2022

Professional Black Men and their Developmental Relationships with Career Mentors and Sponsors

Alfred Javier Hawkins
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Alfred Javier Hawkins

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Daphne Halkias, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty
Dr. Howard Schechter, Committee Member, Management Faculty
Dr. Raghu Korrapati, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Professional Black Men and their Developmental

Relationships with Career Mentors and Sponsors

by

Alfred Javier Hawkins

MA, Walden University 2021

MA, Michigan State University 2019

BS, American Military University 2017

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

A literature gap exists in research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities. The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. The narrative inquiry method was used to address the problem and answer the research question using interview data from nine professional Black men holding a high-ranking position within their industry sector and being mentored during their career trajectory. This study was framed by three key concepts aligning with the purpose of the study: (a) Eby and Robertson's concept of developmental mentoring relationships, (b) Hewlett's concept of career sponsorship, and (c) Louis and Freeman's concept of mentoring Black professional men. The critical event approach was used to analyze the data and four conceptual categories emerged: (a) need for constructive mentoring relationships, (b) mentors providing professional and personal growth development to protégés, (c) significance of sponsorship for upward mobility, and (d) challenges faced by Black professional men in leadership roles today. This study is significant to drive positive social change by raising awareness of successful experiences of Black men in the workplace and thus altering perceptions on the value of Black men as aspiring organizational leaders, given that narratives of racial experiences help to inform employers' outlook on equity, inclusion, and social justice within an organizational context.

Professional Black Men and their Developmental

Relationships with Career Mentors and Sponsors

by

Alfred Javier Hawkins

MA, Walden University 2021

MA, Michigan State University 2019

BS, American Military University 2017

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

November 2022

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Regina Hawkins, and my wife, Maria Hawkins, who have always encouraged me to take the next step, even when I believed I had gone as far as I could. The women in my life have always contributed to my success, and I am grateful for their presence in my life. To my children Nathan and Dallas Hawkins, I hope that I have set a high bar and that you will surpass what I have achieved because I want to demonstrate that self-confidence is a potent thing.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Mentoring has been investigated as a personal resource for building a sustainable career as a leader (Dey et al., 2021). Nevertheless, leadership and management researchers have overlooked the role of sponsorship in Black men's mentoring programs as an interface to a successful job promotion (Murrell et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2020). Sponsorship is a component of mentoring that is explicitly instrumental and focuses on speeding up the protégé's exposure to influential networks and advanced career opportunities through mentor influence (Sims et al., 2021). Black men often lack the sponsorship aspect of mentorship mentors within predominately White organizations because of stereotypical perceptions, such as Black men lacking emotional intelligence, soft skills, or motivation to ascend to valued management positions (Sparkman, 2021).

While high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors usually rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to leadership positions, such an approach has been documented to exclude Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). In a Harvard Business labor study, Roberts and Mayo (2019) documented that at highly ranked United States finance companies, only 2.4% of executive committee members, 1.4% of managing directors, and 1.4% of senior portfolio managers were Black; only 1.9% of technology executives and 5.3% of technology professionals are African American in the United States. To gain a deep understanding of how Black male professionals' developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors offered access to promotion opportunities, further research is needed to fill this literature gap using a constructivist approach that explores Black men's narratives of

developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021). This study is significant in driving positive social change by raising awareness of the successful experiences of Black men in the workplace and thus altering perceptions on the value of Black men as aspiring organizational leaders.

This chapter will present the background literature leading to the problem statement, including a description of the scholarly literature gap. Chapter 1 presents the alignment between the study's problem, purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework. Finally, this chapter details the significance, assumptions, limitations of the study, and the definition of key terms used throughout this document.

Background of the Study

Bloch et al. (2021) addressed a gap in the literature on how racialized and gendered processes may intersect and work differently for racially and gender marginalized workers when aiming to reach middle-level and senior-level management positions. Using 2015 EEO-1 data collected by the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC), an archival data study was conducted examining how a workplace's characteristics affect Black men, Black women, White men, and White women's share of middle- and senior-level management (EEOC, 2015). Bloch et al. found that Black men are strikingly underrepresented in middle and senior management in private-sector workplaces, reinforcing that access to middle and senior management for Black men varies from other marginalized groups because of race and gender (see also Germain, 2020; Sisco, 2020).

Brooms et al. (2021) examined 12 Black and Latino male college students' engagement and leadership experiences at a Hispanic-serving university. There were a couple of crucial points made by the findings of this investigation. To begin, Black and Hispanic males saw their jobs as youth mentors as a unique chance to guide, support, and sustain male youth of color throughout the educational pipeline. Second, the men highlighted a specific mentoring and modeling deficiency they encountered personally and identified as a community need. More research is needed to address pathways to mentoring for minority men due to systemic racism embedded in many organizations across American society (Goings, 2021; Jernigan et al., 2020).

The critical nature of mentoring Black men and how mentoring those men have long been overlooked in the literature (Robotham et al., 2021). In a recent study, faculty of color perceive barriers to mentoring and if these barriers vary by race/ethnicity and gender (Davis et al., 2022). Mentoring issues identified by faculty of color included bad mentoring experiences, difficulty locating mentors, insufficient institutional support for formal mentoring, and a lack of post-tenure mentoring among tenured academics (Davis et al., 2021).

Minorities' hurdles during the mentorship were addressed through a defined program approach to study the unique impact of peer mentoring in supporting and developing African American leaders (Murrell et al., 2021). Peer mentorship helps create a safe atmosphere for African American leaders to engage in necessary identity work. This study sheds light on the vital requirement for Black men to be mentored by their peers and how they benefit from the support and validation. Nevertheless, mentoring

alone provides proteges with guidance and dialogue on career development, but mentoring without executive sponsorship can hinder promotion opportunities across racial lines (Davis et al., 2021; Wingfield, 2019). The guidance of a good mentor and sponsor can be critical to young professionals from all backgrounds, and for Black men to achieve this, a strategic mentoring approach may be needed by exploring the narratives of successful Black professional men and their stories with mentoring and sponsorship experiences (Rudel et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021).

Problem Statement

Black males are underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States and lack access to the sponsorship aspect of mentoring needed to support their promotion within important industry sectors (Wicker, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). For example, data gathered by the U.S. Department of Labor (2021) in the human resources profession indicated that out of 287,000 human resource managers, 81% are White, Blacks comprise 12%, and women account for 76% of this total. Leadership and management scholars have noted that while Black male leadership could play a more significant role in organizational effectiveness, their perspectives were underutilized due to their suppressed social identities, embedded systemic racism in U.S. organizations, and a lack of executive sponsorship and mentorship within organizational leadership structures (Germain, 2020; Rudel et al., 2021). The social problem is that while high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors usually rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to

leadership positions, such an approach has been documented to exclude Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019).

Mentoring alone provides proteges with guidance and dialogue on career development but mentoring without executive sponsorship can be a barrier to promotion opportunities across racial lines due to systemic racism embedded in many organizations across American society (Goings, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). Scholars have hypothesized that Black men remain underrepresented in leadership positions in influential industry sectors because of a lack of long-term developmental relationships with highly ranked sponsors who can provide career support and power-sharing possibilities (South-Paul et al., 2021; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020). A literature gap exists in research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021). The specific management problem is that professional Black men's experiences building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors remain poorly understood (see Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. A narrative inquiry method was used to answer the study's research question (Clandinin, 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method that grew out of K. J.

Gergen's (1998) constructivism and can be used by researchers to deconstruct Black

men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors (Wicker, 2021).

I collected storytelling data through semistructured, online interviews with

participants meeting the study's inclusion criteria while keeping reflective journal notes

throughout the research process (see Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). The final sample size in

this qualitative study of nine was determined by data saturation evaluated from the

verbatim interview transcripts of participants' stories (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Traditionally, triangulation is used in qualitative research for determining themes;

however, Webster and Mertova (2007) have suggested that triangulation is not feasible

for critical event narrative inquiry story-based studies, stating that it is "almost impossible

to achieve" (p. 91).

Research Question

RQ: How do professional Black men narrate their daily experiences in building

developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors?

Conceptual Framework

The theories and concepts that ground this study included three key concepts that

focus on how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building

developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors: (a) Eby and Robertson's

(2020) concept *of* developmental mentoring relationships, (b) Hewlett's (2013) concept of

career sponsorship, (c) Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of mentoring Black

professional men. As a researcher in this empirical investigation, I aimed to advance

research and address a literature gap on Black men's narratives of developmental

relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion

opportunities within their given industry sector (see Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020;

Wicker, 2021).

Eby and Robertson's adopted Kram's (1985) concept of developmental mentoring

relationships, which describes a close one-on-one developmental relationship between a

senior or more experienced individual (mentor) and a junior or less experienced

individual (protégé) as a significant career development experience. Eby and Robertson

relied on theories from nonorganizational behavior literature to extend Kram's (1985)

theoretical work and provide new insight into the developmental workplace mentoring

through a theoretical lens that included attachment theory (Germain, 2011),

interdependence theory (Eby, 2007), and the working alliance (Bordin, 1979).

Hewlett (2013) defined career sponsorship as advocating for and

promoting a high performer in a professional network. Hewlett grounded her scholarly

work in social capital theory by stressing that most positions of power and authority are

occupied by White men likelier to promote individuals who appear like themselves.

Social capital is defined as an "investment, and use of embedded resources in social

relations for expected returns" (Lin, 2000, p. 786). Social capital is an essential aspect of

career sponsorship that can influence career advancement. Louis and Freeman's (2018)

concept of mentoring Black professional men used the counternarrative aspect of critical

race theory (CRT) to understand the voices of Black professional men who had reached a

high level of professional responsibility with same-race cross-cultural mentoring. The

central tenet of CRT is that race is a social construction; hence ethnic and racial groups

experience differential racialization and realities (Tillman, 2001). There is a need for more narrative research to allow Black men's voices to fully develop, analyze, and give meaning to their stories of career mentoring (Louis & Freeman, 2018). The conceptual framework development will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative, given that quantitative research methods are outcome-based, with a tendency to overlook the depth of human experiences, which can lead to ineffective results by disregarding the significant characteristics of themes and occurrences (see Tracy, 2019). Qualitative approaches, when investigating how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors, allow for complex human issues to be included in the research data and for further emphasis on presenting detailed, thick descriptions rather than focusing on testing a priori hypotheses (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Social constructivists such as K. J. Gergen (1998) wrote that narrative emphasizes the contextual construction in social relations and daily life experiences (Esin et al., 2014). Narrative inquiry allows for detailed participant descriptions through storytelling and a detailed understanding of human experiences being lived daily, particularly in marginalized populations (Clandinin, 2016; Indira, 2020).

Human beings primarily communicate through storytelling, the oldest form of social exchange (Caine et al., 2019). The narrative approach was appropriate for this study as it extends the potential of business research beyond the traditional options and minimizes the boundaries of fields within social sciences (McAlpine, 2016). I expected

participants' stories to be rich in information and provide the social context needed to answer this investigation's research question in the narrative inquiry tradition. This study was grounded in a hermeneutic approach that focuses on how human experience is mediated through storytelling (see Clandinin, 2016). Hermeneutics is based on deciphering, interpreting, and translating ideas by examining language and considering multiple meanings that include my perspective (Patterson & Higgs, 2005). The moving back and forth between the researcher's and participant's perspectives on stories to uncover inherent meanings is termed the "hermeneutic circle" (Polkinghorne, 1988). Using this approach increases obtaining findings that can likely become important scholarly knowledge (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

While other qualitative methods exist, such as phenomenology and case study, and gather data based on the participants' experiences at specific points of the participants' lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), these qualitative designs do not include a critical event analysis of participant narratives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A narrative inquiry approach permits the researcher to present a general picture of the participant's daily experience, including examining complex data of critical events that influence the daily decision-making and reactions to such events (Kim, 2015). A narrative inquiry approach allows the narrative researcher to work closely and establish trusting relationships with participants who may express discomfort when revealing critical events within their organizational setting (Deacon & Lloyd-Parkes, 2020). Using narrative inquiry, I collected critical facts and positions (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) by retelling each participant's own stories as captured through personal experience,

including the individuals' personal and social experiences (see De Fina &

Georgakopoulou, 2019).

To provide an accurate and data-rich narrative study, I conducted online

interviews and recordings of the life experiences of a purposeful sample of nine

participants. The sample population for my study met the following inclusion criteria:

adults over the age of 18; identifying as a Black man with a minimum of 10 years of

professional organizational experience; holding a high-ranking position within their

industry sector; and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena

under study. The inclusion criteria of the study's sample replicated sample criteria from

similar studies on mentoring and sponsorship of Black leaders in the United States (see

Jernigan et al., 2020; Louis & Freeman Jr., 2018).

The logical connections between the framework presented and the nature of my

study include that despite numerous studies on how Black men remain underrepresented

in leadership positions, there remains a lack of research on developing long-term

developmental relationships with highly ranked sponsors who can provide career support

and power-sharing possibilities using samples of professional Black men (see South-Paul

et al., 2021; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020). Scholars recommended that qualitative

researchers use a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's

narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors (Murrell et

al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021). Given these scholarly recommendations, I chose

the narrative inquiry design to answer my research question by offering Black

professional men an opportunity to voice their experiences. They alone are best qualified to use storytelling to express and reflect on a Black man's daily experiences.

Definitions

Career Sponsorship: This term refers to a subset of mentoring that is overtly instrumental and focuses on increasing the protégé's exposure to significant networks and advanced career prospects through the mentor's influence (Randel et al., 2020).

Developmental Relationships: This term refers to a relational approach to define mentoring as a developmental relationship characterized by mutual growth, learning, and development in personal, professional, and career sectors (Hayes, 2019).

Mentoring: This term refers to a personal and professional relationship fostered, arranged, or nurtured by an institution, organization, or career development program with the express objective of developing leadership (Jernigan et al., 2020).

Intersectionality: This term refers to the idea that social positions are relational and determined by power structures. A rapidly emerging field of psychological research provides a framework for comprehending Black men's work experiences in predominantly white organizations (Pitcan et al., 2018).

Racial microaggressions: This term refers to perceptible (or not so perceptible) statements or behaviors, unequal treatment, stigmatization, hyper-monitoring, and personal threats or insults on another's well-being (Burt, Mcken, et al., 2016).

Social network: This term refers to the informal networks and sources of knowledge that enable professionals to make sense of their organizational experiences efficiently (Murrell et al., 2021); also, as the racial disparities in the access to information

and resources flowing through social networks, as well as disparities in the benefits associated with the usage of social network resources, (Pedulla & Pager, 2019).

Assumptions

A qualitative researcher assumes that a qualitative approach can generate knowledge about societal concerns, questions, or problems, benefiting humanity (Tracy, 2019). Qualitative research and data analysis are distinct and frequently reveal discoveries in addition to truths and commonalities (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). The first assumption was that the participants accurately described their mentorship and sponsorship experiences as African American men. My second assumption was that participants thoroughly understood the fundamental characteristics of mentoring and sponsoring. The third assumption was that I could objectively and precisely document the interviews. The final assumption was that the data collected may aid various organizations looking to better understand personal mentoring and sponsorship experiences for Black men in their organizations.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations are the restrictions or boundaries that enable the study's objectives to be accomplished (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). A delimitation was that participants in this study must be African American men with at least 10 years of experience in their respective professional fields. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry, I explored the lived experiences of Black men's developmental relationship with career mentors and sponsors. A quantitative approach was not considered in the research design for this study since it precluded the examination of actual experiences.

Participants for this narrative inquiry study were recruited using purposeful sampling strategies and screened with the following inclusion criteria: adults over the age of 18, identify as a Black man with a minimum of 10 years of professional organizational experience, hold a high-ranking position within their industry sector, and be able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. African American men with less than 10 years of professional experience were excluded from the study due to their potential lack of mentoring and sponsorship experience. The participants in the study were narrowed explicitly to a particular set of individuals because they have a certain experience and knowledge of a specific phenomenon (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Limitations

Feelings of subjectivity or bias could pose a limitation in narrative analysis with the risk of influencing the study or producing distrust among researchers in social science (Riessman, 1993; Sools, 2020). With narrative inquiry being a way of understanding and inquiring into experiences, the likelihood of falsification, dramatization, or misrepresentation of stories by the researcher or participants could pose a limitation. To combat limitations, I maintained the integrity of the narratives by distinguishing between what was narrated by the participants and what was reported (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I remained aware of the research's shortcomings in presenting accurate findings. Some of the anticipated challenges and limitations of this narrative inquiry study's design included selecting participants due to specific inclusion criteria and possible biased views, leading to insufficient or inaccurate data. All study participants may not have the same views regarding their daily experience with career mentoring and sponsorship. The

dependability of the study results was achieved as I carefully remained consistent in the collection, analysis, and reporting of the research data to ensure other researchers in similar conditions could replicate the study results (see Brutus et al., 2013).

A fundamental limitation raised by seminal methodologists is that the small sample size of a qualitative study may not represent the entire population (Tracy, 2019). Due to the small sample size, the transferability of a qualitative study's findings may not apply to situations of others within the representative population (Stake, 2010). The interviewing time and research may not suit all those requested as participants in the study. A limitation in narrative studies is that researcher reflexivity may produce biased results. I identify as a successful African American male who has held leadership positions in various primarily White-dominated companies. My journey, however, has been somewhat difficult as I sought acceptance, mentorship, and sponsorship from colleagues and senior leadership in these organizations while remaining my authentic self. I wrote reflective notes after each interview to help mitigate any potential biases. Chronicling daily interactions with the study participants could help the researcher recognize their bias easily and possibly reduce potential ethical issues and challenges (Roulston & Shelton, 2015).

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

My study is significant to professional practice to inform organizational leaders on how Black men can successfully build developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. As organizations across America struggle with inclusion and

diversity issues, this study may be significant to the management field, adding new knowledge about how Black professional men need more involvement with the sponsorship aspect of mentorship. Sponsorship can mitigate stereotypical misperceptions of Black men dominating upper management circles in America, such as Black men lacking emotional intelligence, soft skills, or motivation to ascend to valued management positions (Sparkman, 2021).

Significance to Theory

This study may be significant to theory extension by contributing knowledge to the study's conceptual framework on Black males, who are immensely underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States and lack access to the sponsorship aspect of mentoring needed to support their promotion (see Wicker, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). I aimed to advance research and address a literature gap on research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector.

Significance to Social Change

While important implications for policy and practice have been generated from previous studies on underrepresentation, social isolation, cultural incongruence, and academic hurdles professional Black men face, little is known about how Black male professionals excel and persist despite these challenges (Burt et al., 2019). Most published evidence on mentoring has been investigated as a personal resource for

building a sustainable career as a leader (Dey et al., 2021). Nevertheless, leadership and management researchers have overlooked the role of sponsorship in Black men's mentoring programs as an interface to a successful job promotion (Murrell et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2020).

The gap between research and policy is founded on the lack of research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offered access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021). This study is significant to drive positive social change by raising awareness of successful experiences of Black men in the workplace and thus altering perceptions on the value of Black men as aspiring organizational leaders, given that narratives of racial experiences help to inform employers' outlook on equity, inclusion, and social justice within an organizational context (see Eby & Robertson, 2020; Wicker, 2021)

Summary and Transition

Black males are immensely underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States and lack access to the sponsorship aspect of mentoring needed to support their promotion within important industry sectors (Wicker, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). While high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors usually rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to leadership positions, such an approach has been documented to exclude Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). The specific

management problem to be addressed in this study due to a literature gap is that professional Black men's experiences building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors remain poorly understood (see Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021).

This qualitative, narrative inquiry study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. A narrative inquiry method was used to answer the study's research question. Using the conceptual framework to ground this study, I presented theoretical propositions that further explained the problem facing the sample of participants recruited for this study. This chapter also presented the study's nature, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. This study is significant in driving positive social change by raising awareness of the successful experiences of Black men in the workplace and thus altering perceptions on the value of Black men as aspiring organizational leaders. Narratives of racial experiences help inform employers' outlook on equity, inclusion, and social justice within an organizational context (see Eby & Robertson, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

Chapter 2 will provide the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework upon which the research rests. To present knowledge within a narrative literature review on the specific problems, I reviewed the existing literature on additional encounters that volunteers experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The specific management problem is that professional Black men's experiences building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors remain poorly understood (see Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021). A developmental relationship is a relational approach characterized by mutual growth, learning, and development in personal, professional, and career sectors (Hayes, 2019). Sponsorship is an integrant of mentoring that focuses on speeding up the protégé's exposure to influential networks and providing career opportunities through mentor influence (Hewlett, 2013; Sims et al., 2021).

The guidance of a good mentor and sponsor can be critical to young professionals from all backgrounds, and for Black men to achieve this, a strategic mentoring approach is needed due to systemic racism embedded in many organizations across American society (Goings, 2021; Jernigan et al., 2020). Leadership and management researchers have overlooked the role of sponsorship in Black men's mentoring programs as an interface to a successful job promotion (Murrell et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2020). The gap in research leads to the end for future researchers in exploring Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offered access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

Chapter 2 provides the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework that grounds my study. Subsequently, I present a synthesis of knowledge and critical analysis of selected literature review on topics related to the problem and purpose of the

study, including the unique experiences of Black men with their career mentors and

sponsors. The literature review of this chapter will include the following topics: *Black*

professional men, and developmental relationships with mentors, defining developmental

relationships with mentors, representation of Black men in leadership roles, research on

the experiences of Black professional men in corporate America, systemic racism and

executive sponsorship of Black professional men, and *understanding microaggressions in*

the workplace and intersectionality

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review process is valuable to research as it assists with refining

research questions, exposing inconsistencies in the literature, and strengthening the

foundation of knowledge on a specific topic (Paul & Criado, 2020). The literature should

always be consistent with the central topic being analyzed and methodologies across

studies while elaborating on the conceptual framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This

literature review will present information applicable to developmental relationships with

career mentors and sponsors for Black professional men that will align with the central

research question.

I conducted searches of databases to find peer-reviewed journal articles relevant

to the study, including the Walden University Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central,

EBSCOhost, ABI/INFORM Collection, ScienceDirect, SAGE Premier, Academic Search

Complete, Business Source Complete, PsycNET, SpringerLink, and Emerald Insight. I

focused on collecting and reviewing those documents that generated the highest impact

based on citation data. With 389 million records, Google Scholar is currently the most

comprehensive academic search engine (Gusenbauer, 2019). Given Google Scholar's popularity as a search engine for academic literature, the data presented in this literature review indicates publications accessed from most library databases, including EBSCO (Leung et al., 2019).

The keywords used in the searches included *professional Black men, African American professionals, Black male leadership; mentorship, sponsorship, career mentors, career sponsors, developmental relationships with mentors, access to promotion opportunities, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, social justice in the workplace, mentor-protégé relationship, social networks in the workplace, same-race mentoring, cross-race mentoring, cross-gender mentoring, systemic corporate racism, microaggressions towards Black Males, leadership barriers for Black professionals, intersectionality in the workplace, leadership development for Black male, diversity in mentorship programs,* and *the authenticity of allies for Black men*. For this conceptual framework, the search words included *career sponsors, developmental relationships with mentors, mentoring Black professional men,* and *narrative inquiry*.

Most of the resources used for this study's literature review were published between 2016 and 2022. A total of 184 resources were selected for this study, and 122 (66%) were included in the literature review. Eighty-five percent of the literature review resources are recent publications (less than six years) between 2016 and 2022. Table 1 below summarizes the number of resources used in this study by age and type. Furthermore, Table 2 below summarizes the number of resources by topic and shows 84% of peer-reviewed articles.

Table 1

Number of Resources by Type and Age of Reference

Age of References	2016-2022	2009-2015	2003-2008	1975-2002
Peer-reviewed articles	131	15	3	5
Conference papers	5	0	0	0
Industry reports	2	0	0	0
Magazines/Blogs	6	0	0	0
Thesis/dissertation	2	0	0	0
Books	4	6	3	2
Total	**150**	**21**	**6**	**7**

Table 2

Number of Resources by Topic

Topics	Peer-reviewed articles	Conference papers	Books	Thesis/ dissertation	Industry reports	Magazines and blogs
Career mentoring and executive sponsorship of professional Black men	103	5	2	2	2	6
Methodology	48	0	9	0	0	0
Theory	13	0	4	0	0	0
Total	164	5	15	2	2	6

In preparation for this literature review, previous inquiries regarding the conceptual framework were conducted on the topics of developmental mentoring relationships, career sponsorship, the concept of mentoring, mentoring Black professional men, and the interface of successful professional Black men having developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Chapter 2 will also present a synthesis of updated scholarly knowledge on the success of Black professional men who established developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors that offered access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector.

Conceptual Framework

The theories and concepts that ground this study include three key concepts that focus on aligning with the purpose of the study of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors: (a) Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept of developmental mentoring relationships, (b) Hewlett's (2013) concept of career sponsorship, and (c) Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of mentoring Black professional men. In this empirical investigation, I aimed to advance research and address a literature gap on research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector (see Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept of developmental mentoring relationships, developed from Kram (1985), is defined as a close one-on-one developmental

relationship between a senior or more experienced individual (mentor) and a junior or less experienced individual (protégé) as a significant career development experience. Kram initially defined workplace mentoring relationships as helping proteges advance their careers and develop a sense of professional identity and competence. Following Eby and Robert's concept of mentor relationships, I investigated how professional Black men established these types of relationships and whether these developmental relationships between mentors and protégés contributed to their career success, according to the study's participants. Eby and Robertson's relied on theories from nonorganizational behavior literature to extend Kram's theoretical work and provide new insight into the developmental workplace mentoring through a theoretical lens that included attachment theory (Germain, 2011), interdependence theory (Eby, 2007), and the working alliance (Bordin, 1979).

Eby and Robertson's (2020) discussed how organizational context provides another potential layer of influence on workplace mentoring. Narratives of racial experiences help inform employees' outlook on equity, inclusion, and social justice within an organizational context. Given that both mentor and protégé roles exist in organizational climate, future researchers must consider organizational climate factors, such as the nature of support and threat in a workspace, when exploring the developmental mentoring relationship (Eby & Robertson, 2020).

Developmental relationships in mentoring components about the mentor require the mentor first to comprehend mentoring, must be an encourager of shared innovation, must know how to maintain perspective, devote time, communicate rules or

collaboratively develop them, and must be able to recognize the progressive steps of mentees and guide them through each one to independence and transformation (Irby, 2013). Mentoring relationships frequently involve some advising but go beyond advising in their provision of individual-specific information and bilateral engagement and interactions that include the provision of advice based on a profound personal understanding of the protege's prior experiences, strengths and weaknesses, personal aspirations, values, and professional goals (Montgomery et al., 2014). As both parties benefit from the mentoring relationships, it is essential to foster productive bilateral interactions (Montgomery, 2017).

Hewlett (2013)defined career sponsorship as the act of advocating for and promoting a high performer in a professional network. In stressing that most positions of power and authority are occupied by White men who are likelier to promote individuals who appear like themselves, Hewlett grounded her scholarly work in social capital theory. Social capital is defined as an "investment, and use of embedded resources in social relations for expected returns" (Lin, 2000, p. 786) and can be used to understand better the role of career sponsorship of marginalized demographic groups, including people of color (see Morris, 2020). Granovetter (1973) first conceptualized social capital, whose weak tie theory suggested that a weak link between social networks could be more instrumental in gaining access to valuable resources than strong ties within social networks. Granovetter's theory on social capital makes a case for the value of connections between social cliques, and the value acquired from social networks can lead to mutually beneficial actions for sponsors and their protégés (Morris, 2020).

Due to ongoing bias and discrimination in organizations for African Americans, career sponsorship may be essential for the career advancement of African Americans. In the end, effective mentoring sponsorship is less about advice and more about opening doors (Randel et al., 2021). Career sponsors create opportunities for protégés to be exposed to influential individuals positively, with the expectation that these individuals will recognize and embrace the protégé's talents and potential (Hewlett, 2013; Paddison). Obtaining sponsorship involves issues of self-presentation and trust. It activates the formation of specific types of identities (such as a relational or shared in-group identity, as explained below) with a demographically distinct individual (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Ragins, 2012).

Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of mentoring Black professional men used the counternarrative aspect of CRT to understand the voices of Black professional men who had reached a high level of professional responsibility with same-race cross-cultural mentoring. The central tenant of CRT is that race is indeed a social construction, and its place in society results in differential experiences within the same social environment; hence, ethnic and racial groups experience differential racialization and realities (Tillman, 2001). Louis and Freeman theorized that both same-race and mentors of differing ethnicity might add the depth and evolution needed to mentor Black male professionals. There is a need for more narrative research to allow Black men's voices to fully develop, analyze, and give meaning to their stories of career mentoring (Louis & Freeman, 2018).

Receiving guidance on navigating corporate America as a professional Black man is beneficial and appears to impact them positively. Nevertheless, few Black professional men have access to senior leadership positions (Center for Talent Innovation, 2019). Formal and informal mentoring relationships support preparing and recommending minoritized groups for leadership and leadership development (Jernigan et al., 2020). For Black professional men, vested interest was crucial for sustaining leadership efforts related to organizational strategic planning, succession planning, and follower development (Jernigan et al., 2020).

Literature Review

Representation of Black Men in Leadership Roles

Black males are underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States (Wingfield, 2019). There appears to be a long-held trend of not allowing more than 3.3 % of Black people into executive and senior-level leadership positions of Fortune 500 companies when Black Americans make up at least 13% of the population (Posner, 2020). The Fortune 500 rankings state that despite years of diversity programs and promises of racial inclusion in leadership positions across corporate America, Black men in CEO positions leading Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies remain very low (Wahba, 2020). In 2012, six Black CEOs led Fortune 500 companies; in 2020, that number was down to three Black male CEOs leading Fortune 100 companies (Wahba, 2020).

While the top American corporations do not mirror the country's demographics since of the 279 top executives spots, only five, or 1.8%, were Black (Guynn &

Schrotenboer, 2021). Similar statistics highlight how major organizations' actions do not match their words regarding placing, promoting, and hiring Black men into executive positions (Creary, 2020). Posner (2020) studied the causes of economic inequality and questioned the lack of successful Black voices in C-Suites across the United States. Black men continue to face unique characteristics and barriers to middle and senior management positions (Burt et al., 2019); Posner suggests that organizations disclose extensive information regarding their progress in promoting greater internal diversity and inclusion at the staff, executive, and board levels. Additionally, they should evaluate the diversity of their business partners (Posner, 2020).

Changes associated with systemic racism and corporate movements to change and support Black employees are launched more rapidly than in the past, yet the need for more change continues (Creary, 2020). While important implications for policy and practice have been generated from previous studies on underrepresentation, social isolation, cultural incongruence, and academic hurdles professional Black men face, much remains unknown about how Black male professionals excel and persist despite these challenges (Burt et al., 2019).

Burt et al. (2019) studied the sources of motivations of Black men in predominantly White institution engineering graduate programs to determine what influences them to persist, despite the challenges associated with their race. The authors studied 42 students using adapted grounded theory techniques, conducted multiple analysis iterations to explore the motivation factors, and categorized results into themes. As a result, a new theory of Black men's graduate motivation was developed. The theory

explains the factors influencing Black men's experiences and motivations to persist regardless of circumstances. Burt et al. further applied their results to explore the motivations to persist in understanding how a Black man can navigate professional relationships.

Despite the social improvements in the United States, there may still be a stigma associated with Black male leaders in their professional fields (Rudel et al., 2021). Black male leadership in primarily White organizations is compounded by the fact that Black men must simultaneously combat traditional images of Blackness while battling for equal standing with their White counterparts (Rudel et al., 2021). Both traditional and modern leadership theories are universalized and fail to account for social and emotional challenges. Black leaders face within their social identification place (Henry, 2021; Rudel et al., 2021).

Black men seeking leadership positions in organizations could still face blockades that stifle progression to senior leadership positions. Racial disparities persist throughout the employment process, with African Americans experiencing significant barriers compared to Whites (Pedulla & Pager, 2019). Even when Black men or individuals of color choose to enter the leadership pipeline, barriers to entry are frequently erected that do not improve the quality of leaders but serve to screen them out (Fuller et al., 2019; Roberts & Mayo, 2019). One possible solution that organizations could employ to improve minority leadership advancement outcomes is reducing the importance of career utilization for leadership advancement (Khattab et al., 2020).

Organizational leaders in predominantly White organizations should be concerned about whether there are appropriate structures for developing evidence-based leadership necessary for facilitating positive identity work that integrates personal, social, and leadership identities in the development of Black males (Murrell et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021). One strategy for advancing the development of facilitative structures for Black male leaders is for organizational leaders to design and implement a diversity and inclusion strategic plan that includes sponsored mentorship and coaching programs (see Velasco & Sansone, 2019; Wicker, 2021). Today, numerous organizations have diversity management programs and departments, each with its own organizational diversity goals. Still, despite the popularity of diversity inclusion and management interventions in many organizations in the United States, subtle prejudice persists and actively impedes the success of Black male leadership across a range of institutions (Small, 2020).

Additionally, Black leaders may face environmental factors in the workplace that may distort their authentic selves (Pitcan et al., 2018). Black male leaders face a workplace environment where masculinity and race interact to create power and privilege dynamics. Through a phenomenological examination of their lived experiences, Sparkman (2021) examined the leadership and career advancement of 10 Black male executive executives in predominantly White higher education institutions. His findings corroborated previous research on professional Black men leaders in that they demonstrated how their exposure to racially charged environments influenced their leadership approach and career trajectory (e.g., Sisco, 2020). Still, professional Black men continue to navigate the workplace despite these obstacles.

According to some researchers, Black men typically overcome resistance and succeed in their careers as leaders in their organizations. For example, Sims et al. (2021) found that despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles to leadership, Black men lead with a sense of purpose that fuels their personal and collective identity. Further, the spiritual leadership of African American leaders has enabled them to thrive in the face of adversity, which some attribute to the fact that they have tapped into their spiritual leadership (Russo-Netzer & Moran., 2018; Small, 2020).

Understanding Microaggressions in the Workplace and Intersectionality

Livingston and Rosette (2020) posited that African American men are often stigmatized/biased based on race. Thus, as Livingston and Rosette stated, "stigmatism acts as a gatekeeper that denies entry into higher levels of organizational leadership" (p. 47). In another study, Sims et al. (2021) investigated whether Black men are likelier to possess the antecedent of leadership efficacy, display servant leadership, and experience engagement. Because Black men are more likely to experience microaggressions, the authors wanted to determine whether these encounters moderate and diminish their participation. The outcomes of this study confirmed prior findings of comparable leadership encounters with microaggressions, including assumptions of inferiority, limited views of leadership capability, and misreading of leadership acts. In contrast, a narrow view of the leadership qualities of Black men exists within corporate America (Sims et al., 2021).

Hudson et al. (2020) built on the intersectionality framework for understanding microaggression experiences by highlighting and amplifying the voices of professional

Black men working in primarily white institutions. The research themes that emerged were navigating cultural racism, being black under the spotlight, and vigilance against racism. Findings from this study illustrate how contemporary cultural racism operates. The overarching finding was that middle-class Black men constantly manage and evaluate how White people see them. Black men who encounter microaggression and unease while navigating their jobs in predominantly white organizations seek psychological safety techniques within their daily work relationships (Hudson et al., 2020; Rudel et al., 2021).

Microaggressions against Black men persist in a variety of occupational specialties. For instance, Ode et al. (2022) described this underrepresented cohort within orthopedic surgery and their perceptions of occupational opportunity and workplace discrimination. 455 practicing orthopedic surgeons who self-identify as Black were surveyed anonymously. Most Black orthopedic surgeons surveyed agreed that racial discrimination and diminished occupational opportunity are pervasive in the workplace and have encountered various forms of racial microaggression in their practices (Ode et al., 2022). Using a Critical Race Theory lens, DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020) investigated how African American professionals in HBCUs and PWIs (4-year and 2-year institutions, respectively) encountered and dealt with racial microaggressions. This study included fifteen African American instructors/professors and administrators as participants. Regardless of the type of institution, the interview themes revealed that participants encountered a variety of racial microaggressions. Additionally, many participants used

adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies to deal with race-related stress in the workplace (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020).

While overt biases against Black Americans and other historically marginalized groups continue to exist in U.S. society, subtle forms of bias toward these groups also play a significant role in shaping intergroup relations and contributing to the social disadvantage and persistent disparities (economic, social, and health) faced by members of these groups (Dovidio et al., 2018; Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021). Additionally, because these biases may be deeply ingrained in the history and reinforced by contemporary societal ideologies, White Americans, the historically dominant group in the United States, may express their biases without conscious or even conscious awareness (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Johnson, Nadal, et al., 2021).

One criticism leveled at microaggression research is that the majority of studies focus exclusively on how an individual's singular identities trigger microaggressions (e.g., being a woman, being a person of color, or having a disability) rather than on how the intersections of an individual's multiple identities (e.g., being a person of color with a disability, being an LGBT person of color) may affect their experiences with microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2015). Because racial microaggressions are frequently unintentional communications by a perpetrator, critics argue that they do not constitute an act of aggression. (Spanierman et al., 2021). Several academics have suggested that targets or victims of microaggression should give the offender "the benefit of the doubt" when confronted with microaggression behavior (Haidt, 2017).

Using Qualitative Secondary Analysis (QSA) and Consensual Qualitative

Research (CQR), Nadal et al. (2015) analyzed data from six previous qualitative studies

to address two central goals: (a) to determine whether the qualitative analysis is an

effective method for examining intersectional microaggressions, and (b) to determine

whether people with multiple identities are capable of identifying intersectional

microaggressions in their daily lives. One of the study's eight themes, "assumption of

inferiority or criminality of men of color," brought attention to the fact that African

American men are also presumed to be inferior as a result of the intersection of their race

and gender, according to the researchers (Nadal et al., 2015; Spanierman et al., 2021).

The criticism of intersectionality is that it fails to place identities in their structural

contexts (for example, identities concerning power structures) (Moradi, 2017).

Discrimination against people with intersectional identities, including microaggressions,

can be experienced in many ways, mainly if their identities include social-group

membership in groups with marginalized statuses (Singh et al., 2021; see Skinner-

Dorkenoo et al., 2021). The available research demonstrates that the impact of these

microaggressions is anything but micro—contrary to what some critics assert—and is

associated with various negative physical and psychological consequences. (Johnson,

Nadal, et al., 2021; Lavaysse et al., 2018). Evidence from both empirical studies and real-

world examples suggests that microaggressions contribute to perpetuating systems of

racial oppression in the United States (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021). Results from

previous findings have indicated that middle-class Black Americans are more likely to

work and live in racially integrated, often predominantly White settings; thus, they must

frequently navigate a variety of racial issues and contemporary cultural racism (Assari et al., 2018; Guy, 2014; Hudson et al., 2020).

While intersectionality and microaggressions are well-defined and established fields, there is little agreement on how to measure intersectional microaggressions systematically using methods that accurately capture the experiences of the populations studied (Singh et al., 2021; M. T. Williams, 2020). Understanding the contexts of intersectional, social identities, and microaggressions may benefit many different organizational leadership types. Microaggressions, in particular, send messages not only to people of color but also to the rest of society about where group boundaries are drawn and which groups are given the most respect and consideration (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021).

Research on the Experiences of Black Professional Men in Corporate America

While high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors usually rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to leadership positions, such an approach has been documented to exclude Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). Despite the findings mentioned above, other studies investigated how Black professionals manage their careers as a minority in the workplace through resilience and adapting to a situation in the face of adversity. Rudel et al. (2021) used the frameworks of emotional intelligence and social architecture to analyze the experiences of Black male leaders in an organizational setting. By examining Black professional men's and women's lived experiences in corporate America, researchers discovered how

participants developed resilience in the face of racial bias in the workplace through coping and self-preservation tactics (Sisco, 2020).

Research findings on the experiences of Black male leaders in an organizational setting suggested that emotional intelligence factors may explain why Black men employ specialized strategies to manage social and emotional distress, encounter barriers to workplace acculturation, rely on authentic leadership skills to overcome leadership obstacles and use code-switching to navigate multiple identities (Rudel et al., 2021). Other intersectionality researchers have documented how high-achieving Black men and women have persistently overcome limitations and unfavorable circumstances (Fries-Britt, 2017). Black men have displayed resilience to racial bias in corporate America to continue to navigate racial bias in the workplace due to embedded systems of systemic racism (Hudson et al., 2020).

A new wave of research measures how predominantly White organizations can become better allies to Black employees (Wingfield, 2019). Corporate efforts in the era of a heightened call for diversity and inclusion initiatives also support the organizational efforts of Black employees in reducing organizational racism and supporting long-term collegial relationships (Sisco, 2020). Nevertheless, when investigating corporate America through the lens of the "seed": employees of color who frequently navigate corporate cultures alone; the "soil": organizational leadership, mindset, and infrastructure continue to overlook people of color despite ostensibly working on their behalf (Caver & Livers, 2021).

Fries-Britt's (2017) study examined the experiences of high achieving Black males studying STEM fields to understand their motivation to persist and succeed. The author uses an existing database of research that outlines the experiences of high achieving Black and underrepresented collegians majoring in STEM fields for several years. In addition, the database contained independent studies consisting of several small focus group interviews. Fries-Britt (2017) revealed the difficulty in finding literature on high-achieving Black men and found that the low number of Blacks who manage to graduate from STEM results in few Black STEM scientists and leaders. Furthermore, Black STEM employees are less likely to be granted leadership roles, despite acquiring educational credentials and training equivalent to their White peers (see Creary, 2020).

Despite the increasing number and high visibility of Black men who have achieved celebrity status, most Black professional men struggle daily with the burden of racism (Guy, 2014). Placing a higher premium on diversity and implementing targeted initiatives has not resulted in the Black worker representation gap closure (Hancock et al., 2021; J. B. Williams, 2017;). Institutionalized organizational practices and norms are guided by "racialized" assumptions that lower expectations for workers of color and perpetuate racial hierarchies due to their performance of most minor desirable tasks (Velasco & Sansone, 2019). The rise of white nationalism has exacerbated explicit racism against Black Americans in recent years and subtle racism on the job. However, organizations assert their desire to hire and promote diverse candidates despite explicit and implicit bias, and they continue to face discrimination in the workplace (Roberts & Mayo, 2019). Often, Black professional men perceive themselves to be highly visible in

workplace environments because they are frequently the only Black person present (Hudson et al., 2020). While evidence of racism abounds, formal discussions about it in corporate settings have been uncommon until recently (Creary, 2021; see Melaku et al., 2020).

Hancock et al. (2021) examined Black workers in the private sector in three parts: first, their participation in the overall US private-sector economy; second, their representation, advancement, and experience within companies; and third, a path forward that includes critical challenges to address, actions companies can take, and additional actions for a broader set of stakeholders to accelerate progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I). According to their analysis, Black workers are underrepresented in high-growth geographies and high-paying industries. Meanwhile, they are overrepresented in low-growth regions and low-wage frontline jobs (Hancock et al., 2021).

Ferguson and Dougherty (2021) conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 self-identified African American/Black "professionals" in mid-level management or higher over two years to better understand how African American/Black people experience and manage the paradox of being Black Professionals. Two themes emerged from the analysis: 1) encountering Black Professionalism as a paradox and 2) managing the Black Professional's paradox. Their findings implied that participants engaged in a vicious cycle via a process we refer to as cultural labor to manage the competing cultural demands faced by Black Professionals (Ferguson & Dougherty, 2021).

The lack of diversity perpetuates a culture that appears to be hostile to Black men and their career advancement (Johnson, Nadal, et al., 2021). Other experiences of Black professional men navigating predominantly White spaces include racial discrimination (Hudson et al., 2020) and the assumption that they are unqualified by their White colleagues. Often Black men and men of color are labeled as "diversity hire," which diminishes the skills and qualifications of these employees (Creary, 2021; Serafini et al., 2020).

It has been suggested by Sacks (2018) and others that for Black middle-class people, the constant portrayal of a public self can be exhausting, and the perceived necessity of maintaining a public identity to ensure smooth transitions into the White world can be infuriating. Racial codeswitching is one strategy in which Black people adjust their self-presentation in specific contexts to receive desired outcomes (e.g., perceived professionalism) by mirroring the norms, behaviors, and attributes of the dominant group (i.e., White people) (Grandey et al., 2019; McCluney et al., 2019). Code-switching adds to the burden on Black employees by requiring them to constantly monitor their appearance, speech, and behaviors while at work, contributing to burnout and fatigue (McCluney et al., 2019). Additionally, White men are far less likely to be required to code-switch—adjust their style of speech, appearance, and behavior to fit into a particular culture and increase their chances of being hired, accepted, or promoted (Melaku et al., 2020). In the minds of many native-born Black males, their race is a significant factor in their self-perception (Fries-Britt, 2017).

As the country becomes less white and more diverse, corporate America must adapt to remain competitive (Guynn & Schrotenboer, 2021). Scholars with widely divergent theoretical perspectives agree on the importance of schemas in explaining the pervasiveness of racial and ethnic phenomena (Ray, 2019). Given the prevalence of bias in the workplace, most human resource development (HRD) professionals will almost certainly continue to encounter inequitable norms that stifle organizational vitality, innovation, and competitiveness (Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018). Some White employees resist change out of fear of losing privilege and power associated with their job, position, level of income, earning potential, and formal authority (Velasco & Sansone, 2019).

While substantial underrepresentation persists, many Black men earn PhDs in science, amassing resources and developing resilience strategies to cope with stress, including the constant stress associated with racism (Gazley & Campbell, 2020). Black males who have succeeded have recognized, navigated, and confronted these issues to ensure long-term prosperity (Fries-Britt, 2017). Although many Black men find themselves in dire circumstances, Wiebold and Spiller's (2017) research discovered accounts of men from various socioeconomic backgrounds who were able to succeed despite the dictates of racism and discrimination or the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Racial disparities in professional network access frequently go unnoticed in many organizations because African American job seekers are aware of and recognize racial discrimination and thus use their networks to target employment opportunities that are less likely to face discrimination, increasing their chances of landing a job (Pedulla &

Pager, 2019). Organizations need to restructure their hiring and development practices to remove the barriers. Black employees have previously been required to overcome to earn rewards on par with their White colleagues (Creary, 2021). By holding decision-makers accountable to diverse committees, the decision-making process will be restructured to encourage the hiring and promotion of racial minorities while not requiring it overly deterministically (J. B. Williams, 2017). Ray (2019) argues that at the end of the day, racial inequality is not "within" organizations but "of" them, as racial processes are necessary for corporate formation and continuity.

Defining Developmental Relationships with Mentors

Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept *of developmental mentoring relationships* is defined as a close one-on-one developmental relationship between a senior or more experienced individual (mentor) and a junior or less experienced individual (protégé) as a significant career development experience. Eby and Robertson's (2020) research was grounded in Kram's (1985) seminal work which defined workplace mentoring relationships as helping proteges advance their careers and develop a sense of professional identity and competence. Kram (1985) developed a conceptual model derived from an empirical study to demonstrate that mentoring relationships can significantly facilitate career advancement and psychological development in early and middle adulthood by providing a vehicle for completing these primary developmental tasks. Kram's (1985) conceptual model elucidated the phases of a mentor relationship by systematically delineating the psychological and organizational factors that influence transitions between phases.

Following Kram's (1985) recommendations, Thomas (1990) investigated the effect of race on proteges' developmental relationship formation experiences. Data were collected from 88 Black and 107 White managers who collectively accounted for 487 developmental relationships. The findings indicate that White proteges have virtually no developmental relationships with other races. However, Black proteges form 63% of their developmental relationships with whites. Blacks are more likely than whites to develop relationships outside formal authority structures and departments. Additionally, it was discovered that same-race relationships might provide significantly more psychosocial support than cross-race relationships (Randel et al., 2020; Thomas, 1990; Thorne et al., 2021; Tillman, 2001). On the other hand, Randel et al. (2020) argue an urgent need for cross-race sponsorship among Black protégés, owing to White men's network access, which could accelerate Black career advancement.

In defining the developmental relationships for mentoring programs, Irby (2013) suggested the following concepts and considerations: (a) mentor screening and training, (b) mentor support, (c) mentor accountability, (d) mentor understanding of diversity, (e) mentor focus groups for processing, and (d) possibly term limits for mentors in a formal mentoring situation. Rather than viewing the mentor as the established source of power and knowledge, relational mentoring recognizes the capacity for mutual influence, growth, and learning within high-quality relationships (Bierema, 2022; Hayes, 2019). Alternatively, some scholars contend that not all mentoring relationships and practices are beneficial and effective. For example, Johnson et al. (2020) argued that relationships that the trainee defines as mentoring in nature could sometimes provide fertile ground for

ethical tensions and dilemmas to develop. Even when mentors and proteges are self-selected, their relationships may not always work. Self-selected mentors can be counterproductive in that they can prevent the exchange of differing perspectives, limit learning opportunities for both parties, and reinforce the status quo in various situations. (Wilson, 2021).

Framed by developmental mentoring relationships, Hayes (2019) examined the mentoring experiences of novice principals and their mentors in a school district's mentoring program and how developmental mentoring relationships support novice principals in their efforts to be leaders of learning. By clarifying the mentor's role in leading learning, a mentoring relationship was found to assist a novice principal in developing the skills necessary to lead learning, focusing mentoring sessions on developing the mentee's capacity as a leader of learning, and committing to mentoring sessions that support teaching and learning (Hayes, 2019). In other words, mentors need to know how to keep perspective and not just show up – but they must show up and devote time, communicate rules or develop them collaboratively, recognize the mentees' progressive steps and move them towards independence and transformation (Irby, 2013).

Eby and Robertson (2020) extended Kram's (1985) theoretical work and provided new insight into developmental workplace relationships by applying attachment theory (Germain, 2011), interdependence theory (Eby, 2007), and the working alliance theory (Bordin, 1979). In many cases, mentor interaction can be limited during mentoring relationships. As attachment theory suggests, Eby and Roberts implied that proximity and availability might influence a mentor's status as an attachment figure. The authors

explained that the interdependence theory was applied to developmental workplace relationships because mentors could benefit from mentoring relationships by adopting their protégés' successes through transformation by meeting needs. Furthermore, mentors can use the working alliance theory to determine when their protégés are ready to take on more responsibility for their careers and when to begin the separation process when they believe their protégés are ready to work independently (Eby & Robertson, 2020).

Attachment theory is a well-established and robust theory of close relationships that focuses on how individual differences in attachment orientation affect how attachment and caregiving systems are enacted (Germain, 2011). According to attachment theory, when an individual is confronted with threatening surroundings, the attachment system is activated and encourages the individual to seek protection and comfort from an attachment figure (Eby & Robertson, 2020). Mitchell et al. (2015) found that perceptions of similarity between protégés and mentors, one of the strongest predictors of mentoring relationship quality, were higher when mentors and protégés were both similarly high or similarly low in attachment security (Eby et al., 2013).

In interpersonal interactions, interdependence theory explains social behavior that considers personal and situational factors (Eby & Robertson, 2020; Kelley et al., 2003). According to interdependence theory, the cost-benefit ratio of a relationship is a critical factor in determining whether a person is satisfied with their relationship (Eby, 2007). Eby draws a connection between interdependence theory and mentoring relationships, emphasizing the importance of interactions that frequently involve exchanging tangible resources, such as reviewing resumes or assisting a protégé with a problem at work, and

intangible resources, such as emotional support and encouragement. While interdependence theory proposes that individuals act to maximize their outcomes, it also accounts for behavior that contradicts immediate self-interest (Eby, 2007; Eby & Robertson, 2020).

As Bordin (1979) proposed, the degree to which a working alliance's demands and the individual characteristics are compatible determines whether a working alliance will be formed. Bordin explains that the client-therapist alliance has three components: task, goal, and bond. Task, goal, and bond (the three elements of therapy) provide a common framework for understanding the importance of the client-therapist relationship in the collaborative process of reducing client distress (Eby & Robertson, 2020). According to Eby (2007), a critical aspect of the working theory is that mutual acceptance of the relationship's goals results in the most effective relationship outcomes; a primary practical task should be to clarify the mentorship's goals and how the mentor and protégé intend to accomplish them collaboratively.

Black Professional Men and Developmental Relationships with Mentors

Mentoring can assist diverse leaders in completing the necessary identity work to support their leadership development efforts and mitigate the impact of negative experiences, which can be particularly detrimental in unsupportive or non-inclusive work environments (Murrell & Onosu, 2022). Black men and those minority employees who require more mentoring may be overlooked in organizations where contentious mentor-protégé relationships develop, resulting in unhealthy work environments (Liu et al., 2020). Organizations may find value in carrying out a cultural analysis, as Kochan et al.

(2015) focuses on identifying factors that affect the support of mentoring relationships (Freeman & Kochan, 2019).

While good intentions and goodwill are necessary components of successful mentoring relationships, they are insufficient to address culture, race, power, and privilege (Byars-Winston et al., 2018). Black men and other minorities have been found to have more incredible difficulty initiating developmental relationships. In contrast, those with a cultural background closely aligned with their mentors are more likely to initiate and sustain developmental relationships in the traditional dyadic mentoring structure (Burt et al., 2019). For example, cultural contexts may affect why mentors seeking a mentor-protégé relationship feel compelled, or at least willing, to develop a protégé or why protégés seeking to request mentorship is receptive to development (Burt et al., 2019; Mull et al., 2022).

Employees seek informal developmental relationships to anchor their personal and professional identities as changes in the employment contract make work trajectories less secure (Methot & Cole, 2021). Murphy and Kram (2010) emphasized the importance of developmental relationships within or outside organizational boundaries, including non-work relationships. Consider the informal developmental relationships nurtured outside the organization's reward system and are likely to result in positive behaviors (see Eby et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2020; Mull et al., 2022). The advantage of informal mentoring relationships is that they are perceived to be more intense than formal ones because their scope is unbounded, emphasizing professional development and personal growth (Janssen et al., 2016). Like formal mentoring, informal mentoring has barriers that could

impact Black men seeking informal relationships. For example, informal mentoring relationships are especially vulnerable to issues of equity and access, which can be exacerbated by mutual identification (Janssen et al., 2016, 2018).

Employee relations have become more flexible and complex as organizations have globalized, where work coordination does not have to occur in the exact location and time (Yeo & Li, 2022). Virtual mentoring is gaining traction as a viable strategy for resolving work-family conflict caused by domain boundary crossing (Derks et al., 2016; Raghuram et al., 2019). Given that many employees are now working remotely, it is critical to understand how developmental relationships, such as virtual mentoring or virtual coaching, can assist remote workers in development (Bennett & McWhorter, 2021; see Iqbal, 2020; Sanyal & Rigby, 2017).

Virtual mentoring developmental relationships can be established via telephone, videoconference, social media, instant messaging, meeting platforms, email, websites, texting, or a combination of these modes of digital communication (Bierema, 2022; Hui et al., 2021). Yarberry and Sims (2021) implied that virtual mentoring could offset and minimize the effects of exclusion on marginalized groups from diversity and inclusion. For example, virtual mentoring can provide access and availability to support networks that would otherwise be inaccessible to groups such as minorities and Black professional men (Kasprisin et al., 2003; see Owen et al., 2018). On the other hand, a drawback of virtual mentoring for developmental relationships includes the potential for communication obfuscation, mainly when psychosocial and complex issues are involved (Bjursell & Sädbom, 2018). Hui et al. (2021) elaborated on the disadvantages of virtual

mentoring, noting the lack of important verbal, social, and environmental cues in developmental relationships. Still, like face-to-face developmental relationships, virtual developmental relationships should be optimized, and care must be taken when organizations observe counterproductive factors (McReynolds et al., 2020; Shuler et al., 2021).

Systemic Racism and Executive Sponsorship of Black Professional Men

Leadership and management scholars have noted that while Black male leadership could play a more significant role in organizational effectiveness, their perspectives were underutilized due to their suppressed social identities, embedded systemic racism in US organizations, and a lack of executive sponsorship and mentorship within organizational leadership structures (Germain, 2020; Rudel et al., 2021). Black males are immensely underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States and lack access to the sponsorship aspect of mentoring needed to support their promotion within important industry sectors (Wicker, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). Mentoring alone provides proteges with guidance and dialogue on career development but mentoring without executive sponsorship can be a barrier to promotion opportunities across racial lines due to systemic racism embedded in many organizations across American society (Goings, 2021; Wingfield, 2019).

Scholars have hypothesized that Black men remain underrepresented in leadership positions in influential industry sectors because of a lack of long-term developmental relationships with highly ranked sponsors who can provide career support and power-sharing possibilities (South-Paul et al., 2021; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020). In terms of the

role of various types of developmental relationships in the process of leadership development, a growing body of popular literature has implied, if not explicitly stated, that mentoring is a less effective means of career advancement than the newly touted concept of sponsorship (Gray et al., 2019; Seehusen et al., 2021). Sponsorship contributes to protégés' increased visibility, social capital, and professional skillset across various professions and contexts (Morris, 2020; Patel & Awan, 2020).

Career sponsorship is frequently cited as elevating underrepresented groups to leadership positions (Branson-Davis, 2018; Helms et al., 2016; Patton et al., 2017). The sponsorship function of mentoring has enormous potential to accelerate African American protégés' career advancement in cross-race mentoring relationships. Sponsorship may be especially critical for African Americans' career advancement, given the persistence of bias and discrimination in organizations serving African Americans (Randel et al., 2020). Cross-race sponsorship is especially pressing for African American protégés in PWIs (Thorne et al., 2021).

Drawing on identity, diversity, and mentoring research, Randel et al. (2020) examined the processes, practices, and challenges associated with cross-race sponsorship of African American protégés from an identity perspective. The authors made a theoretical argument regarding how identity processes play a role at different stages of cross-race sponsorship involving African American protégés and their mentors. When sponsoring African American protégés in cross-racial mentorship partnerships, there are specific chronological concerns to keep in mind (Randel et al., 2020). For example, protégés may have different schemas based on their past experiences–such as systemic

racism–and their social identities as minority or majority members. (Burke, 2020;

Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2020; Tourse et al., 2018). Another initial concern for Black

professional men might be finding and securing a cross-racial sponsor in a PWI.

Securing sponsorship requires considering both one's presentation and trust and

developing specific types of identities (such as a relational or common in-group identity)

with someone demographically different from oneself (Humberd & Rouse, 2016).

Additionally, it entails the alignment of mentors' and protégés' identities as they reach out

to others and perform their respective roles (Randel et al., 2020). Consequently, African

Americans face identity-related obstacles in advancing their careers by gaining access to

influential networks and positions of authority within organizations historically

dominated by whites (Chanland & Murphy, 2018).

Hernandez and Longman (2020) used a collaborative autoethnographic research

design to examine how emerging leaders of color perceived the process and benefits of

being "sponsored" in the context of Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The

benefits of sponsorship for leadership development are significant in several ways: (a)

heightened awareness of the importance of mentors and sponsors, with sponsorship

viewed as a complement to mentorship; (b) appreciation for the value of having clear

parameters defining sponsorship as a distinct leadership development tool; and (c) a sense

of increased empowerment for navigating career advancement (Hernandez & Longman,

2020). Significantly, sponsors believe in the protégé's potential and demonstrate their

commitment by agreeing to (a) associate their reputation with the relationship, (b) use

their senior leadership position at decision-making tables to advocate for the protégé's

next career advancement, and (c) provide "air cover" for the protégé, allowing for the necessary risk-taking to advance emerging leaders to the next level (Hewlett, 2013; Murphy et al., 2017). Notwithstanding, Black professional men still frequently find themselves in binds as they attempt to navigate within PWIs. For example, Muir (2014) argues that the sponsorship function of mentoring is particularly prone to identity change, as protégés adjust their self-concepts to advanced career roles and mentors adjust their perceptions of their primary responsibilities.

As a form of systemic racism, Ferguson and Dougherty (2021) described some of the double-binds Black men face, such as unwelcomeness and having unrealistic expectations. The unwelcomeness double-bind encapsulates the oscillation between vast abstract meaning systems that raise questions about the existence of blackness in professional settings (Ferguson & Dougherty, 2021). In addition, the authors defined performative as Black professionals' inability to meet unachievable performance expectations. Participants described how workplace performances were infused with White superiority/Black inferiority notions. While White Americans resist and deny the reality of systemic racism, they feel the loss of White privilege and social status quite acutely, generating strong resentments that motivate them to rationalize away the possibility of systemic racism (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Parker, 2021).

Black professionals use various strategies to combat systemic racism in the workplace, including avoidance, indirect communication, and direct confrontation (Davis, 2018). Additionally, codeswitching may be another conventional survival skill that Black professionals use in PWIs. Black professionals under pressure to code-switch

may feel devalued, reducing their commitment to the company and desire to contribute their unique perspectives (Davis, 2018; Myers, 2020). Several interconnected myths perpetuated in workplaces subtly undercut people of color's leadership aspirations and experiences, resulting in nearly invisible attitudes and practices such as hiring for "fit" and expecting non-White employees to code-switch in order to fit the organizational culture continue to exist as systemic realities (Hughes, 2018; Santiago et al., 2021). However, McCluney et al. (2019) argued that effective code-switching could provide a competitive advantage when used by Black professional men in specific environments.

McCluney et al. (2019) developed a "code-switching at work" scale to assess how black people downplayed their race, avoided adjusting their behavior and appearance, and investigated how code-switching as an impression-management strategy informs Black people's work experiences. The authors identified three primary reasons for workplace code-switching: (a) for Black people and other racial minorities, downplaying membership in a stigmatized racial group helps increase professional perceptions and the likelihood of employment, and (b) avoiding negative stereotypes about black racial identity (e.g., incompetence, laziness) enables black employees to be perceived as leaders, and (c) expressing common interests with members of dominant groups fosters similarity with influential organizational members, which increases the likelihood of promotion, as individuals gravitate toward people, they perceive to be similar. Conforming, being inauthentic, or engaging in dishonest behaviors at work exists to forestall perceived workplace threats, such as being excluded, not promoted, fired, harassed or taunted, having job assignments impacted, or being terminated (Baker &

Lucas, 2017). Code-switching becomes second nature for many Black professionals who are forced to live on the periphery of society due to their racialized identities (Myers, 2020).

Numerous institutions have enacted policies to address systemic oppression, defined as the inequitable treatment of specific social groups due to laws, policies, and institutional practices. Despite their good intentions, these policies frequently fail to eradicate long-established oppressive practices (Esquierdo-Leal & Houmanfar, 2021). Career sponsorship for professional Black men could be a significant bridge to upward progression. However, Black professionals continue to have a low representation in positions of power, with declines between 2007 and 2015 (Guynn, 2017; Hill et al., 2016; Zarya, 2017).

Identifying the Literature Gap

Mentoring serves two essential purposes: career advancement and psychosocial well-being. Mentoring components that assist in learning the ropes and preparing an individual for promotion within an organization are known as career functions (Murrell & Onosu, 2022). Mentoring is a process in which an experienced individual gives a protégé with instrumental or career support (e.g., developmental opportunities and sponsorship) as well as psychosocial support (e.g., personal advice and companionship) (i.e., a person with less experience in need of development) (Avery et al., 2021). The question of how different mentoring relationships can be sustained through the various stages of formation and nurturing to achieve high-quality developmental partnerships is a vital but challenging aspect of effective leadership development (Blake-Beard, 2015). Mentoring

relationships enable personal and professional progress and define, shape, and transform co-constructed identities in the workplace (Murrell & Onosu, 2022).

Mentoring's beneficial effect on leadership development has been extensively documented across various organizations, industries, and organizational contexts (Randel et al., 2020). Through identity work, mentoring diverse and inclusive leaders convey to followers that belonging, psychological safety, and identity are valued across all persons (Newman et al., 2017). Still, organizations seeking to launch practical mentoring efforts must first ascertain the requirements of their target demographic, then prioritize which areas to address, and be deliberate in committing time and resources to assist them (Cannon, 2021). For example, factors have played a significant role in Blacks' under-representation in the technology business, including a lack of senior sponsorship, effective mentoring, and inefficient hiring practices (Cain, 2021). Many Black IT professionals leave the field owing to workplace antagonism and abuse and other factors such as salary disparities and a lack of mentorship. Examining the lack of Black people in technology reveals the existence of hurdles and barriers at various levels and occupation fields (Cain, 2021).

Other prestigious fields, such as surgery, continue to face significant difficulties with underrepresented in medicine (UIM). Several of these barriers include inadequate distribution of academic and personal resources, a lack of guidance or mentoring in career decision-making, and systemic barriers such as social prejudices that prevent access to career-advancing opportunities (Freeman et al., 2016; Sola et al., 2021). Mentorship is especially critical for surgeons' personal and professional development

(Danner et al., 2017). As of 2021, there are just six black chairs among the 154 US departments of surgery accredited by the Association of American Medical Schools. Only three historically black colleges and universities are excluded (Johnson-Mann et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this figure indicates regression rather than improvement, as there were 13 black chairs in the surgery department in 2008 (Johnson-Mann et al., 2021).

Sponsorship, exposure and visibility, counseling, protection, and demanding tasks are all examples of career roles (Murrell & Onosu, 2022). The essential relationship in sponsorship is not between protégés and sponsors, as is frequently assumed, but between sponsors and an audience – the individuals they intend to convince in favor of their protégés (Chow, 2021). Many people have benefited in some way from sponsorship to develop their careers. Sponsorship helps forge a path for the protégé to walk toward a vision or goal with clarity and supports talent cultivation through investment and patronage into the desired field (Sola et al., 2021; Thomas, 1990). Recognizing the strengths of sponsorship, many of us focus on securing sponsors who will amplify, boost, connect, and defend us (Chow, 2021).

Sponsorship, exposure and visibility, counseling, protection, and demanding tasks are all examples of career roles (Murrell & Onosu, 2022). The essential relationship in sponsorship is not between protégés and sponsors, as is frequently assumed, but between sponsors and an audience – the individuals they intend to convince in favor of their protégés (Chow, 2021). Many people have benefited from sponsorship to develop in their careers. Sponsorship helps forge a path for the protege to walk toward a vision or goal with clarity and supports talent cultivation through investment and patronage into the

desired field (Sola et al., 2021; Thomas, 1990). Recognizing the strengths of sponsorship, many of us focus on securing sponsors who will amplify, boost, connect, and defend us (Chow, 2021).

Mentoring has been investigated as a personal resource for building a sustainable career as a leader (Dey et al., 2021). Nevertheless, leadership and management researchers have overlooked the role of sponsorship in Black men's mentoring programs as an interface to a successful job promotion (Murrell et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2020). Black men often lack the sponsorship aspect of mentorship mentors within predominately White organizations because of stereotypical perceptions, such as Black men lacking emotional intelligence, soft skills, or motivation to ascend to valued management positions (Sparkman, 2021).

While high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors usually rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to leadership positions, such an approach has been documented to exclude Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). Black men are profoundly under-represented in middle and senior management in private-sector workplaces (Bloch et al., 2021). The critical nature of mentoring Black men and how mentoring those men have long been overlooked in the literature (Robotham et al., 2021). Further research is needed to address pathways to mentoring for minority men while breaking down the barrier of systemic racism embedded in many organizations across American society (Goings, 2021).

Mentoring alone provides proteges with guidance and dialogue on career development, but promotion opportunities across racial lines can be severely restricted

(Wingfield, 2019). The guidance of a good mentor with executive sponsorship can be critical for Black men to achieve an upward career trajectory (Wicker, 2021). To gain a deep understanding of how professional Black men's developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors open access to promotion opportunities in the corporate workplace, further research is needed to fill this literature gap using a constructivist approach that explores Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

Summary and Conclusions

Black males are immensely underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States and lack access to the sponsorship aspect of mentoring needed to support their promotion within important industry sectors (Wicker, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). While Black male leadership could play a more significant role in organizational effectiveness, their perspectives were underutilized due to their suppressed social identities, embedded systemic racism in US organizations, and a lack of executive sponsorship and mentorship opportunities opened to minorities in corporate America (Goings, 2021). While high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors usually rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to leadership positions, such an approach has been documented to exclude Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019).

Mentoring alone provides proteges with guidance and dialogue on career development but mentoring without executive sponsorship can be a barrier to promotion opportunities across racial lines due to systemic racism embedded in many organizations

across American society (Goings, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). Black men remain underrepresented in leadership positions within influential industry sectors because of a lack of long-term developmental relationships with highly-ranked sponsors who can provide career support and power-sharing possibilities (South-Paul et al., 2021; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020). To offer practitioner-based recommendations based on an intersectional approach to career mentors and sponsors, researchers still need to explore professional Black men's experiences building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors (Murrell et al., 2021; Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021).

In Chapter 3, the research method for this qualitative narrative study will be presented and developed. The procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection will be presented. The data analysis plan will be discussed, and issues of meeting trustworthiness criteria and ethical considerations for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Leadership and management scholars have noted that while professional Black men could have a more inclusive role in organizational effectiveness, they are underutilized due to their suppressed social identities, embedded systemic racism in U.S. organizations, and a lack of executive sponsorship and mentorship within organizational leadership structures (Germain, 2020; Rudel et al., 2021). Scholars have hypothesized that Black men remain underrepresented in leadership positions in influential industry sectors because of a lack of long-term developmental relationships with highly ranked sponsors who can provide career support and power-sharing possibilities (South-Paul et al., 2021; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020).

A narrative inquiry method addressed the identified literature gap and answered the study's research question (see Clandinin, 2016). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method that grew out of K. J. Gergen's (1998) constructivism and can be used by researchers to deconstruct Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors (Wicker, 2021). Storytelling data were collected through semistructured, online interviews with participants meeting the study's inclusion criteria while keeping reflective journal notes throughout the research process (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

This chapter will provide detailed information on the research design and rationale for using the narrative inquiry approach to meet the study's purpose. I presented a rationale for the participant selection strategy, data collection and analysis strategies, the researcher's role, evaluation methods for the trustworthiness of data, ethical considerations, and a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research design founded on participants' stories to understand their daily experiences within specific contexts (Webster & Mertova, 2007). I used this research method to illustrate human experiences through the storytelling (see Clandinin, 2016) of professional Black men narrating their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Choosing the narrative inquiry method to address the purpose of this study aligned with Wicker's (2021) recommendation that a literature gap exists in research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities (see Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

Aligning with the problem and purpose of the study and the qualitative paradigm, the central research question is as follows:

RQ: How do professional Black men narrate their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors?

This study may contribute to the extant literature on the experiences of professional Black professional men, drawn from a demographic population that remains

underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States due to poor access to executive sponsorship (see Wingfield, 2019). Although there do exist studies on Black employees, primarily women, and their challenges seeking leadership positions, this study is a novel contribution to research to fill a gap in the daily life experiences of professional Black men in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors (see Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021). Researchers should consider the element of race in the workplace to better understand Black employees' experiences and coping strategies in a specific work environment (Creary, 2021).

While other qualitative methods exist, such as phenomenology case studies and grounded theory, gathering data based on the participants' experiences at specific points of the participants' lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), these qualitative designs do not include a critical event analysis of participant narratives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Phenomenology was not selected because I did not intend to investigate a social phenomenon but rather explore the lived experiences through a phenomenological outlook (see Freeman, 2016). A case study design was not chosen because the evaluation of already established cases did not align to explore specific populations' daily lived experiences through original storytelling (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The grounded theory approach to empirical research omits detailed participant narratives of critical life events (Lal et al., 2012).

The narrative research approach is explicitly adopted for identifying critical life events within the participants' storytelling (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A narrative

inquiry approach allowed me to present a general picture of the participant's daily experience, including examining complex data of critical events that influence the daily decision-making and reactions to such events (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Kim, 2015). Therefore, the narrative inquiry was the preferred method for gathering narratives related to Black participants' daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors while facing the challenges of systemic racism in the corporate environment (see Stavrou & Murphy, 2021).

The data collection process with the central focus on an open-ended interview process embedded within the narrative inquiry design supports a researcher in forming a trusting relationship with participants, permitting the uncovering of critical life events (Clandinin, 2016). After data collection, I sought to answer my research question through a rigorous data analysis process. The first step of the data analysis was the process of restorying, a narrative data analysis method used to gather data, analyze the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrite the data (Clandinin, 2016). The critical events approach was the second step of analyzing critical events experienced by the participants and as defined by place, time, characters, and significant events essential to meet the purpose of the study.

A critical event narrative analysis was also used to model the events in narratives, investigate stories of daily experiences, and strengthen the study's results (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). This approach occurred in two stages: (a) interpretation of each story through restorying to provide a description or categories for each event or single case and (b) cross-checking each case with the event category's themes for comparative purposes.

This two-stage process aims for the researcher and participant to coconstruct meanings, themes, and images and produces a participant-guided interpreted transcript (Kalet et al., 2021). Finally, a thematic analysis was applied to organize the coconstructed meanings of stories into themes and ultimately guide the texts' interpretations (see Clandinin, 2016).

The goal of using this two-stage data analysis process is for the researcher and participant to coconstruct meanings, themes, and images to produce a participant-centric, interpreted transcript (Hickson, 2016). This hermeneutic narrative approach was used to explicate meaning within stories even when they are not sequential and can be ordered as a singular piece of information (see Polkinghorne, 1988). While triangulation is primarily used in qualitative research for determining themes, Webster and Mertova (2007) stated that triangulation is not feasible for critical event narrative inquiry's story-based studies.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a narrative study can be defined by a thorough understanding of the culture being studied, the ability to avoid interfering with the natural flow of social interaction, and, potentially, an established relationship that promotes both telling and judging the truth (Unluer, 2012). Additionally, the researcher is responsible for conducting interviews and describing, interpreting, and analyzing the data (Dodgson, 2019). To avoid potential conflicts of interest, no participants in this study had a direct relationship with me that could influence the interviews. I documented all participants' lived experiences during my research to ensure its validity and minimize the risk of bias.

My role as a researcher was to interview professional Black men with at least 10 years of experience in various industries who have participated in mentoring and

sponsorship at various stages of their careers as they are pertinent to the research's central question. Qualitative research interviews require trust to obtain the most viable data (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; see Tracy, 2019). Breach of the trust imperative between participants and researcher jeopardizes the research process throughout the interview and writing phases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When possible, I carefully noticed any personal biases that did not directly affect the stories at hand.

As a Black professional man who has served as both a protégé and a mentor in various organizational mentoring programs, I am familiar with the difficulties inherent in advancing to executive leadership roles in predominantly White organizations. I had to take on additional roles and responsibilities at work and pursue additional education to compete with my White peers, who did not have to endure such adversities. My research, however, is not about me; instead, I believe that other Black professionals have their own distinct experiences. I want to investigate this matter to hear how their story parallels or contradicts using a qualitative narrative inquiry. Consent forms and fundamental ethical research principles were used to ensure the study's integrity. These principles included respecting one person, beneficence, and justice (see Humbyrd et al., 2019). Participants had the opportunity to verify their stories for accuracy and maintain credibility. Finally, participants could withdraw from the study during the research process, even if their actions resulted in failing to meet its objectives (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Methodology

Since the narrative inquiry is my qualitative research design of choice to answer my research question, I will begin this section by introducing a definition of the

framework and outlining key features of the research actions undertaken by narrative inquirers. People lead storied lives, interpret their pasts, and imagine their futures through these stories. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), narrative inquiry is a way to think of experience as a story, where a story is "a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (p. 477). To employ narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular perspective on experience as the phenomenon being studied. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006 p, 479).

Research storytelling is a sound way of understanding human experiences as they live daily (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The narrative inquiry research supported the storytelling of Black professional men's daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. The narratives provided by the Black professional men participating in my study were not altered so as not to take away from experience. I developed my interpretation of participants' stories based on the men's perceptions of their experiences (see Webster & Mertova, 2007)

What makes narrative inquiry distinct from other forms of inquiry is the ongoing attentiveness to *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place* as the research process begins, continues, and comes to final closure. Temporality means being attentive to people and events evolving through the past, present, and future (Connelly & Clandinin, 1992). Sociality refers to the inquirers and the participants' "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006, p. 480). Place is the

location or series of locations where the inquiry and the events under inquiry occur

Connelly & Clandinin, 2006 p, 481). An integral aspect of thinking as a narrative

researcher is the simultaneous exploration of temporality, sociality, and place (Stavrou &

Murphy, 2021).

Collected data such as reflective journaling notes, transcribed interviews, and

observation notes are produced during the entire research process and are codeveloped by

researchers and participants in synchrony with the collected narratives of temporality,

sociality, and place (Jha, 2018). Temporality and place are cocomposed across different

spaces, over multiple interactions, and reflect earlier life experiences. Sociality is shown

during these outward events as researchers and participants pay attention to their inward

emotions, thoughts, and moral responses (Clandinin, 2019).

Polkinghorne (1988) recognized that humans primarily communicate via

storytelling, the oldest form of influence. The narrative-research approach was ideal for

this study, as it extends the potential for inspiration and encouragement to other Black

males to reject the master narrative that has become engrained as a leadership norm by

offering a counter-narrative found within the first-person accounts of my participants(see

Wicker, 2021). This research strategy aligned with Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept

of mentoring Black professional men by the counternarrative aspect of Critical race

theory to understand the voices of Black professional men who had reached a high level

of professional responsibility with same race mentoring and cross-cultural mentoring.

Ladson-Billings (1998) wrote that the "use of voice or 'naming your reality' is how

critical race theory brings together form and substance in scholarship. Critical race theory

scholars use parables, chronicles, stories, counter-stories, poetry, fiction, and revisionist histories to illustrate the false necessity" (p. 15). Storytelling serves as a method for contextualizing experiences "within a broader social justice meaning" (Rocco et al., 2014, p. 461). I obtained meaningful, in-depth, and rich data that presents intimate and personal experiences through storytelling.

The narrative inquiry approach highlighted the influence of their culture, livelihood, and critical events in the study participants' daily lives (see Wang & Geale, 2015). Data was collected using the narrative storytelling tradition from Black professional men's daily experiences building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. A critical event approach (Webster, & Mertova, 2007) documented important events in the participants' narratives to ensure the data's trustworthiness, thus addressing the study's purpose and research questions. Unlike other forms of qualitative research such as case study, ethnography, or phenomenology methods, a narrative inquiry approach allows for presenting detailed participant descriptions through storytelling and serves as a valuable research method for developing a detailed understanding of human experiences as they are lived daily (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Storytelling is the oldest influence on human relationships (Polkinghorne, 1988). I followed the narrative inquiry data collection method of focusing on the exchange of conversation between the participants and myself on how the past influences their lives, present, and future life events (see Caine et al., 2019; Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). Participants' stories represent how people interpret their social and inner world and find

meaning in their experiences (Clandinin, 2016; Polkinghorne, 1995). Significant events are communicated in storytelling as a form of communication. I did not reconstruct communicated experiences but narrated how participants understood their experiences (see Webster & Mertova, 2007).

In this study, the data analysis focuses on participants' accurate, verbatim descriptions and accounts aligned to the research question (Riessman, 2008). In its modern form, hermeneutics is based on deciphering, interpreting, and translating ideas by examining language as a text in any form and considering multiple meanings that include my perspective as the researcher. The moving back and forth between perspectives to uncover inherent meanings is termed the hermeneutic circle (Polkinghorne, 1995).

A rigorous, two-step data analysis uncovered novel patterns across the collected data. The first step of the data analysis will be the process of restorying, a narrative data analysis method used to gather data to analyze the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene; Clandinin, 2016). The critical events analysis recommended by Webster and Mertova (2007) was the second step of analyzing critical events experienced by the participants and as defined by place, time, characters, and significant events essential to meet the purpose of the study. I used thematic analysis to organize the data into coconstruction of meanings and themes between participants and researcher. A theme can be identified as an idea, direction, notion, or characteristic that surfaces from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Through the critical event analysis approach, I identified important events based on crucial life decisions and how they have potentially life-changing consequences in participants' lives.

Participant Selection Logic

Through this narrative inquiry, I aimed to understand professional Black men's daily challenges and experiences regarding mentorship and executive sponsorship in their sectors. The sample population met the following inclusion criteria: adults over the age of 18; identify as a Black man with a minimum of 10 years of professional organizational experience; hold a high-ranking position within their industry sector; and be able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study (see Tracy, 2019). The inclusion criteria of the study's sample replicated sample criteria from similar studies on mentoring and sponsorship of Black leaders in the United States (see Jernigan et al., 2020; Louis & Freeman Jr., 2018). Characteristics of a population group are specific to that group, such as a particular individual, group, organization, or specific collection of data, and may include, for example, specific attributes, traits, experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and impressions in the case of people. (Harkiolakis, 2017). The participants were recruited by contacting candidates through the professional online platform LinkedIn to identify initial participants who meet the inclusion criteria. Once the participants were identified, I contacted them via email to inform them of the study's objectives and provided a written consent form that outlined their rights as a participant.

Black people account for about 12% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Still, they occupy only 3.2% of the senior leadership roles at large companies in the United States and just 0.8% of all Fortune 500 CEO positions, according to the analysis by Coqual (2019. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the United States indicated that in 2018, Black professionals held just 3.3% of all executive

or senior leadership roles, which is above the CEO's position (Branson-Davis, 2018).

There is an overrepresentation of black employees in frontline positions (18%) as

compared to managerial positions (9 %; Hancock et al., 2021). On current trends, it will

take approximately 95 years for Black employees to achieve talent parity (or 12%

representation) across all levels of the private sector; however, addressing the significant

barriers to advancement for Black employees could reduce that time to about 25 years

(Hancock et al., 2021).

Criterion and Snowball Sampling

I used a sample size of nine participants in this narrative inquiry. This study

aimed to interview as many participants as possible to reach saturation when collected

data becomes redundant or revealed by no new data (Boddy, 2016). Saturation is a well-

established concept for assessing the trustworthiness and quality of qualitative research

(Braun & Clarke, 2021). When no additional observations are required to answer the

research questions, saturation occurs (Lowe et al., 2018). I used criterion sampling and

snowball sampling as necessary for this study. Criterion sampling collects a target sample

within a given population group using participants who meet the same inclusion criteria

(Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Snowball sampling of a hidden population begins with a

convenience sample of initial subjects because the population would not be restricted as

hidden if a random sample could be drawn (Etikan et al., 2016). The planned snowball

participant selection strategy appears sufficient to achieve this study's ten to twelve

referrals.

Listening to multiple people's voices directly from the field enables a complete understanding of the whole group's lived, shared experiences with the narrative inquiry phenomenon (Hickson, 2016). By developing an engaging narrative that is both personal and connected, I connected with the participants and established rapport with them, fostering a sense of security and cultural awareness (Berry, 2016). I developed semi-structured interview items grounded in the conceptual framework and the literature review. Follow-up probes were included to provide guidance and direction during the interviews. I gathered all data for each interview in the form of stories by allowing participants to speak freely and taking handwritten notes in the form of reflective journal notes. It is critical in narrative research to capture what is said and how it is said. Interviews will be recorded using the Microsoft Teams recording audio function to ensure accurate transcription. I sent the participants a transcript of their recorded interview and the opportunity to clarify any statements made during the interview through transcript review and member checking (see Motulsky, 2021).

The unit of analysis for this study is the professional Black man. The method of purposeful sampling selection is based on identifying participants who can contribute information that will aid in determining the study's central significance (Tracy, 2019). Qualitative researchers avoid randomization sampling because their findings are frequently not generalizable to a larger population (Ishak & Abu Bakar, 2014). The sample size in narrative inquiry studies is ambiguous, as it is dependent on the questions being investigated, data saturation, and the size that provides the most information, even

though data saturation is less straightforward in the narrative approach than in other qualitative designs (Saunders, Kingstone, et al., 2018; Sims et al., 2021).

Appropriate identification of the intended sample population is critical (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015). Researchers must define appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria when designing a study and consider the impact of those decisions on the external validity of the study's results. Inclusion criteria are the essential characteristics of participants that the researcher is looking for to ensure that the study's purpose and research questions are aligned (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Prescreening questions determined whether interested participants met the inclusion criteria and collected demographic data. Each question was based on self-reporting. Four basic contact information questions were included in the demographic inventory to ascertain (a) gender, (b) years of experience, (c) race identifier, and (d) mentor experience. Prospective participants will be prescreened against the participant criteria to ensure they possess the necessary knowledge and experience to contribute to the research topic. The inclusion criteria required that participants be Black professionals with at least ten years of experience, as this would allow them to establish themselves in their industry and most likely have had mentoring relationship experience during their careers.

Recruitment efforts for this narrative inquiry will include snowball sampling to obtain a representative sample of nine participants (Schram, 2006). Purposive sampling is a widely used technique in qualitative research to identify participants likely to provide much information about the phenomenon under investigation (Tracy, 2019). The study participants were purposefully selected from LinkedIn websites and interviewed with

open-ended questions about the research question until the participants' data saturation point was reached. LinkedIn was chosen as a social media platform because it enables effective communication with the target group. I confirmed individuals' eligibility as they contacted me to express interest in participating in the research. Additional participants were chosen and placed in a pool in the event of an accident. For instance, if a participant chooses not to complete the study, a participant could be chosen from the prescreened participant pool to meet the participant's desired outcome.

The interview process enables one to immerse themselves in another's experiences to gain insight into that person's reality. The interview guide was the primary direction source throughout the interview process. Unlike a traditional interview, observations will be made, and participants' stories will be recorded, but the mannerisms in which they discuss the experience will also be noted. Seminal narrative methodologists recommend using a semi-structured interview to minimize the researcher's influence and allow the participant's intentions and meaning to emerge (Clandinin, 2016). Through in-depth storytelling, participants shared their perspectives as Black professional men on developing mentoring relationships and career sponsorship and how they dealt with these experiences in predominately White organizations and professions. All participants were interviewed using the same interview protocol to ensure saturation.

I kept field notes throughout the interview process to document my thoughts, interpretations, and reflections on the narratives communicated by the participants. Furthermore, the researcher will take note of any issues that support or undermine the data's trustworthiness (Fusch & Ness, 2015). As the researcher, I communicated the data

collection findings to the study participants, enhancing the reliability and validity of the authentic lived experiences shared, recorded, transcribed, and reported (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The final sample size will be determined by the degree of saturation of the interview data (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). According to Flick (2018), saturation occurs when data become repetitive and do not progress in a new direction or raise new questions. Data reliability in qualitative studies is not determined by the number of participants but by the rich, in-depth information about the phenomenon provided by individual participants (Harkiolakis, 2017).

Instrumentation

The study findings will result from carefully executed and rigorously planned data collection procedures. A typical data collection method in qualitative studies, the semi-structured interview, will offer a tool to gain the researcher a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena from the participant's perspective. In this qualitative, narrative inquiry, the interview protocol addressed the study's purpose and answered its CRQ: *How do professional Black men narrate their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors?*

Using criterion and snowball sampling to support this narrative inquiry, I recruited 10 professional Black men in leadership positions within their organizations from the LinkedIn professional platform. The study began with eight participants hoping to achieve saturation, but if saturation had not been reached, the snowball effect would have been used to gather the remaining participants, with 12 being the maximum number. I developed reflective journal notes during the online interviews to collect data (see

Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). If I had found that recruitment with criterion sampling was limited, I would have used snowball sampling to recruit participants and collect primary data until saturation was achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The saturation determination is made when participants' stories become similar, and no new data is revealed in the three interviews in a row after the minimum number of participants is reached (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The interview questions (see Appendix C) were developed, pilot tested, and adapted from a study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania by Morris (2020) in an open-access, a qualitative study exploring the lived experiences with sponsorship and mentorship of women of color reaching leadership positions in their careers. Morris' (2020) study's proposal, including the soundness and ethical approval of the research processes, interview question development, and pilot study field test, was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Research Board at the University of Pennsylvania. The interview items were developed to allow the participants to respond in a story-telling manner while maintaining narrative integrity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019).

Open-ended interviews are the traditional form of conducting a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016). I commenced the interviews with opening demographic questions to ensure the participants qualified for the study. Follow-up probes were used to gain further insight throughout the interview for clarification. Participants were given more time to tell their stories upon request, and subsequential time was scheduled accordingly. Data collection interviews took 30 to 40 minutes during digital recording and manual

transcribing. Interview schedules were allocated at 40 minutes for each participant, with no anticipation for interviews to conclude sooner than the expected time.

I used audio recordings and transcribed interviews for accuracy, syncing interview data with reflective journal notes and supporting the interview data's dependability and credibility (see Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Member checking through transcript review will also be selected for data collection to ensure the relationship between participant and researcher does not compromise the accuracy of the data during illustration (Morse, 2015). In the member-checking process, participants will have the opportunity to review a summary of the interview to revise their ideas to ensure clarity and accuracy. Significant changes will only be incorporated if an additional interview is deemed necessary to ensure the validity of the information recorded during the initial interview. Before the interview, the participants were informed that their contribution of information would not be compromised and used for research only, and their identities would be kept entirely confidential, followed by the destruction of the data after five years (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In this study, I emphasized the perspective of "doxa", or the participants' ways of doing things (see Loh, 2013), to better understand professional Black men's daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. As a narrative researcher, I was expected to listen attentively to the story uninhibited and ask follow-up questions to clarify any details that required additional information (Flick, 2018; Newton, 2017). The recruiting and data collection process consisted of the

following: (a) recruit members that fit the inclusion for the study's purpose; (b) inform

participants of the following steps; (c) conduct interviews (d) transcribe interviews; (e)

organizing setting, plot, characters, and critical events; and (f) conducting member checks

to ensure participants report revisions, clarifications, and confirmation of accurate,

critical events noted.

After six participants were recruited, a snowball effect was necessary to bring in

the remaining participants due to achieve saturation. As a sole researcher, I conducted

both interviews and data collection. Using only the researcher to collect data ensured that

the participants' narratives and identities remained confidential. One interview per day

was conducted during the week to allow sufficient time for analysis and review of the

data and burnout avoidance.

The study participants were informed before the session that the audio would be

recorded and that field notes would be taken during the interview session. The

information was recorded with the help of Cok Auto recorder, a program specifically

designed for recording audio calls. Additionally, I emphasized the importance of

informed consent and reminded participants that their participation is voluntary and that

they have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The interviews were conducted using the Microsoft Teams platform from my

account to help protect the participants' privacy in the study. By utilizing the virtual

platform, I will interview participants from various industries throughout the United

States, potentially circumventing building access issues. Additionally, the virtual

platform will assist in resolving scheduling conflicts. I will send each participant a link to

a calendar invitation separately to help maintain individual confidentiality. During the interviews, participants could turn on or off the camera, depending on their comfort level. Each interview was scheduled for 30-40 minutes; however, if more time was required, participants were allowed to take a 5-to-ten-minute break before continuing. The initial plan was to conduct interviews over two months, including follow-ups as necessary and if requested.

A follow-up interview was scheduled within five business days if the participant or I felt we needed more information or had questions after the scheduled interview time expired. I intend to use member checking to allow the participants to ensure that their words are accurately represented. Member checking entailed emailing participants a 1-2-page summary of the data they provided to elicit feedback and comments regarding the accuracy with which their stories were recorded. Member checking is used in qualitative research to ensure the data is trustworthy (Birt et al., 2016).

Participants' experiences will be gathered through open-ended questions, serving as the primary data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Participants could provide additional information, clarify, and elaborate on their rationales by answering open-ended interview questions. The research questions were relevant to the participants identified and consistent with the research design and methodology. I closely monitored data collection using questioning strategies and recording responses to ensure the information was valid and reliable. Biases were monitored to ensure that they had the least possible impact on the study's outcome (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Participants were able to provide data in the form of stories during open-ended interviews. The most common method of gathering data in narrative inquiry studies is open-ended interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). The critical event narratives section of the data analysis boosts the credibility of the research findings (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In the event of a media failure, precautions were taken. For example, if the participants or myself lost internet access during the interviews, a phone interview would have served as a backup source. Participants provided alternate dates to avoid additional delays if an incident precluded the original scheduled interview date and time.

Before beginning the interview, the participants were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary and that any information they provided would be kept strictly confidential and not be shared with anyone else. Furthermore, participants were assured that their identities and interview transcripts would be kept confidential, with data collection materials destroyed after five years. Each interview concluded with data collection, notification of the next steps in the process, and data transcription. Once all the data had been transcribed, I conducted an individual inductive narrative analysis of each piece of information to identify common themes. The data collection and interview process concluded when similar data are discovered, indicating saturation (see Fusch & Ness, 2015; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis entails interpretation, which influences our choice of narrative representations (Kim, 2015). Narrative as inquiry is a process of meaning-making that encompasses three significant spheres of inquiry: scientific (physical), symbolic (human

experience), and sacred (metaphysical) (Hendry, 2009). Narrative scholars attempt to decipher meanings by analyzing plotlines, thematic structures, and social and cultural allusions. These meanings are analyzed and interpreted concurrently with the research text during the transition period (Kim, 2015). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) emphasized the importance of researchers telling their own stories. When researchers tell their stories, the participants' stories become entwined with the researchers to create new collaborative narratives.

The data analysis process began with restorying, a narrative data analysis technique that involves gathering data, analyzing the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). The second data analysis stage involved performing a critical event narrative analysis on like, other, and critical narratives. This classification of events enables assessing the complexity and breadth of narrative data collected (Mertova & Webster, 2019). A *like* event replicates the context, method, and resources used in the critical event but with different participants. *Like* events occur on the same level as critical events, and the context is similar to that of the critical event (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

Additional anecdotal and incidental information is referred to as 'other events' and may shed light on the same issues. *Other* events occur in the exact location, context, and period as the gathered critical and similar events (Mertova & Webster, 2019). Because of participants' lived experiences, the critical events reflected their most memorable and impressionable moments. By applying the critical events data analysis method to primary data, it is possible to develop reportable research findings, results, and conclusions,

allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the lack of mentoring relationships and career sponsorship that many Black men face in their professional settings (see Webster & Mertova, 2007).

I used a hermeneutic narrative approach to explain meaning within stories, even if they are not sequential or if the data cannot be considered a standalone piece of information (see Polkinghorne, 1988). Flood (2010) discussed various methods of hermeneutic interpretation of data; she indicated that naïve reading, structural analysis, and comprehensive understanding are beneficial methods of interpreting collected data. Hermeneutically moving between parts and the whole will provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences (Freeman, 2016).

To develop restoried data for comparative purposes, I used holistic content analysis of the narrative data, including thematic coding of production and description, cross-referencing, categorizing, and thematic linking (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Thematic analysis was used to uncover and categorize participants' experiences using language (Riessman, 2008). While there are numerous approaches to text analysis, M. Gergen (2003) cautions that an "analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles" may undermine "the research's objectives" (p. 272) by diverting attention away from narratively thinking about the experience (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Discrepant data and negative cases must be identified and analyzed as part of the logic of validity testing in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2008). Discrepancies in data patterns were investigated further during the data analysis process, which indicates the need to delve deeper into the information (Tracy, 2019).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truthfulness and confidence in the data collected or the participant's views and the researcher's representation and interpretation (Papakitsou, 2020). It is impossible to report precise data in qualitative research because its interpretation is the foundation for the study's conclusions (Burkholder et al., 2016). According to Saunders et al. (2016), the interpretations of primary data contribute to credibility through the data collection and analysis processes. Handwritten notes and audio recordings are two other methods for documenting the participants' perspectives and involvement (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). These two methods result in a more accurate translation of the participant's interview and reduce the amount of information that needs to be recollected.

I established the qualitative study's credibility by conducting member checks to ensure that the interviews adequately represent the participants' experiences. Member checks involving participants' feedback on emerging findings are considered the essential validity measure for credibility (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Member checking through transcript reviews helps ensure the researcher's reliability; however, member checking necessitates sharing the researcher's findings, interpretations, and conclusions with participants (Candela, 2019). Member checking also enables participants to participate in the research process by fact-checking and authorizing the researcher's interpretations of the data they provide, thereby enhancing the research's

credibility and validity (Iivari, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) advocate for member checks to accurately express participants' responses.

Transferability

Transferability implies that an accurate impression of information would enable another person in a similar situation to conclude, compare similarities, and utilize necessary information (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (2016) assert that the researcher ensures accurate data transfer via accurate and detailed reporting. A detailed and rich description of context, location, and people will support the study's transferability (Clandinin, 2016) when the researchers are transparent about their analysis and trustworthiness. It is necessary to give a detailed description to ensure transferability; The inclusion of Black professional men from various sectors in this study may help organizational leaders better understand the disparity in career development opportunities faced by Black men attempting to project their careers.

Dependability

Dependability refers to comparing and reusing research strategies over time while remaining stable enough to produce a trustworthy research outcome (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This research study demonstrated dependability by presenting an audit trail that described how data were collected, how categories were derived, and the rationale for decisions made during the process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, I remained transparent throughout the development phase of the study, including the recruitment process, data analysis, interview notes, and other relevant data that contribute to its credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Moreover, I established dependability by adhering

to a consistent interview protocol and asking the same interview questions to each study participant. The interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the data collection was accurate.

Confirmability

The extent to which researchers substantiate or verify study findings is known as *confirmability* (Papakitsou, 2020). Confirmability implies that the study's findings are objective and unbiased because they do not reflect the researcher's personal beliefs (Clandinin, 2016). Researchers must have a high level of reflexivity to understand the research process and ensure that other researchers understand it (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I used two necessary checks to increase confirmability: first, I allowed the interviewees to review the transcribed interview for inconsistencies. Second, I ensured that no new themes emerged after interviewing the required number of participants and that data saturation was achieved (Tracy, 2019).

Ethical Procedures

I did not initiate the study until I received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board. The Belmont Report is a seminal work in the field of ethics. This report is founded on the principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for individuals protecting subjects and participants in clinical trials and research studies. For the selected participants of the study, informed consent forms were provided outlining the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of the research, the study's benefits and risks, and contact information for participants who may require additional information. Participants were informed that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, that there

were no penalties for withdrawing early, and that they could withdraw without incurring any consequences (Birt et al., 2016). Participants could be replaced if they no longer wished to contribute in the same way recruitment was initially decided (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The human participant is a critical component of the study as a data source (Tracy, 2019). Due to the intimate nature of the interactions with participants, deliberate research planning is a critical strategy for incorporating safeguards to avoid ethical dilemmas (Babbie, 2017). I made every effort to mitigate the ethical issues associated with social desirabilities, such as participants tailoring responses to appease me as the researcher or fearing repercussions if their responses were unfavorable to the organization or its leaders. My goal was to maintain confidentiality, and as such, I ensured that there were no identifying details in documents or transcripts. All the devices used for this study were owned and used by me alone, with no others authorized to use them. I conducted one-on-one interviews via Microsoft Teams (audio only) to ensure that other organization members did not see the interviewees.

Password-protected devices and locked file cabinets protected documentation and journal entries were accessible only to critical personnel. Access to this research information was restricted to Walden University faculty members with a legitimate need to know, such as a dissertation chairperson, committee member, or university reviewer. The data was securely archived for five years before being permanently deleted from the laptop and all other devices used in this study (see Kornbluh, 2015).

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, and the methodology were presented and summarized, and I offered a roadmap of the study's research method and design. I conducted individual online interviews with a purposeful sample of 8-12 participants, all professional Black men with life experience with career mentoring and executive sponsorship who shared the experience. The sample size of the final study was determined by data saturation. The study population met the following inclusion criteria: The sample population will meet the following inclusion criteria: adults over the age of 18; identifying as a Black man with a minimum of 10 years of professional organizational experience; holding a high-ranking position within their industry sector; and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study.

I used open-ended interview questions to understand the participants' storytelling from their perspectives. Utilizing the format of open-ended questions within a semistructured interview protocol while personally interfacing with the participants captured essential information using reflective journal notes and personal observation. The methodology included the rationale for participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, as well as the data analysis plan. Through the critical event analysis approach, I identified important events based on crucial life decisions and how they have potentially life-changing consequences in participants' lives, accomplished when qualitative researchers use triangulation for this purpose. Chapter 3 also included issues of trustworthiness. Ensuring credibility,

transferability, dependability, confirmability of the data analysis results, and ethical

procedures is essential for any qualitative study. The issues of trustworthiness are a

reflection of the quality of data that will be collected from this narrative inquiry study. In

Chapter 4, research results will be presented.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Scholars have hypothesized that Black men remain underrepresented in leadership positions in influential industry sectors because of a lack of long-term developmental relationships with highly ranked sponsors who can provide career support and power-sharing possibilities (South-Paul et al., 2021; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020). A literature gap exists in research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

I analyzed the data collected from nine semistructured interview questions adapted from an interview guide developed by Morris (2020) in an open-access, qualitative study exploring the lived experiences with sponsorship and mentorship of women of color reaching leadership positions in their careers. When triangulated with archival data and reflective field notes, the semistructured interview data findings provided in-depth insight into participants' experiences with the central phenomenon of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Presenting results from the data analysis to answer the research question may be significant to theory extension by contributing knowledge to the study's conceptual framework on Black males, who remain

underrepresented in leadership positions across various influential industries and sectors in the United States (see Wicker, 2021; Wingfield, 2019).

This chapter describes the research setting, participant demographics, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and evidence of trustworthiness and presents the study results. The chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 5.

<div align="center">**Research Setting**</div>

This narrative study's data was gathered through semistructured interviews with nine professional Black men holding top leadership positions in various industries. Microsoft Teams was used to conduct interviews with the transcription add-on for recording interview transcriptions. Each interview lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. Participation inclusion criteria included (a) Black men over the age of 18 with no less than 10 years of professional organizational experience, (b) holding a high-ranking position within their industry sector, and (c) having been mentored at some point in their careers.

Participants were recruited through the professional social media platform LinkedIn, using snowball sampling, and my professional networks from the African American Chamber of Commerce and African American Strategy Group (AASC). Recruitment was conducted by sending a request to participate in the study to potential candidates for the research via direct messaging on LinkedIn and direct email to communicate with other professional networks. Once a participant expressed interest in

participating in the study, a consent form was sent to them via email. Participants who responded with "I consent" were sent invitations to the agreed-upon interview date.

The interview protocol (Appendix B) was structured and used as a guide to ensure consistency with the interview questions and to make the interview comfortable and informative of the research topic and study background. For clarity, the interview protocol also included definitions of key terms that appeared throughout the interview questions. Each participant was reminded of their ability to terminate the interview and withdraw at any time. The participants in the study were asked if it was ok to record the interview before starting each recorded session. None of the participants declined to participate in the interviews, and all appeared very at ease and eager to share their experiences.

Demographics

Participants for this study were selected from my professional network and additional snowball sampling techniques. Using purposeful sampling and snowball techniques, participants who could provide rich data pertinent to the research questions were selected (see Etikan et al., 2016; Maxwell, 2008). The snowballing technique required identifying prospective participants and asking them to recommend other prospective participants who met the criteria. Each selected participant identified themselves as a Black man at the top of their profession.

All nine participants met the criteria for inclusion in this study, and the collected demographic data points were pertinent. Most participants were highly educated and between the ages of 41 and 60, with at least 15 years of experience in their respective

industries. All participants were highly accomplished, with varying degrees of

responsibility and, in some cases, supervising as many as 100 employees. Many had

begun their careers in low-level positions but eventually rose to the top. The

characteristics and demographics of participants in the study are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant's Demographics and Characteristics

Participant	Age	Years of experience	Education level	Title	Role	Organization sector
Participant 1	51–60	31	Doctorate's	Director ecological science dept	Director	Education
Participant 2	51–60	24	Master's	Branch chief	Antiharass ment supervisor	Government
Participant 3	41–50	27	Master's	Chief of Staff HR	HR manager	Private
Participant 4	51–60	21	Master's	Training program specialist	Supervisory training	Education
Participant 5	51–60	29	Doctorate's	Senior consultant	Director	Education
Participant 6	41–50	18	Master's	State conservationist	Supervisor	Government
Participant 7	51-60	16	Master's	Grants management	Operations chief	Government
Participant 8	51-60	22	Master's	Assistant Director of Lands & Realty	Deputy lands supervisor	Government
Participant 9	41-50	15	Master's	Management consultant	Ceo	Private

Data Collection

The data collection for this narrative inquiry study began on April 25, 2022, after receiving institutional review board (IRB) approval from Walden University. The IRB approval number for this research at Walden University is 04-25-22-1017132. The nine participants were recruited using purposeful and snowball sampling. I searched for potential participants for this study using the search function on the business social networking site LinkedIn. I used search terms related to the inclusion criteria to identify additional participants, aligning with the network and snowball sampling strategy (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). LinkedIn search terms included Black professional network, Successful Black men, Black men CEOs, successful Black entrepreneurs, Black professional mentors, Blacks in higher education, Blacks in technology, Blacks in government, and Blacks in medicine. The second search was conducted through my professional network built throughout my career, including senior Black professionals from professional Black strategic groups and Black chamber of commerce associations.

Following a search of the various LinkedIn groups, I selected profiles of Black professional men who could be candidates for the research study. Then, I connected with the potential candidates via LinkedIn request and sent them a message introducing myself and the study, along with a request to participate if they felt they met the inclusion criteria. The research invitations were sent to the professional email accounts of the potential participant candidates I already had in my professional network. I sent 16 invitations to members of my LinkedIn connections and my professional network, receiving eight responses. Two of the eight candidates responded that they did not meet

all the inclusion criteria, specifically, the mentorship portion. The other six participants who agreed to participate in the study were sent a consent form to their professional email. They all responded affirmatively after reviewing the form's additional study information.

Using the snowball technique to acquire more participants, two participants provided me with four additional recommendations of other Black professional men who may have met the inclusion criteria. I then contacted four of them to see if they were interested in participating in the study and received three responses from interested individuals. I sent a consent form to their professional email address for approval, bringing me to a total of nine participants. Despite not connecting with all the initial potential candidates, the recruitment effort was a success overall. I anticipated I would not receive a 100% response rate, so I sent invitations to more candidates than necessary.

Semistructured Interviews

The following data collection phase involved scheduling interviews with the participants at a convenient time and date that worked for us. The interview process was eight weeks, from April 29, 2022, to June 13, 2022. The objective was to conduct one weekly interview to have sufficient time between interviews for data analysis. I chose Microsoft Teams because of my familiarity with the program's functionality, specifically the audio and transcribing functions. Once the participants and I agreed on a date and time, I emailed each participant a calendar invite with the Microsoft Teams' embedded meeting instructions to join the meeting at the designated time. All participants successfully logged in to Microsoft Teams via the applications or the optional web-based

function for those who did not have the Microsoft Teams application loaded on their computer or mobile device. There were no technical issues with the audio or connections throughout the interviews. I captured the Microsoft Teams transcription output and corrected any misinterpretations as necessary.

During the interviewing phase of collecting data, I set aside any biases, assumptions, judgments, and stereotypes I might have held about Black men in professional settings. I acknowledged that I, too, have had mentors and sponsors throughout my professional career as a Black professional. I established rapport and maintained consistency with each participant by adhering to the protocol for semistructured interviews (Appendix B). I listened carefully to each participant and allowed them to speak freely. I kept handwritten journal notes to supplement the audit trail and balance the information across interview transcripts. Using journaling and reflective notes in conjunction increased the study's data and strengthened its validity. Both the interview questions and the interview settings were well-received by the participants.

After interviewing six participants, I continued to conduct interviews with the remaining three until I reached data saturation with participants seven through nine (see Schram, 2006). Data saturation has been reached when all possible observations have been made, and no more is needed to answer the research questions (Lowe et al., 2018). After hearing similar responses from Participants 7, 8, and 9, I began to experience data saturation because no new themes emerged (see Tracy, 2019). The interview data

provided rich, detailed stories about the Black men from various professions about their developmental relationships with mentors and career sponsors.

Member Checking

At the end of each participant interview, I uploaded the audio file and the recorded transcription from Microsoft Teams. After each interview session, the transcripts were automatically output to an electronic folder I created; all needed was to save the data in the desired document format for review. As part of the member-checking process, I emailed each participant a copy of the transcript so they could verify that I had accurately recorded their responses (see Motulsky, 2021). In the body of the email sent to each participant, it was stated that they had 48 hours to respond if they felt that there were statements that did not accurately reflect their responses.

The nine participants did not respond with requests for corrections or redactions of their interview responses, and they were satisfied with the results. Data collection concluded on June 15, 2022, following the completion of the member verification procedure. All data collected for this study were stored electronically on a secure laptop in a password-protected folder that was only accessible to me. The files included the transcriptions from each interview in Microsoft Word format and MP3-formatted recordings. I managed the confidentiality of the participants' data, following the guidelines in Chapter 3.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

This study is based on a hermeneutic approach that focuses on mediating human experience through storytelling (Clandinin, 2016). Hermeneutics is based on deciphering,

interpreting, and translating ideas by examining language and considering multiple

meanings of experiences, including my own. This methodology yields findings that are

likely to become significant research material (Webster & Mertova, 2007). By identifying

the terms and descriptions within each transcript, then comparing them across all data

collected from transcripts, the hermeneutic circle was used to examine the relationship

between the parts of each transcript and the whole of all transcripts (Paterson & Higgs,

2005). Hermeneutic researchers can investigate how participants' cultural traditions,

language, and history shape their lived experiences and interactions (Meretoja, 2017).

I used semistructured virtual audio interviews to collect data from the participants'

individual narratives. The same questions were asked to each participant in the same

order. I listened to the stories in search of explicit and implicit meanings. During the

coding process, I meticulously noted when a participant's response to one question

answered another and the themes that emerged from the responses. An audit trail of the

interview field notes was created throughout each audio interview session to classify raw

data, reveal emerging categories and theories, and mitigate possible research bias. I

downloaded the interview transcripts as Microsoft Word files and checked their accuracy

by listening to the audio recordings. The audio-recorded data from the individual

interviews were reviewed several times and evaluated to what was captured by field

notes.

The data analysis process began with the first step of restorying, a narrative data

analysis technique consisting of gathering data, analyzing the story (e.g., time, place,

plot, and scene), and then rewriting the data (Clandinin, 2016). The second step of

analysis consisted of using the critical events experienced by the participants, as defined

by place, time, characters, and significant events that were essential to the study's

objective (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Because events are such critical parts of people's

lives, using them as the primary focus of research provides a useful and insightful tool for

getting to the heart of what is important in that research. (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

The two-step approach to narrative analysis permits data analysis to be conducted

within the framework provided by the narratives' descriptions of processes, results

presentation, assumptions, risk, and negotiation (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Through the

lens of narrative inquiry, this study's data collection and analysis process conveyed rich

information from participants' personal narratives of crucial moments in their daily lived

experiences as professional Black men from various work sectors who have had

developmental relationships with mentors and career sponsors.

I used thematic coding when analyzing the collected data from participant

interviews. Thematic analysis is a qualitative researcher's technique to identify patterns or

themes from interview data to answer research questions (Clandinin, 2016). The process

of thematic analysis heavily relies on dialogue transcripts, allowing one to concentrate on

"what was said" as opposed to "how the story was told" (Riessman, 2008). Thematic

coding is a two-stage narrative data process consisting of production and description,

cross-referencing, categorizing, and thematic linking for comparative purposes

(Clandinin, 2016).

The second data analysis stage involved performing a critical event narrative

analysis on like, other, and critical narratives. This classification of events enables

assessing the complexity and breadth of narrative data collected (Mertova & Webster, 2019). A like event replicates the context, method, and resources used in the critical event but with different participants. Like events occur on the same level as critical events, and the context is similar to that of the critical event (Mertova & Webster, 2019). Additional anecdotal and incidental information is referred to as 'other events' and may shed light on the same issues. Other events occur in the same location, context, and period as the gathered critical and similar events (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

The following four coding categories and 11 themes emerged from data analysis responses to the interview questions:

- Coding Category 1: Need for constructive mentoring relationship
    - Themes: (a) challenging mentoring from fellow Black mentors, (b) progress before pride, and (c) responding diplomatically to perceived racism
- Coding Category 2: Mentors providing professional and personal growth development to protégés
    - Themes: (a) leadership development and (b) career advisement
- Coding Category 3: Significance of sponsorship for upward mobility
    - Themes (a) sharing of professional networks, (b) access to career opportunities, and (c) fast tracking to leadership roles
- Coding Category 4: Challenges faced by Black professional men in leadership roles today:

- Themes: (a) dealing with micro aggressions and discrimination, (b) double standards for Black leaders, and (c) mentoring the next generation of Black men aspiring to leadership positions

Triangulation is a technique that is typically utilized in qualitative research to ensure the credibility of the collected data. However, Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested that triangulation in story-based research was "almost impossible to achieve" (p. 91). I did not find any discrepant data that was inconsistent with the themes or that contradicted them. The data analysis results should explain the participants' lived experiences and the extent of the research problem.

Using criteria to support the trustworthiness of data collected and to be analyzed is essential in a research study. The critical event approach used in this study adequately achieved this process because the participants' openness and transparency emphasized, captured, and described events from stories of their daily experiences. (Webster & Mertova, 2007). I verified interpretations and themes continually during data collection. The four coding categories were grounded in theories and three key concepts that focus on aligning with the purpose of the study of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors: (a) Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept of developmental mentoring relationships, (b) Hewlett's (2013) concept of career sponsorship, and (c) Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of mentoring Black professional men.

What follows in Table 4 is a visual representation of the data analysis results in coding and theme examples taken from the 11 reformulated themes gleaned from the

critical events data analysis, organized by the four coding categories and subthemes and

supported by verbatim excerpts from participants' narratives.

Table 4

Coding and Theme Examples

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
2	"His (my mentor) first guidance to me was that every time you were rejected, counseled or otherwise treated where you feel that you are not being treated fairly just because the person may be a White male or White female and you are Black male doesn't mean it's discrimination, you owe it to yourself to keep performing and proving that you have what it takes to be at that next level."	Need for constructive mentoring relationship	Challenging mentoring from fellow Black mentors
5	"He introduced me to different theories and different people, You know and encouraged me to listen to different management and leadership experts like John Maxwell and other leadership gurus. We would then discuss what I learned and how I interpreted it as a Black man."	Mentors providing professional and personal growth development to protégés	Leadership development
7	" So my sponsor was a woman who helped me obtain a senior position by passing my name to the hiring authority in her organization. She painted a good picture for me because she was aware of my work ethic and quality of work. Her own reputation in the organization and endorsement of me, ultimately lead to the hiring authority selecting me for a leadership position. I do not believe I wouldn't have the opportunity without her, especially as a Black man in a predominately White organization. "	Significance of sponsorship for upward mobility	Sharing of professional networks
2	"You know when dealing with prejudices, whether it's microaggressions, biases, or even discrimination. These unfortunate attitudes can be physically and psychologically demanding on us."	Challenges faced by Black professional men in leadership roles today	Dealing with micro aggressions and discrimination
1	" If I hadn't had mentors at that time in my career, I probably wouldn't be able to navigate and become successful as I've been throughout my career and continue to move, you know, with upper mobility because some of the things that I see now, even with young people, they find themselves getting derailed just because they don't necessarily know how to handle some of those microaggressions or even those conscious and non-conscious biases behaviors towards them that they may see in their organization."	Need for constructive mentoring relationship	Progress before pride
3	I mean just professionally they provided counsel, and allowed me to bounce ideas off of them. They would say, I wouldn't go over there or hey, you know you might want to think twice before you do this, as far as career direction".	Mentors providing professional and personal growth development to protégés	Career advisement
8	"My sponsor saw something in me when I was in public relations, and he thought I would do extremely well in special uses type of positions. However, he recognized that I needed more of a leadership perspective, so he got me a job as a staff officer, which helped elevate me out a lot as a supervisor and leader still to this day."	Significance of sponsorship for upward mobility	Access to career opportunities

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The credibility of the data collected by the researcher is contingent upon the methodology employed, the approach to the research, the discoveries made, the familiarization of the participants, and the researcher's evaluation (Kowalik, 2018). The credibility of this narrative inquiry study relied on an ability to capture and interpret the storied experiences of professional Black men to the degree that would instill confidence in the reader of the study's rigor (Loh, 2013) and plausibility (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I utilized member checking by requesting that participants review the collected data, which helped establish credibility and validated trustworthiness (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Furthermore, member checking ensured that participant interviews accurately reflected their experiences.

Qualitative data saturation aims to ensure that the researcher obtains sufficient information to answer the research question and that no new themes emerge. After the ninth participant had been interviewed, it became clear that there would be no further discoveries of previously undiscovered themes. I was able to accurately record and transcribe the participants' responses by using both the audio recordings and in-depth handwritten notes. The interview transcripts were then separately emailed to each of the nine participants so they could verify the accuracy of their transcribed responses to the interview questions. I requested a response from the participants within 48 hours if they needed any changes.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability indicates the extent to which the findings of my study could be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Burkholder et al., 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Each participant satisfied the requirements to be included in the study and was a member of the population researched. The narrative inquiry design used for this study emphasized transferability by instilling a sense of verisimilitude rather than creating a false appearance of causality from the temporal aspects of narrative data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I ensured accurate data transfer through detailed reporting (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I provided a comprehensive and in-depth description of the study's context, setting, and participants so that the findings could be applied to other situations (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Dependability

The research data collected from Black professional experiences with developmental relationships with mentors and career sponsors made it possible to answer the research question and demonstrate the study's reliability. I established dependability by adhering to a consistent interview protocol and asking the same interview questions to each study participant. My study's dependability was ensured by an audit trail consisting of transcribed interviews, journal notes, data analysis procedures, and the procedure for identifying data themes. Before coding, I verified the accuracy of the participants' transcribed responses. Moreover, I remained transparent throughout the development phase of the study, including the recruitment process, data analysis, interview notes, and other relevant data that contribute to its reliability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrates that study results are not the product of the researcher's imagination or bias but are based on empirical evidence (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Throughout the research process, I constantly self-refed to maintain objectivity and counteract biases. I employed two necessary checks to increase confirmability: first, I allowed the interviewees to review the transcribed interview for inconsistencies. I distributed records of electronically transcribed participant responses to each participant to examine and verify the accuracy of interpretation using transcript review, a technique within the member checking procedure (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Second, I ensured that after interviewing the nine participants, no new themes emerged and that data saturation was achieved (Tracy, 2019).

Study Results

I developed the research question for this study based on the purpose of the study, the research problem, and the qualitative, narrative inquiry research design. I analyzed the rich, thick, and detailed narratives using transcribed, audio-recorded participant stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Aligning with the problem and purpose of the study and the qualitative paradigm, the central research question is as follows:

How do professional Black men narrate their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors?

The interview questions reflected the challenges and obstacles faced by successful Black men in forming developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. In

this section, the participant's responses were categorized into the following eleven reformulated themes gleaned from the critical events data analysis and organized here, supported by verbatim excerpts from participants' narratives. Because of participants' lived experiences, the critical events reflected in this section below represent their most memorable and impressionable moments. By applying the critical events data analysis method to primary data, it is possible to develop reportable research findings, results, and conclusions, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the lack of mentoring relationships and career sponsorship that many Black men face in their professional settings (see Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Challenging Mentoring from Fellow Black Mentors

This theme refers to the positive mentoring relationships protégés receive from Black mentors who are more familiar with their struggles and understand what it takes to advance. Mentors and mentees must have candid, difficult conversations for mentoring relationships to be effective, close, and conducive to positive change (Eby & Robertson, 2020). Participants recalled their difficult discussions with their Black mentors about overcoming the external and internal distractions that come with being a Black professional.

Participant 2: "His (my mentor) first guidance to me was that every time you were rejected, counseled or otherwise treated where you feel that you are not being treated fairly just because the person may be a White male or White female and you are Black male doesn't mean it's discrimination, but there are time when you have to speak up for not only yourself, sometimes for others, however, do not let it make you overly

distracted, you owe it to yourself to keep performing and proving that you have what it takes and you deserve to be where you are you are ready for that next level."

Participant 5: "I had some things that, you know, that I was dealing with for years and never stopped to deal with about myself, and they were starting to surface, and it was starting to get in the way of my work, but when I met face to face with my mentor, he was the strong Black man that stood up and told me about myself; he told me that he needed me to stop making excuses and get my act together. That was the tough love that I needed the time and it was difficult for me, but it probably saved my career. "

Progress Before Pride

This theme describes how Black men in the workplace must frequently compromise their personal pride or engage in code-switching to avoid having their advancements halted due to their race. Due to their racialized identities, many Black professionals are forced to live on the margins of society, where code-switching becomes second nature (Myers, 2020). Some participants recalled conversations with mentors in which they were advised that sometimes they might have to swallow their pride until they were in positions where they could effect change.

Participant 6: "So what my mentors prepared me for was just letting me know that, hey, these people are going to be looking at you, and you know, you're going to have to be on your "A" game. You're going to have to do what they do, but better, you know, just be a model citizen because, whether we like it or not, sometimes where the representative for the full community and your actions could impede the next Black

person's progress coming behind you, so sometimes you have to just bear it from time to time. Those are some of the sacrifices we must make".

Participant 8: " Some of the best advice my mentor told me was, you know, stand on your own, you know, on your own feet because everyone is not going to be an advocate or an ally for you in this agency. And there might be some people you work with that's going to try to, you know, to try to tear you down or be discriminative towards you. Now don't let anybody push you around, but more importantly, stay focused on your task, goals and stay focused on your future, so you have to make intelligent decisions and not let emotions get in the way of opportunities, and now that's not always fair to us Black men, but it will eventually play itself out."

Responding Diplomatically to Perceived Racism

This theme examined how mentors guided protégés through situations involving racism, discrimination, and inequality. The strategies employed by Black professionals to combat systemic racism in the workplace include avoidance, indirect communication, and direct confrontation (Davis, 2018). Participants discussed advice from mentors on responding appropriately to racial bias or discrimination they may encounter in the workplace as professional Black men.

Participant 2: "So for me, he's shown me that when I witness an act of prejudice happening, there are things I can do in the moment, such as being direct and addressing it, but also choosing a time and a place to address the situation. When I do feel like someone is being racist in and shape or form, you know, there are a couple of things that he advised me that I should do before trying to jump in or sort of spring to action,

meaning, I need to take time to let them talk, you know, without interrupting or jumping into conclusions. I need to validate their experiences because in institutions of prejudice there can be a lot of unknowns and then we'll be able to discuss what I perceived."

Participant 4:"One of the things that he told me was that, in his opinion, there is still racism, and he clarified that everyone came in with their own rose-colored goggles, that is, everyone views life through their own life experiences, and so he gave me some excellent advice regarding race relations and when to act and when not to act, yes, there's discrimination, yes, there's a lot of biases. Yes, people feel more comfortable with their own race or people that are similar to them in some kind of way, but those are just natural biases that everybody's going to have, Of course you need to be brave enough to put your hand up, however just because it gives the appearance, you don't constantly jump up, wave your hand and cry and discrimination because very soon you're going to be like the boy that that, that cried wolf. So, I guess it's short, he told me to pick my battles, but be reasonable."

Leadership Development

This theme refers to the developmental leadership relationship between mentors and protégés. Mentoring can aid diverse leaders in completing the necessary identity work to support their leadership development efforts and mitigate the impact of negative experiences, which can be especially damaging in unsupportive and non-inclusive work environments (Murrell & Onosu, 2022). The participants described their mentors' various methods to help them become better leaders.

Participant 5: "My mentor prepared me in the sense that he helped me become consciously competent about you know what it was I was doing, for example, he introduced me to different theories and different people, you know and encouraged me to listen to different management and leadership experts like John Maxwell and other leadership gurus, even having me read One *Minute Manager*". We would then discuss what I learned and how I interpreted it as a Black man. He would put that type of stuff in front of me, So I would say he prepared me more for leadership more than anyone else."

Participant 2 : "So in that essence, my mentor used some developmental tools, you know, meaning my 360 leadership assessments and the Myers-Briggs Type indicator assessment that I've taken over the years. Using those types of leadership tools, my mentor really helped guide me and enhance the areas that I needed to improve. One of the things that he taught me is that when we typically try to work on weaknesses, we don't tend to put a lot of effort into improving those weaknesses, however when we classify them as areas of improvement vice weaknesses, we tend to act on it with more enthusiasm. He really put emphasis on me to take stock in my own personal growth."

Career Advisement

This theme describes the guidance provided by mentors to protégés to help them navigate and excel in their careers. Personal and professional growth and the definition, molding, and remaking of jointly constructed identities in the workplace are all made possible through mentoring relationships (Murrell & Onosu, 2022). The participants discussed the importance of having mentors when pursuing professional career aspirations.

Participant 1: "A senior-level official in the State office was aware that some of us Black students had been hired as student interns, so they reached out to us to let us know they were available as mentors, providing us with his phone numbers and other means of communication so that we could get to know one another. We met up at a conference and we had a discussion and talked about what I wanted to do with my career and the importance of having mentors and people that you could talk to and people that could help you along the way in terms of your career, and, you know, so that's kind of how it started; then over the course of probably the next 10 to 15 years even this was an individual who I would say, we had an informal mentoring relationship."

Participant 3: "I mean just professionally, they provided counsel and allowed me to bounce ideas off them; they would say, I wouldn't go over there or hey, you know you might want to think twice before you do this, as far as career direction. So, I have had those types of mentors that always caused me to leave the conversation reflecting and trying to think on really what is the best routes to take in my career and these were mentors who you know, who were extremely high in the administration and some senior execs as well."

Sharing of Professional Networks

This theme describes the importance of networking and providing Black professionals access to the organization's key contacts. Access to social networks is essential for Black professional men due to racial disparities in access to information and resources flowing through social networks and disparities in the benefits associated with using social network resources (Pedulla & Pager, 2019). The participants discussed how

their sponsors assisted them in establishing fruitful connections within their respective organizations.

Participant 7: " So my sponsor was a woman who helped me obtain a senior position by passing my name to the hiring authority in her organization. She painted a good picture for me because she was well aware of my work ethic and quality of work. Her own reputation in the organization and endorsement of me ultimately lead to the hiring authority selecting me for a leadership position. I do not believe I would have the opportunity without her, especially as a Black man in a predominately White organization."

Participant 1: "So I've been fortunate to have mentors who can also be leadership career sponsors because they were in positions of power or leadership that they had the authorities to, you know, to make things happen, from travel to training, and opportunities for shadowing. They had connections and access to other people who they could share with me and it allowed me to have access and relationship with other people who were very helpful in helping me get some of the places I need to get in terms of my career. I think most of the people I've had relationship with, fortunately I've been able, they've been able to serve in both capacities."

Access to Career Opportunities

This theme illustrates the benefit of career sponsors in their ability to provide career opportunities for which a mentor may lack the power, resources, or connections. Mentoring without executive sponsorship may hinder promotion and career opportunities across racial lines (Davis et al., 2021; Wingfield, 2019). Participants shared their stories

about how their career sponsor provided access for them to career and promotion opportunities within their organization.

Participant 9 : "And like I said, my principal was amazing; she recruited me as African American, and she let me be the head coach, even though she didn't really have a coaching spot, but she created a coaching spot so she could get me into school because having a Black male teacher right in the school was beneficial for her in so many different ways, especially me being a Spanish teacher as well. I've gotten involved with people who wanted me to win, and they treated me as such and they helped me to really become a really good teacher, and so I feel like my sponsorship experiences have been really positive. "

Participant 6: "I got a call from the gentleman that hired me for my first position, and he said hey, if you ever put in for another job, you need to let me know first; so just talking with him and, you know, asking him, what do I got to do to grow and expand my career, so he got me involved in some collateral duty opportunities, you know, one being civil rights, basically, exposure that would kind of expand my, you know, breath of knowledge. Through that opportunity, I was able to get a supervisory role, and I was in that supervisor role for three months, before getting involved in a leadership development program that our that our agency has, and I was a representative for my State."

Fast-Tracking to Leadership Roles

This theme examines the various ways in which career sponsors were able to expedite the advancement of protégés to leadership positions with increasing responsibilities within their organizations, thereby assisting the protégés' career

advancement. Sponsorship is a component of mentoring that accelerates the protégé's exposure to influential networks and provides career opportunities through mentor influence (Hewlett, 2013; Sims et al., 2021). Participants discussed their relationship with their career sponsors and how their sponsors provided them the opportunity to advance in their careers.

Participant 1: "I do have one example that I'll share that I think is really that's relevant to this discussion; I was at the time that I was kind of trying to make the transition from a sort of a lower level or maybe mid-level supervisor to a leadership team member position at the State level. You know, I really didn't have at that point the kinds of experiences that, you know, that I was going to need in order to compete for some of the jobs that were going to be coming open that I would probably be interested in, but one of the things that my sponsor helped me, was to obtain was a detail opportunity in a position that allowed me to get that experience and more."

Participant 5: "Yeah so, I have had sponsors who pushed me and even did the heavy lifting for me, which opened doors; for example, my sponsor filled out an application for an opportunity that helped me excel to the next level. Here's a quick story; I taught science and math and, I was teaching science when the principal comes to my classroom which wasn't, you know out of the norm for a principal show up in your class. So she walks me to the office and she starts telling me, you know, I think you'd be good as an administrator, so she's the one that actually pulled me out of the classroom and into the administration side. "

Dealing with Microaggressions and Discrimination

This theme discusses some racial obstacles Black professional men face while working in their respective fields. Some of the challenges for Black professional men navigating predominantly white spaces are racial discrimination and the assumption by their White colleagues that they are unqualified (Hudson et al., 2020). Microaggressions send messages not only to people of color but also to the rest of society about where group boundaries are drawn and which groups are given the most respect and consideration (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021). Participants reflected on their professional experiences as Black men and their emotional states when confronted with discrimination or other forms of racism.

Participant 4: "I think as a Black male, there are specific challenges we deal with for instance, when dealing with diversity and inclusion efforts, many are likely to believe that you're only being promoted just because of the color your skin, and not because the broad background you bring, not because your educational background, not any of the above. I find that to be very true in my profession and my organization and I live with that on a routine regular basis. And I'll add to that with this, if you ever got on an elevator and somebody clutched their purse, and the next day you go to a meeting and find out that they're one of your employees, you would know what I feel."

Participant 3: "You know what, to be honest, when it comes down to racial biases and those types of things, I saw it consistently and especially in the professional realms. Right now, I think Black men have the hardest because if a Black man speaks a certain way and is accepted by their Caucasian colleagues, they might become the token Black

man of the organization, and you cant have many of them just one or two. And it gets old and tiring chasing after everything and working extremely hard for acceptance."

Double Standards for Black Leaders

This theme refers to Black professionals' unfairness in leadership positions compared to their counterparts. Black men must simultaneously combat traditional images of blackness while battling for equal standing with their White counterparts complicates Black male leadership in primarily White organizations (Rudel et al., 2021). The participants reflected on their times as leaders when they were subjected to unequal treatment while serving in their roles.

Participant 4: "I will tell you this, I think my leadership role is more challenging and much more difficult as a Black man. I'll give you this typical example, I've seen my White male supervisor lose his temper during heated arguments, but I know that if I did that, the consequences would be different. Those are some of the things we have to deal with and be cautious of because some of them are waiting for us to make a mistake".

Participant 3: "People might not see the greatness in you, you know, so it's up to you to bring it out, and it's up to you to challenge yourself and put yourself in front of them because you will have to work twice as hard, and you may only get one chance to show your skill set. On top of that, the only time you can turn off is when you go home and close the door, but that's just the reality of being a Black leader, no matter where you work."

Mentoring the Next Generation of Black Men Aspiring to Leadership Positions

This theme describes the need for current Black leaders to provide mentoring and sponsorship opportunities to future generations of Black men so that they are not left behind in organizations due to lack of access and racial inequality. Same-race developmental relationships in the organization may provide significantly more psychosocial support than relationships between races (Randel et al., 2020; Thomas, 1990; Thorne et al., 2021; Tillman, 2001). Participants described the necessity for Black leaders to take on the responsibility and challenge to assist other Black men in their organizations who may lack mentorship and career sponsorship.

Participant 9: So, I've had actually pretty good mentors and sponsors throughout my life that I always talk about the fact that I got blessed to have good leaders, to start with my father all the way up through my Marine Corps career. And the thing that I had with the leaders and the mentors that I had, that I think is really beneficial is the fact that I had leaders who were interested in helping you to become a leader, instead of trying to hold your hand or walk you through and do it for you. That's the type of mentoring that we have to provide for the younger upcoming Black men.

Participant 8: I think we as Black professional men, who have success need to make sure that we are mentoring, we are sponsoring, we are allies, we're advocates for individuals like us, because it's not the recruiting and the outreach portion. That's the most important part of it, are the most important part is retaining individuals into this agency when they get here.

Summary

Chapter 4 discusses the eleven important themes that emerged from the research. This narrative inquiry study used storytelling to record the experiences of nine Black professionals in various career sectors in the United States. This qualitative narrative study provided in-depth, rich narrative data responses to the CRQ: *How do professional Black men narrate their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors?* A critical events analysis of the nine participants' narratives uncovered the following four coding categories: (a) need for a constructive mentoring relationship, (b) mentors providing professional and personal growth development to protégés, (c) significance of sponsorship for upward mobility, and (d) challenges faced by Black professional men in leadership roles today.

The 11 themes derived from the nine participants' narratives through critical event analysis were as follows: (a) challenging mentoring from fellow Black mentors, (b) progress before pride, (c) responding diplomatically to perceived racism, (d) leadership development and (e) career advisement (f) sharing of professional networks, (g) access to career opportunities, and (h) fast-tracking to leadership roles (i) dealing with microaggressions and discrimination, (j) double standards for Black leaders, and (k) mentoring the next generation of Black men aspiring to leadership positions.

The existence of trustworthy evidence was addressed to adhere to the criteria credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis results, I utilized both member checking and the critical event approach to analyze narrative data, which assisted in emphasizing,

capturing, describing, and capturing the essence of the daily life experiences of the participants. I implemented audit trails and reflective note journaling to enhance the data's credibility. I presented the participants' accounts and transcribed them for confirmation from audio interviews conducted virtually in Microsoft Teams.

In Chapter 5, I will provide a more in-depth interpretation of the study's findings by focusing on how these findings compare and contrast to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5, I also provide additional insight into the limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future studies and the implications that inform organizational leaders on how Black men can successfully build developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. I selected the narrative inquiry design to answer my research question because Black professional men are uniquely qualified to use storytelling to express and reflect on the daily experiences of Black men (see Louis & Freeman, 2018; Tillman, 2001). I collected data through in-depth conversations with nine participants about their daily interactions with mentors and career sponsors as they navigated their careers using the narrative inquiry research method (see Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The theories and concepts that served as the foundation for this research included three key concepts that focus on aligning with the purpose of the study of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors: (a) Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept of developmental mentoring relationships, (b) Hewlett's (2013) concept of career sponsorship, and (c) Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of mentoring Black professional men. In this empirical investigation, I sought to advance knowledge using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offer access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector (see Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

While high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors typically rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to advance protégés to leadership positions, it has been demonstrated that this strategy excludes Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). A critical event analysis of the nine participants' narratives revealed 11 prominent themes: (a) challenging mentoring from fellow Black mentors, (b) progress before pride, (c) responding diplomatically to perceived racism, (d) leadership development, and (e) career advisement (f) sharing of professional networks, (g) access to career opportunities, and (h) fast-tracking to leadership roles (i) dealing with microaggressions and discrimination, (j) double standards for Black leaders, and (k) mentoring the next generation of Black men aspiring to leadership positions.

Interpretation of Findings

This narrative inquiry's findings confirm or extend current knowledge in the discipline, with each case presenting examples from the literature discussed and critically analyzed in Chapter 2. In this section, I present the study's findings in the context of the four coding categories that emerged from the data analysis. I followed Meraz et al.'s (2019) and Polkinghorne's (1995) recommendations that using multiple analytic methods to interpret narrative data can strengthen the findings' validity. The judgment about the validity of study findings is based on the weight of the evidence and the likelihood that a claim is valid (Hammersley, 2016). Therefore I compared these coding categories with relevant concepts from four different sources: (a) the data collected, (b) my use of the inductive approach in pattern identification and theme formulation during the data

analysis, (c) methodological considerations within the qualitative paradigm, and, (d) the conceptual framework and the research from extant, updated literature.

In each subsection below, I compared my findings with seminal authors' research presented in the conceptual framework and my critical review of the literature (e.g., Creary, 2020; Eby & Robertson, 2020; Louis & Freeman, 2018; Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021**;** Wingfield, 2019). I demonstrate how the findings confirm and extend existing knowledge about how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Extension studies, such as this empirical investigation, provide replication evidence and extend previous studies' results in new theoretical directions (Bonett, 2012).

The Need for Constructive Mentoring Relationships

Black men and those minority employees who require more mentoring may be overlooked in organizations where contentious mentor-protégé relationships develop, resulting in unhealthy work environments (Liu et al., 2020). Black Professional men require mentor relationships structured to provide emotional support, a safe space for venting, and goal-oriented. The study results confirmed the need for professional Black men to have a mentor and frank and challenging conversations with their mentors. Most of the participants in the study also mentioned the need for a strong role model willing to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations with them to help them overcome social disadvantages and achieve their goals. These conversations are often between fellow Black mentors who have often had similar experiences. The study's findings are consistent with Eby and Robertson's (2020) task, goal, and bond (the three elements of

therapy), which provided a common framework for understanding the importance of the client-therapist relationship in the collaborative process of reducing client distress.

Mentors Providing Professional and Personal Growth Development to Protégés

Black men have been found to have greater difficulty initiating developmental relationships(Burt et al., 2019). On the other hand, those with a cultural background like their mentors are more likely to initiate and sustain developmental relationships in the traditional dyadic mentoring structure (Burt et al., 2019). The exchange of knowledge and experience between mentors and mentees in mentoring relationships can benefit protégés in terms of their professional and personal development capacity. My results confirmed that mentoring relationships could strengthen the skills of novice principals by concentrating mentoring sessions on developing their capacity as learning leaders and committing to mentoring sessions that support teaching and learning (see Hayes, 2019).

The participants in my study confirmed that protégés benefited greatly from the developmental opportunities provided by their mentors while in developmental relationships. The findings of this study expanded on the existing knowledge with Kram's (1985) description of mentoring relationships in the workplace, which describes how mentees advance their careers and develop a sense of professional identity and competence through professional development.

Significance of Sponsorship for Upward Mobility

Mentoring alone provides protégés with guidance and dialogue on career development. However, mentoring without executive sponsorship can impede promotion opportunities across racial lines due to the pervasive systemic racism in many American

organizations (Goings, 2021; Wingfield, 2019). Sponsorship enhances the visibility, social capital, and professional skill set of protégés in various contexts and professions (Morris, 2020; Patel & Awan, 2020). This research study's results align with the seminal work of Hewlett (2013), who defined career sponsorship as the act of advocating and promoting a high performer within a professional network. Participants described how having a career sponsor gave them opportunities to advance in their careers and obtain leadership positions that they may not have had otherwise. The study advanced knowledge by employing a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who provide access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector (see Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

Challenges Faced by Black professional Men in Leadership Roles Today

Black male leadership in organizations dominated by Whites is hampered by the fact that Black men must simultaneously combat traditional images of Blackness and fight for parity with their White counterparts (Rudel et al., 2021). Black men in corporate America have demonstrated resilience in the face of racial bias to continue navigating racial bias in the workplace due to embedded systems of systemic racism (Hudson et al., 2020). The study's findings shed light on the numerous obstacles they had to face and triumph over as Black men on their path to leadership roles while currently serving in those roles. The study's participants confirmed that they followed the guidance of their mentors, which helped them to persevere despite those obstacles. The findings in this research align with Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of mentoring Black professional

men by the counternarrative aspect of CRT to understand the voices of Black

professional men who had reached a high level of professional responsibility with same-

race mentoring and cross-cultural mentoring.

Limitations of the Study

All studies have limitations regardless of methodology or design (Yin, 2014).

Scholars conducting qualitative research must be familiar with the limitations of their

study design, data collection, and analysis methods to increase their findings' validity

(Tracy, 2019). This study was restricted to a small, purposeful sample of Black men over

18 years old with at least 10 years of experience in various professions and a willingness

to discuss their developmental mentoring and career sponsor relationships. I sent

recruitment letters to my professional network on LinkedIn and other professional groups

with which I am affiliated. Some communications issues resulted in minor delays in

responses; however, I was able to interview nine of the 13 qualified participants for the

research study who responded to their acceptance letters. The initial goal of the

recruitment process was to capture professional Black men s from many work sectors as

possible; however, it would not have been feasible to meet that goal entirely.

All participants were volunteers, but there is always a chance that they

misrepresented events. Participants' experiences are crucial because they provide

substance for an information-rich study while adhering to the credibility-establishing

guidelines for coded narrative data established by narrative methodologies (Webster &

Mertova, 2007). The interviews were conducted virtually using the audio platform for

Microsoft Teams. Internet-based interviews are comparable to face-to-face interviews;

however, there is still a loss of intimacy and an inability to accurately read body language and nonverbal cues (Janghorban et al., 2014). I used the interview method approved by Walden University's IRB, which enabled the interview interactions to avoid contextual information and helped me avoid personal reflexivity and maintain a highly unbiased atmosphere (see Kraus, 2018). Transferability is the degree that something can be replicated (Patton et al., 2017; Webster & Mertova, 2007). I collected and analyzed the data and ensured its transferability to other populations and contexts with similar characteristics (see Stake, 2010).

<div align="center">

Recommendations

</div>

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

This qualitative research study provided a deeper understanding of the daily experiences of Black men in various professions who have had developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. This study confirmed not only the challenges faced by Black professional men in the organization but also how mentoring and career sponsorship can help improve the equity of Black men in predominantly White organizations. Using qualitative narrative inquiry for this study provided rich data through the participants' narratives, from which I could extract significant themes.

The findings of this study revealed factors based on three key concepts that align with the purpose of the study, which was to examine how professional Black men perceive their daily experiences in forming developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors: 1) Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept *of developmental mentoring relationships*; 2) Hewlett's (2013) concept of career sponsorship*; and*. 3) Louis

and Freeman's (2018) concept of *mentoring Black professional men*. Many organizations offer formal and informal mentoring programs, but they may have neglected to consider the racial dynamics that influence the lives of many Black men in professions across the United States. It has been documented that high-ranking organizational sponsors and mentors exclude Black men from leadership positions when they rely heavily on social networks and personal connections to promote proteges to leadership positions (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019).

The thematic factors that contributed to these findings suggest that organizations conduct a more in-depth examination of the diversity, inclusion, and equity aspects of mentoring and sponsorship, as well as how the combination of these two variables greatly benefits Black professional men. The findings of this study's data also suggest that Black professionals in senior executive positions should mentor and sponsor other Black professionals who are emerging leaders and may lack access to professional networks, career development, and advancement opportunities.

Recommendation for Future Research

Research employing a layered account approach to position and deconstruct Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who provide access to promotion opportunities are lacking (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021). This study contributes to the existing literature on the experiences of Black professional men, a demographic group that remains underrepresented in leadership positions across numerous influential industries and sectors in the United States due to limited access to executive sponsorship (Wingfield, 2019). Participants in

this study asserted unequivocally that Black professional men face obstacles in their leadership paths that are unique to them as minorities in the workplace and that it is nearly impossible to reach the top without mentoring and career sponsorship.

This exploratory qualitative research study presented findings that could provide an opportunity for replication using qualitative methods and quantitative validation in future studies. Based on the study's data and findings, I have developed relevant recommendations for future research that will extend and add value to the study. The first recommendation is that more research is conducted to determine whether a lack of mentoring and career sponsorship is to blame for low minority retention in predominantly White organizations and institutions. In addition, I recommend that researchers investigate the impact of developmental relationships and career sponsorship on the lack of Black professional executives in high-level organizations. This research recommendation will provide qualitative and quantitative researchers with a deeper understanding of the developmental relationships of Black professional men with mentors and career sponsorships through multiple research methods.

Implications

Implications for Social Change

The role of sponsorship in Black men's mentoring programs as an interface to a successful job promotion has mainly been ignored by researchers in leadership and management (Murrell et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2020). When analyzing diversity and inclusion initiatives, organizations might find it helpful to investigate the experiences of black men concerning mentorship and career sponsorship. The study provided a wealth of

information regarding how career sponsors provided at least some degree of equity for Black professional men who were fortunate enough to have one or more of these individuals in their careers. Regrettably, those professional Black men who do not have access to this significant career resource will have a much more challenging time moving up the corporate ladder. A stereotypical perception of Black men lacking emotional intelligence, soft skills, or motivation to ascend to valued management positions often leads to their lack of sponsorship in predominately White organizations (Sparkman, 2021).

When I started this research study, I was curious to know how mentorship and career sponsorship played a role in those few professional Black men who have achieved top executive or leadership positions. This study allowed professional Black men to share their perspectives, concerns, and suggestions regarding the significant impact developmental relationships with mentors and career sponsors had on their lives. All the study participants recalled the invaluable career advice from mentors and career opportunities from sponsors and how instrumental these developmental relationships were in leading to their professional growth and success. This study has implications for positive social change by raising awareness of successful experiences of Black men in the workplace and thus altering perceptions on the value of Black men as aspiring organizational leaders, given that narratives of racial experiences help to inform employers' outlook on equity, inclusion, and social justice within an organizational context (see Eby & Robertson, 2020; Wicker, 2021)

Implications for Professional Practice

The experiences of professional Black men establishing developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors are poorly understood (Robotham et al., 2021; Wicker, 2021). Previous studies on under-representation, social isolation, cultural incongruence, and academic obstacles professional Black men face have generated important policy and practice implications, yet little is known about how Black male professionals excel and persist despite these obstacles (Burt et al., 2019). The significance of my study's findings may inform organizational leaders about how successful Black men in various professions can achieve success and mitigate systemic racism by receiving adequate mentoring and career sponsorship.

Professional Black men at the entry-level and beyond may not always have accessibility to mentorship and career sponsor, even when seeking out these resources themselves. High-ranking sponsors and mentors usually promote their proteges to leadership positions using social networks and personal connections; however, this method has been shown to leave out Black men (Murrell et al., 2021; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). From this study's findings and scholarly literature review, I recommend the following best practices for top leaders in organizations to gain a better understanding of professional Black men's experiences with developmental relationships with mentors and careers sponsors:

1. Organizations with mentorship programs may wish to evaluate the racial aspect of their programs to determine whether Black men are adequately represented in mentorship and career sponsorship roles.

2. Provide mentors with adequate resources to help enhance and benefit their developmental relationships with their protégés.

3. Encourage and support Black resource groups within their organization as an avenue to share resources such as career opportunities, professional development, and networks.

4. Explore the current interest of qualified Black men within the organization in available or potential leadership career opportunities.

5. Examine the selection process for the organization's education, career, and leadership development programs to ensure that Black men are not intentionally or inadvertently excluded.

Implications for Theory

The concepts that framed this study were 1) Eby and Robertson's (2020) concept *of developmental mentoring relationships*; 2) Hewlett's (2013) concept of career sponsorship*; and*. 3) Louis and Freeman's (2018) concept of *mentoring Black professional men*. I extended these three supporting theories and provided new insight into developmental workplace mentoring using the attachment theory (Germain, 2011), interdependence theory (Eby, 2007), and the working alliance theory as a theoretical lens (Bordin, 1979). The gap amongst these numerous streams of research is founded on the lack of research using a layered account approach that positions and deconstructs Black men's narratives of developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors who offered access to promotion opportunities within their given industry sector (Murrell et al., 2021; Sisco, 2020; Wicker, 2021).

I fulfilled this research study's purpose and answered the central research question using a narrative inquiry approach to understand better how professional Black men view their developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Throughout their leadership journey, successful professional Black men relied heavily on developmental relationships with mentors and career sponsors, according to the findings of this study. This study is significant to theory because it provided insights and new knowledge on the combinations of a developmental mentoring relationship and career sponsorship for Black professional men. Mentoring alone provides protégés with career development guidance and dialogue, whereas mentoring without executive sponsorship can impede promotion opportunities across racial lines (Davis et al., 2021; Wingfield, 2019).

Conclusions

This qualitative, narrative inquiry study aimed to understand how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors. Black professional men still face microaggressions, exclusion, discrimination, and other forms of racism in the workplace. Black people, in general, account for about 12% of the U.S. population. Still, they occupy only 3.2% of the senior leadership roles at large companies in the U.S. and just 0.8% of all Fortune 500 CEO positions (Coqual, 2019). To increase their chances of obtaining leadership positions, Black professionals must seek developmental relationships with mentors and career sponsors from within or outside the organization.

Most published research on mentoring has examined it as a personal resource for establishing a sustainable leadership career (Dey et al., 2021). All participants in this

study have attained high-level leadership positions in their respective fields and attribute their success to positive mentor relationships and career sponsors who helped them advance their careers. The results of my study reflect the participants' experiences and instruct leaders to be more methodical when accessing the sponsorship component of mentoring precisely because of the effect it has on Black professionals within their organization. In addition, participants encourage other Black and non-Black executive leaders to seek out young Black professional men who may feel isolated and require career guidance.

References

Assari, S., Lankarani, M. M., & Caldwell, C. H. (2018). Does discrimination explain high

    risk of depression among high-income African American men? *Behavioral*

    Sciences (Basel, Switzerland), 8(4), 40. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs8040040

Avery, D. R., McKay, P. F., Roberson, Q. M., & Thomas, K. M. (2021). REAL

    (racialized experiences in academic life) talk: A curated conversation with four

    Black fellows. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 1-

    17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-021-09783-y

Babbie, E. (2017). *Basics of social research* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Baker, S. J., & Lucas, K. (2017). Is it safe to bring myself to work? Understanding

    LGBTQ experiences of workplace dignity. *Canadian Journal of Administrative*

    Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration, 34(2), 133-148.

    https://doi.org/10.1002/cjas.1439

Bennett, E. E., & McWhorter, R. R. (2021). Virtual HRD's role in crisis and the post

    Covid-19 professional lifeworld: Accelerating skills for digital

    transformation. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 23*(1), 5–

    25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422320973288

Berry, L. E. (2016). The research relationship in narrative enquiry. *Nurse*

    Researcher, 24(1), 10–14. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.2016.e1430

Bierema, L. L. (2022). "Can you hear me now?" Technical and human factors in virtual

    developmental relationships. In R. Ghosh & H. M. Hutchins (Eds.), *HRD*

perspectives on developmental relationships (pp. 241-272). Palgrave Macmillan.

   https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85033-3_11

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A

   tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? Sage

   Journals: *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802–

   1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Bjursell, C., & Sädbom, F. (2018). Mentorship programs in the manufacturing

   industry. *European Journal of Training and Development, 42*(7/8), 455–

   469. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-05-2018-0044

Blake-Beard, S. (2015). Confronting paradox: Exploring mentoring relationships as a

   catalyst for understanding the strength and resilience of professional Indian

   women. In P. Kumar (Ed.), *Unveiling Women's Leadership*, (pp. 25–43). Palgrave

   Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137547064_3

Bloch, K. R., Taylor, T., Church, J., & Buck, A. (2021). An intersectional approach to the

   glass ceiling: Gender, race, and share of middle and senior management in US

   workplaces. *Sex Roles, 84*(5-6), 312–325. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-

   01168-4

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market*

   Research, 19(4), 426–432. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053

Bonett, D. G. (2012). Replication-extension studies. *Current Directions in Psychological*

   Science, 21(6), 409–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721412459512

Bordin, E. S. (1979). The generalizability of the psychodynamic concept of the working

 alliance. *Psychotherapy, 16*(3), 252–260. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0085885

Branson-Davis, K. (2018). Activating the power within: Sponsorship among Black

 women professionals (Publication No. 2092260882) [Doctoral dissertation,

 Temple University]. ProQuest Dissertation

 Publishing. https://doi.org/10.34944/dspace/829

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data

 saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size

 rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 13*(2), 201–

 216. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1704846

Brooms, D. R., Franklin, W., Clark, J. S., & Smith, M. (2021). "It's more than just

 mentoring": Critical mentoring Black and Latino males from college to the

 community. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 24*(2), 210–

 228. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2018.1538125

Brutus, S., Aguinis, H., & Wassmer, U. (2013). Self-reported limitations and

 future   directions in scholarly reports analysis and recommendations. *Journal of

 Management, 39*(1), 48–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312455245

Burke, M. G. (2020). Moving beyond the Statements: The need for action to address

 structural racism at predominantly white institutions. *International Journal of

 Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Higher Education, 5*(1), 174–

 179. https://doi.org/10.32674/jimphe.v5i1.2632

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K., & Crawford, L. (2016). *The scholar-practitioner's guide to research design* (1st ed.). Laureate Publishing.

Burt, B., McKen, A. S., Burkhart, J. A., Hormell, J., & Knight, A. J. (2016, June 26-29). *Racial microaggressions within the advisor-advisee relationship: Implications for engineering research, policy, and practice* [Paper presentation]. ASEE 123rd Annual Conference and Exposition. New Orleans, LA, United States. https://doi.org/10.18260/p.26029

Burt, B. A., Williams, K. L., & Palmer, G. J. (2019). It takes a village: The role of emic and etic adaptive strengths in the persistence of Black men in engineering graduate programs. *American Educational Research Journal, 56*(1), 39–74. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218789595

Byars-Winston, A., Womack, V. Y., Butz, A. R., McGee, R., Quinn, S. C., Utzerath, E., & Thomas, S. B. (2018). Pilot study of an intervention to increase cultural awareness in research mentoring: Implications for diversifying the scientific workforce. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science, 2*(2), 86 94. https://doi.org/10.1017/cts.2018.25

Cain, C. C. (2021). Beyond the IT artifact- Studying the underrepresentation of Black men and women in IT. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, *24*(3), 157-163. https://doi.org/10.1080/1097198X.2021.1954315

Caine, V., Estefan, A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2019). A return to methodological commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. In D. J Clandinin (ed.), *Journeys*

in narrative inquiry (pp. 265–277).

Routledge., https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273896-16

Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the Function of Member Checking. *Qualitative Report, 24*(3), 619–628. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3726

Cannon, R. M. (2021). *Mentoring Strategies with African American Males* (Doctoral dissertation, Trevecca Nazarene University).

Caver, K., & Livers, A. (2021). The paradox of the seed and soil: Cultivating inclusive leadership for a "new normal. *Leadership, 17*(1), 18–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715020976201

Chanland, D. E., & Murphy, W. M. (2018). Propelling diverse leaders to the top: A developmental network approach. *Human Resource Management, 57*(1), 111–126. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21842

Chow, R. (2021). Don't just mentor women and people of color, sponsor them. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2021/06/dont-just-mentor-women-and-people-of-color-sponsor-them

Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry: A methodology for studying lived experience. *Research Studies in Music Education, 27*(1), 44–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X060270010301

Clandinin, D. J. (2016). *Engaging in narrative inquiry.*

Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315429618

Clandinin, D. J. (2019). Narrative inquiry: Both a view of, and a methodology for, studying experience. In D. J Clandinin (ed.), *Journeys in narrative inquiry* (pp. 211-227). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273896

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, E. (2006). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* Jossey-Bass/Wiley Publisher.

Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, J. (2010). Narrative Inquiry. In P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGaw (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (3rd ed., pp. 436–441). Elsevier., https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-044894-7.01387-7

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2–14. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002

Coqual. (2019). *Being Black in Corporate America*: *An Intersectional Explanation*. https://coqual.org/reports/being-black-in-corporate-america-an-intersectional-exploration/

Craig, M. A., & Richeson, J. A. (2014). More diverse yet less tolerant? How the increasingly diverse racial landscape affects Americans' racial attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40*(6), 750–761. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214524993

Creary, S. (2020, July 8). How to be a better ally to your black colleagues. *Harvard Business Review,* •••, 2–5. https://hbr.org/2020/07/how-to-be-a-better-ally-to-your-black-colleagues

Creary, S. (2021). Seizing the Moment: Having Difficult Conversations About Race in

the Workplace. *Management and Business

Review, 1*(1). https://ssrn.com/abstract=3914948

Danner, O. K., Lokko, C., Mobley, F., Dansby, M., Maze, M., Bradley, B., Williams, E.,

Matthews, L. R., Harrington, E., Mack, L., Clark, C., Wilson, K., Beech, D.,

Heron, S., & Childs, E. (2017). Hospital-based, Multidisciplinary, youth

mentoring and medical exposure program positively influences and reinforces

health care career choice: "The Reach One Each One Program early

Experience". *American journal of surgery*, *213*(4), 611–616.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjsurg.2016.12.002

Davis, S. M. (2018). Taking back the power: An analysis of Black women's

communicative resistance. *The Review of Communication, 18*(4), 301–

318. https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2018.1461234

Davis, T. M., Jones, M. K., Settles, I. H., & Russell, P. G. (2021). Barriers to the

successful mentoring of faculty of color. *Journal of Career Development, 1*.

Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453211013375

Deacon, J. H., & Lloyd-Parkes, E. (2020). The use of a narrative methodology in small

firm research. In *Handbook of Entrepreneurship and Marketing. Edward Elgar

Publishing.*, https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785364570.00023

DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., Johnson, O. T., Womble Edwards, C., McCoy, W. N., & White, A.

M. (2020). African American professionals in higher education: Experiencing and

coping with racial microaggressions. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 23*(4), 492–508. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1579706

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2019). *The handbook of narrative analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.

Derks, D., Bakker, A. B., Peters, P., & van Wingerden, P. (2016). Work-related smartphone use, work–family conflict and family role performance: The role of segmentation preference. *Human Relations, 69*(5), 1045–1068. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715601890

Dey, M., Lim, L., & Ross, F. (2021). The impact of mentoring: How to build on success. *Journal of Accountancy, 236.* https://www.journalofaccountancy.com/issues/2021/sep/impact-of-mentoring-for-black-accounting-professionals.html

Dodgson, J. E. (2019). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation, 35*(2), 220–222. https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334419830990

Dovidio, J. F., Pearson, A. R., & Penner, L. A. (2018). Aversive racism, implicit bias, and microaggressions. *Microaggression theory: Influence and implications*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119466642.ch2

Eby, L. T. (2007). Understanding problems in mentoring: A review and proposed investment model. In B. R. Ragins & K. E. Kram (Eds.), *The handbook of mentoring at work:* Theory, research and practice (pp. 323–344). Sage.

Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Hoffman, B. J., Baranik, L. E., Sauer, J. B., Baldwin, S., Morrison, M. A., Kinkade, K. M., Maher, C. P., Curtis, S., & Evans, S. C. (2013).

An interdisciplinary meta-analysis of the potential antecedents, correlates, and consequences of protégé perceptions of mentoring. *Psychological Bulletin, 139*(2), 441–476. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029279

Eby, L. T., & Robertson, M. M. (2020). The psychology of workplace mentoring relationships. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 7*, 75–100. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012119-044924

Ellard-Gray, A., Jeffrey, N. K., Choubak, M., & Crann, S. E. (2015). Finding the hidden participant: Solutions for recruiting hidden, hard-to-reach, and vulnerable populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 14*(5), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621420

Esin, C., Fathi, M., & Squire, C. (2014). *Narrative analysis: The constructionist approach.* The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis. Sage.

Esquierdo-Leal, J. L., & Houmanfar, R. A. (2021). Creating inclusive and equitable cultural practices by linking leadership to systemic change. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 14*(2), 499–512. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-020-00519-7

Etikan, I., Alkassim, R., & Abubakar, S. (2016). Comparison of snowball sampling and sequential sampling technique. *Biometrics and Biostatistics International Journal, 3*(1), 55. https://doi.org/10.15406/bbij.2016.03.00055

Ferguson, M. W., Jr., & Dougherty, D. S. (2021). The Paradox of the Black Professional: Whitewashing Blackness through Professionalism. *Management Communication Quarterly,* •••, 08933189211019751.

Flick, U. (2018). The sage handbook of qualitative data collection. SAGE Publications
Ltd., https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781526416070 https://doi.org/10.4135/97815
26416070

Flood, A. (2010). Understanding phenomenology. *Nurse Researcher*,17(2), 7
15. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2010.01.17.2.7.c7457

Freeman, B. K., Landry, A., Trevino, R., Grande, D., & Shea, J. A. (2016).
Understanding the leaky pipeline: perceived barriers to pursuing a career in
medicine or dentistry among underrepresented-in medicine undergraduate
students. *Acad Med.*;91(7): 987-993. doi:10.1097/acm.0000000000001020

Freeman, M. (2016). Why narrative matters: Philosophy, method, theory. Storyworlds*: A
Journal of Narrative Studies, 8*(1), 137-
152. https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.8.1.0137

Freeman, S., Jr., & Kochan, F. (2019). Exploring mentoring across gender, race, and
generation in higher education: An ethnographic study. *International Journal of
Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 8*(1), 2–
18. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-05-2018-0027

Fries-Britt, S. (2017). It takes more than academic preparation: A nuanced look at black
male success in STEM. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 8*(1), 6–
22. https://jaamejournal.scholasticahq.com/issue/2674

Fuller, E., Hollingworth, L., & An, B. P. (2019). Exploring intersectionality and the
employment of school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration, 57*(2),
134–151. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-07-2018-0133

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative

    research. *Qualitative Report, 20*(9), 1408–

    1416. http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss9/3 https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-
    3715/2015.2281

Gazley, J. L., & Campbell, P. B. (2020). The role of resilience in black men's success in

    STEM graduate programs. *The Journal of Negro Education, 89*(3), 360–372,

    381. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.89.3.0360

Gergen, K. J. (1998). From control to co-construction: New narratives for the social

    sciences. *Psychological Inquiry, 9*(2), 101–

    103. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0902_4

Gergen, M. (2003). Once upon a time. A narratologist's tale. In C. Daiute & A. Lightfoot

    (Eds.), *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society* (pp.

    267–285). Sage., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985246.n35

Germain, M. L. (2011). Formal mentoring relationships and attachment theory:

    Implications for human resource development. *Human Resource Development*

    Review, 10(2), 123–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484310397019

Germain, R. (2020). *Diversity and Inclusion.* Too many diversity initiatives are

    neglecting junior Black employees. We can fix

    that. https://fortune.com/2020/08/19/corporate-diversity-black-employees-
    mentorship-support/

Goings, R. B. (2021). Introducing the Black male adult learner success theory. *Adult*

    Education Quarterly, 71(2), 128 147. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713620959603

Grandey, A. A., Houston, L., III, & Avery, D. R. (2019). Fake it to make it? Emotional

    labor reduces the racial disparity in service performance judgments. *Journal of*

    Management, 45(5), 2163–2192. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318757019

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*,

    78(6), 1360-1380. https://doi.org/10.1086/225469

Gray, A. L., Crandall, J. R., & Taylor, M. (2019). *The 5 percent: Action steps for*

    institutions investing in women of color. Retrieved

    from https://www.higheredtoday.org/2019/10/21/5-percent-action-steps-

    institutions-investing-women-color/

Gusenbauer, M. (2019). Google Scholar to overshadow them all? Comparing the sizes of

    12 academic search engines and bibliographic databases. *Scientometrics, 118*(1),

    177–214. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-018-2958-5

Guy, T. C. (2014). The (End)angered black male swimming against the current. *New*

    Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2014(144), 15–

    26. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20110

Guynn, J. (2017). Silicon Valley's race gap is getting worse, not better, new research

    shows. *USA*

    Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2017/10/03/diversity-and-

    silicon-valley-race-not-gender-gap-gets-worse/727240001/

Guynn, J., & Schrotenboer, B. (2021, February 4). Why are there still so few Black

    executives in America? *USA Today*. https://www.usatoday.com/in-

depth/money/business/2020/08/20/racism-black-america-corporate-america-facebook-apple-netflix-nike-diversity/5557003002/

Haidt, J. (2017). The unwisest idea on campus: Commentary on Lilienfeld (2017). *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 12*, 176–177. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616667050

Hammersley, M. (2016). *Reading ethnographic research*. Routledge.

Hancock, B., Williams, M., Manyika, J., Yee, L., & Wong, J. (2021). *Race in the workplace: The Black experience in the US private sector*. McKinsey.

Harkiolakis, N. (2017). *Quantitative research methods: From theory to publication.* Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

Hayes, S. D. (2019). Using developmental relationships in mentoring to support novice principals as leaders of learning. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 27*(2), 190–212. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2019.1611289

Helms, M. M., Arfken, D. E., & Bellar, S. (2016). The importance of mentoring and sponsorship in women's career development: Quarterly journal. *S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal, 81*(3), 4–16. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1833936685?accountid=14872

Hendry, P. (2009). Narrative as Inquiry. *The Journal of Educational Research, 103*(2), 72–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670903323354

Henry, S. (2021). Critical Engagement: Lessons Learned and Implications for HRD About Black Male Faculty Leadership in Higher Education. *Advances in*

Developing Human Resources, *23*(4), 300–

318. https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223211037750

Hernandez, K. A. C., & Longman, K. A. (2020). Changing the face of leadership in

higher education:" sponsorship" as a strategy to prepare emerging leaders of

color. *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative*

Research, 15(2). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1304452

Hewlett, S. A. (2013). *Forget a mentor, find a sponsor: The new way to fast-track your*

career. Harvard Business Review Press.

Hickson, H. (2016). Becoming a critical narrativist: Using critical reflection and narrative

inquiry as research methodology. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and*

Practice, 15(3), 380–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325015617344

Hill, C., Miller, K., Benson, K., & Handley, G. (2016). Barriers and bias: The status of

women in leadership. *American Association of University Women*. Retrieved on

June 22, 2020, from https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Barriers-and-

Bias-nsa.pdf

Hollingsworth, S., & Dybdahl, M. (2007). Talking to Learn: The critical role of

conversation in narrative inquiry. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative*

Inquiry:Mapping a Methodology (pp. 146–176). Sage

Publications., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226552.n6

Hudson, D., Sacks, T. A., Sewell, W., Holland, D., & Gordon, J. (2020). Surviving the

white space: Perspectives on how middle-class Black men navigate cultural

racism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 1–

19. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1834594

Hughes, R. T. (2018). *Myths America lives by: White supremacy and the stories that give us meaning*. University of Illinois Press.

Hui, R. T., Law, K. K., & Lau, S. C.-P. (2021). Online or offline? Coaching media as mediator of the relationship between coaching style and employee work-related outcomes. *Australian Journal of Management, 46*(2), 326–

345. https://doi.org/10.1177/0312896220914383

Humberd, B. K., & Rouse, E. D. (2016). Seeing you in me and me in you: Personal identification in the phases of mentoring relationships. *Academy of Management Review, 41*(3), 435–455. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2013.0203

Humbyrd, C. J., Hutzler, L., & DeCamp, M. (2019). The ethics of success in bundled payments: Respect, beneficence, and social justice concerns. *American Journal of Medical Quality, 34*(2), 202–204. https://doi.org/10.1177/1062860618792092

Iivari, N. (2018). Using member checking in interpretive research practice: A hermeneutic analysis of informants' interpretation of their organizational realities. *Information Technology & People, 31*(1), 111–

133. https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-07-2016-0168

Indira, R. (2020). Lending Voices to the Marginalised: The power of narratives as alternative sociological discourse. *Sociological Bulletin, 69*(1), 7–

16. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022919898999

Iqbal, H. (2020). E-mentoring: An effective platform for distance learning. *E-mentor, 84*(2), 54–61. https://doi.org/10.15219/em84.1463

Irby, B. J. (2013). Editor's overview: Defining developmental relationships in mentoring for mentor/mentee dyads, for mentors, and for mentoring programs. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 21*(4), 333–337. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2013.867685

Ishak, N. M., & Abu Bakar, A. Y. (2014). Developing sampling frame for case study: Challenges and conditions. *World Journal of Education, 4*, 29–35. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v4n3p29

Janghorban, R., Roudsari, R. L., & Taghipour, A. (2014). Skype interviewing: The new generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, *9*(1). https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.24152

Janssen, S., Tahitu, J., van Vuuren, M., & de Jong, M. D. T. (2018). Coworkers' perspectives on mentoring relationships. *Group & Organization Management, 43*(2), 245–272. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601116669641

Janssen, S., Vuuren, M., & Jong, M. D. T. (2016). Informal mentoring at work: A review and suggestions for future research. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 18*(4), 498–517. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12069

Jernigan, Q. A., Dudley, M. C., & Hatch, B. H. (2020). Mentoring matters: Experiences in mentoring Black leaders in higher education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2020*(167/168), 43–57. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20397

Jha, S. (2018). Narrative Texts in Narrative Inquiry: Interpretive Voices to Better

   Understand Experiences in Given Space and Time. *Open Journal of*

   Leadership, 7, 237–249. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2018.74014

Johnson, M. W., Brown, A. L., & Harrison, L. (2020). Troubling the waters: A critical

   essay on black male role models and mentors. *The Urban Review, 52*(3), 415–

   434. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-019-00538-x

Johnson, V. E., Nadal, K. L., Sissoko, D. R. G., & King, R. (2021). "It's not in your

   head": Gaslighting, 'splaining, victim blaming, and other harmful reactions to

   microaggressions. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 16*(5), 1024–

   1036. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211011963

Johnson-Mann, C. N., Butler, P. D., & Greene, W. (2021). Diversity in Surgery—How

   Do We Change the Narrative: Pipeline to Professor?" *The American*

   Surgeon, *87*(11), 1718–1721. https://doi.org/10.1177/00031348211029874

Kalet, A., Libby, A. M., Jagsi, R., Brady, K., Chavis-Keeling, D., Pillinger, M. H.,

   Daumit, G. L., Drake, A. F., Drake, W. P., Fraser, V., Ford, D., Hochman, J. S.,

   Jones, R. D., Mangurian, C., Meagher, E. A., McGuinness, G., Regensteiner, J.

   G., Rubin, D. C., Yaffe, K., & Ravenell, J. E. (2021). Mentoring underrepresented

   minority physician-scientists to success. *Academic Medicine, Publish Ahead of*

   Print. Advance online

   publication. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000004402

Kasprisin, C. A., Single, P. B., Single, R. M., & Muller, C. B. (2003). Building a better

   bridge: Testing e-training to improve e-mentoring programs in higher

education. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 11*(1), 67–

78. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361126032000054817

Kelley, H. H., Holmes, J. G., Kerr, N. L., Reis, H. T., Rusbult, C. E., & Van Lange, P. A.

(2003). *An atlas of interpersonal situations*. Cambridge University Press.

Khattab, J., van Knippenberg, D., Pieterse, A. N., & Hernandez, M. (2020). A network

utilization perspective on the leadership advancement of minorities. *Academy of

Management Review, 45*(1), 109–129. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2015.0399

Kim, J. H. (2015). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories

as research.* Sage publications.

Kochan, F., Searby, L., George, M. P., & Jon, M. E. (2015). Cultural influences in

mentoring endeavors: Applying the cultural framework analysis

process. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 4*(2),

86–106. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2015-0010

Kornbluh, M. (2015). Combatting challenges to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative

research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12*, 397–

414. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2015.1021941

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part

4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *The European Journal of General

Practice, 24*(1), 120–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kowalik, J. (2018). Opinion polls as a data source in political science studies: Can they

be trusted or not? Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-SKL Odowska

LublinPulonia Sectiu K, 25(2), 25–39. http://doi.org/10.17951/k.2018.25.2.25-39

Kram, K. E. (1985). Improving the mentoring process. *Training & Development Journal, 39*(4), 40–43. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1985-24008-001

Kraus, K. E. M. (2018). A confessional account of community entry: doing critically reflexive ICT4D work in a deep rural community in South Africa. *Information Technology for Development, 24*(3), 482-510. https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2017.1323306

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education : QSE, 11*, 1, 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863

Lal, S., Suto, M., & Ungar, M. (2012). Examining the potential of combining the methods of grounded theory and narrative inquiry: A comparative analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 17*(21), 1-22. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss21/1

Lavaysse, L. M., Probst, T. M., & Arena, D. F., Jr. (2018). Is more always merrier? Intersectionality as an antecedent of job insecurity. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15*(11), 2559. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112559

Leung, B. T. H., Xie, J., Geng, L., & Pun, P. N. I. (2019). Search engines. In *Transferring Information Literacy Practices* (pp. 163–174). Springer., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7743-3_7

Lin, N. (2000). Inequality in social capital. Contemporary sociology, 29(6), 785-795. https://doi.org/10.2307/2654086

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. sage.

Liu, Y., Abi Aad, A., Maalouf, J., & Abou Hamdan, O. (2020). Self-vs. other-focused

mentoring motives in informal mentoring: Conceptualizing the impact of motives

on mentoring behaviours and beneficial mentoring outcomes. *Human Resource*

Development International, •••, 1–

25. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1789401

Livingston, R. W., & Rosette, A. S. (2020). Stigmatization, subordination, or

marginalization?: The complexity of social disadvantage across gender and race.

In B. M. Ferdman, J. Prime, & R. E. Riggio (Eds.), *Inclusive Leadership* (pp. 39–

59). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429449673-3

Loh, J. (2013). Inquiry into issues of trustworthiness and quality in narrative studies: A

perspective. *Qualitative Report, 18*(33). Advance online

publication. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2013.1477

Louis, D. A., & Freeman, S., Jr. (2018). Mentoring and the Passion for Propagation:

Narratives of two Black male faculty members who emerged from higher

education and student affairs leadership. Journal of African American Males in

Education, 9(1), 19–39. http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/465330.

Lowe, A., Norris, A. C., Farris, A. J., & Babbage, D. R. (2018). Quantifying thematic

saturation in qualitative data analysis. *Field Methods, 30*(3), 191–

207. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X17749386

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE

Publications.

Martinez-Fuentes, S., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Jager, J., Seaton, E. K., & Sladek, M. R.

 (2020). An examination of ethnic-racial identity and US American identity among

 black, latino, and white adolescents. *Identity, 20*, 208–223. Advance online

 publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2020.1784177

Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. *The SAGE handbook of applied*

 social research methods, 2, 214-253.

McAlpine, L. (2016). Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about

 narrative. *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri. Estonian Journal of Education, 4*(1), 32–

 57. https://doi.org/10.12697/eha.2016.4.1.02b

McCluney, C. L., Robotham, K. J., Lee, S., Smith, R. E., II, & Durkee, M. I. (2019). The

 costs of code-switching. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-

 costs-of-codeswitching

McReynolds, M. R., Termini, C. M., Hinton, A. O., Jr., Taylor, B. L., Vue, Z., Huang, S.

 C., Roby, R. S., Shuler, H., & Carter, C. S. (2020). The art of virtual mentoring in

 the twenty-first century for STEM majors and beyond. *Nature*

 Biotechnology, 38(12), 1477–1482. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41587-020-00758-7

Melaku, T. M., Beeman, A., Smith, D. G., & Johnson, W. B. (2020). Be a better

 ally. *Harvard Business Review, 98*(6), 135–139. https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-

 better-ally

Meraz, R. L., Osteen, K., & McGee, J. (2019). Applying multiple methods of systematic

 evaluation in narrative analysis for greater validity and deeper

meaning. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *18*, 1609406919892472. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1609406919892472

Meretoja, H. (2017). The ethics of storytelling: Narrative hermeneutics, history, and the possible. Oxford University Press.

Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis.* John Wiley & Sons.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Mertova, P., & Webster, L. (2019). *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424533

Methot, J. R., & Cole, M. S. (2021). Unpacking the microdynamics of multiplex peer developmental relationships: *A mutuality perspective. Journal of Management.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063211048437

Mitchell, M. E., Eby, L. T., & Ragins, B. R. (2015). My mentor, myself: Antecedents and outcomes of perceived similarity in mentoring relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 89*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.04.008

Montgomery, B. L. (2017). Mapping a Mentoring Roadmap and Developing a Supportive Network for Strategic Career Advancement. SAGE Open, 7(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017710288

Moradi, B. (2017). (Re)focusing intersectionality: From social identities back to systems of oppression and privilege. In K. A. DeBord, A. R. Fischer, K. J. Bieschke, & R. M. Perez (Eds.), *Handbook of sexual orientation and gender diversity in*

counseling and psychotherapy (pp. 105–127). American Psychological

Association., https://doi.org/10.1037/15959-005

Morris, T. (2020). *The influence of career sponsorship on the advancement of female heads of color in independent schools* (Order No. 27837709). Available from ProQuest One Academic. (2417791008). Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/influence-career-sponsorship-on-advancement/docview/2417791008/se-2

Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*(9), 1212-1222. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501

Motulsky, S. L. (2021). Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research? *Qualitative Psychology, 8*(3), 389–406. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000215

Muir, D. (2014). Mentoring and leader identity development: A case study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 25*, 349–379. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21194

Mull, M., Duffy, C., & Shuck, B. (2022). Making the connection between developmental relationships and employee engagement. In *HRD Perspectives on Developmental Relationships* (pp. 41–63). Palgrave Macmillan., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85033-3_3

Murphy, W. M., & Kram, K. E. (2010). Understanding non-work relationships in developmental networks. *Career Development International, 15*, 637–663. https://doi.org/10.1108/13620431011094069

Murphy, W. M., Roberts Gibson, K., & Kram, K. E. (2017). Advancing women through developmental relationships. In S. R. Madsen (Ed.), *Handbook of research on gender and leadership* (pp. 361–377)., https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785363863.00034

Murrell, A. J., Blake-Beard, S., & Porter, D. M., Jr. (2021). The importance of peer mentoring, identity work and holding environments: A study of African American leadership development. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(9), 4920. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094920

Murrell, A. J., & Onosu, G. O. (2022). Mentoring diverse leaders: the necessity of identity work. In *HRD Perspectives on Developmental Relationships* (pp. 175–195). Palgrave Macmillan., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85033-3_8

Myers, T. K. (2020). Can You Hear Me Now? An Autoethnographic Analysis of Code-Switching. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 20*(2), 113–123. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708619879208

Nadal, K. L., Davidoff, K. C., Davis, L. S., Wong, Y., Marshall, D., & McKenzie, V. (2015). A Qualitative Approach to Intersectional Microaggressions: Understanding Influences of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Religion. *Qualitative Psychology, 2*(2), 147–

163. https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/qup0000026 https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000
026

Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review
of the literature. Human Resource Management Review, 27 (3), 521– 535.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.01.001

Newton, V. L. (2017). 'It's good to be able to talk': An exploration of the complexities of
participant and researcher relationships when conducting sensitive
research. *Women's Studies International Forum, 61*, 93–
99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2016.11.011

Ode, G. E., Brooks, J. T., Middleton, K. K., Carson, E. W., & Porter, S. E. (2022).
Perception of racial and intersectional discrimination in the workplace is high
among black orthopaedic surgeons: Results of a survey of 274 black orthopaedic
surgeons in practice. *JAAOS-Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic
Surgeons, 30*(1), 7–18. https://doi.org/10.5435/JAAOS-D-20-01305

Owen, H., Whalley, R., Dunmill, M., & Eccles, H. (2018). Social impact in personalised
virtual professional development pathways. *Journal of Educators Online, 15*(1).
Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.9743/JEO2018.15.1.9

Papakitsou, V. (2020). Qualitative Research: Narrative approach in sciences. *Dialogues
in Clinical Neuroscience & Mental Health, 3*(1), 63–
70. https://doi.org/10.26386/obrela.v3i1.177

Parker, C. S. (2021). Status threat: Moving the right further to the
right? *Daedalus, 150*(2), 56–75. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01846

Patel, N., & Awan, O. (2020). Mentorship and Sponsorship: Are You in Good

 Hands? *Current Problems in Diagnostic Radiology, 49*(1),

 1. https://doi.org/10.1067/j.cpradiol.2019.10.006

Paterson, M., & Higgs, J. (2005). Using Hermeneutics as a Qualitative Research

 Approach in Professional Practice. The Qualitative Report, 10(2), 339-357.

 https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol10/iss2/9

Patino, C. M., & Ferreira, J. C. (2018). Inclusion and exclusion criteria in research

 studies: Definitions and why they matter. *Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia, 44*,

 84–84. https://doi.org/10.1590/s1806-37562018000000088

Patton, E. W., Griffith, K. A., Jones, R. D., Stewart, A., Ubel, P. A., & Jagsi, R. (2017).

 Differences in mentor-mentee sponsorship in male vs female recipients of

 national institutes of health grants. *JAMA Internal Medicine, 177*(4), 580–

 582. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.9391

Paul, J., & Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know

 and what do we need to know? *International Business Review, 29*(4),

 101717. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101717

Pedulla, D. S., & Pager, D. (2019). Race and networks in the job search

 process. *American Sociological Review, 84*(6), 983–

 1012. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419883255

Pitcan, M., Park-Taylor, J., & Hayslett, J. (2018). Black men and racial microaggressions

 at work. *The Career Development Quarterly, 66*(4), 300–

 314. https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12152

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. State University of New York Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education : QSE, 8*, 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839950080103

Posner, M. (2020, June 11). Why We Need More Black Voices In The C-Suite. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelposner/2020/06/11/why-we-need-more-black-voices-in-the-c-suite/?sh=262d127d484

Raghuram, S., Hill, N. S., Gibbs, J. L., & Maruping, L. M. (2019). Virtual work: Bridging research clusters. *The Academy of Management Annals, 13*(1), 308–341. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2017.0020

Randel, A. E., Galvin, B. M., Gibson, C. B., & Batts, S. I. (2020). Increasing career advancement opportunities through sponsorship: An identity-based model with illustrative application to cross-race mentorship of African Americans. *Group & Organization Management, 46*(1), 105–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601120978003

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2019). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological.* Sage Publications.

Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review, 84*(1), 26–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Sage Publications.

Roberts, L. M., & Mayo, A. J. (2019). Toward a racially just workplace. *Harvard Business Review. Available online at:* https://hbr.org/2019/11/toward-a-racially-just-workplace (accessed September 10, 2020).

Robotham, K. J., Settles, I. H, Spence Cheruvelil, K., Montgomery, G. M., & Elliott, K. C. (2021). Just and Inclusive team climates affect mentoring satisfaction: The roles of negative mentoring and race. *Journal of Career Development*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453211044134

Rocco, T. S., Bernier, J. D., & Bowman, L. (2014). Critical race theory and HRD: Moving race front and center. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 16*(4), 457–470. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422314544294

Roulston, K., & Shelton, S. A. (2015). Reconceptualizing Bias in Teaching Qualitative Research Methods. *Qualitative Inquiry, 21*(4), 332–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414563803

Rudel, E. M., Derr, B., Ralston, M., Williams, T. B., & Young, A. (2021). Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Social Architecture, and Black Male Leadership. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 23*(4), 319–334. https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223211037749

Russo-Netzer, P., & Moran, G. (2018). Positive growth from adversity and beyond: Insights gained from cross-examination of clinical and nonclinical samples. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 88*(1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000224

Saarijärvi, M., & Bratt, E.-L. (2021). When face-to-face interviews are not possible: Tips and tricks for video, telephone, online chat, and email interviews in qualitative research. *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing, 20*(4), 392–396. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurjcn/zvab038

Sacks, T. K. (2018). Performing Black Womanhood: A qualitative study of stereotypes and the healthcare encounter. *Critical Public Health, 28*(1), 59–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2017.1307323

Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2017). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life.* Sage.

Santiago, R., Nwokoma, N., & Crentsil, J. (2021). Investigating the implications of code-switching and assimilating at work for African American professionals. *Journal of Business Diversity, 21*(4), 72–81. https://doi.org/10.33423/jbd.v21i4.4750

Sanyal, C., & Rigby, C. (2017). E-mentoring as a HRD intervention: An exploratory action research study within an international professional mentoring scheme. *Human Resource Development International, 20*(1), 18–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2016.1220156

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity, 52*(4), 1893–1907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (Seventh). Pearson Education.

161

Schram, T. H. (2006). Choosing a research approach. In Conceptualizing and proposing

qualitative research (2nd ed.) (pp. 106-108). *Pearson/Merrill Prentice-Hall*

Seehusen, D. A., Rogers, T. S., Al Achkar, M., & Chang, T. (2021). Coaching,

mentoring, and sponsoring as career development tools. *Family Medicine, 53*(3),

175–180. https://doi.org/10.22454/FamMed.2021.341047

Serafini, K., Coyer, C., Brown Speights, J., Donovan, D., Guh, J., Washington, J., &

Ainsworth, C. (2020). Racism as experienced by physicians of color in the health

care setting. *Family Medicine, 52*(4), 282–

287. https://doi.org/10.22454/FamMed.2020.384384

Shuler, H., Cazares, V., Marshall, A., Garza-Lopez, E., Hultman, R., Francis, T. K.,

Rolle, T., Byndloss, M. X., Starbird, C. A., Hicsasmaz, I., AshShareef, S.,

Neikirk, K., Johnson, P. E. C., Vue, Z., Beasley, H. K., Williams, A., & Hinton,

A., Jr. (2021). Intentional mentoring: Maximizing the impact of underrepresented

future scientists in the 21st century. *Pathogens and Disease, 79*(6), ftab038.

Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1093/femspd/ftab038

Sims, C. M., Carter, A. D., Sparkman, T. E., Morris, L. R., Jr., & Durojaiye, A. (2021).

On Black male leadership: A study of leadership efficacy, servant leadership, and

engagement mediated by microaggressions. *Advances in Developing Human

Resources, 23*(4), 354–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223211037753

Singh, R. S., Bhambhani, Y., Skinta, M. D., & Torres-Harding, S. R. (2021).

Measurement of Intersectional Microaggressions: Conceptual Barriers and

Recommendations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 16*(5), 956–

971. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691621991855

Sisco, S. (2020). Race-Conscious career development: Exploring self-preservation and

coping strategies of Black professionals in corporate America. *Advances in

Developing Human Resources, 22*(4), 419–

436. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422320948885

Skinner-Dorkenoo, A. L., Sarmal, A., Andre, C. J., & Rogbeer, K. G. (2021). How

microaggressions reinforce and perpetuate systemic racism in the United

States. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 16*(5), 903–

925. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211002543

Small, E. (2020). How successful African-American male leaders in predominately

White Organizations integrate spirituality with leadership practice. *Journal of

Management, Spirituality & Religion, 17*(2), 184–

208. https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2019.1697727

Sola, R., Roberts, S., Thomas, T. J., Dickerson, T. A., Soriano, I. S., Cook, T. F. A., &

Barksdale, E. M. (2021). Impact of Mentoring on Diversity and Inclusion in

Surgery. *The American Surgeon*, *87*(11), 1739–

1745. https://doi.org/10.1177/00031348211047486

Sools, A. (2020). Back from the future: A narrative approach to study the imagination of

personal futures. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 23*(4),

451–465. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1719617

South-Paul, J. E., Campbell, K. M., Poll-Hunter, N., & Murrell, A. J. (2021). Mentoring as a buffer for the syndemic impact of racism and covid-19 among diverse faculty within academic medicine. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(9), 4921. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094921

Spanierman, L. B., Clark, D. A., & Kim, Y. (2021). Reviewing racial microaggressions research: Documenting targets' experiences, harmful sequelae, and resistance strategies. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 16*(5), 1037–1059. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211019944

Sparkman, T. E. (2021). Black male executives in higher education: The experience of ascending the academic leadership ladder. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 23*(4), 277–299. https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223211037752

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. Guilford Press.

Stavrou, S., & Murphy, M. S. (2021). Methodological Landscapes: Mapping narrative inquiry, critical race theory, and anti-racist education. *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry, 8*(1), 1–21. https://jcri.ca/index.php/CRI/article/view/14359

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy, 68*(3), 226–231. https://www.cjhp-online.ca/index.php/cjhp https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456

Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing, 7*(3), 155–163. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2552022

Thomas, D. A. (1990). The impact of race on managers' experiences of developmental

relationships (mentoring and sponsorship): An intra-organizational study. *Journal

of Organizational Behavior, 11*(6), 479–

492. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030110608

Thorne, K. M., Jones, M. K., Davis, T. M., & Settles, I. H. (2021). The significance of

race in cross-racial mentoring of faculty of color. *Translational Issues in

Psychological Science*. Advance online

publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000286

Tillman, L. C. (2001). Mentoring African American faculty in predominantly white

institutions. *Research in Higher Education, 42*(3), 295–

325. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018822006485

Tourse, R. W. C., Hamilton-Mason, J., & Wewiorski, N. J. (2018). Systemic racism in

the United States: *Scaffolding as social

construction*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1696468

Tracy, S. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis,

communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons.

U.S. Census Bureau (2021). African American population. Retrieved from

https://www.census.gov/about/partners/cic/resources/data-links/african-

american/cps.html

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021). https://www.bls.gov/

United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (EEOC)

(2015). https://www.eeoc.gov/statistics/employment/jobpatterns/eeo1/2015

Unluer, S. (2012). Being an insider researcher while conducting case study

    research. *Qualitative Report, 17*(58), 1–

    14. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/unluer.pdf

Velasco, M., & Sansone, C. (2019). Resistance to Diversity and Inclusion Change

    Initiatives: Strategies for Transformational Leaders. *Organization Development*

    Journal, 37(3), 9–20. https://verticleleadership.com/wp-

    content/uploads/2019/12/OD-Journal-Fall-Velasco_Sansone-2.pdf

Wahba, P. (2020, June 1). The number of black CEOs in the Fortune 500 remains very

    low. Fortune. https://fortune.com/2020/06/01/black-ceos-fortune-500-2020-

    african-american-business-leaders/

Wang, C. C., & Geale, S. K. (2015). *The power of story: Narrative inquiry as a*

    methodology in nursing research. International Journal of Nursing Sciences, 2(2),

    195–198. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2015.04.014

Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An*

    introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and

    teaching. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203946268

Wicker, C. J. (2021). The trenches and valleys of corporate America: A black male

    human resource leader's autoethnographic account. *Advances in Developing*

    Human Resources, 23(4), 335–353. https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223211037762

Wiebold, L. L., & Spiller, M. (2017). Explaining mainstream success: Accounts from

    Black men "in the middle.". *Journal of Black Studies, 48*(1), 3–

    25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934716658863

Wiggins-Romesburg, C. A., & Githens, R. P. (2018). The Psychology of Diversity Resistance and Integration. *Human Resource Development Review, 17*(2), 179–198. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484318765843

Williams, J. B. (2017). Accountability as a debiasing strategy: Testing the effect of racial diversity in employment committees. *Iowa Law. Review, 103*, 1593. https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/facpub/1962/

Williams, M. T. (2020). Microaggressions: Clarification, evidence, and impact. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 15*(1), 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691619827499

Wilson, F. (2021). "Learning with the devil: mentoring and advocates", *Personnel Review*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-08-2020-0649

Wingfield, A. (2019). "Reclaiming Our Time": Black Women, Resistance, and Rising Inequality: SWS Presidential Lecture. *Gender & Society, 33*(3), 345–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243219835456

Wingfield, A. H., & Chavez, K. (2020). Getting in, getting hired, getting sideways looks: Organizational hierarchy and perceptions of racial discrimination. *American Sociological Review, 85*(1), 31–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419894335

Yarberry, S., & Sims, C. (2021). The impact of covid-19-prompted virtual/remote work environments on employees' career development: Social learning theory, belongingness, and self-empowerment. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 23*(3), 237–252. https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223211017850

Yeo, R. K., & Li, J. (2022). Blurring of boundaries between work and home: the role of developmental relationships in the future of work. In *HRD Perspectives on Developmental Relationships* (pp. 305-332). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85033-3_13

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Fifth edition). SAGE. http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.30.1.108

Zarya, V. (2017). Why there are no black women running fortune 500 companies. Retrieved Feb 2, 2022, from https://fortune.com/2017/01/16/black-women-fortune-500/

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Hello-

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, and I am inviting you to participate in my research study. ***This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors.***

The study is important as the findings may aid senior leadership in developing a more nuanced understanding of the effects of career sponsorship and developmental mentoring relationships through the lens of Black professional men. I believe your experience would be a significant contribution to the study.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, the signed consent must be returned to the researcher via email **or indicate your consent by typing "I Consent"** to the researcher via email.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Alfred J. Hawkins
Ph.D. Candidate – Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Demographics and Screening for Inclusion Criteria:

Participant No: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Race: _____

Highest Academic Degree: _____

Industry sector: _____
Total years of experience in a leadership position : _____
Total years of experience in a mentoring/sponsorship relationship : _____

Preliminary Actions: Interviewer to participants:

Thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in my study. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how professional Black men view their daily experiences in building developmental relationships with career mentors and sponsors.

Before we get started and ensure consistency among participants' interview responses, I would like to share the definitions of terms we may use within the interview process as they are defined within this study.

Career Sponsorship: This term refers to a subset of mentoring that is overtly instrumental in nature and focuses on increasing the protégé's exposure to significant networks and advanced career prospects through the mentor's influence (Randel et al., 2021).
Developmental Relationships: This term refers to a relational approach to define mentoring as a developmental relationship characterized by mutual growth, learning, and development in personal, professional, and career sectors (Hayes, 2019).
Mentoring: This term refers to a personal and professional relationship fostered, arranged, or nurtured by an institution, organization, or career development program with the express objective of developing leadership (Jernigan et al., 2020).

Before we begin the interview, you must be comfortable in your location, and you feel free to participate without interruptions. Do you feel this description describes your setting at this moment? Is there anyone with you or you are in a private space?

May I begin the interview?

1. Please share the story of your developmental relationship with your mentor.
2. Please share on how your mentor prepared you to confront racial and bias or discrimination as a professional Black man aspiring to a leadership position.
3. Please share your story on your mentor's engagement prepared you for a position of leadership.
4. Given what we have discussed, is there anything else you would like to share about your developmental relationship with your mentor in reaching your career goals?
5. Please share the story of your developmental relationship with your career sponsor.
6. Please share your story on how your sponsor provided access for you to promotion opportunities within your organization .
7. Given what we have discussed, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a professional Black man who has been sponsored within your organization and gone on to a leadership position?

Examples of probes to facilitate conversations around shared facts:
"Can you provide me an example of that?"
"Can you please tell me more?"
"Is there anything else?"
"I gathered you…"
Epilogue to Interviewees:
It was a pleasure, and I thank you for your time and attention throughout this interview. I will provide you with a copy of your interview transcript as discussed in the consent to check accuracy. I will use no personal identifiers to identify you, and all participant responses will be combined for data analysis and report.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.