 6 implied that she had to learn to appreciate herself, which has helped her cope with her dark skin tone. It took her a minute to learn herself and love herself. In addition, the participant said she created a wall and barricaded it around her heart, mind, and entire oracle. She had to display a solid mindset that she would leave if someone tried to penetrate with ignorance regarding her skin color.

Theme 6: Social Support

Black women have overcome countless obstacles to excel and make historical movements as leaders in their careers and personal lives. However, these obstacles were easy to accomplish with support from their family, friends, and religious beliefs. This theme of social support codes trust, confidence, emotional support, encouragement, and belief emerged. Three subthemes were generated family, friends, and religious beliefs.

Family, Friends, and Religious Belief

Participant 1 stated that to help her overcome colorism in her workplace, she turned to her religious beliefs and other minority organizations for moral support. Participant 2 said that because her father played an essential part in her life, her experiences with colorism did significantly influence or cause any emotional issues for her. The participant's father encouraged her to love herself. Also, both of her parents

provided an excellent foundation for her life. In addition, her friends have been

emotionally supportive. Participant 3 stated that her mom and husband provided

emotional support after leaving her job. Participant 4 voiced that her husband provides

emotional support when needed. However, participant 6 stated there are still issues with

her father's family because of their light skin, and they still are not on speaking terms.

Participant 8 referenced that her maternal grandmother would tell the participant, do not

let anyone treat you differently because of your skin color. Her maternal grandmother

made her feel very loved.

Summary

This chapter consisted of the research question and the responses from women

who self-identify as Black in executive leadership for nonprofit agencies who have

experienced colorism in their workplace. The results of this study revealed that women

who self-identified as Black are still emotionally affected by colorism in many ways.

Some indicated their first experiences with colorism were with their family members and

peers, while others' first encounters began in their work environment. Participants

expressed that it was much easier to confront colorism in their workplace than to discuss

it with their family members. In addition, participants stated there was an opportunity to

leave their work environment when faced with the issues surrounding colorism; however,

participants did not have that opportunity with their families. Also, participants

referenced that light-skinned individuals appeared to have a much better opportunity than

darker-skinned individuals. However, lighter-skinned participants indicated they were

punished because of their skin tone by darker-skinned individuals, and their work

performance was not an issue. Furthermore, one participant stated that colorism is much harder to prove in the workplace because it is between the same group of people. Colorism could be one of the factors that Black women do not recognize the division based on different skin tones but instead, see it as Black women hating on other Black women in general.

I will describe the research setting, demographics, data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness. Also included are the themes and subthemes guided by the main research question. There were five themes to emerge colorism, differential treatment, adversity, trauma, and social support. In addition to the five themes, eight subthemes generated stigma/ discrimination, light skin/dark skin bias, advantages of physical attributes, self-esteem, misfortune, self-worth, self-love, and family, friends, and religious beliefs. Study participant has given an overview of their experiences with colorism in their workplace. Some participants said they decided to leave their jobs to overcome the distress caused by colorism in their workplace. In addition, whether the participant's skin tone was caramel, light, very light, medium brown, dark, or very dark skin tones, each has been emotionally affected by colorism in their workplace or personal lives. In chapter 5, I will discuss, analyze, and interpret the data from this study and reference the literature review and theoretical framework. I will discuss the study's limitations, present recommendations for future research, and the content to describe this study can be a positive factor in promoting social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this qualitative research study, I aimed to investigate women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination) in the workplace. Although other studies have advanced the literature domain, only some are related to colorism. Moreover, fewer are related to women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles and their experiences with colorism in their workplace, thus leaving a gap in the literature. Therefore, I designed this study to address the gap in the literature. Because colorism can emotionally affect women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership, their experiences were explored to understand better overcoming personal barriers within their workplace.

In this chapter, I discuss the interpretations of the findings, the limitations, any implications of the study, recommendations for future research studies, and a summary. In addition, I conclude with the implications for positive social change. Also, I discuss and reference the themes that evolved from the data analysis of the participant's lived experiences. Furthermore, I discuss each of the themes in the existing literature. This chapter contains content for future research that helped answer the research question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies and who have experienced colorism in the workplace (i.e., intragroup discrimination)?

Colorism is the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin (Harvey et al., 2017). Colorism within the Black community can

be a significant problem because it can affect one's self-concept, well-being, and overall life outcome (Fultz, 2014). Historically, colorism has been considered one reason for intraracial (same-group discrimination) and interracial (different-group discrimination) discrimination in many communities (Tharps, 2016). According to Gray (2017), skin color bias (also referred to as colorism) has contributed to difficult experiences for women of color, significantly darker-skinned (dark pigment) women. Based on the interviews conducted with the eight women who self-identified as Black and had been emotionally impacted by experiences of colorism, I identified six themes to demonstrate the barriers to the emotional effect of colorism: (a) colorism, (b) differential treatment, (c) adversity, (d) trauma, and (e) social support. In this study, findings indicated that women who self-identified as Black struggled with overcoming stereotypical thoughts surrounding skin tone, which has had an emotional impact on personal barriers. Even though these obstacles may have caused emotional and psychological pain, each participant has greatly strived to improve intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to sustain the emotional pain associated with their trauma.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section is composed of interpreting the findings indicated in Chapter 4. This section is framed on the primary research question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive leadership roles and who have experienced colorism in the workplace? The research question and the themes are illustrated; Chapter 2 literature will also be incorporated. In addition, remarks will be

implemented within the findings, including a review connecting the theoretical

framework to the study.

Primary Research Question

The main research question was used to determine if there is an emotional effect

on women who self-identified as Black in executive leadership roles and who have

experienced colorism in the workplace. Five themes emerged from this research question.

The themes included colorism (sigma, discrimination), differential treatment (light

skin/dark skin bias and advantages of physical features), familial relations/conflict,

adversity (self-esteem and misfortune), trauma (self-worth and self-love), and social

support (family, friends, and religious beliefs). Qualitative research has referenced that

women who self-identified as Black engaged in four types of coping strategies:

active/engagement strategies (i.e., cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with the

situation; approach coping; resistance strategies), social support/interconnectedness (i.e.,

seeking support from friends and family), religion and spirituality (prayer or ritual-

centered coping), and disengagement/avoidance strategies (i.e., not doing anything to

resolve the situation; denial and desensitization; Everett et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2013;

Lewis et al., 2017; Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

Theme 1: Colorism

Findings from this study established that research participants shared a similar

definition of colorism. Most participants defined *colorism* as discrimination between the

same group of people. However, some participants described colorism as when

individuals with lighter skin tones receive special treatment over those with darker skin

tones. Some participant described their experiences with colorism as first introduced in their workplace setting, while others acknowledged that their experiences were within their family environment. All participants discussed colorism's emotional effect on their personal and professional life. They expressed that some of the challenges stemming from colorism in their workplace were much more difficult to overcome. Participants stated that because discrimination occurred between the same groups of people, seeking help was not an option. Also, the participants did not realize that colorism was discrimination and did not think colorism was significant to address, unlike racism.

The findings in this study are like previous studies on colorism that indicated colorism is the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin (Harvey et al., 2017). Feliciano (2015) suggested that skin color is a primary marker for categorizing people by race. Light skin is compared to Whiteness, medium skin tone to Latin, and most significant dark skin to Black. However, Hunter's (2007) notion was that lighter-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black are afforded more opportunities and higher living status than darker-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black is a form of colorism. Webb (2019) implied that the general pattern is that society extends greater privileges to people of color who appear less like their racial archetype and more like the European racial archetype. As stated, advancement and privileges are granted and determined by skin tone. Moreover, colorism discrimination is also based on physical traits, such as hair texture, eye color, and the shape or size of one's nose or lips (Webb, 2019).

Stigma/Discrimination

The participants discussed the existing barrier of stigma/discrimination, which was based on their skin. Based on the comments collected by the participants in this study, their skin tone was one of the barriers to unhealthy working relationships with other women who self-identified as Black. Also, most participants replied that because the discrimination they endured was based on their skin tones from other women who self-identified as Black, there was an issue with a lack of trust, which made it complicated to have any positive relationships in the workplace. Moreover, some participants expressed that, based on their experiences with colorism in the workplace, they preferred to work in a more diverse environment. Thus, when colorism manifests in the workplace amongst women who self-identify as Black, this prohibits having healthy working relationships and any accountability for the negative attitudes displayed between women who self-identified as Black based on skin tone.

The study's findings support evidence showing the adverse effects of interracial discrimination. However, in a post-racial era, intraracial discrimination is emerging in work settings different in nature due to research on colorism (Sanders Muhammad & Halkias, 2019). Workplace bullying is another concern for women who self-identify as Black. According to Hollis (2020), workplace bullying happens in intersecting elements such as race, gender, and sexual orientation; also, colorism could be a factor in the frequency of workplace bullying. Thus, Black managers face scrutiny in the workplace, and these women of color in leadership face higher penalties for the agency, possibly weakening their ability to lead competently (Sanders Muhammad & Halkias, 2019).

Furthermore, women and minorities must work harder to prove competency (Baldor, 2021). In addition, qualified women who self-identify as Black remain excluded mainly from leadership consideration despite superior ability and performance (Sanders Muhammad & Halkias, 2019). Therefore, although very little research has been established on what racial and gender minority groups are experiencing in the workplace, how they cope, and how they relate to others in their social settings, issues relating to colorism must be addressed.

Theme 2: Differential Treatment

This theme addresses both positive and negative treatment due to colorism, and these experiences stem from their childhood to the present day. Historically, skin color plays a significant role in the dislike displayed with dark skin individuals toward light skin individuals who self-identify as Black; this includes how other ethnic groups perceive and classify people of color (Chaney & Perkins, 2018). Participants expressed that society's views on lighter-skinned individuals are positive, but society views darker-skinned individuals negatively. Most participants referenced that throughout life, they were stereotyped because of their skin tone.

Participants also disclosed that most pain associated with colorism was within their family. Because most participants have some interactions with their families, most did not make speeches about their hurt but justified it as normal behavior. Participants revealed that experiences with colorism were more so with family. However, the participants spoke on experiences from the outside; thus, none identified it as colorism but instead referenced it as if they were different. For example, one participant stated, "In

general Black women dislike each other, and colorism has nothing to do with it." The findings in this study agreed with recent studies. Dhillon-Jamerson (2018) suggested that women who self-identify as Black appearances are more scrutinized within sociocultural settings; however, women who self-identify as Black with darker skin tones have been profoundly impacted. Prior literature by Culbreth (2016) stated that regardless of the many discriminatory acts afflicted by people outside of the Black community, discriminatory acts based on skin color are just as insidious.

Light Skin/ Dark Skin

Participants discussed their barriers with light skin/dark skin bias. Research participants articulated discriminatory treatment received from family, peers, and in their workplace, resulting in feelings of guilt, isolation, privilege, and shame. One participant stated that she had been offered more prominent societal positions because of her caramel skin tone. She also believes she would not have the same opportunities if her skin tone were much darker. While another participant expressed that she was afforded more opportunities because her skin tone was very light; however, she was not taken seriously and was met with disrespect. However, another participant replied that she faced many challenges because of her dark skin. She stated that the impact of colorism included family members, so-called friends, romantic partners, and associates.

When considering barriers with skin tone bias within the family research participant implied that she was terminated from her job based on her light skin tone because other staff had much darker skin tones. It relates to barriers with skin tone bias with family members; she dealt with colorism because her skin complexion was much

darker than her brothers, who have a very light complexion. She also felt her mother favored her brother because of his light skin complexion. Another participant communicated that her first experiences with colorism were with her paternal grandmother. Her paternal grandmother's skin tone was very light, and she only wanted to interact with her grandchildren with light skin complexions. She stated that because her skin tone complexion is very dark, her paternal grandmother rejected her.

This study supports previous researchers. Rossetti (2014) described women who self-identify as Black and discovered that exposure to skin tone hierarchies, bias, and stereotyping was first introduced by mothers, family members, communities, and social media. In the Black community, most have grown up hearing familiar phrases such as "If you're White, you're right, / If you're yellow, you're mellow, / If you're brown, stick around, / If you're Black, get back" (Hall, 2018, pp. 78-95). University Wire (2015) suggested that light-skinned individuals who self-identified as Black expressed that their skin tone was not dark enough to be accepted as African, nor was their skin tone light enough not to have African roots. Moreover, colorism discrimination is also based on physical traits, such as hair texture, eye color, and the shape or size of one's nose or lips (Webb, 2019).

Advantages of Physical Attributes

Research participants acknowledged that physical such as hair texture, eye color, and skin tone contributed to discrimination with colorism. Colorism is a global ideology that denigrates darker skin and tightly coiled hair, two specific physical traits associated with African heritage (Tribble et al., 2019). Moreover, colorism discrimination is based

on physical traits, such as hair texture, eye color, and the shape or size of one's nose or lips (Webb, 2019). Hence, all these features have been historically racialized (categorized or divided according to race) in the United States. These features are typically associated with specific racial categories and certain ethnic groups. Hence, one participant stated that most did not believe she was Black because of her light skin tone, green eyes, and long hair. However, another participant said she embraced her dark skin tone and was comfortable being a darker-skinned Black woman. She did not believe one's skin tone had anything to do with being successful.

Further, another participant conveyed that she had a balance with colorism because the texture and length of her hair made people assume she was mixed. However, she believed that dark skin people with coarse hair receive different treatment. This research's findings supported that positive characteristics are attributed to lighter skin. At the same time, darker complexions are frequently placed into stereotypical categories and judged severely by their physical appearance (see Mathews & Johnson, 2015). These skin tone biases have more of a psychological effect on women of African descent (Maxwell et al., 2014). A previous researcher suggested that skin complexion has significantly influenced women who self-identify as Black lives, life chances (a way to improve one's life), and life choices (Mathew & Johnson, 2015).

Theme 3: Familial Relationship /Conflicts

In this theme on familial relationships/conflicts, participants described family relationships/conflict experiences associated with colorism in detail. Participants gave insight into their struggles with maintaining healthy relationships with family members

due to pain caused by hurtful words or negative behaviors received from their loved ones. In this study, I found that this pain experienced has been a contributing factor for any conflict resolution within their families. Also, colorism has been a silent killer in their relationships that these participants have refused to share with others and family members, which induces their negative thinking surrounding their skin tone.

Based on one participant's responses, her experiences with colorism started with her family, and the treatment significantly impacted her life. She recalled taking family pictures, and her cousin commented that she could only be identified in the picture when she smiled. The participant said she dislikes taking pictures because she fears being the darkest person in the photo. She also said going to the movies with her family was a bad experience because she would get teased that her skin tone was so dark that only the white part of her eyes would be noticed. The participant indicated she spoke with her sister about her treatment regarding her skin tone from other family members. The participant implied that her sister denied that she was treated differently and never spoke with any other family member regarding her feelings. In this study, I found that these women who self-identified as Black did not seek help with skills to cope with barriers caused by colorism because this kind of discrimination within their family is not discussed.

However, another participant indicated that she dealt with colorism in her family because her skin tone was much darker than her father's and brothers. Even though the participant and her brother shared the same parents, their skin tones differed. Further, the participant indicated that her father's family did not know she existed until she turned 18.

Participant referenced that her mother took her and her brother to the mall as a little girl. However, she was left alone under a staircase, and her mother took her brother with her to go shopping. She said she was confused and scared after her mother did not return to get her.

Participant also stated that she could not understand why her mother left her unsupervised and alone, especially since she was a little girl. Eventually, the participant had to ask the police to take her home because her mother did not return to get her. She reiterated that her mother left her behind because her skin tone was much darker than her brother's. The participant stated that she would retaliate against her brother and punish him out of anger. She recalled when she was punished for something he did, and she hit him in the head with a pair of her mother's stilettos shoes. She said the scar was on his head. She also referenced an incident when she and her brother were outside, her parents would put a net over her brother because his skin was very high yellow, but she would have to figure it out and did get a net for protection from the mosquito bites. The participant stated that as of today, she does not like to interact with her brother; he was favored and received special treatment based on his light skin complexion. There is no communication with her father's family because she was never accepted based on her dark skin tone.

Participant referenced that her paternal grandmother's adverse treatment was because her skin tone was very dark; this treatment has caused her to be very insecure, and she finds it hard to accept her skin tone. She implied that her paternal grandmother did not want to interact with her and her brother because of their dark skin tones; she

would only want to keep her sister because she had a very light complexion. The participant stated that her paternal grandmother would give her sister more gifts for Christmas gatherings and birthdays. She said this caused a problem between her parents and her grandmother because she favored her sister because of her light skin tone. The participant believed that her paternal grandmother excepted and viewed the lighter-skinned grandchildren as beautiful and the darker grandchildren as ugly. Also, she thought that because her paternal grandmother's skin tone was very light and she could have passed for being white, she had no positive feelings toward any person with a darker skin tone. Participant concluded that because of the treatment she received from her grandmother because she had a darker skin complexion, she does not have a positive relationship with any of her family members with lighter skin complexions.

The study finding was consistent with past research that insinuated that both men and women who self-identified as Black are affected by skin complexion bias. Mathew and Johnson (2015) suggested that women who self-identified as Black experienced a more negative effect from colorism going back to their preschool years. In addition, to macro (societal) influences, colorism is also imparted at the micro level as one's family shapes a person's identity, perspectives, and life experiences, materializing within the socialization process (Mathews & Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, colorism serves as a social stratification mechanism that typically puts lighter-skinned group members on the top and darker-skinned group members on the bottom across many outcomes (Harvey et al., 2017). Based on Wilkinson et al. (2015), skin color affects how individuals view themselves and others. Maxwell et al. (2015) indicated that individuals who self-identify

as Black men and women with darker skin complexions might experience greater self-hatred feelings, skin color discontent, and racial rejection.

Theme 4: Adversity

This theme will give a detailed description of the participant's experiences with adversity. Participants have described their adversity experiences, overcoming these personal challenges throughout life, and overcoming the odds against them based on society's views. Mothers, family members, communities, and social media first introduced women who self-identified as Black exposure to skin tone hierarchies, bias, and stereotyping (Rossetti, 2014). Mathew and Johnson (2015) suggested that skin complexion has significantly influenced women who self-identify as Black lives, life chances (a way to improve one's life), and life choices. Uzogara and Jackson (2016) suggested that skin tone is gendered judging based on physical beauty, which is judged critically. In the findings of the study, women who self-identified as Black have adapted ways to conquer adversity and establish an outlet to communicate their pain in a way that is most beneficial to their mental health as it relates to colorism.

Self-Esteem

From a psychological perspective, there are many intraracial issues involving how people of color think about each other and how they, in turn, treat each other. All these issues continue to interfere with and hamper the overall psychological growth, emotional well-being, and happiness of people of color (Benson, 2016). Gray (2017) indicated that African American women expressed negative and emotional responses such as anger,

frustration, and discomfort toward colorism. In general, the psychical impacts of colorism have been found to affect men and women.

Keyes (2019) stated that racial socialization could influence intraracial and interracial colorism, consequently affecting a person's physical and mental health and social stratums. Moreover, most research on colorism found that it continues to have a lasting effect on women who self-identify as Black. Furthermore, the findings in this research supported Gray's (2017) suggestion that colorism is a social issue that affects self-esteem, self-efficacy, social processes, and intergroup interactions. Also, Kansky and Diener (2017) indicated that cognitive (how we think about ourselves and feel about ourselves) are components of overall well-being.

During the data collection, the research participant conveyed that her confidence was shattered when she was terminated. She said that period in her career was one of the low points in her life. She also stated that she could not believe her light skin tone was why she was terminated. However, another participant replied that she is very secure and confident with her dark skin tone; her father always encouraged her to love herself. Another participant expressed that her very dark skin has significantly impacted her, and because her skin tone was very dark, she did not think she was beautiful. Also, she explained that it was still hard for her to accept her dark skin tone.

Thus, another participant referenced that she had to overcome barriers with low self-esteem and could not see her self-worth because of her dark brown skin. As a child, a participant questioned why her skin was much darker and why people with lighter skin tones had options. She still struggles with her skin tone today and must tell herself about

every day in the mirror that she is beautiful and made in God's image. This study's findings correlate with Keyes's (2019) review that colorism can cause psychological trauma to one's image and self-esteem; also, colorism affects one's overall well-being and life experiences. Also, in a past study, researchers concluded that the psychological effects of skin tone biases caused more concern in women who self-identify as Black (Maxwell et al., 2014). Therefore, maybe women who self-identified as Black continue to face barriers to colorism because they do not think barriers surrounding colorism are a means to seek professional counseling.

Misfortune

Participants discussed misfortune situations that happened in their life because of colorism. Researcher Hibbs (2020) stated, "internalized racism is harmful to a person of color's mental health, resulting from Whites opinions and views which produces "self-perpetuating cycle of oppression," and feelings of self-doubt, eroding self-esteem, and worth and generating helplessness and hopelessness. Skin tone bias can still affect women who self-identify as Black regardless of status or position. One research participant in the study participants stated that because of her caramel skin tone, she was excluded from different activities in the Black community. In addition, she seeks moral support from outside organizations.

Another participant suggested that sometimes other people's beliefs regarding someone's skin tone can cause an issue with insecurity. In addition, participants with lighter skin tone complexion referenced that they received harsh treatment from their employees. This kind of mistreatment can cause participants emotional distress. Another

participant confirmed that her dark skin still affects her emotionally, mentally, and physically. Her very dark skin has caused adverse effects on some of her family members, so-called friends, dating associates, and acquaintances. Participant recalled going to the movies with her family; a family member told her they would only find her way from her eyes. She said dating was also tricky for her, and most men preferred only light-skinned women in her dating years.

Based on a comment from another participant explaining her misfortune, she worked in a small rural community with only Black staff. She was terminated because her skin complexion was much lighter and her hair texture was different; moreover, she had to downplay her grammar and speak like the others just to be excepted. She stated she feels uncomfortable working in an all-Black environment because of her treatment in her previous job. She now only prefers to work in an environment that has fewer Blacks and is more diverse.

The misfortunes that the research participant had to endure are not only job-related but within their family; this was detailed by one participant that informed even though she and her brother share the same parents. Their skin complexions were much different; she was brown-skinned, and her brother was very light to fair-skinned. The participant indicated that her mother's family has a darker complexion and feels inferior to her father's family because they have light skin tones. The participant also acknowledged that her father's family did not know she existed until she turned 18 because of her brown skin. Hence, colorism is still a persistent problem in her rural community. In addition, speaking about colorism is referenced as taboo. Black.

Additionally, participants' responses highlighted treatment by some of their family members and in their workplace due to their skin tone, which correlates with past and current research findings on colorism.

Theme 5: Trauma

Based on the responses from the research participants that implicates trauma caused by colorism is still influencing their view of self-perception. The participants welcome the opportunity to speak openly about their trauma; each has realized their strength through adversity. Past and present researchers have acknowledged that psychological distress due to discrimination has been vital in women who self-identify as Black lives. Colorism significantly impacts women who self-identify as Black mental status, which causes anxiety and depression. Comments from participants indicated that skin tone bias can still reflect how women self-identify as Black regardless of their status or position in life.

The psychological distress that individuals who self-identify as Black experienced due to racism, colorism, and discrimination, is a nontrivial matter, so much so that in comparison to Whites, individuals who self-identify as Black experienced higher levels of mortality, disease, comorbidity, and impairment (Tibbs, 2020). Based on Helms's (1990) seminal research, women who self-identify as Black and other women of color should recognize, question, and reject societal definitions that describe Black women. This study found that women who self-identified as Black have been affected by traumatic experiences because of colorism. This trauma has profoundly impacted their relationships with their families, coworkers, peers, and, lastly, with romantic partners.

Participants commented on the barriers to self-love and self-worth. Participants openly expressed how they healed from the disappointment of being categorized by their skin tone. Colorism, or in-group bias on skin tone, is a persistent phenomenon within the Black community that may influence the family dynamics resulting in a significant negative psychosocial effect on individuals who self-identify as Black (Void, 2019). Skin color stratification's psychological impact on the lives of women with darker skin tones reported being described as unattractive and more aggressive (Keyes, 2019). Also revealed in the findings is that men who self-identified as Black consciously and unconsciously practice bias to skin complexion. This form of intraracial discrimination creates relationship conflicts between men and women and further devalues women who self-identified as Black self-esteem through rejection and humiliation (Hall, 2017).

Self-Worth

One participant stated in the interview that she had become an emotional eater. She mentioned the treatment she received based on her skin tone, work-related stress, and combined everyday challenges. She finds eating food helps with stress and issues with the job. Also, she suffers in silence because of the mistreatment from the Black community. The participant said that she suppresses her feelings to break down walls to have a positive relationship with the Black community. Another participant expressed that after she resigned from her job as a director, she questioned her decision. The participant stated that she was very down and bothered her for a long time after leaving her position.

Also, another research participant recalled that her self-worth became a barrier in her life in grade school. She explained that it was raining outside, and a boy with a lighter skin complexion asked if he could walk under the umbrella with her; after they got to the place, he replied, oh, thank you, African booty scratcher. The participant said his comments still play in her head, and she remembers all negative comments about her skin tone. One participant's comments revealed that because she worked in an all-Black school, she experienced loneliness and was confused about the adverse treatment from other staff. She experienced feeling guilty for having long hair and a lighter skin tone. The participant feels that being older, she would have handled things differently and not downplay herself or her abilities.

Finally, one other participant referenced lashing out at people to deal with her anger and pain because of her dark brown skin. When she realized the lashing out was not minimalized or made the pain of feeling insignificant, she stopped talking for a couple of years. The participant said her parents would put a net over her brother to protect him from mosquito bites, but she had to figure out how to protect herself because her skin was much darker. She communicated out of anger that she would hit her brother in with her mother's stilettos shoes in the head. She also believed that lighter-skinned people are most likely to be chosen or selected over darker skin people even though they have the same talents and beauty. Further, Keyes et al. (2020) insinuated that colorism and social stratification based on skin complexion have significant sociological effects on individuals who self-identify as Black. In addition, individuals who self-identify as Black with darker skin are profoundly impacted by prejudice solely because of their skin color.

Findings in this study corroborate with other research findings that suggest there is still an emotional effect on women self-identify as Black caused by skin tone prejudices.

Self-Love

Participants discussed self-love and how others' comments negatively and positively influence their perceptions. The findings in this research supported the implications of colorism extending across various analysis levels for individuals who self-identify as Black; this includes the intrapersonal to the interpersonal to the intragroup, and eventually to the intergroup. In addition, it is significant to convey and recognize that individuals (both within and outside communities of color) embrace the ideology of colorism (Harvey et al., 2017). Past research suggests that colorism can profoundly have a lasting effect on women who self-identify as Black. In this current study, the participants shared their perspectives on self-love and how hard it was for them to understand their worth finally. The study participant with a darker complexion started early; she was encouraged to love herself and appreciate her skin tone.

Thus, another participant's comments reiterated that she has no problem with her light skin, but others due. However, one participant responded that she has learned not to focus on past comments regarding her dark skin tone; however, she still uses caution with being in pictures because she is afraid of being the darkest person in the picture. Based on a comment on self-love, one participant implied that she had to learn to appreciate herself, which has helped her cope with her dark skin tone. It took her a minute to learn herself and love herself. In addition, the participant said she created a wall and barricaded

it around her heart, mind, and entire oracle. She had to display a solid mindset that she

would leave if someone tried to penetrate with ignorance regarding her skin color.

During the interview, some participant expressed their personal growth to

overcome the negative images to describe their outer character. They each had to identify

the cause of their pain by others, but by conquering those negative thoughts with positive

thoughts, they first realized their skin tone does not represent their true beauty, which is

inner beauty. The study findings supported researchers Maxwell et al. (2015), that found

individuals who self-identify as Black with darker skin did not dislike their skin tone.

However, Davis (2017) stated that colorism produces continuous tension and pressures in

the lives of women who self-identify as Black.

Theme: 6 Social Support

Black women have overcome countless obstacles to excel and make historical

movements as leaders in their careers and personal lives. However, these obstacles were

sometimes easy to accomplish with their family, friends, and religious beliefs. Literature

supports that it is essential to have a support system to help overcome barriers in difficult

times. In this study, comments were given to show that participants had established a

support system to help with the barriers to overcoming colorism.

Family, Friends, and Religious Belief

One participant commented that to help her overcome colorism in her workplace,

she turned to her religious beliefs and other minority organizations for moral support.

While another participant conveyed that her father played an essential part in her life, her

experiences with colorism did significantly influence or cause any emotional issues with

her. The participant's father encouraged love herself, and both of her parents provided an excellent foundation for her life. In addition, her friends have been emotionally supportive. Two participants stated that their mothers and husbands provided emotional support to help their obstacles stemming from colorism. However, one participant stated there are still issues with her father's family; further, she gets emotional support from her husband. The last comment by a participant referenced that her maternal grandmother would tell the participant, do not let anyone treat you differently because of your skin color. Her maternal grandmother made her feel very loved.

Comments from each participant indicated that they did not seek professional help with facing their barriers with colorism because, in the Black community, most review getting counseling as unfavorable, and speaking about mistreatment based on skin tone is denounced. In many words, the issue of colorism should not be discussed in or outside the Black community. In addition, all research participants expressed that their family, peers, and religious belief were more resourceful in helping overcome the barriers to dealing with pain and comfort when needed. Research participants gave a detailed description of their feelings of personal growth by accepting their skin tone. Each participant shared the roles of their social support system to help them understand and overcome their barriers regarding their skin tone. One participant expressed that she experienced loneliness and isolation in her workplace. Another participant voiced that she became an emotional eater and that food was her source of comfort. In comparison, another participant indicated that her experiences with colorism included family and

peers. These negative comments from family members about her dark skin complexion made her question if she was beautiful.

One other participant stated that she has little interaction with her father's family because they rejected her based on her dark skin complexion. However, the participants with lighter skin complexions also experienced colorism, mostly from people outside their families. Participants with lighter skin complexions expressed barriers to colorism in their workplace. It is essential to recognize that during this period, the research participant could identify the source of their pain and why they developed a complex about their skin complexions. However, most have embraced and accepted their skin tone and focused less on past comments about them. The participant reported that as they aged, they realized it is essential to love themselves and be happy with their skin complexion.

Alignment With Theoretical Framework

The research findings are detailed in the theoretical frameworks I used to analyze the research. This study was constructed on CRT and structural of colorism. Literature typically shows CRT references to race, but in this instance, CRT roles relate to the color spectrum within the Black race about women who self-identified as Black. CRT's tenets are constant in American society and extend outside individuals' prejudices (Reese, 2019). CRT can help explain the racial inequality that emerges from social-economic differences created between races to maintain elite status for Whites in the labor markets and politics (Curry, 2018). There are two central beliefs to CRT; the intractability of racism and racial disparity and the structural view of racism that associates individual

prejudice as the leading cause of inequality (Reese, 2019). Critical race theorists had yet to be considered in formal studies when theorizing colorism, a direct offshoot of racial domination (Reese, 2019). Monk (2021) suggested that the standard definition of race is substituted as an interaction marker for ethnoracial classification and categorization with race as the phenomenon.

Skin color or tone is a major cause of discrimination in colorism. Colorism is a form of inter-group discrimination based on skin color that indicates lighter-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black are given more opportunities and privileges than darker-skinned individuals who self-identify as Black (Gasman & Abiola, 2016). In 1984 the term colorism was coined and defined by Walker as "prejudice or preferential" treatment of same-race people based solely on their color (Webb, 2019); however, Norwood (2015) viewed colorism as being similar instead of being the same as racism.

A clear example of racism, as stated by Norwood, is when an individual who self-identify as Black is denied services or employment based on no other reason than being Black. When the phenomenon of colorism is present, it could determine if services or employment are permitted based on preferential treatment for a person with a lighter skin tone compared to a person with a darker skin tone. Researchers have described this phenomenon as skin color bias or complex (Webb, 2019). Participants expressed preferential treatment based on skin tone in their workplace in leadership.

This study has determined that CRT and structural colorism are essential to shed light on the emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency experience with colorism in the workplace. The

study's findings revealed that discrimination is still based on an individual physiognomy (judging someone's behavior based on their facial features). Ethnoracial and color discrimination referenced that skin complexion is the primary physical attribute associated with racial classification when engaging others (Keith & Monroe, 2016). A structural theory of colorism will support those individuals who self-identify as Black having lighter skin tones with European features more favorably and tend to be more privileged than those who self-identify as Black with darker skin tones (Reese, 2019).

Although there is evidence of its decisive role in shaping life chances, trajectories, and outcomes, the topic of colorism has consistently been placed on the back burner by social scientists and even by women who self-identified as Black, suffering from its negative consequences (Monk, 2019). Racism may affect an individual regardless of color; two individuals belonging to the same ethnoracial category may face differential treatment due to their skin tones (Monk, 2021). Further, people who identify as Black are not only stratified concerning their ethnoracial category membership, but intracategorically by the hue of their skin, resulting from a practice referred to as colorism (Monk, 2021).

Limitations of the Study

While this study is deemed a contributing factor to the understanding of women who self-identified as Black in an executive director leadership role in a nonprofit agency experiences with colorism in the workplace, several limitations unfolded in this study. One of the limitations is that the participants had to be in an executive director leadership position working for a nonprofit agency. Since there was a restriction on who could

participate in the study, the sample size was small, with only eight participants. Also, because the research flyer was posted only on LinkedIn, recruitment for participants was very limited to only the purpose of the study. The study interviews were phone only; this could limit the creditability of the researcher. Since participants were in different geographical locations, using zoom for interviews was only sometimes available, and all interviews had to be conducted by phone.

Another limitation is the way data was collected. All participants were asked the same questions. Their interpretation of the questions could have affected their responses regarding their experiences with colorism. Also, because the results are likely limited because they were based on self-report, I was aware that the participants' experiences did not reflect other women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles. Further, social desirability may have influenced the participants' responses to perceive more favorable to the researcher. Finally, the last limitation of this study is me. As a woman who self-identify as Black and shares similar experiences with the research participants, I was made aware of all bias. However, to ensure there was no bias, I used bracketing and member checking, which clarified that the researcher's notes reflected only the participant's voices.

Recommendations for Future Research

Colorism among women who self-identified as Black remains pertinent and should be discussed and researched more today than in the past. Research on colorism and its emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in the workplace should be explored for several reasons. Future research should investigate whether a misperception

bias regarding skin tone influences working relationships between women who self-identify as Black (African Americans) born in the United States and women born in the Caribbean. One participant voiced that her experiences with colorism in the workplace were with women from Jamaica. Another participant suggested that colorism is not the cause for conflict in Black women's relationships; however, Black women do not like each other in general. Therefore, future research can determine if there is a difference in the two cultural backgrounds or if colorism is the cause for friction between these women who self-identified as Black, were born in two different countries, and had complex cultural backgrounds.

Another future research should focus on the colorism impact on the working relationship between men who self-identify as Black in executive directors in leadership roles in a nonprofit agency. This study was limited to women's experiences with colorism in the workplace. Collecting data from men regarding colorism in the workplace can help clarify if there is an emotional effect on men who self-identify as Black in executive leadership roles in nonprofit agencies. More research is centered on women's experiences with colorism than on men's experiences with colorism in the workplace.

Future research on colorism should be investigated with women who self-identify as Black from diverse backgrounds, such as Hispanics, Asians, Africans, and Caribbeans. There is little representation of women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in leadership roles. Researching these women of color from different backgrounds could show a lack of resources to address conflicts surrounding colorism in the workplace. Further, this research used CRT to relate the color spectrum within the Black race with

women who self-identified as Black experiences with colorism. However, future research using a theory on colorism could address the stigma caused by colorism for both men and women of color with different backgrounds.

Implications for Social Change

Positive social change can be one of the motives to change society's views on the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of people with different cultural backgrounds. This study investigated whether there was an emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency and their experiences with colorism in the workplace. Findings provided a profound insight into the issue regarding women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in nonprofit agencies experiences with colorism in the workplace. Moreover, understanding that colorism and skin tone have influenced the interactions among women who self-identify as Black can better assist with resolving conflicts as they arise in the workplace. Research has shown that skin tone discrimination between individuals with light skin and dark skin tones has maintained its course so that the impressions that people form towards individuals who self-identified as Black are still heavily dependent on their skin tone (Harvey et al., 2017).

This study's findings instantiated that those women who self-identified as Black experience discrimination, both interracial and intraracial, which has had a significant emotional impact on their lives. Keith and Monroe (2015) explained that colorism is complex; it occurs interracial and intraracial, affecting people of color's psychological well-being. Uzogara and Jackson (2016) supported that colorism's impact from out-

groups (Whites) and in-groups (Blacks) on women who self-identified as Black is based on their skin tone. Lighter and medium skin tones seem to experience colorism less than darker skin tones when it comes to both in-group and out-group discrimination.

When it comes to promoting positive social change, this research can bring awareness that there is still an emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black stemming from colorism. Moreover, understanding that women who self-identified as Black life experiences with colorism can promote positive social change in the counseling field, education institutions, and human resource departments. Further, acknowledging that colorism still exist allows an open dialogue on its impact on women who self-identified as Black and the Black community. Additionally, this can be an opportunity to seek assistance from programs and initiatives designed to provide supporting resources to individuals who have experienced colorism in the workplace. Furthermore, Webb (2019) suggested that color-based stereotypes, implicit biases, economic disparities, educational inequalities, and other forms of social discrimination are reasons to have more inadept conversations on colorism. Frisby (2019) indicated that colorism continues to be a barrier for individuals who self-identified as Black living in America. The normalization and ignorance of colorism represent the historical legacy surrounding American society's racial prejudices that have yet to be relinquished (Hagan, 20.

Conclusion

Colorism affects every aspect of women who self-identified as Black lives, regardless of their shade of skin tone. Skin color bias (also referred to as colorism from

now on in this proposal) has contributed to difficult experiences for women of color, significantly darker skinned (dark pigment) women (Gray, 2017). Even though men and women who self-identified as Black are affected by skin complexion bias, past researchers have suggested that women who self-identified as Black has experienced a more negative effect from colorism going far back to their preschool years (Mathew & Johnson, 2015). Women who self-identified as Black appearances are more scrutinized within sociocultural settings; however, women who self-identified as Black with darker skin tones have been more profoundly impacted (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018). Historically, skin color played a significant role in the dislike displayed by dark-skinned individuals toward light-skinned individuals who self-identified as Black; this includes how other ethnic groups perceive and classify people of color (Chaney & Perkins, 2018). This qualitative study investigated the emotional effect on women who self-identified as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency experience with colorism in the workplace. The results of this study revealed that women who self-identified as Black are still emotionally affected by colorism in many ways. Some participants indicated their first experiences with colorism were with their family members and peers, while others' first encounters with colorism began in their work environment.

Findings in this study support previous research that women who self-identified as Black with darker skin tones voiced that those women who self-identified as Black with lighter skin tones are given more workplace advancement opportunities. However, women who self-identified as Black with lighter skin tones indicated that their leadership was not respected in the workplace. Women with darker skin tones believed there was the

preferential treatment given to women with lighter skin tones. These women who self-identified as Black that experienced colorism in the workplace did not file complaints because it is hard to prove same-group discrimination.

In the study, women who self-identified as Black experience colorism in their families and face more obstacles in overcoming barriers to their self-esteem, self-worth, and love for self. Although these women who self-identify as Black-faced barriers with colorism caused by family members, peers, coworkers, and romantic relationships, they voiced that seeking help to overcome the pain was never considered. Research participants indicated that seeking professional counseling surrounding personal issues in the Black community is a sign of weakness. However, the study found that the research participants sought comfort and guidance from other family and friends and with their religious beliefs.

All eight research participants interviewed for this study had experiences with colorism, either positively or negatively. Even if it is receiving acceptance or rejection, each participant acknowledged feelings of despair, hurt, anger, depression, isolation, and love. Thus, some participants disclosed having confidence and being secure with their skin tone. However, all participants reported that they are more mentally healthy after conquering their insecurities with low esteem, lack of confidence, and love for themselves. All participants revealed that they are in a much better place with their skin tone and have come to realize that the views of others are not significant as they age.

This importance of this study on colorism is essential because it sheds light on a problem in the Black community that has been avoided, dismissed, and disregarded as

unimportant. However, findings in this study agree with past research that substantiated that this problem surrounding colorism is alarming because of the pain associated with intraracial discrimination. In addition, future research can continue exploring this topic of colorism to bring awareness of this existing phenomenon that still affects Black women.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduction: Hello, my name is Alyse Gardner-Kennedy, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am researching women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency who have experienced colorism in the workplace. The purpose of this study is to investigate women who self-identify as Black in executive leadership roles in nonprofit agencies who have experienced colorism in their workplace. I would like to thank you for volunteering your time to be part of this study to share your experiences.

Instructions: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are not under any obligation to participate or complete it. At any time, you of the interview if you are uncomfortable or want to discontinue the interview, you may do so at any time. You were provided a consent form via email of your agreement to participate in this study: do you still consent? Thank you for consenting. This interview will be voice recorded, and all information will be kept confidential and anonymous. The audio recording will be deleted after the transcribed transcripts are no longer needed. Your name will not be used at any time during the interview. You will be given a numeric identifier to protect your identity. The interview will last between 30-60 minutes. I will take notes during the interview, which will be kept in a safe place. Do you have any questions? At this time, recording will begin.

Ice Breaker: First, thank you for participating in this study. Next, I am going to ask you a few demographic questions:

What is your age?

a. 25-30

b. 31-40

c. 41-50

d. 51-60

e. Over 60

1. How do you describe your skin tone?

2. What is your highest level of education you have attained?

a. Bachelor's degree

b. Master's degree

c. Doctorate or PhD

3. What is your current position?

Interview Questions:

Primary research Question: What is the emotional effect on women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles in a nonprofit agency who have experienced colorism in the workplace?

2. What is your definition of colorism?

3. What are your experiences with colorism in your workplace?

a. Have you experienced colorism outside your workplace?

b. How did colorism impact any relationships?

4. What are some challenges/barriers you experienced due to colorism?

5. What emotional effect have you experienced from colorism in the workplace?

a. Did you speak with anyone about your treatment from other staff due to your skin tone?

b. Did you seek help from the human resource department?

c. Did you seek professional help about the emotional impact of colorism with you?

d. Does colorism still influence any relationships with others?

f. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to say thank you, again, for your time and participation in this study. If there is any additional information needed, can I contact you again? I will end the interview process at this point.

Appendix B: Research Flyer

Online research study seeks women who self-identify as Black in executive director leadership roles for nonprofit agencies who have experienced colorism in the workplace

There is a new study called *"Colorism and Women Who Self-Identify as Black in Leadership Roles".* The purpose of this study is to investigate women who self-identify as Black in executive leadership roles in nonprofit agencies who have experience colorism in their workplace. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences with colorism in the workplace.

This interview questionnaire is part of the doctoral study for Alyse Gardner-Kennedy a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

About the study:
- One 30–60-minute online interview questionnaire
Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Women who self-identify as Black in executive leadership roles in nonprofit agencies who have experienced colorism in the workplace
- Between the ages of 26 to 65 years old or older
- Participants must speak English and live in the United States

To confidentially volunteer, please use the following email:

XXX@waldenu.edu