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The Lived Experiences of Black Women Pursuing Managerial Positions in Corporate America

Edo Linette Branch
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Edo Linette Branch

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

The Lived Experiences of Black Women Pursuing Managerial Positions in Corporate

America

by

Edo Linette Branch

MM, Fontbonne University, 2006

MBA, Fontbonne University, 2004

BS, Computer Information Systems, Lincoln University, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2023

Abstract

The cultural and historical background of Black women represents unique complexities in the journey to management. The specific problem was that Black women often faced more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was the intersectionality of gender and race. The research question was designed to understand what lived experiences of Black women were advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. A purposeful sampling was used to collect the narratives from 10 Black women in the Midwestern regions in the United States. A thematic analysis was employed to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions. Five main themes emerged from the data in response to the research question: (a) gender and racial biases in the workplace, (b) the need for perseverance strategies, (c) own professional development, (d) important resources for Black women, and (e) hindsight. The findings indicated that gender and racial biases in the workplace perpetuate the underrepresentation of Black women in management. The data also suggested that Black women used perseverance strategies to help them ascend into managerial roles effectively. The findings may contribute to positive social change at the individual, organizational, and societal/policy levels.

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Dedication

In loving memory of my mother, Bessie Pearl Ervin-Watson, and my father, Willie Lee Watson. While my mother was not here in the physical form to experience my starting the doctoral journey, my father had the opportunity. Every chance he got, he spoke this moment into existence, telling everyone who visited him while I was present that I was “Dr. Edo Branch.” He insisted even when I tried to tell him I wasn’t quite there yet. He was my motivation to keep pushing. I am grateful to have been able to share my topic with him because he made sure I stayed focused and approached the process with a growth mindset. I dedicate this dissertation and my heart to my siblings, Barbara, Sharon, William, Ini, Reginald, and Brandi. Despite all we have gone through, I had to ensure I remained steadfast and represented “completion.” And even through my father’s passing during the program, dissolution, and other severe adversities, I persevered. To all my nieces and nephews, Quinn, Randy, Shantria, William, Shekira, Tyler, Breonda, Iyonna, India, Imani, and Tamon, and all my great nieces and nephews, anything is possible if you believe. Shoot for the stars! To everyone who looked up to me and followed me throughout my journey, “I did it!” To all my family, friends, mentees, and onlookers, I love you, and thank you all for believing in me. In my six-word memoir, “Giving up is never an option.” See it through!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Women make up at least 50.8% of the United States population, and 46.8% are in the professional workforce (Census Quick Facts, 2016; United States Department of Labor, n.d.). Despite making up half of the United States population, women only represent 26% of managing roles in the workforce (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). In the 2019 study, “Women in the Workplace 2019,” McKinsey & Company found women to still lag in corporate America in areas of salary gaps, promotions due to the broken rung, glass ceilings, lack of training and development, among other gender and racial barriers (Coury et al., 2020).

Thorbecke (2019) defined broken rung as the most significant systemic barrier to gender parity that prevents women from climbing the corporate ladder. Crager (2020) explained in an article titled “What is the broken rung? Workplace Fairness,” a broken rung is a missing step in the “corporate ladder,” which prevents women in entry-level roles from being promoted into management. McKinsey & Company described the broken rung as one which typically impacts Black women far more than any other gender and race in the workplace (Coury et al., 2020; Ward, 2020). The broken rung is the more significant barrier for Black women navigating the workplace.

The influence of race and traditional privileged gendered roles continues to infiltrate most aspects of the work environment, with little progress in attaining management roles for Black women (Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019). Black women remain the highest demographics that are underrepresented in management roles (Beckwith et al., 2016; Bui, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018). To successfully navigate

the workplace and ascend into management roles, Black women saw the need to use perseverance strategies due to underrepresentation and the influence of race and traditional privileged gendered roles.

Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the research question, the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, the significance of the study, and summary.

Background of the Study

The cultural and historical background of Black women represents unique complexities in the journey to management (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Davis (1971) explained that Black women must accept the total weight of the legacy of slavery, as slavery directly reflects on the conditions and paths of their struggles today and the perpetuation of racism. To fully understand the extent of the underrepresentation of Black women in managing and leading roles, one must understand the historical aspects of her life. Mitchell (2003) suggested that understanding the history of Black women's lives transforms our understanding of what happened. It is evident in today's climate that racism happened and is still happening, and there has been no resolution. Kendi (2019) purported that the only way to address racism is that one must go beyond how racism operates and come to terms with the fabrics of how racial disparities were bred into the United States. Casteism, an invisible comprehensive underlying infrastructure that serves as a host for inequalities, injustices, and disparities that are perpetually experienced in the United States, is more powerful than acts of racism and holds people in an oppressed or

fixed place has been in existence for many years (Giddings, 1996; Gilmore, 1996; Reece, 2018; Wilkerson, 2020). The term oppression, often reserved for Black people, has been defined by the dominant White majority as superiority and a way to prevent Blacks from freely expressing their wills and needs (Maynard, 2018). Being racially oppressed makes workplace integration difficult and exacerbates gender and racial biases where Black women are overrepresented (Delton, 2007). Hill-Collins (2000) defined stereotype, a racial bias, as a way of controlling the image and perpetuating the oppression of Black women. Stereotyping of Black women has been permeated throughout slavery by sexual and labor exploitation, physical features, physically strong and masculine appearances, and Black women being considered loud and angry if speaking out against any experiences of oppression (Kilgore et al., 2020; Newsome, 2003). Black women are often mistreated while interacting in the workplace and find themselves on the defense when encountering everyday racial microaggressions (Corbin et al., 2018). The lack of representation of Black women in corporate managerial roles continues in the United States workforce today (Coury et al., 2020). Even with the increase in educational attainment, Black women continue to find promotion challenging to attain or to ascend into managerial roles (Alcorn, 2020). While plenty of literature was available that focused on the many barriers and challenges that affect the rate at which Black women advance into managerial roles, not much literature exists on how Black women remained motivated and persevered.

Crenshaw (1989) argued that the most privileged group members marginalize and create a distorted analysis of sexism and racism, which excludes Black women from the

discourse of feminist theory and antiracist policy. She further explained that while the exclusion of Black women from feminist theories and antiracist policies persists, the interaction of race and gender does not accurately reflect the discrete set of experiences. To support her argument, Crenshaw used the court system and existing cases on workplace discrimination of Black women to examine intersectionality to identify and understand the treatment Black women receive in the workplace.

Franken et al. (2009) examined how the intersectionality of identity affects and interacts with equality. They provided insight into the crossroads and interactions between markers of inequality and the evolution of policy tools. They also explained the complexity of the issue of inequality and illuminated how the facets of identity intersect with gender.

Essed (1991) explained that understanding the reality of racism is not accessible without knowledge of racism. She further explained that institutional and individual racism remove rules, regulations, and procedures from people who make and enact them yet who also believe there is different racism outside of how racism generally operates (p. 36). Essed later coined intersectionality as “entitlement racism,” which is classed, gendered, ability-based, and is becoming mundane.

Davis (2016) referred to the theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw and used her interpretation of intersectionality based on gender and the feminist approach. Rather than discussing the division of relationships, like intersectionality, she summed up the original debate between identity and transversal politics, where gender and race exist. She explained that access to higher-ranking roles remains limited for Black women.

Williams and DeSteno (2008) believed that pride and self-esteem are the mediating functions for perseverance. They further explained that pride is a unique motivational role that determines behavior and guides decisions that confront challenges in a physical environment. They also asserted that self-esteem feeds pride and is the underlying mental computation that determines situational pride experiences, leading to perseverance.

King (2014) identified courage and wisdom as the possessions and exercises of intellectual virtues that perseverance needs as a critical component for personal development and fulfillment. She described the greats, such as Thomas Edison's long endurance of work and failure to produce the incandescent light bulb, and Booker T. Washington's gaining education and overcoming racism, slavery, and poverty to share his views of politics and how his views relate to the intellectual virtues. King defined intellectual virtue as traits of excellent cognitive goods with efforts made by the possessor for their acquisition and maintenance.

Anderson et al. (1980) explained that only a specific personal impression within one's domain might persevere beyond the complete invalidation of the evidence of the source of the initial reaction. In their experiment, they examined two questions, one which suggested that our beliefs are less responsive to empirical or logical attacks than they ought to be that may influence opinions, and the second, which looked at one cognitive process hypothesized to foster belief perseverance. Their findings indicated that people tend to cling to their beliefs mostly than logically or normatively warranted, in the

face of evidential invalidation, beliefs may persevere, and causal explanations and scenarios may mediate belief.

Hall et al. (2012) explained that continuously, Black women remained overlooked, while White women viewed Black women as their equals. They also revealed that the experience of a Black woman outweighs the similarities, where the things that separate Black women from White women are the amount of stressful exposure to unconscious biases, discrimination, and sexism regularly. Hewlett and Green (2015) posited that Black women are more likely to pursue management roles than their White counterparts; however, Black women are treated as though they do not exist while in their pursuit. Hewlett and Green noted that although Black women are treated as nonexistent, they are more confident that they can succeed in a position than White women. The authors also noted that Black women were similar to White women (44% vs. 30%) to report feeling stalled and that their superiors did not recognize their talents. Thomas (2004) explained that naturally, Black women are excluded from the dominant groups, which become, by default, the most ignored and invisible race and gender in the workplace and within society.

Problem Statement

The influence of race and traditional privileged gendered roles continues to infiltrate most aspects of the work environment, with little progress in attaining management roles for Black women (Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019). In corporate America, Black women remain the highest demographics that are underrepresented in management roles (Beckwith et al., 2016; Bui, 2019; Roberts et al.,

2018). Bui (2019) posited that persistent management underrepresentation is due to gender and racial bias, not education, experience, or skillset. Despite the underrepresentation and gender and racial biases, Black women continuously pursue management roles in the workplace (Dickens et al., 2018; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019).

The general problem was that Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions (Alter, 2017; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019). The specific problem was that Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts (Alter, 2017; Bui, 2019; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who faced more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The study aimed to gain insight into how Black women perceive gender and racial biases in comparison to their White male and female counterparts. The participants selected for individual interviews were asked open-ended questions related to their experiences while advancing in corporate America. By understanding their lived experiences through their perceptions of gender and racial biases, additional elements may manifest themes related to this phenomenon. This study may lead to further research on the psychological state of Black women to help in understanding how they navigate

the workplace while continuing to pursue management roles despite gender and racial biases (Dickens et al., 2018; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015).

Research Questions

What are the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that grounded this study was the intersectionality of gender and race as it relates to the underrepresentation of Black women managers in corporate America. The theory of intersectionality of gender and race lends to the perspective that the intersections of many inequalities are centralized (Cole 2009; Collins 2000, Crenshaw 1989; King 1988; May 2015; Weber 2010). Because the intersectionality of gender and race addresses the relationship between the two institutions and how they both influence one another, Essed's concepts have been used widely in studies related to discrimination of gender and race, it has been used more with topics specifically related to the Black woman's plight in various settings such as work, home, health, and society.

The intersectionality of gender and race adds additional hardship to pursuing managerial roles for Black women in the workplace (Carastathis, 2016). Concepts explored include the types of strategies that Black women use for motivation and perseverance as they pursue managerial roles in corporate America. The approach provides a structural view of how the strategies are related to perseverance and reducing the impact of gender and racial biases. The purpose of this qualitative study using an

exploratory research design was to gain an abysmal understanding of the journey of Black women managers in corporate America. The findings of this research aimed to advance the knowledge on the intersectionality of gender and race and perseverance as it relates to the grit and passion for long-term goals regardless of any initial failures or adversity (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) and to contribute to the original qualitative data to this study's conceptual framework. Further research and application of the strategies Black women use to persevere may offer ways Black women can navigate the work environment while pursuing managerial roles in corporate America.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative descriptive phenomenology. The descriptive phenomenology approach is a widely used method which aims to explore and describe the lived experiences of participants within a study (Christensen et al., 2017). This phenomenological approach revealed the hidden aspects of the experiences of Black women managers as they see it in corporate America (Babbie, 2017). van Manen (2017) stated that the phenomenological interview evokes a comprehensive account of a person's experience of the phenomenon through certain situations and events.

According to Jackson et al. (2018), conducting descriptive interviews with participants allows researchers to focus on the awareness aspect, as the communication of the lived experience gives access to understanding the way the world appears to the people and not the researcher. In a physical interview setting, this descriptive phenomenological approach captured the unique perceptions and an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the Black woman's journey in corporate

America as she advanced into managerial roles. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that being physically present with individuals in observation is the best approach to qualitative studies. Qualitative methodological research must be a disciplined practice that carefully examines and explores a participant's personal experience, the ideas, and the meaning to which human subjects attribute to social encounters or problems human experience from personal interviews (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative research is appropriate when the intended goal is to describe what and why and to give meaning to how a phenomenon occurs (Myers, 2019). The qualitative method is relevant because the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into managerial positions who experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. Quantitative research requires statistical analysis to determine if a hypothesis leads to a specific outcome correlated (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017).

The quantitative method was not appropriate for the study, as I did not plan to conduct data analysis or examine relationships. A mixed-method research design combines qualitative and quantitative methods to compare detailed empirical and theoretical data (Palinkas, 2014). The mixed method was not appropriate for this study because the quantitative research methods were not implored. The results of this study may offer ways Black women can navigate the work environment while pursuing managerial roles in corporate America. The rationale for using qualitative research is that qualitative research allows the focus to be on the participants' experiences while intentionally removing any researcher's bias (Moustakas, 1994).

The preselected sample of 10 participants audio recorded web-based interviews was the primary source of data collection within the study. Data from interviews were recorded, transcribed, and entered into a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, to ease data triangulation and identify patterns, themes, and trends within the narrative. The study findings identified perseverance strategies Black women used to help them navigate the workplace better and ascend into managerial roles.

Definitions

The following definitions are terms associated with the topic of the journey of Black women in management:

Black feminism: Black feminism involves the struggle for the birthright, the quest for voice, the interdependence of thoughts and actions, the consequences of empowerment, and most importantly, the refusal of Black women to remain silent about their fundamental rights. It is social change with anti-sexism and anti-racism to provoke notions of justice, fairness, and equality for not only Black people but for all people. (Ali et al., 2021).

Black women or Black woman: Woman of color or African American woman or women. “Black” is capitalized throughout the study to reflect a group of people and to be consistent with the capitalization of “African American” (Solomon et al., 2019).

Broken rung: A metaphor for a missing step within the “corporate ladder” that prevents women from advancing from entry-level positions into leading or management roles (Cramer, 2020).

Caste system: A systemic framework that describes a social hierarchy that is artificially constructed and legally reinforced, which assigns worth and determines the opportunities for individuals based on race, class, and other factors (Wilkerson, 2020).

Intersectionality of gender and race: Intersectionality is a valuable analytical tool used in the analyses of differences among race, gender, and class to avoid pitfalls inherent to identity politics which shape the varying dimensions of Black women's employment experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

Management: Management is an individual who brings order and consistency to an organization's resources and processes (Kotterman, 2006). From the Black woman's viewpoint, management is a negotiated process of common authority that may accommodate various viewpoints and diversified challenges (Parker, 2001).

Opportunity equity: In the study context, opportunity equity refers to the exploitation and occupational segregation of Black women in pursuit of management roles (Solomon et al., 2019).

Oppression: Black identity, which describes losing rights to freely express the wills and needs (Maynard, 2018). For Black women, oppression points to violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural impression (Kobo, 2018).

Perseverance or grit: The means of continued pursuit goals, despite failures or adversity in progress (Duckworth et al., 2007). Perseverance brings an element of human trait and state into perspective for long-term goals that are not fixed but intentionally cultivated in oneself (Merriman, 2017).

Racial bias: Racial biases, based on Dovidio, are modern prejudices in which people act or feel differently toward those from outside of their racial group (Hamilton & Dovidio, 2015).

Racism: Racism refers to the marginalization and oppression of people of color, attributing negative characteristics to an entire group of people; any prejudice, injustice, domination, inferiorizing, the bigotry that denies dignity to any human group (Blum, 2002). Kendi (2019) described racism as a mixture of racist policies and racist ideas that produce and normalize racial inequity. Racist policies are any actions that perpetuate or exacerbate racial inequity between races.

Stereotypes: While Beeghly (2021) purported stereotype refers to a false hypothesis or criticism, Hill-Collins (2000) described a stereotype as a controlling image or idea of a social group that serves as a social norm.

Support and resources: In the study context, support refers to leadership assistance to enable Black women by promoting their work contributions to others and helping them navigate organizational politics within the workplace (Washington & Roberts, 2019).

Systemic gender and racial bias: In the context of the study, systemic gender and racial bias is a combination of systems, institutions, and factors that were created and maintained to implant racial inequality in every facet of life for people of color (Yancey-Bragg, 2020). Systemic gender and racial biases are the systems that keep Black women from pursuing specific roles (Phillips, 2015).

Unconscious bias: Unconscious bias is a common stereotypical idea in American culture that informs our behavior without the conscious mind's approval (Mattingly, 2018). It is easy to say that we all do it, and Wheeler (2015) purported that we all have some unconscious behavior or bias in how we react and respond to people and specific situations. In the study context, Black women remain significantly impacted in various ways, such as being overly disciplined, overlooked, and altogether disregarded by subtle instances of discrimination in the workplace (Staats et al., 2017).

Under-, over- representation: Underrepresentation refers to discrimination with a lack of gender or race within specific roles in a workplace (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). Overrepresentation refers to the representation of a group within a specific category that exceeds expectations for that particular group or one that differs substantially from the representation of other groups within that category (Skiba et al., 2008).

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas not yet proven but presumed true without validation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The study used a guided format, therefore, the assumptions within the study must be presented.

- Participants of the study assured confidentiality of the research study before the interview.
- All study participants must be employed at a company they do not have a controlling interest in, except for those who serve in an ownership capacity.

By definition, an idea that is considered true without validation is a research assumption (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative research aims to understand

individuals, groups, and phenomena in a natural setting and contextualized ways that reflect meaning from peoples' experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For data integrity, building a trustworthy conversational partnership is essential to ensure the interviewee becomes comfortable with sharing their innate experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

While building rapport with people, interviewees may be more willing to participate and schedule based on advance notice and initial conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Relying on first-hand knowledge of people who know about experiences delivers high-quality responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Scope and Delimitations

I identified the variables in the population in the literature review and integrated these into the research design and interview questions. The scope of the study included Black women who have served at least 5 years in management within corporate America. I did not use participants with less than 5 years in management. Additional eligibility requirements included not having a controlling interest in the company where participants are employed and living and working in the Midwestern region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) at the time of the study.

The research problem indicated that Black women advancing into management positions experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The study participants consisted of 10 Black women managers with at least 5 years of managerial experience. These Black women must be employed at a company they do not have a controlling interest in, except those who serve

in an ownership capacity. The geographic scope of the study was confined to the midwestern region of the United States. All participants comprised women who identified as Black or of African descent.

The study required the involvement of Black women to be interviewed via the web for data collection, and an analysis was conducted to identify the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America and learn what perseverance strategies Black women used for their ascension.

Limitations

The study included Black women living and working in the Midwestern region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) at the time of the study. The focus on participants from a specific region limited the ability to generalize the analysis findings to a broader audience. The limitations in the study are associated with face-to-face interviews, such as (a) indirect information can only be obtained from participants' own experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016); (b) the interview setting should be in an unfamiliar place for the researcher within a natural setting where the participant will be comfortable with sharing their innate experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012); (c) the ability to identify

the perceptions of reality from participant-to-participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012); and (d) response bias related to being present.

Considering random and nonrandom selection methods in comparison to face-to-face interviews has weaknesses: (a) researcher bias is eliminated in the selection process, therefore, cannot be controlled, and (b) any sampling frame with units that can be calculated is not within the scope (Ochoa, 2017). Interviewers can also present a limitation if personal bias and emotions are not separated from the interview process (Patton, 2015). Verbatim transcription of the audio recording reduced the potential for bias while capturing and analyzing the interview data.

Significance of the Study

This study filled a gap in the literature in understanding the journey of Black women advancing into management positions who experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The results of this study identified the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America, such as securing a sponsor and mentor, joining informal and professional networks, and ways they can manage and overcome the gender and racial biases. Black women may also benefit by focusing on roles outside of support positions, such as leading roles within a specialized area to develop specific skills and experience necessary to propel their careers. This study may provide corporations with a creative way to manage diversity and bring awareness to the

need for programs to address the sensitivity and professional development of underrepresented groups, such as Black women, within corporate America.

Significance to Practice

The research study may be significant to Black women managers and future leaders. Further exploration of specific perseverance strategies and how they may have been demonstrated in their collegiate programs to prepare Black women for their professional careers. I would also recommend a more in-depth study to understand how Black girls are groomed and empowered to become confident and persistent in their professional journey. Using the reflections of Black women's lived experiences, the participants in the study may find a spark of motivation, encouragement, and confidence to challenge themselves to become more visible and bring more value within their corporate environments (Dickens et al., 2018; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019). Black women managers within corporate America used perseverance strategies to ascend into managerial roles. The study's findings provided a pivotal change to the cultural narrative for Black women managers in corporate America.

Significance to Theory

The research may also be significant to scholars, as the research addressed the gap in the literature relating to Black women being confronted more with systemic gender and racial biases, which impeded their pursuit of management roles in corporate America (Alter, 2017; Bui, 2019; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019). The study's outcome addresses the challenges, barriers, and perseverance strategies Black women used to ascend into management roles.

Significance to Social Change

The study provided Black women with data that would allow Black women to learn about and practice the perseverance strategies that may help them to ascend into managerial roles. The participants of the study were Black women managers. The study provided information for Black women to learn about and practice their perseverance strategies to ascend into managerial roles.

Sponsorship and mentorship are critical for helping Black women advance within the workplace (Barrett et al., 2014). Black women have been ignored and excluded from the necessary access to informal networks, which allows networking with meaningful affiliations to help propel their careers (Combs, 2003; Linehan & Scullion, 2008). While Black women compete with Black men, White women, and White men, they may need to adopt a direct understanding, based on their lived experiences, to find personal meaning to their unique position within society.

Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 introduced the study and set the stage for exploring the lived experiences of Black women managers as they navigated the workplace who experienced more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The chapter began with a background of the study, highlighting the limited research on this topic and the importance of exploring the experiences of Black women managers. The problem statement discusses the challenges Black women managers face in the workplace, including gender and racial biases, compared to their White male and female counterparts while advancing in the workplace. The purpose of this qualitative,

descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who faced more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The assumptions, scope, and delimitations were outlined, and potential limitations were discussed, including the potential for participant bias and incomplete data. Finally, the significance of the study was discussed, emphasizing the study's potential impact on the development of programs that may promote workplace equity for Black women. Overall, Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive introduction to the study and established the foundation for exploring the lived experiences of Black women managers in the workplace. Chapter 2 includes the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research problem was that Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts (Alter, 2017; Bui, 2019; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. This chapter explores the existing research on the intersectionality of gender and race related to Black women managers in the workplace. A literature search strategy was developed to conduct this review to identify relevant studies, including online databases and academic journals. The conceptual framework guiding this review is grounded in the intersectionality of gender and race theory, focused on perseverance, which emphasizes a complex and overlapping nature of gender and race, the impact of these intersections on the experiences of Black women, and tools used in the workplace.

An initial Google Scholar search using the phrase women in management theory and research rendered roughly 3,650,000 results. Many of these results included keywords, titles, and terms such as a representation of women, women's voices, women in management, shifting paradigms, future exploration, and the psychology of women. A second Google Scholar search using the phrase Black women in management theory and research rendered roughly 3,060,000 results. The second search results included keywords, titles, and terms such as managing hypervisibility, sexual objectification, race,

gender and authority, gender differences, racial microaggressions, and stereotypic roles. A final google scholar search using the phrase underrepresentation of Black women in management qualitative analysis rendered roughly 39,800 results. These results include keywords, titles, and terms such as coping strategies, mentoring, successful behaviors, racial and gender identities, barriers to advancement, troubled success, navigating the workplace, and shifting identities. Chapter 2 describes the current concepts and empirical research concerning the lived experiences of Black women and related perseverance strategies to gain clarity and an abysmal understanding of the phenomena of the study. The first section describes the literature search strategy. The second section describes the conceptual framework of the lack of support, access to resources, and the excessive gender and racial biases Black women have endured throughout their professional journey to ascend into managerial roles. In the third section, I present the literature review and concepts used to form the conceptual lens (intersectionality of gender and racial biases and the need for perseverance strategies) guiding the perspectives of the study. I include an analysis and justification for the qualitative research design in the fourth section.

Within the search inquiries, some recurrent themes and terms emerged, making a succinct connection between Black women and management in various areas: race and gender, identity, barriers, stress, coping, and women in management. Considering the recurrent themes and terms in the search inquiries, Black women advancing into management positions experience more gender and racial biases than White male and female counterparts in corporate America. Lean In (n.d.), an organization that seeks the

equality of women and girls in a world without bias or barriers to hold women back, created an article that described Black women at the intersection of racism and sexism. As the google scholar search results presented, recurrent themes of race and gender remain at the forefront of Black women in the workplace. Lean In suggested that there is no separation between gender and race for Black women because Black women always exist in both identities of racism and sexism and are negatively impacted. Bell (1990) purported that racism and sexism lead to psychological anxiety in Black women. Bell continued that Black women face direct challenges where they must transform stereotypical images.

Similarly, Landau (1995) purported that the relationship between gender and race and Black women comes with barriers due to indirect forms of discrimination at recruitment, job entry, and promotion. As Bell (1990) suggested, Black women experience psychological anxiety due to stereotypical images; Landau similarly described triple jeopardy, which leaves Black women having to cope with negative and racially motivated stereotypes, being the only person of color in a workgroup, and simply being a token as a requirement of human resources quotas or affirmative action legislation, rather than their competence. Recently, there has been a direct movement of diversity and inclusion with organizations inserting Black women lead for diversity and inclusion roles to eradicate opportunity equity for all people of color. Olsen (2020) called the insertion of Black women into these lead roles “tokenism,” which she described as a band-aid “solution” to systemic problems. And in this study, the systemic problem was gender and race inequity of Black women in the workplace. Though we can continue to highlight the

perpetual problems of oppression, the barriers, and the lack of attention towards Black women in the workplace, more exploration is needed on her ability to cope and persevere beyond the negative annotations (Spates et al., 2020).

Literature Search Strategy

In the literature review, I include recent studies and seminal sources of peer-reviewed journals, articles, scholarly books, government publications, “doctoral dissertations,” private reports, and previously unpublished personal research. The literature review includes the following databases and libraries: ABI/INFORM Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Search Complete, Elsevier, Emerald Database, JSTOR, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University, Psych Articles, Psych INFO, SAGE Journals, Wiley Online Libraries. The literature review garnered a review of over 300 sources, of which approximately 207 are cited in the study. The distribution of cited sources is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Sources of Literature

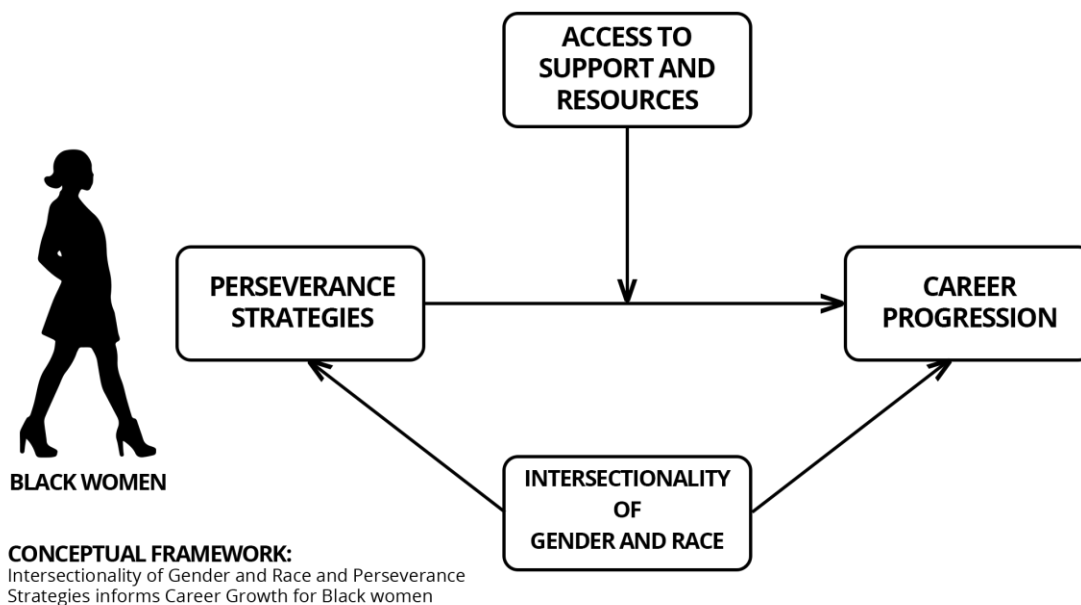
Types of sources	n.d.	2021	2020 - 2016	2015 - 2000	1999 - 1970	Total
Peer-reviewed journal articles			40	65	16	121
Online sources		2	24	9	1	36
Books			11	11	7	29
Private reports			6	3		9
Government sources			5	1	1	7
(blank)			3			3
Videos	1		1			2
Total	1	2	90	89	25	207

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are products of the qualitative process of theorization (Jabareen, 2009) that can best explain the natural progression of a phenomenon (Adom et al., 2018). I used the intersectionality of gender and race theory, introduced by Crenshaw in 1989, and focused on perseverance. See Figure 1. Intersectionality of gender and race theory is grounded on the Black feminist theory, which explores the mutually exclusive categories of Black women and their lived experiences in contrast to privileged group members (Crenshaw, 1989). The intersectionality of gender and race within the research study helped explore Black women managers who have experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Branch, E. (2021). Conceptual Framework [Digital Graphic] – Graphic created by Edo Branch.

The theory of intersectionality of gender and race lends to the perspective that the intersections of many inequalities are centralized (Cole 2009; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989; King 1988; May 2015; Weber 2010). Essed's (1991) concepts of intersectionality have been widely used in discriminatory studies specifically related to the Black woman's plight where the relationship between two institutions influences one another in various settings within the workplace, home, health, and society. Intersectionality dictates the quality and purity of analysis and acknowledgment of inequality by including the right people, the oppressor and highlighting issues of the oppressed who suffer from racism and sexism (Soave, 2019). Intersectionality is often dismissed just as Black women when describing and identifying oppression (Bhopal, 2020). The intersectionality of gender and race adds additional hardship to pursuing managerial roles for Black women in the workplace (Carastathis, 2016). The study draws upon the literature, which is primarily from Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality of gender and race theory in efforts to identify the generating relevant factors which may inform career progression for exclusive categorical groups.

Perseverance brings an element of human trait and state into perspective for long-term goals, which means perseverance is not fixed and must be intentionally cultivated into oneself (Merriman, 2017). Another scholarship on the might of Black women has used strength, coping, and resilience. In the research, perseverance was the catalyst for strength, coping, resilience, and passion. Peterson and Seligman (2004) defined perseverance as a voluntary continuation of intended goals, despite challenges, barriers, or discouragement. Similarly, Duckworth et al. (2007) used the term "grit" to define

perseverance as a means of continued pursuit of goals, despite failures or adversity in progress. Anderson et al. (1980) described perseverance as “belief perseverance,” where the effects are mediated by the generation of casual scenarios to imply the correctness of one’s initial beliefs later in the absence of direct relevant evidence.

Coping, a characteristic of perseverance, involves changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage internal and external demands as exceeding one’s resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). On the other hand, Everett et al. (2012) believed resilience is a protective factor that one takes on in the form of coping. Resilience is believed to be another form of resistance to one’s ability to function under adversity (Britt et al., 2016; Caza & Milton, 2012; Caza et al., 2020). Caza et al. introduced trait resilience as a form of grit, though resilience may be used in other scenarios where adversity is absent.

Adversity has always been a factor, which means that one would have to take on three different attitudes as a response to stressful situations: control, commitment, and challenge (Everett et al., 2012; Kobasa et al., 1982; Maddi, 2004, 2006, 2013). *Control* is described as the tendency one may influence their surroundings, which gives them the belief that there is a potential to exert effort on significant and positive outcomes; *commitment* is described as being active in events that help one find purpose against adversity; *challenge* is described as one having the belief that they are capable of changing various aspects of their lives without any adverse reactions. When the three attitudes are combined, it allows people the ability to accept, persist beyond, and direct energy for a positive outcome (Maddi, 2006). The combination of control, commitment,

and challenge gives insight into coping strategies to overcome stressful circumstances (Everett et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2013).

Everett et al. (2012) purported that stress causes psychological changes to the body, even behavior, mood, and emotions. Dealing with various forms of racism and sexism regularly gives cause to fight for and against, a fight that remains a challenge. Challenge in the study means “grit.” Grit refers to working towards challenges and maintaining effort and interest despite failure, adversity, or plateaus (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth et al. (2007) explained that gritty individuals approach achievement as a marathon and one who stays the course. Credé et al. (2017) explained grit as a higher-order construct with two lower-order facets: “perseverance of effort” and “consistency of interest.” Perseverance and consistency refer to working hard in the face of adversity without frequently changing goals and interests (Credé et al., 2017). Duckworth and Gross (2014) explained grit as having and working through thick and thin to reach a long-term goal. Merriam (2017) explained that grit enables individuals to persist with consistency and deliberate practice. Christensen and Knezek (2014) suggested that there were two types of grit: one that relates to persistence and perseverance and another which relates to a consistent interest in something over time. While Williams and Desteno (2008) suggested that while grit may focus on the long-term, in the short-term, efforts become taxing and tedium in pursuit of a passion. Passion is an intense desire or excitement for something and is defined as something that drives us, such as a motivation behind an action (Sigmundsson et al., 2019). Based on the theory of intersectionality of gender and race and perseverance, I sought to provide a lens through which Black women

managers could partake and reflect meaning from their own experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I sought to explore how perseverance is informed in pursuing management roles for Black women.

Literature Review

Research suggests that Black women experience a more significant burden of unconscious biases and racial microaggressions than their White counterparts (Hall et al., 2011). Findings also suggest that Black women lack the necessary resources for opportunity equity within a corporate environment, such as managerial support and access to informal networks to secure higher roles (Lean In, 2020). But most important to this study was the impact that intersectionality of gender and race have on the ability of Black women to progress in corporate America. Existing scholarship suggests that having a “quota” to fill the rank with more Black women may be intimidating (Jenkins, 2020). Although the quota has been a measure for most companies, Black women have only been idle bodies in positions to fulfill compliance, and once the quota for race becomes a metric, leaders tend to shy away from the true intentions of diversity and inclusion (Greenfield, 2020). To alleviate the underrepresentation of Black women in managerial roles, it will take more than companies making a statement condemning racism and racial inequality (Greenfield, 2020) if the focus is genuinely on diversity and inclusion. To peel the layers back off of the multiple barriers of power is to finally address the intersectionality of gender and race and integrate quotas that may be beneficial for Black women (Hughes, 2011). For example, quotas may work if programs are available to groom Black women for higher roles within corporate America if fears are not realized, if

no stigmas exist, and if there are no pipeline problems, such as access to informal networks (He & Kaplan, 2017). Informal networks have been essential for gaining social handshakes that can be used for career success and social support (Alan & Sözen, 2017). Defined as an invisible social structure, informal networks are natural-ready contact systems in that women are not privileged (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Women also struggle to advance into managerial roles due to the “broken rung” known for preventing women from leaping into management and beyond (Cramer, 2020). Black women have additional barriers that affect the rate at which they ascend into management roles, and many of these barriers stem from the history of the Black woman (Hall et al., 2012).

Intersectionality of Gender and Race

I explored the impact of the intersectionality of gender and race and perseverance. Black women have experienced this in their journey to management. Intersectionality of gender and race may be reflected in the experiences and perceptions of minority social identities of Black women whom previous scholars believe experience more significant challenges than their White female counterparts while advancing professionally in corporate America (Elliott & Smith, 2004). Intersectionality has been rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory and shaped as a heuristic and analytical tool to encourage social movement and advocacy on the vulnerabilities of Black women (Carbado et al., 2014). Crenshaw (1989) found that the analysis of Black women has been distorted where sexism and racism intersect and noted that Black women had been excluded from the discourse of feminist theory and antiracist policies. Although Mumby (1993) suggested that feminist theory is transformative, Crenshaw (1989) noted that

transformation is not inevitable for Black and White women alone due to a discrete set of experiences. In scholarship, Black women have been the quintessential intersectional subjects, but no conclusions have been reached on eradicating deeply rooted oppression (Nash, 2008). There is still much work to do for such eradication. Among women of color, Giddings (1984) exposed the racial division of oppression and suppression, including the understanding that White women tend to follow in tandem, sharing the same experiences as Black women only to later betray the Black woman where the road splits. Dorothy Height, leading president of the National Council of Negro Women for 40 years, pointed out the separation describing women getting suffrage, but suffrage did not come for Black women and Black people until after multiple lynchings, the civil rights movement, and Voting Rights Act (Giddings, 1984). hooks (1987) contended that in the 19th century, the women's rights movement could have provided Black women a forum to address their plights, but the privilege of White women prevented such opportunity. Until the history of Black women is discussed in totality, the road to being represented in the full analysis of women may not be complete. In agreeance with Crenshaw, Carastathis (2016) urged for analytic clarity and contextual rigor of Black feminism, which must be retraced to enact the radical potential to actualize coalitions. Even with analytical clarity, the core of the oppression of Black women is perpetuated by White privilege or the caste system (Bhopal, 2019; Wilkerson, 2020). Wilkerson noted that the caste system was created as an American innovation and used for the benefit of the elites while enforced by the poorer members of the dominant caste who required the submission of Black slaves to the will of White people. In the research, experiences that

stem from slavery appeared as a perpetuating stigma of advancing in the workplace. Despite this perpetuating stigma, Black women continue to cope with the new dynamics of gender and racism in their journey (Davis, 2004; Thomas, 2004). St. Jean and Feagin (1998) noted that Black women face “double-jeopardy” and Landau (1995) noted a “triple jeopardy” with having to deal and cope with the blended characteristics of gender and racism, which may trigger a single and collective reaction by White people.

Similarly, Kendi (2019) noted racist policies produce inequities between racial groups and that the White woman’s resistance to Black feminism and theories of intersectionality is self-destructive, which prevents an understanding of oppression. These texts together highlight the impact of White people, whether inflicting or reacting, due to inequities of gendered racism, particularly against Black women (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Kendi, 2019). Discussions of racism are generally dismissed in everyday conversations as if racism does not exist, and as long as there is denial, there lacks any possibility of awareness (Simon, 2020). Essed (1991) noted if there is no knowledge of racism, the reality of racism is not easily understood. How can one be an antiracist if they are unwilling to understand what racism means for those impacted? Kendi noted that being an antiracist goes against the natural and obvious flow of the United States’ history. Di’Angelo (2018) noted that White people see their existence and White privilege as racial comfort and are less tolerant of racial stress, and also highlighted the lack of information about what racism means or how it works. Rather than addressing the root of racism and oppression, White people continue to dismiss racism and suggest that Black people “get over it,” but the impact of systemic racism today still threatens the lives of

Black people and, specifically, Black women progressing in corporate environments (Oluo, 2019).

Black Feminism

Intersectionality of gender and race is situated within the course of a Black feminist when in the nineteenth century, Black women resisted the double-tasked whips and stings of prejudice related to sex and race (Carastathis, 2016). Feminism is used in the context of equality for women, and when used in conjunction with intersectionality, is a legal disadvantage for Black women, highlighting Black feminists set forth a problematic consequence of systemic treatment based on gender and race (Crenshaw, 1989). The feminist movement began during the women's right to vote era and was led by Susan B. Anthony and Participant 9 Cady Stanton. hooks (1987) described feminism as advocating women's rights and equality of the sexes. hooks (2000) also noted feminism as a movement that does not imply men as the enemy but as an end to sexism, sexual exploitation, and oppression. hooks purported sexism and racism as an oppressive force in the lives of Black women and highlights the overlap of being "Black" and "woman," which she describes as Black feminism, a systemic devaluation of Black womanhood as a direct consequence of racism. Henry (2021) asserted that whiteness is central to the constructs of Black feminism and intersectionality and points out that Black women's lived experiences are not determined by one system of oppression but by capitalism and racism, which leads to a structural disadvantage for Black women. Carastathis (2016) argued that Black feminism and intersectionality are used as

objectifying proxies for Black women, which can be erased because intersectionality is often used specifically in one conceptual arena, the Black woman's plight.

On the other hand, Mowatt et al. (2013) purported that Black women should augment the feminist discourse. Meaning that more insight into the effects of gender and racial biases should be exposed. Nash (2008) contended that intersectionality serves theoretical and political purposes for feminist and anti-racist scholarship and uses feminist and anti-racist scholarship to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity. Feminism, however, falls short on inclusion alone and forms a disconnect where feminism claims to speak for (all) women yet gives inattention to racial, ethnic, class, and sexual differences, where Black women need attention placed on defending their virtue (hooks, 1987; Nash, 2008). Leaning on Mumby's (1993) statement, "At its best, feminist theory is transformative.", leaves out the discourse of Black women as suggested by Crenshaw (1989). hooks (2000) believed that the focus of feminism is solely on ending sexist oppression. Sexist oppression is vastly experienced by Black women who are confronted with the struggle within the relationship between individuals and society or social structures (Alinia, 2015). The same social structures label and racial stereotype Black women by the hypervisibility of their bodies (Mowatt et al., 2013). Racial stereotypes are projected thoughts and beliefs one racial group holds over members of another (Torres & Charles, 2004, p. 116).

Mowatt et al. (2013) drew their research through an interdisciplinary lens, proposing two concepts for Black feminists' analysis to enhance feminist leisure scholarship. Black women are represented in an abnormal stereotypical manner and are

invisible concerning systemic oppression that besets Black women and hypervisibility (Mowatt et al., 2013). Similarly, hooks (1987) noted that White women excluded and ignored the contributions of Black women in feminist ideology. Mowatt et al. unpacked the intersectional experiences of gender and race, explicitly impacting Black women to demonstrate the need for intersections between Black feminism and leisure studies. Mowatt et al. purported that systemic oppression beset Black women regarding lack of equal access and participation, resulting in their invisibility. Black women are invisible through the consequences of systemic sexism and racism. Mowatt et al. attempted not to emphasize the Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a default approach to examine race while providing insight into Black Feminism and continued to describe how Black women use leisure for gain. Mowatt et al. defined leisure as establishing sites where power is erected and exercised in various ways to enforce gender-based and racially oppressive relations that are features of other societal institutions. More insight is necessary to integrate the Black feminism framework into scholarship, which may give an increased voice and representation of Black women's overall experiences (Mowatt et al., 2013). Mowatt et al. noted that Black feminists sought an opportunity to specifically develop antiracist and antisexist politics. The feminist movement highlighted similar interests of White women; however, it failed to address the realities of Black women regarding overt and covert racism and classism. White feminists were not dependable allies for Black women, as White working-class women could discriminate against them (Giddings, 1996).

Similarly, Crenshaw (1989) suggested that the discussions of White feminists have consistently been ill-fitted for the Black woman's circumstances and deny the

specificity of Black women's lives. For Black women, overt and covert racism is just one aspect of their realities. Black women experience sexism by Black men, racism by White women, and blatant sexism and racism by White men, which pushes the limits beyond the acts of oppression (hooks, 1987). The experiences of sexism and racism are where Black feminism comes into play to critique systems of institutional, structural, and cultural oppression to highlight the experiences of Black women in an analysis of the intersectionality of gender and race (Mowatt et al., 2013). hooks purported that White women barred Black women from having an equal voice in the feminist movement, but for Black women, Black feminism encourages scholarship that transcends privileged theories rooted in racism and sexism. Mowatt et al. noted that systemic oppression occurs in multiple ways for Black women. For example, Black women are overrepresented in health disparities as well as lack of promotions in the workplace, and because of this overrepresentation, Black women exist in a state of systemic invisibility or problematic visibility, such as sexist oppression (hooks, 1987; Mowatt et al., 2013). Much focus is placed on the contrasting differences between Black and White women, as well as among Black men, and less on the lived realities of Black women and how they navigate the workplace.

The intersectionality of gender and race adds additional hardship to pursuing managerial roles for Black women in the workplace (Carastathis, 2016). Research on Black women is integrated within feminist literature, which does not contribute to understanding the intersectionality of gender and race that Black women face in their professional development (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Concepts explored include Black

women's strategies for motivation and perseverance as they pursue managerial roles in corporate America. The approach provides a structural view of how the strategies are related to perseverance and reducing the impact of gender and racial biases. The purpose of this qualitative study using a descriptive research design is to gain an abysmal understanding of the journey of Black women managers in corporate America. The findings of this research aimed to advance the knowledge on the intersectionality of gender and race and perseverance as it relates to the grit and passion for long-term goals regardless of initial failures or adversity (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), and to contribute to the original qualitative data to this study's conceptual framework. Further research and application of the strategies Black women use to persevere offer ways Black women can navigate the work environment while in pursuit of managerial roles in corporate America.

Despite the challenges experienced, Black women continue to ascend into management roles and beyond within corporate America by leveraging their strengths (Giddings, 1984; Johns, 2013). Anderson et al. (1980) explained that only a specific personal impression within one's domain might persevere beyond the complete invalidation of the evidence of the source of an initial reaction. King (2014) pointed out that courage and wisdom as the possessions and exercises of intellectual virtues that perseverance needs as a critical component for personal development and fulfillment. Much remains unknown about the experiences and psychological state of Black women who persevere beyond challenges (Hall et al., 2012; Thomas, 2004). While gender and racial biases against Black women have been studied extensively in the literature, there is a gap in research that focuses on the journey and psychological state that allows Black

women to remain persistent in their quest for career advancement in corporate America (Thomas, 2004).

Passion and Perseverance

Resilience and perseverance have long been idealized as the virtue of Black women who may cope with disproportionate demands from a history of racism and sexism. A study by Sisco (2020) found that practicing resilience and perseverance for Black women relied heavily on safeguarding their narratives to avoid being misrepresented, misunderstood, and misidentified by stereotypes imposed upon them. However, safeguarding may not work for every Black woman as everyone's grit and commitment levels differ (Gross, 2014). Duckworth and Gross (2014) conducted a study and developed a tool to gauge the level of resilience and passion using a Grit-S scale by using questionnaires. In their study, Duckworth and Gross found that self-control is required to adjudicate between lower-level goals and actions they soon regret being successful. Duckworth and Gross also found that grit is equivalent to maintaining allegiance towards higher-level goals with rapid succession over a long period. Duckworth (2016) later used the Grit Scale to measure the extent to which people approach life using a battery of personality questionnaires. In her findings, Duckworth found that while some people may have great skills to reach a level of grit, others may need to contort themselves to equally reach the same set of skills. The roadmap to success is investing effort into improving skills and reaching an achievement using those skills (Duckworth, 2016). Grit was introduced by Duckworth as a predictor of who makes it and who does not, which has two components of passion and perseverance. Duckworth

describes both components; 1) passion refers to caring about goals in an abiding, loyal, and steady way which begins with enjoying doing things, and 2) perseverance is referred to as discipline and improving upon things you did yesterday, and you become gritty whereas you avoid complacency. With perseverance, one devotes their time and seeks purpose in becoming full-hearted, which leads to challenge that exceeds skill practice and mastery and does whatever it takes to improve (Duckworth, 2016). Nelson et al. (2016) provided depth into the perseverance of Black women and used the term “strong” to pull on the characteristics of Black women and their desire to move beyond stereotypes rooted in the slavery era. Nelson et al. highlighted that strength was an integral part of the identity of the Black woman. Similarly, Duckworth noted that culture and identity are critical to understanding how people with grit live. For Black women, adversity through their historical representations of enslavement has been the grit that continues to help Black women persist against the odds (Duckworth, 2016; Nelson et al., 2016). Another aspect of understanding Black women is to look at the childhood of Black girls to determine how they learn perseverance. French et al. (2012) attempted to introduce perseverance and intersectionality as one dependent on the other for Black women and girls. Like Nelson et al., and drawing on French et al. analysis, a strength-based perspective was used in the analysis of resiliency against gender and racial oppression and grooming Black girls to reach resiliency at an early age was explored. The Black culture has been rooted in religion. Mendenhall et al. (2012) purported that Black women use religious beliefs and family connectedness to cope with the realities of gendered-racial oppression. When perseverance is mentioned in the study, we apply the concept to

Black women pursuing management roles after numerous rejections and underrepresentation (Merriman, 2017). For Black women, rejection leads to alternatives, such as remaining in the same job, legal redress for non-promotion, or securing another position outside their current organization (Hall et al., 2010). Despite numerous rejections, Black women stay the course (Merriman, 2017). Black women cope with the stresses of rejection in the workplace, pushing them to persevere to prove that they can achieve, attain, and accomplish anything set before them (Hall et al., 2010). While there has been little research on gaining insight into persistence, efforts will be taken to understand the resilience and perseverance of Black women in their pursuit and journey of managerial positions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Coping is consistently used to describe the psyche of Black women as they continue navigating stressful workplace circumstances (Bonanno, 2004; Everett et al., 2012; Masten, 2015). Racism and sexism have been the biggest stressors for Black women in every capacity (Everett et al., 2010). A study that does not highlight the challenges and barriers of Black women may render inadequate, as knowing the history of Black women, knowledge of racism, understanding of racial comfort and privilege, and racial discussions may alleviate the harsh experiences and realities of Black women in the workplace (DiAngelo, 2018; Essed, 1991; Mitchell, 2003; Olou, 2019).

Roberts et al. (2018) conducted a study encompassing beating the odds as a Black woman leader and asserted that just the experience of being Black in America creates a sense of resilience, courage, and pride. They studied the careers of 2300 alums of African descent from the Harvard Business School. Of that group, 532 Black women who

graduated from 1977 to 2015 were identified, and 67 attained leadership roles in corporations and service firms. Roberts et al. conducted in-depth interviews with 30 of the 67 Black women to understand how they succeeded in the obtention of leadership roles and how resilience played a part. Through this study, Roberts et al. found a vast struggle to advance women in underrepresented groups due to this group's need to model their development strategies using their paths to success. In the study, the struggle came into play when the same experiences did not inform their counterparts of the underrepresented group (Roberts et al., 2018). Black women continue beating the odds and successfully overcoming impeding barriers such as lack of support, lack of access to resources, and excessive gender and racial biases in the workplace (Alter, 2017; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Siple et al., 2018).

Challenges, Barriers, and the Underrepresentation of Black Women

An underrepresentation disparity continues for Black women and their journey to managing and leading roles in corporate America (Johns, 2013). Despite the challenges and barriers, Black women continue to make great strides (LeanIn, n.d.). Studies have not specifically addressed the experiences on the journey of Black women, such as the daily stressors of unconscious biases that impacts their ability to grow beyond support and analytical roles within an organization (Everett et al., (2010). To date, there have only been two Black women to ever serve as CEO of major corporations since the inception of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission founded in 1965; Ursula Burns, CEO of Xerox (2019), and Rosalind Brewer, CEO of Sam's Club (2016). Ursula Burns, the first Black woman to run a Fortune 500 company, stated that 20 years is how long it takes to

grow an entry-level employee, or even longer for those seeking specialty programs like STEM or professional services, and while Black women are graduating from college in high numbers, they tend to land in support positions, rather than coming out of the education system that gets them through to the C-suite (McGirt, 2017). Burns has been openly vocal about her frustration with corporations making excuses for not hiring Blacks (Alcorn, 2020). The Wells Fargo CEO, Charles Scharf, stated a limited pool of Black talent is preventing diversity (Shaban, 2020). The thought process of today's corporate environment leans on racial comfort and privilege, preventing Black women from reaching new heights in the workplace (DiAngelo, 2018). Oluo (2019) purported that a lack of racial discussions plays a part in misunderstanding Black women, slowing their professional progression. Similarly, Cohen and Huffman (2007) purported that the underrepresentation of Blacks is significant when underrepresentation operates in a high-proportion Black labor market.

The challenges and barriers are unique to Black women's pursuit and journey in corporate America. Several challenges prevent Black women from being ushered to the top. For example, Elliott and Smith (2001), purported that bottom-up pressure has been found regarding race or ethnicity. Black women are barred from participation in society due to dual minority status and the rampant forms of discrimination (Turner, 1997), and remain in competition with White women, White men, and Black men due to sexism and racism. Because of discrimination, Black women are forced with the psychological burden of living with false images and struggling to live and work for a purpose and a positive sense of identity, all while aspiring to be in control of their lives (Turner, 1997).

Oppression

The term oppression, explicitly reserved for Black people, has been defined by the dominant white majority as superior and a way to prevent Blacks from freely expressing their wills and needs (Maynard, 2018). Oppression is defined by Hanna et al. (2000) as the privilege of dominant groups of people rendering systematic subjugation of unjust and harsh power over subordinate groups of people, specifically Blacks. St. Jean and Feagin (1998) described oppression as a multifaceted burden for Black women, with a core of cultural devaluation and an invisible face leading to the “misrecognition” of humanity. Hill-Collins (2000) contended that oppression works together to produce injustices beyond one fundamental type of system. If one fundamental type of oppression system existed, then race, ethnicity, and class inequalities would be ignored for women and even more so for Black women. Thompson and Campling (2003) suggested that oppression arises because of unfair discrimination. Crenshaw (1989), on the other hand, noted that discrimination flows in more than one direction for Black women where race and sex discrimination intersect (Crenshaw, 1989). Discrimination must be tackled first before intersectionality can be addressed, and the oppressor must acknowledge and comprehend the current state of Black activism against gender and racial discrimination (Soave, 2019). Potapchuk et al. (2005) purported that systemic oppression is not simply a problem of individuals; systemic oppression is structural internalized racism that Black people confront regularly. Internalized racism is described by Potapchuk et al. as a negative consequence of racism in the lives of Black people that White people choose to ignore, like their whiteness (Brown, 2018). DiAngelo (2018) purported that race has been

a Black cultural issue that is not a concern of White people. Accountability is reduced when racism is not acknowledged by those who use it as oppression, as well as any possibility of developing strategies that may eradicate the acts of racism (McIntosh, 1990). Patterson (1973) similarly purported that if the oppressor has not acknowledged the inequality of the oppressed, empathy and respect cannot be honored toward Black women who continue to seek assistance and equality from their oppressors. While Black women have been continuously ignored, silenced, and discriminated against, intersectionality has been used to bring balance to analyze and acknowledge the experiences of covert and overt racism (Bhopal, 2020). Women constitute almost half of the United States labor force, yet discrimination remains at the forefront of their positions, salaries, and advancements (Beck & Davis, 2005).

Unconscious Biases

The rise of racial discrimination lawsuits may have reduced blatant racism; however, blatant racism has turned into a modern subliminal type of discrimination and prejudice termed implicit bias or, as described in the study, unconscious or racial bias (Dobbin et al., 2016; Hamilton & Dovidio, 2015;). Unconscious bias is a common stereotypical idea in American culture that informs our behavior without conscious mind approval (Mattingly, 2018). Shannon (2006) described unconscious bias as an unconscious habit that limits the destructive habits of White people's privilege to operate undetected. Sullivan (2006) described unconscious biases as a habitual and problematic ignorance that benefits and supports the continued domination of White people, which cannot be resolved unless unconscious biases are acknowledged. While unconscious

biases are typically revealed verbally, DiAngelo (2012) purported that it is easy to say that we all have stereotypical appointments, and Wheeler (2015) purported that we all have some unconscious behavior or bias the way we react and respond to people and specific situations. While this may hold some merit, Blacks are significantly impacted in various ways, such as being overly disciplined, overlooked, and altogether disregarded (Staats et al., 2017). Duster (2008) purported that dominant groups have held negative associations with minority groups, leading to subtle discrimination without awareness. Unconscious biases result from how Black women have been historically perceived and unconsciously stereotyped.

Stereotypes

It would be remiss not to discuss the experiences and impact of stereotypes on the lives of Black women. Racial stereotypes have pervaded American culture and negatively influenced the perception of Black women in society and the workplace. Hill-Collins (2000) defined stereotype as controlling the image and perpetuating the oppression of Black women. Similarly, Harris-Perry (2011) purported that stereotypes are considered a blatantly negative and insulting tool to control the narrative image of a particular group. Stereotyping of Black women has permeated throughout slavery. For example, during slavery, sexual and labor exploitation of Black women swayed how society viewed Black women by their physical features, such as appearing physically strong and masculine, unvirtuous, and lascivious (Davis, 1981; Newsome, 2003). Slave masters enforced stereotypes of Black women by inciting racism and segregating Blacks by skin tone, a form of microaggressions and colorism among Blacks, which also dictated activity under

the caste system for many years (Giddings, 1996; Gilmore, 1996; Reece, 2018). The “Black Mammy” character was derived during slavery, which restricted some Black women to only domestic servantry (Davis, 1981; Hills-Collins, 2000). West (1995) defined “Mammy” as a Black woman whose primary role was domestic service with little to no compensation, entrenched in the southern culture. During slavery, Black men had no authority over the independence of the Black woman’s domestic domain within larger plantations, as Black women often became brokers between the enslaved person and White communities (Giddings, 1996).

Similarly, Davis (1981) noted that Black women were viewed as profitable labor units, a commodity for labor (Giddings, 1996). Despite experiences of labels and stereotypes, Black women remain resilient. Hine (1992) explained that Black women played an essential role in the freedom of the Black community and in ensuring their survival. For example, activist Harriet Tubman’s actions before the Emancipation of Proclamation in 1863 led the Black community to freedom with the help of the Underground Railroad, an organized system that guided Black people to freedom (History.com, 2009). Though Blacks were legally freed in 1863, Black women have become victims of negative stereotypes in mainstream American culture as a remnant of slavery (Ashley, 2014). Black women are being left out of managing and leading more often (Giddings, 1996) because of the stereotypes of appearing angry, loud, and incompetent. In corporate America, Black women continue to feel the impact of negative stereotypes, which affects the rate at which they advance in the workplace (Hall et al.,

2012). In addition to stereotypes, Black women are also hit with the glass ceiling, another barrier that hinders their ascension into managing and leading roles.

Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling became popular in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article describing the glass ceiling as an invisible barrier that women encounter as they attempt to advance in a corporate hierarchy (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The glass ceiling remains for women alike, even while they are the ones to watch and include gender balancing in the workplace (Chesworth, 2016). Adams and Funk (2012) explained that if women must be like men to shatter the glass ceiling, then gender differences would be expected to disappear. Cotter et al. (2001) described the effects of the glass ceiling as an implication that gender disadvantages are more substantial and higher in a hierarchy than in the lower echelons of an organization, and these disadvantages become worse as a person's career progresses. Bass and Avolio (1994) described a glass ceiling as a barrier to organizational advancement.

Similarly, Powell and Butterfield (1994) described the glass ceiling as a barrier for women as a group, barring advancement simply because they are women and not because they lack the skills necessary to handle the job. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) described the following three levels of barriers to the advancement of minorities and women, which contradicts hard work which leads to a better life; 1.) societal barriers that are outside of a business's direct control; 2.) internal structural barriers that are within direct business control, and; 3.) governmental barriers that are due to inadequate reporting and information dissemination. Ragins et al. (1998) suggested

that an accurate understanding of overt and subtle barriers faced by women with strategies is necessary for dismantling the glass ceiling. Like glass ceilings, Black women have another barrier preventing their advancement in the workplace called a “concrete wall.” Pierre (2019) described the concrete wall as a barrier for Black women because there are additional hurdles and more significant challenges that are more difficult to overcome than the glass ceiling. Since every company is different, eliminating the barriers to advancement for Black women is complicated, and each scenario must be carefully evaluated (The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Frye (2018) purported that though Black women have had the highest labor force participation rates among all women, there remains a lack of attention given to understanding why disparities persist for Black women who must perform ten times more than their white counterparts to advance or obtain equal pay. Atop of disparities, Black women face unconscious and subtle biases that make their journey far more unique than their White counterparts, perpetuating the Black woman’s underrepresentation in managerial and leading roles (Frye, 2018).

Support and Resources

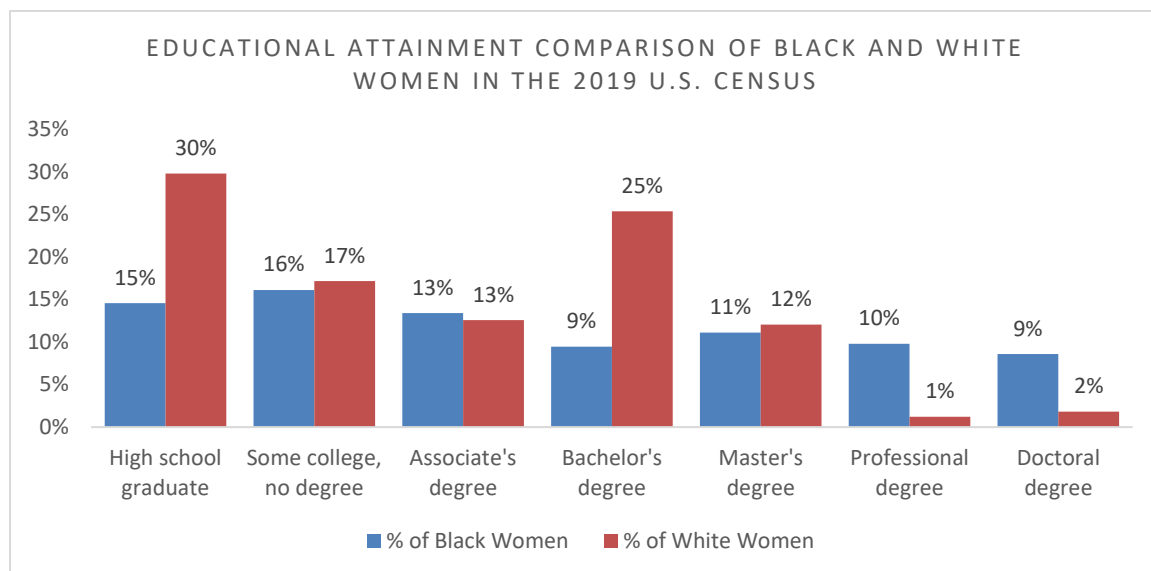
Informal networks have been significant for gaining social handshakes that can be used for career success and social support (Alan & Sözen, 2017). Lack of access to informal networks remains a barrier for Black women when attempting to advance in the workplace (Combs, 2003; Linehan & Scullion, 2008). The lack of access to informal networks, lack of access perpetuates the underrepresentation of Black women in management positions, maintaining inequality in the workplace (Bierema, 2005;

Commission for Employment Equity, 2016; Mengel, 2015). Horak et al. (2020) described an informal network as a group from which individuals may uniquely benefit. To uniquely benefit means the more access someone has to an informal network, the more access to resources they can expect. The Black woman, on the other hand, may ascend into management or maybe pursue management and is forced into the out-group status (Combs, 2003). Combs described two types of group statuses related to informal networks; 1.) *in-groups*, which refers to individuals having access to the benefits of inclusion, and 2.) *out-groups*, which refers specifically to the exclusion of Black women associated knowledge and information exchange. To be a part of the in-groups of informal networks suggests that individuals will have access to transactional content, such as opportunities for exchanging information, collaboration, developing alliances, acquisition of tacit knowledge, visibility, and support in the workplace (Combs, 2003; Horak et al., 2020; Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Formal and diverse networks have been created to provide inclusion on the organizational level to promote good bureaucrat (Horak et al., 2020). An institution has transparency, accountability, and disclosure with principles of good governance. Dennissen et al. (2019) described three levels of diverse networks the *individual level*, *the group member level*, and *the organizational level*. The *individual level* contributes to an individual's career development; the *group member level* contributes to community building, and the *organizational level* works at total inclusion and full participation for members (Dennissen et al., 2019). Although informal networks can lead to career advancement, Black women tend not to integrate themselves as some informal networks are engulfed in collusion, cliques, and other negative

phenomena (Horak et al., 2020). McGuire (2002) argued that informal networks consist of unspoken rules, which serve as a breeding ground for gender inequality and resistance to change. To McGuire's point, Mehra et al. (1998) suggested friendship networks exist in place of informal networks, are built based on exclusionary pressures, and only include same-race networks. Friendship networks perpetuate the underrepresentation of Black women in the workplace (Mehra et al., 1998). An aspect of informal networks automatically excludes Black women due to identity shifts and similarities (Combs, 2003). Black women struggle with trying to fit in and are continuously stereotyped by dominant groups to disempower and craft mistaken ideas about Black women, such as "mammy," "Jezebel," "the welfare queen," and the angry and argumentative "sapphire" (Nelson et al., 2016). Although the onus is on Black women regarding progressing in the workplace, the dominant group in organizations often wonders what will happen to them if inclusion is enforced and Black women propel themselves into management and other leading roles (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002).

Figure 2

Educational Attainment Comparison of Black and White Women in the 2019 U.S. Census



Training

Although Black women are attaining professional and doctoral degrees (Figure 2) at a higher rate than any other demographic, they tend to rely more on non-academic training programs to enhance their professional skills for the workplace (Caputo & Cianni, 1997). Training only supported Black women's roles in the workplace and served little value in advancing or portability (Caputo & Cianni, 1997). Black women feel more accomplished by earning and owning their career advancement and avoid integrating themselves into informal networks to push them through the ranks (Horak et al., 2020). There is no immediate if any, career return for Black women who invests in their professional development, with the current rate of underrepresentation (Smith & Joseph, 2010). Black women continue to earn less than any other group and have far less access to opportunities than their white counterparts (Katz, 2020). Chaudhary (2019) contended

that despite accomplishments, Black women are less likely to be promoted, less likely to receive support from managers, less likely for managers to promote their achievements, and more likely to experience everyday unconscious biases.

In 2018, the National Geospatial-Intelligence (NGA), a federal agency, conducted a diversity and inclusion study of Black promotion and admitted that Blacks were not promoted at the rate Whites were promoted, even after being adequately trained. In the study, Blacks' promotion rate trended lower than Whites for four consecutive years. Black promotion trended lower because of an early bottleneck where the pathway to advancement limited the pool of Black candidates that could compete for higher Bands and Senior roles (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2018). The study also found that not all employees were given the same access to career development programs to ensure the advancement of Blacks. Additionally, unconscious biases in supervision were found to be another root cause in the study. The barriers that impacted the promotion of Blacks included the relationship with supervisors, feedback, networking and mentoring, development opportunities, leadership roles, and promotion readiness ratings (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2018). The study noted Blacks worked extremely hard to attain promotion. However, it never came to fruition. The inability to achieve promotion is the same for Black women in corporate environments. Black women are required to perform ten times as hard to obtain the feedback necessary for constructive criticism from performance reviews (Brancaccio, 2017), and at this point, mentors and sponsors may be able to fill the gap. NGA noted that an enhanced network and mentorship are needed to promote black advancement and be inclusive.

Mentoring and Sponsorship

Mentorship and sponsorship are critical for helping Black women to advance within the workplace (Barrett et al., 2014). Mentoring has been long recognized as an essential tool for career development (Hunt & Michael, 1983) and a critical component for developing talent (Dirsmith & Covaleski, 1985). Over time, mentoring and mentorship have taken on various interpretations and definitions (Kram, 1985). Bowen (1985) defined mentorship as an acknowledged reciprocal, one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and less experienced individual lasting over an extended period for personal and professional development. Wong and Premkumar (2007) defined mentorship as a learning process that is helpful, personal, and one which reciprocates while building emotional support.

And similarly, Haggard et al. (2011) defined mentoring/mentorship as a type of developmental relationship that shares similar characteristics with other developmental interpersonal relationships that offer reciprocation and mutuality. Black women lack a mutually beneficial relationship with more experienced individuals willing to help them develop professionally and navigate the workplace to advance their careers. For Black women, mentoring can help foster career development, and combat inequalities often experienced throughout their journey in the workplace (Knorr, 2005). NGA suggested educating the workforce on the value and importance of building and maintaining networks, recognizing that professional networking is a legitimate work activity, and encouraging maintaining a diverse and inclusive network. Suggesting and encouraging diversity and inclusion is merely enough without accountability. Leaders tend to shy

away from the true intentions of diversity and inclusion, leaving Black women, the underrepresented group, without promoting ability (Greenfield, 2020). It is practical to have people willing to help you navigate the workplace and someone who can speak about you to others. This person is called a sponsor, a person not related to the act of mentoring (Helms et al., 2016). Friday et al.(2004) defined a sponsorship as an individual who speaks about promotes and nominates a person as a form of instrumental career support.

Similarly, Helms et al. (2016) defined sponsorship as an influential leader who introduces a protege to other leaders who may have the potential to advance a career. For mentoring and sponsorship to work in their favor, Black women must be able to contribute to the bottom line of the business (Brancaccio, 2017). Anne Mulcahy, the first woman CEO of Xerox, saw dedication when she sponsored her successor Ursula Burns for Xerox by grooming her for several years to ascend into the CEO position. Ursula Burns was the first Black woman to serve as CEO of a Fortune 500 U.S. company (Mulcahy, 2010). Without the critical influence of a mentor or sponsor, the Black woman will remain underrepresented in management positions. When Black women have greater insight into the skills of executives, they have the information required to help them progress in their careers (Korn Ferry Institute, 2013).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive review of the literature on the lived experiences of Black women in the workplace. The literature search strategy involved systematically searching academic databases and relevant literature, including peer-

reviewed articles, books, and reports. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the theory of intersectionality of gender and race, which Kimberlé Crenshaw first introduced. This framework was used to describe the experiences of Black women in the workplace, highlighting the significant impact of gender and race on their lives and careers. The literature review covered several key topics related to the experiences of Black women in the workplace, including the intersectionality of gender and race, passion and perseverance, challenges, barriers, and the underrepresentation of Black women, and support and resources. The review examined how Black women faced unique gender and racial biases in the workplace, including unconscious biases and microaggressions, as well as more overt forms of discrimination, such as pay inequity and limited career advancement opportunities. The review also explored factors that contributed to the resilience and perseverance of Black women in the face of these challenges, including their passion for their work. Chapter 3 contains the research method.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The study focused on Black women in management roles at some point in their careers. Through audio recorded web-based interviews, Black women in corporate America were asked open-ended questions about their experience and perseverance strategies to navigate the excessive gender and racial biases to ascend into management roles. The data collected from participants provided an understanding of the types of perseverance strategies Black women used to ascend into management roles.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. Qualitative research was appropriate when the intended goal was to describe what, why, and give meaning to how a phenomenon occurs (Myers, 2019). The qualitative method was relevant because the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Black women managers who have experienced more gender and racial biases compared to their White male and female counterparts and the perseverance strategies they used to navigate and ascend into managerial roles in corporate America. Phenomenology is the study that focuses on an individual's lived experiences which aid in describing and gaining meaning from those experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). The

central focus of phenomenology is for researchers to describe, rather than explain, as accurately as possible the experiences of people (Groenewald, 2004; Lester, n.d.). The themes researchers seek to obtain are not objects or generalizations but are meaningful knots in a web that have been spun as one lives to experience them and how things give themselves to us (van Manen, 2017). Rooted in philosophical foundations, phenomenology qualifies the “whose” and “what” lived experiences being investigated (Frechette et al., 2020). Using a phenomenological approach allows the opportunity to improve the ways of thinking to see a phenomenon vividly and see ahead of the researcher’s point of view by perceiving and interpreting it from the study participant’s point of view (Qutoshi, 2018). Much qualitative research employs a phenomenological approach to gather lived experience not to solve but support a specific problem only after data collection (Caelli, 2001; Patton, 2015). There are seven distinct classifications of phenomenology, and the Encyclopedia of Phenomenology Embree et al. (1997) identified the classifications:

- 1.) Descriptive phenomenology – A variation of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes that helps us move beyond the everyday scope as if it is known for the first time and leads us to the source of the meaning and existence in the world as it was experienced (Moustakas, 1994).
- 2.) Existential phenomenology – The human existence disclosed within an affective state and is the structure of our orientation with our situation (Ttryakian, 1965).

- 3.) Generative historicist phenomenology – The historical context of the human experience, which can trace the genesis of sense of the lived bodily perceptual level (Welton, 2003).
- 4.) Genetic phenomenology – The unconscious level of the monadic genesis, an indivisible being (Steinbock, 1998).
- 5.) Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology – The subjective experience of individuals and groups through their stories experienced in the world (Kafle, 2013).
- 6.) Naturalistic phenomenology – Concerned with objectivism and the intentional activity of cooperating subjects, meaning producing the experience of the individual (Carel et al., 2013).
- 7.) Realistic phenomenology – The promises, obligations, commands, and inform the theory of law constituting consciousness (Embree et al., 1997).

The phenomenological approach can provide a detailed understanding of the problem presented in the study. Conducting a qualitative phenomenological study allows me to uncover shared phenomena of lived experiences and the journey of Black women managers. Quantitative research requires statistical analysis to determine if a hypothesis that leads to a specific outcome correlate (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for the study as I did not plan to conduct data analysis or examine relationships. A mixed-method research design combines qualitative and quantitative methods to compare detailed empirical and theoretical data (Palinkas, 2014). The mixed method was not appropriate for this study because the quantitative research

methods were not implored. The result of this study offers ways Black women can navigate the work environment while pursuing managerial roles in corporate America. The rationale for using qualitative research was that qualitative research allows the focus to be on the participants' experiences while intentionally removing any researcher's bias (Moustakas, 1994). Further research on Black women managers and their strategies to ascend into a managerial role provides substantial literature on navigating career progression.

Role of the Researcher

My role in the research study was to serve as the primary data collection tool to inquire and gain insight into Black women managers' perseverance strategies to ascend into managerial roles. I considered potential areas for bias during the development phase of this research, study execution, and analysis. The study explored perseverance strategies Black women used. The data collected from the 10 participants of the research study were entered into a data analysis software, NVivo, to ease the triangulation of data and to identify patterns, themes, and trends of perseverance strategies Black women used to ascend into managerial roles. The study's findings aimed to identify perseverance strategies used by 10 Black women managers who participated in the study. As a researcher, I was responsible for safeguarding participants and their data. Mechanisms for such safeguarding were clearly articulated to participants preceding prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the study. Two of the interview methods I used for the study are audio recorded web-based interviews. Before conducting interviews for

the study, I requested permission by asking each participant to complete an informed consent form.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative phenomenological design to identify the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions which experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The study required the involvement of Black women to be interviewed via the web for data collection, and an analysis was conducted to identify the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions which experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The data collection of the study captured the challenges, barriers, and perseverance strategies Black women used to ascend into management roles.

The study informed the gap in the literature on Black women and the historical systemic gender and racial biases which have impeded their success and opportunity equity. Data from interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then entered into a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, to ease data triangulation and identify the study's patterns, themes, and trends.

Participant Selection Logic

For the study, I used purposeful sampling and convenience sampling. A purposeful sample provides the most effective method for identifying and capturing diversity that illuminates and gains excellent data within a population (Patton, 2015).

Convenience sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies that provide ease of availability (Patton, 2015), such as seeking participants via LinkedIn who may happen to see the advertisement for a research study opportunity. Upon approval from IRB (approval # 05-25-23-0663726), I employed LinkedIn, a professional social media site, for participant recruitment.

Social media sites like LinkedIn allow researchers to reach a broader population segment and target individuals, allowing researchers to infer eligibility for the study (Gelinus et al., 2017). I used the search function of LinkedIn to seek participants located within the Midwestern states to identify Black women who may fit the research criteria. I also posted an advertisement flyer (Figure 3) requesting participants on my main LinkedIn page.

While collecting data for potential participants, I screened the participant pool of those who expressed interest, made introductions to help build rapport, and scheduled them for an interview via the web. I also ensured that the participants were aware of and consented to the audio recording of the interview before proceeding. Interviews were not conducted on the same day as the initial contact.

The preselected sample of 10 participants in audio recorded web-based interviews were the primary source of data collection within the study. Data from interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then entered into a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, to ease data triangulation and identify patterns, themes, and trends within the narrative. The study findings identified perseverance strategies Black women used to help them navigate the workplace better and ascend into managerial roles.

Conducting the research study was the primary method of understanding the perseverance strategies that helped Black women managers propel and advance in the workplace. Since the study focused on the participants' lived experiences, the qualitative phenomenological research study was the appropriate method of capturing participants' lived experiences.

Instrumentation

In a qualitative study, the researcher serves as the primary collection instrument to uncover the layers of influence of self-thought and identify and engage with these aspects of the research (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I was the primary data collection instrument for the study. For the audio recorded web-based interviews, I conducted open-ended questions allowing the participants to share their lived experiences within the research topic's boundaries (Morse et al., 2015). According to Dawidowicz (2016), phenomenology requires collecting and analyzing people's perceptions, which equates to a definable phenomenon. In phenomenological research, the researcher sets aside their everyday assumptions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and takes the participant's accounts for their lived experiences. The validation of the participant's information is required to ensure the integrity of their responses, and observation is key (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, audio recorded web-based interviews were conducted.

Pilot Study

I assembled a pilot study to conduct a review of the interview protocol. Pilot studies are widely accepted to provide extensive knowledge on a given topic (Renn, 2015). In the study, assembling members in various capacities of a corporate environment

for in-depth and constructive feedback. The focus of the pilot study was to test the questions developed by the researcher and the approach to interviewing. The pilot study members for this study occurred in the Midwestern region of the United States. Each member received the study parameters via email. I collected and considered all discussion points from the pilot study review.

The professional roles of the pilot study members at the time of the study review included (a) executive in a corporate law firm, (b) executive in enterprise sales, and (c) manager of corporate consumer goods. The pilot study members were selected for their experience in current and past roles. All members had broad experience with human resources and diversity, and inclusion. One of the executives within the corporate law firm had significant experience in the diversity and inclusion field and developed diversity programs for employees. The second executive in corporate human resources had direct people management, and the final manager of corporate consumer goods had a long history of facilitating employee relations.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The research study was conducted after the IRB approval (approval # 05-25-23-0663726). In this section, the procedures for participation and data collection were provided. I, the primary researcher, collected data. Data collection occurred as described in the following paragraph.

Upon receiving IRB approval of the prescreen research flyer as the screening tool, I obtained emailed consent from participants. The consent template included background information, procedures for participation, sample questions, the voluntary nature of the

study, risks, benefits, and other crucial elements. The consent allowed participants to ask any additional questions before moving forward. The consent also included that the audio from the interview session was to be recorded and stored for 5 years, as required by Walden University.

The first step of data collection included the audio recorded web-based interview. I used the interview protocol and designed interview questions to stay on track during the interview process. I developed an interview protocol for the study. The document included the specifics about the interview process, and upon meeting IRB requirements and approval, I used the document to facilitate the interview process. The opening of the interview protocol included a script, interview questions, and follow-up notes. The interview protocol for the research is provided in Appendix C.

All participants included audio recordings that met the same confidentiality as the other data collected during the data collection phase. I made notes for each participant to highlight keywords from the responses. The notes met the same confidentiality as the other forms of data and were also used during the coding process.

Next, I allowed the opportunity for the participants to follow up 5 to 45 days after the interview. The purpose of the follow-up was two-fold: to enable the participants to share additional details they may not have covered during the interview process. Second, the follow-up was used to inform participants that they were exiting the study.

The participants for the study were all Black women managers located within the Midwestern region of the United States. The sample included participants who were Black women managers at some point in their careers. For the study, audio recorded web-

based interviews were conducted with 10 participants using the research question to gain insight into Black women managers' perseverance strategies to ascend into managerial roles. The participants were selected via LinkedIn and the snowball method. To obtain participants' permission, I initially used my Premium LinkedIn account to post an advertisement flyer allowing the opportunity and sent InMail an invitation to participate in the study to Black women managers in the Midwestern region of the United States. Within the invitation to participate, I requested a good email address to forward the formal "invitation to participate" message. To build rapport with participants, I informed them that their participation was voluntary and confidential and that, if desired, withdrawal from the study was allowed. The criteria I used to select the participants are as follows:

- Participants needed to be Black women managers.
- Participants were required to have 5 years of managerial experience.
- Participants were required to be employed at a company in which they did not have a controlling interest.
- All participants in the research study must be within the Midwestern region of the United States during the duration of the research study.

The sampling size of the study consisted of 10 participants. The data collection was conducted on Black women managers in corporate America. Interview data was kept secure both physically and electronically. Proper safeguards were implemented for the data collected from participants' interviews by locking the physical journal and encrypted flash drive in an in-home safe. I also ensured that access to the data was password-

protected. Adhering to Walden University's policy, all saved and protected data will be destroyed by shredding.

Data Analysis Plan

I was the primary tool for data management and analysis. Data analysis for the pilot study followed the same structure as the final interview process. The pilot study was used to test the data collection and refine the structure to ensure the final interview provides information-rich data. Data analysis in qualitative research systematically searches and arranges participants' interview transcripts, observation notes, and other non-textual materials accumulated by a researcher to increase the understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon (Wong, 2008). Study participants completed the interview process to answer the research questions. Each participant was given a pseudonym to remain anonymous since the research questions answered were solely from participants in corporate America. The primary data collection technique was via audio recorded web-based interviews.

Analyzing data involves becoming familiar with the data by organizing and examining data so the researcher can identify themes, relationships, and interpretations and generate theories (Jeong & Othman, 2016). For the study, I chose to analyze data using the descriptive method. For the study, a thematic analysis was employed. The thematic analysis has six phases to the development process:

1. The researcher becomes immersed in the data by reviewing the transcripts and listening to audio recordings to identify any patterns or meanings which may lead back to the source of the problem (Moustakas, 1994). During the

interview process, I hand-coded the initial thematic analysis to identify ideas for coding themes.

2. Data analysis relies on coding and categorizing vast amounts of raw data to identify common themes in describing the participants' experiences (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). After reviewing the transcripts several times, I used the initial coding to relate to the research questions to assist with interpreting the participants' meanings and ensure the content was descriptive. According to Creswell (2013), the goal of data analysis in phenomenological studies is to fulfill the (4) steps; 1.) *Identify statements that relate to the topic*, 2.) *Group statements into "meaning units,"* 3.) *Seek divergent perspectives*, and 4.) *Construct a composite*.
3. The researcher searched for themes connected to the research questions and presented patterned responses or meanings within the dataset. Themeing the data is appropriate for qualitative phenomenology studies exploring participants' beliefs, constructs, identities, and emotional experiences (Saldaña, 2016). The themes that emerged were found from the semi-structured interview transcripts, then reviewed for consistency. Next to the transcriptions, terms, keywords, and themes noted that directly related to the study (Saldaña, 2016). Additional themes that emerged were coded, themeing the data as my first cycle coding method helped discover structural properties of the participant's lived experiences (Saldaña, 2016).

4. From the rounds of coding, the codes were categorized to help identify commonalities or to determine if some relationship exists between them, then ordered in a superordinate and subordinate outline format (Saldaña, 2016). I reviewed the data to ensure that the data collected provided a detailed understanding of the purpose.
5. The data analysis plan for the study may help the reader learn how the research question was answered. In addition to learning how the research question has been answered, I organized the data following the coding process. Organizing the data consisted of defining and naming themes. The data was added to the codebook, which can be found in Table 4. The codebook captured the code, the definition of the code, and an example of the code. To help with the coding process, data collected from interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then entered into a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, to ease data triangulation and identify patterns, themes, and trends within the narrative. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software used to help qualitative researchers organize, analyze, and find insights during interviews.

To effectively analyze the study's data, I performed preliminary jottings or notes in a journal as I collected data. Jotting the data should be done while collecting data, not after the study (Saldaña, 2016). The final phase involved writing up the descriptive research study. I reported theme information and compared findings with previously published studies. This complete analysis established links to the results from this study

to the literature on my study topic or conceptual framework published since achieving approval of the proposal.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I employed several methods to ensure data trustworthiness. In this section, I provide credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. Each category of data trustworthiness may provide value to the research.

Credibility

For the research, I held audio web-based interviews in a neutral location at the participant's preference. Creswell (2013) and Patton (2015) provided suggestions for potential influences on the credibility of participant responses based on interactions and locations. In qualitative research, credibility refers to the extent to which an observed measure effectively reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration that may not otherwise be easily explained (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Babbie, 2017).

In a critical research design, credibility is an important element of implementing validity strategies of triangulation, member checking, prolonged contact, and saturation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Triangulation refers to the researcher's ability to use additional sources and categories of data to support the research findings, which ultimately tests for consistency (Patton, 2015). Maxwell (2013) purported that one cannot assume an increased validity using triangulation due to a high risk of researcher bias. Researchers must use due diligence by evaluating the credibility and applying triangulation to the data, theory, and methodology (Patton, 2015).

For the study, I focused on data triangulation using participant interviews, follow-up calls, and the literature. I developed the audio web-based interviews to gather rich responses from the study's participants. The researcher must be interested in the stories told by participants to find value and find them credible (Patton, 2015). Credibility is one of four criteria of quality measurement used in qualitative research; the other criteria include transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Building a trustworthy conversational partnership is important for data integrity to ensure Black women managers are comfortable sharing their innate experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Member Checking refers to the researcher's ability to mitigate any bias within a study to ensure research credibility (Birt et al., 2016; Morse et al., 2015). Data saturation depends on available resources based on the methodology, design, and the number of participants being interviewed; interviews alone may suffice data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation was reached once participants did not introduce new emerging themes or additional information.

The study included prolonged contact with the participant 5 to 45 days after the interview. There was a three-prong contact with the participant at the time of scheduling the interview, the interview, and the follow-up interview. Including prolonged contact with participants allows the opportunity to ensure data integrity and validity, which strengthens data trustworthiness and reduces the high risk of bias (Maxwell, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability refers to generalizing findings within different groups or concepts that may be applicable or transferable to a broader context while maintaining a rich context (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The study required participants to be open to completing and the ability to provide an answer to the research question. The study allowed researchers to gain insight into the journey of Black women managers and their ascension into managerial roles within corporate America. The transferability of the research consisted of 10 planned interviews to determine if aspects of the study design and findings of the research question can be transferred rather than replicating the outcomes of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability refers to data stability. Dependability in qualitative research is like the concept of reliability, whereas reliability does not ensure accuracy more than precision (Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In the research, dependability would mean that the researcher has a reasoned argument and that the collected data is consistent with the argument (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A solid research design is key for having dependability in the study. For the study, NVivo data analysis software was used to query and calculate the collected data, which helped contribute to the presented gap in the study. This collection method used elements of triangulation to help achieve greater rigor and validity within the study. In qualitative research, there are four types of triangulation (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) methodological triangulation, and (d) theory triangulation (Joslin & Müller, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For the study,

data triangulation was used. Multiple sources of data may be required, and the data sources varied, considering the 10 participants in the study, and was based on times and location when data was collected to measure the specific perseverance strategies Black women managers used in pursuit of managerial roles over 5 years (Joslin & Müller, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to objectivity; other researchers can confirm the findings (Kortsjen & Moser, 2018). Confirmability suggests that the interpretations of the findings are not figments of the researcher's imagination but derived from the study's pilot study participants and Black women managers (Kortsjen & Moser, 2018). Transparency and quality of the research are integral to phenomenological research studies (Kortsjen & Moser, 2018). To ensure the integrity of transparency and quality, I tested the interview questions of the study with three participants within the pilot study to validate the problem statement alignment, the purpose of the study, and the research question.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical principles are imperative in most scholarly studies to protect human subjects, known as participants (Binti Mohd Arifin, 2018; Reid et al., 2018). To ensure the care and protection of human subjects, approval from the IRB was required to ensue research studies (Reid et al., 2018). Walden University IRB must approve the study before proceeding with conducting research. Following approval from IRB, the selection process began for qualifying organizations and participants. For the study, I used LinkedIn for sampling, and according to Walden University's Ethics Review form, a

partner organization was not required if the researcher used professional networks, such as LinkedIn, to reach participants. To ensure the quality of the study, the researcher followed Walden University's criteria for ethical standards and code of conduct.

Researchers must comply with ethical research requirements when obtaining consent; rather than relying on the relationship of the participant for consent, researchers should consider the participant's exercise of judgment, which is based on the validity of the study they would be consenting to participate in (Reid et al., 2018). Each participant received consent forms detailing the purpose of the study, information on participation, and resignation from the study. The study provided each interviewee with a participant number to safeguard their identity. Anonymity and confidentiality are not the same, as anonymity is an extra level of protection that prevents the ability to tie data collected back to the participant to the study (Binti Mohd Arifin, 2018; Reid et al., 2018). Adhering to Walden University's policy, at the study's completion, all saved and protected data will be destroyed by shredding after 5 years of secure storage.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the research design and rationale for exploring the lived experiences of Black women managers in the workplace. The study aimed to provide an understanding of the unique challenges faced by Black women managers in their professional careers and the perseverance strategies they used to overcome obstacles. The research design was qualitative, and the study used a semi-structured interview to collect data. A pilot study was conducted to test the interview questions and procedures. The researcher's position was acknowledged in the study, and steps were taken to minimize

the researcher's bias. The participant selection logic was based on purposive sampling, and participants were recruited through LinkedIn, a social media site. The study ensured credibility by using member checking, transferability, dependability, and confirmability while conducting the study to establish trustworthiness. Ethical procedures were followed to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and ensure that the study did not harm participants. The study's findings may contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by black women in their professional careers and inform policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The study may also highlight the importance of addressing intersectionality in discussions about gender and racial inequity against Black women. Chapter 4 presents the study results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenology study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who faced more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The research question was: What are the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America? Chapter 4 presents the study results, the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and study results.

Pilot Study

I assembled a pilot study to conduct a review of the interview protocol. Pilot studies are widely accepted to provide extensive knowledge on a given topic (Renn, 2015). In the study, assembling members in various capacities of a corporate environment for in-depth and constructive feedback was key for the pilot study. The focus of the pilot study was to test the questions I developed and the approach to interviewing. The pilot study members for this study occurred in the Midwestern region of the United States. Each member received the study parameters via email. I collected and considered all discussion points from the pilot study review.

The professional roles of the pilot study members at the time of the study review included (a) executive in a corporate law firm, (b) executive in enterprise sales, and (c) manager of corporate consumer goods. The pilot study members were selected for their experience in current and past roles. All members had broad experience with human

resources and diversity, and inclusion. One of the executives within the corporate law firm has significant experience in the diversity and inclusion field and develops diversity programs for employees. The second executive in corporate human resources had direct people management experience. Finally, the manager of corporate consumer goods has a long history of facilitating employee relations. During the pilot study, the three pilot study participants saw no need to adjust the interview instruments. Therefore, no changes were made to the interview instrument.

Research Setting

Following the approval of the IRB (approval # 05-25-23-0663726), recruitment and interviews for this study occurred from July through October 2022. Potential participants responded to the approved recruitment notice posted on my personal social media account via LinkedIn to express interest. Three initial candidates responded to the social media post, self-identifying as meeting eligibility requirements and expressing willingness to participate in the study. All initial candidates initially responded via email. After receiving the participant's email, I sent the candidates the informed consent form by email. The participants reviewed the consent form and were allowed to ask any additional questions. Participants replied to the email, including "I Consent." Interviews were scheduled after receiving consent from each participant. Using the snowball method, the fourth participant self-identified as meeting eligibility requirements after receiving details of the posted flyer from the 'my personal social media account via LinkedIn. I forwarded the consent form to the fourth participant, who replied with "I Consent," and the interview was scheduled. The fifth participant responded to the social

media posts and expressed willingness to participate via email. The consent form was forwarded to the fifth participant, and a response indicating consent was received in return. The interview was scheduled for this participant. Five additional candidates were recruited with the snowball method and responded and expressed their interest in the study via email. After describing the study, verifying the candidate's eligibility, reviewing the informed consent, and providing an opportunity to ask questions, each additional candidate responded with "I Consent" to the informed consent document. Ten out of the 10 managers who agreed to participate and were able to schedule their time completed the interviews. One of the 10 managers had to reschedule twice but was able to complete the interview.

Table 2

One-on-One Interview Overview

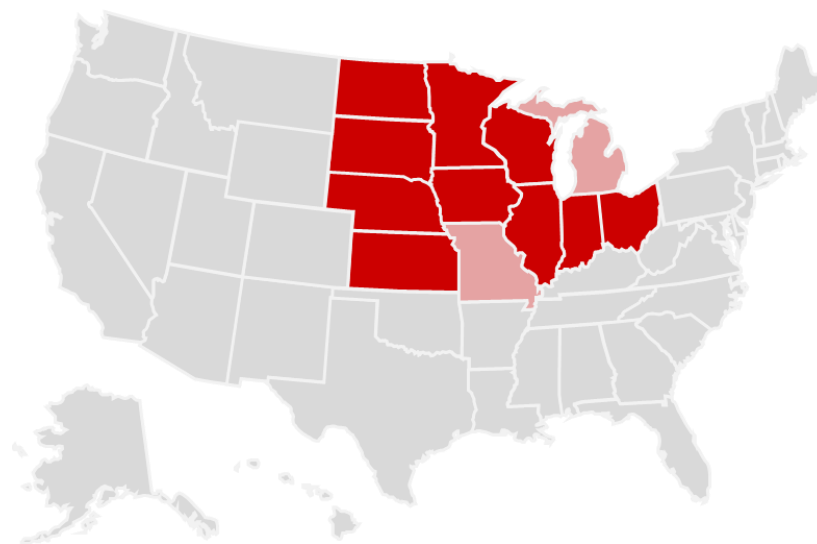
Participant	Length of interview	Transcribed pages (single-spaced)	h:mm:ss
01	36 minutes 35 seconds	10	0:36:35
02	42 minutes 0 seconds	10	0:42:00
03	30 minutes 54 seconds	8	0:30:54
04	38 minutes 58 seconds	10	0:38:58
05	33 minutes 38 seconds	8	0:33:38
06	32 minutes 10 seconds	8	0:32:10
07	32 minutes 18 seconds	8	0:32:18
08	50 minutes 49 seconds	9	0:50:49
09	38 minutes 24 seconds	10	0:38:24
10	31 minutes 35 seconds	9	0:31:35
Length of interview average		9	0:36:44

Demographics

All 10 participants in the study self-identified as Black and female. Ten participants worked as managers for a minimum of 5 plus years in their professional careers before the study. The researcher conducted the study in Missouri. Participants lived or worked in the Midwestern regions (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) to meet the study eligibility. The two states the 10 final participants were representatives of were Missouri and Michigan. See Figure 2. All participants lived in the state in which they worked. One participant had no degree, one participant had only a bachelor's degree, six participants had a bachelor's and master's degree, and two participants had bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees. All participants held management titles as managers at some point in their careers.

Figure 3

States Within the Midwestern Regions



All 10 participants held managerial-level roles throughout their careers, and nine participants currently hold executive-level roles like director, vice president, and senior vice president. Participants had an average age of 50 and an average of 16 years of managerial experience. The marital statuses of the participants ranged from single (3), separated (1), divorced (2), and married (4), and five of the participants had children.

Table 3 shows a display of the participant demographic data.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Data

	Means	Percentage
Average age of participants	50.3	-
Total years of management experience	16.6	-
Level of college/university education (none, bachelor, masters, doctorate):		
<i>None</i>	-	10%
<i>Bachelors</i>	-	10%
<i>Bachelor's & masters</i>	-	60%
<i>Doctorate</i>	-	20%
Marital status (married, divorced, separated, single):		
<i>Married</i>	-	40%
<i>Divorced</i>	-	20%
<i>Separated</i>	-	10%
<i>Single</i>	-	30%
Parent (Y/N):		
	-	50% Y
	-	50% N

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval, the data collection process began. Recruitment began following the distribution of the recruitment flyer (Figure 3) on my personal social media page, LinkedIn. Interviews took place from July 12 to October 11, 2022. The

average length of the 10 interviews was 35 minutes and 44 seconds. See Table 2. All participants met the research participant criteria, consented to the research procedures, and none withdrew from the study. The interviews lasted between 30-55 minutes and consisted of semi-structured interview questions that focused on the participants' lived experiences with the research phenomenon of the study. Data collection involved two audio recorded semi-structured web-based interviews with open-ended questions conducted over Zoom.

Also, confidentiality was maintained throughout the interview process, and participants were de-identified for this study. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants and protect their identities, they were assigned identification numbers from 1 to 10. I also captured data with hand-written notes. The interviews began by thanking participants for allowing me to interview them, with a brief overview of the details of the consent form and the interview process. Participants provided relevant demographic information, including participant age, marital status, parental status, level of education, and length of managerial experience. A list of questions used to obtain demographic data is included in Appendix C. This descriptive information added depth and context to the study to fully understand the experience of becoming a manager. Following the demographic questions, I reviewed the research questions and then led participants through the main interview questions, which focused on their career experiences leading up to and during their time as a manager. The participants were allowed to schedule follow-up interviews to discuss any updates to their first interviews. The complete list of questions used for the semi-structured interviews is included in the interview protocol

(Appendix C). After the first interview, participants received the transcript for verification through email communication.

Figure 4

Participant Recruitment Flyer



Research Study Flyer

**Black Women,
A Research Opportunity
Is Available For You.**

A research study opportunity is available that is focused on developing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management roles in corporate America. The proposed research study aims to understand the lived experiences through the lens of Black women and their perception of gender and racial biases. A secondary aim is to understand how Black women navigate the workplace while in pursuit of management roles, despite the gender and racial biases, and also to identify perseverance strategies they may have used in corporate America.

If you or someone you know fit the criteria listed below, then you are invited to take part or share this information.

Criteria for Participation.

- Black women, who are in or have served in a management capacity for 5+ years
- Should be employed at a company where there is no controlling interest
- Living in the Midwestern Region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin)

Benefits of Participating in Research.

- The aim of this study is to benefit society and the academic community by building a network that is conducive for success which may provide access to resources and/or specific perseverance strategies that can be used for the personal growth of Black professional women and to help Black women navigate the corporate environment better.
- This will add to the body of knowledge about this subject, which presently is limited.

For more information about participating in this research, please contact the researcher at xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx or direct messaging.

This doctoral study is by Edo Branch, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Branch, E. (2021). *Participant Recruitment Flyer* [Digital Graphic] – Photograph taken by Edo Branch of themselves.

The second Zoom interview began with a review of the transcripts emailed to participants. Although no errors were identified with the overall content, two participants offered additional thoughts after reviewing their transcripts. Participants had no further input and verified the accuracy of the transcripts during the follow-up calls.

Table 4*Participant Identifier*

Participant	Identifier
1	Participant 1
2	Participant 2
3	Participant 3
4	Participant 4
5	Participant 5
6	Participant 6
7	Participant 7
8	Participant 8
9	Participant 9
10	Participant 10

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this qualitative, descriptive phenomenology study began with hand-coding each interview transcript. I coded the data while considering the research question about Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts. For the study, Saldaña's (2016) thematic analysis was employed. I read the transcripts several times to immerse myself in the data (Moustakas, 1994). During the initial data analysis process, I created a Word document and created codes from the jotted notes I took during the interview process for each participant and placed them under three categories (Saldaña, 2016). Then, I attempted to describe each without adding the interview question or participant's responses. Unfortunately, my Word document coding method did not allow me to organize the data in a usable format effectively. I abandoned the Word document and began using QSR NVivo coding.

I used QSR NVivo 20 to remain consistent with the descriptive phenomenology research design. The transcripts were organized in a digestible manner for QSR NVivo 20 by using the Style feature in a Word document and making the question headers followed by the participant's responses. The transcripts were uploaded into QSR NVivo 20 software program, which helped manage and organize the transcript data. Once this process was complete, I reviewed the interview transcripts again in their entirety for each interview. Using QSR NVivo 20, codes were created for each new emerging element or pattern.

Member Checking Process

After the hand-coding and analysis of each participant interview, I created a member check document for each participant. Participants were invited via email to participate voluntarily in the member-checking stage of data analysis. The participants were given a copy of the transcript and asked to review it for accuracy. The participants were also asked to set up a follow-up interview, with prolonged contact of 5 to 45 days, to provide any feedback on anything that may have been missed during the interview process. According to Maxwell (2013), prolonged contact with participants, allows the opportunity to ensure data integrity and validity which strengthens data trustworthiness, and reduces the high risk of bias. Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The participants were informed that their participation would help ensure the accuracy and credibility of the study. Although there were no errors identified during the interview process, two participants offered additional thoughts after reviewing their transcripts.

Participants had no further input and verified the accuracy of the transcripts during the follow-up calls.

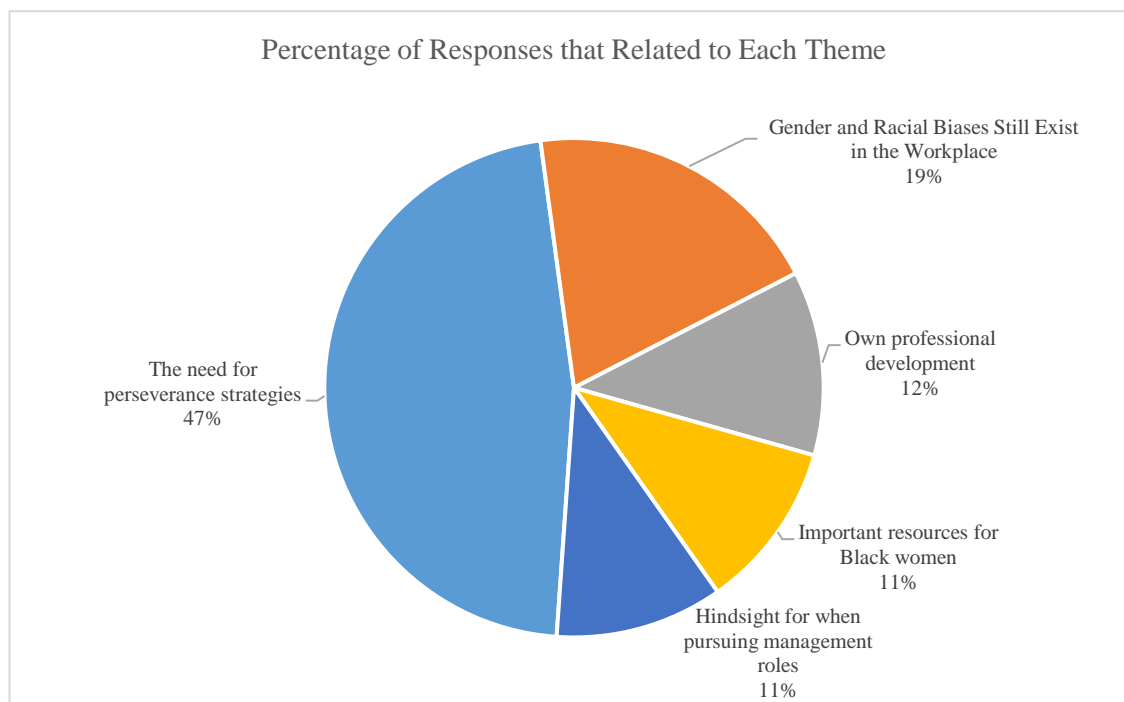
Themes Generated

After creating the codes in QSR NVivo 20, I synthesized the codes into emerging themes and subthemes. I checked the codes against my research question concerning Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts. According to van Manen, themes that researchers seek to obtain are not objects or generalizations but are meaningful knots in a web that have been spun as one life to experience them and how things give themselves to us (van Manen, 2017). Staying true to the descriptive phenomenology design, I allowed participants to lead us to a source of meaning and existence in the world as it was experienced (Moustakas, 1994). During the analysis, I revisited the data multiple times to ensure the accuracy of the emerging themes. I considered the research question and developed themes that would fit into the underrepresentation of Black women in management. For example, the category, gender, and racial bias contain a code for gender and racial biases in the workplace and impede the ability of Black women to advance in the workplace. The research study was about Black women advancing into management positions who may have experienced more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts; however, many aspects in the journey of Black women navigating the workplace applies to the ability to advance into managerial roles. Thus, the code was included within the category.

I then generated five themes from the data by reviewing the connections within the category. The five themes that emerged from the study were (a) *Gender and racial biases in the workplace*, (b) *The Need for Perseverance Strategies*, (c) *Own Professional Development*, (d) *Important Resources for Black women*, and (e) *Hindsight for when pursuing management roles*. Seven corresponding subthemes further explained the phenomenon of the study. The percentage of responses related to each theme can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Percentage of Responses That Related to Each Theme



The subtheme that pertains to the obstacles hindering the advancement of Black women in the workplace is a part of the overarching theme of the persistence of *gender and racial biases in the workplace*. Some of the results within this subtheme were

specific to being Black and female while advancing in the workplace and were essential parts of the lived experiences of Black women navigating the workplace. The subthemes *perseverance strategies that worked*, *perseverance for growth*, *perseverance strategies for successful managers*, and *perseverance strategies beyond management roles* were within the main theme of *the need for perseverance strategies*. The subthemes' *access to resources* and *managerial support* was specific to *own professional development*. The assigned names of each subtheme were derived from the interview questions used during the interview process as well as the responses from participants. The results from these themes were specific to the lived experiences of the participants as they navigated the workspace for professional growth.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the strategic procedures outlined in chapter 3 were followed. Participants' responses were not altered in any way to fit within the scope of data interpretation. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were confirmed.

Credibility

For the study, the participants selected a neutral location to participate and share their lived experiences. I used data triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings. The participants were sourced from the Midwestern parts of the United States. The participants were sincere in their responses which solidified the credibility of the study.

Transferability

Transferability showed how the study could be generalized and applicable to a broader context while maintaining a rich context for confirmability. The participants were informed that the study was voluntary and that no compensation of any sort would be provided for participation.

Dependability

The study proved to be dependable based on its consistency and ability to be duplicated. Data saturation was identified after completing the data collection and did not present any new findings. Transcripts were sent to the participants to ensure accuracy and to determine if any edits were necessary.

Confirmability

The findings of the participants were those of the participants' responses.

Study Results

This study addressed a gap in the literature and helped identify themes related to how Black women can effectively navigate the workplace. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who faced more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The research question for the study was: What are the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America? Following a thorough analysis of interviews for the 10 Black women managers, five main themes emerged from the data in

response to the research question that captured the descriptive experience of the journey of Black women advancing into management roles in corporate America. The five themes that emerged from the study were (a) *Gender and racial biases in the workplace*, (b) *The Need for Perseverance Strategies*, (c) *Own Professional Development*, (d) *Important Resources for Black women*, and (e) *Hindsight for when pursuing management roles*.

The description of the themes was as follows:

1. **Gender and racial biases in the workplace** - refers to the various ways Black women may experience bias, and discrimination based on gender and race. hooks (1987) argued that Black women are subject to oppressive forces due to the intersectionality of gender and race. hooks (1987) also noted that societal racism directly devaluates Black womanhood. In the study, participants' narratives contained several accounts explaining how their progression in the workplace was impacted by gender and racial biases throughout their careers. Participants described their level of expertise, educational attainments, qualifications, and challenges as Black women in a climate that has not resolved gender and racial biases.
2. **The Need for Perseverance Strategies** - refers to the importance of resilience and persistence in facing challenges, barriers, and the underrepresentation of Black women. In the study, perseverance is referred to as "grit"; it refers to the continued pursuit of goals, despite any adversity that may hinder progress. The participants shared strategies they used to

intentionally cultivate the reality that allowed them to persevere and remain steadfast in the face of various barriers and challenges to help them with professional growth.

3. **Own Professional Development** - refers to the importance of Black women taking ownership of their career paths and actively seeking professional growth and advancement opportunities. According to Horak et al. (2020), Black women place greater value on achieving career success through their efforts rather than relying on informal networks to help them advance. In the study, all participants had to own their professional growth. Participants in the study recalled joining leadership development cohorts and professional women's organizations. They also recalled paying for their training for progression.
4. **Important Resources for Black women** - refers to various resources and support systems that benefit Black women in the workplace. Knorr (2005) stated that mentoring can be an effective way to promote career development and address the inequalities that Black women often encounter in their professional journeys. There was consistency within the study where participants stated coaching, mentorship, sponsors, and having a support network were all beneficial.
5. **Hindsight when pursuing management roles** - refers to the lessons and insights Black women learned as they navigated the challenges of advancing.

If having to take on the managerial journey again, all participants shared hindsight about how they would have approached their careers.

Theme 1: Gender and Racial Biases in the Workplace

The first emerging theme identified during the data analysis was *gender and racial workplace biases* that perpetuate cultural underrepresentation. Participants' narratives contained several accounts explaining how their progression in the workplace was impacted by gender and racial biases throughout their careers. When interpreting the experience of being Black and female while ascending into managerial roles, the pattern of devaluing experiences and qualifications of Black women included data coded as education and qualifications, experiences, and black were significant for participants' experience of being Black and female while ascending into management. The experience of being Black and female while advancing into managerial roles revealed that systemic gender and racial biases still impact the ability of Black women to ascend into managerial roles. For example, Participant 6 shared an experience, "they automatically assume you have fewer qualifications, or you have more qualifications than they do. And they're threatened by that. It definitely has. For instance, people have told me, "Oh, you're overqualified, and so we're not sure if you're going to stay that long." And that has definitely been said to me when going from different managerial roles." Participant 7 shared a similar experience, "I've been told that I'm not qualified, even though my resume and my body of work would show otherwise."

Participants described their gender and racial biases as having their professional growth hindered. Black women having the qualifications had no bearing on whether they

would be considered for managerial roles. Although Black women take the time out to get educated, get the experience, or the training, gender and racial biases impede their ability to move forward. The participants in this study recount having to work ten times harder before and still not getting promotions. Participant 9 recalled as she was up for promotion,

I feel like I am more qualified to do so. ...there were certain other companies where I just felt like, *I had to prove over and over again, I have the experience, I've done this position elsewhere, I have the experience, I have the educational requirements behind it, performance evaluations have obviously shown my work, you guys are constantly so at telling me that you want to promote me and move me.* But it never would happen in the timeframe that I thought it should happen compared to other people.

Participant 5 stated, "I think I have to work a lot harder. In addition, I know I will need to prove myself longer to get there than my peers who do not look like me."

Similarly, Participant 10 shared,

...every time I had to work twice as long, twice as hard, than my white male counterparts in order to get anywhere. I was always operating at a manager level before I was given the manager-type title. I was operating at a director level before I was given a director title. My counterparts not so much. They didn't have the experience I had; they did not have the education that I had. However, they seem to rise on the corporate ladder much easier and much more quickly than I

ever did. I always had to be operating at that level, before I was actually given the title.

Participants described specific gender and racial barriers that prevent them from progressing. Participant 1 shared,

I'm always, at times concerned about the quote-unquote, "mad black woman", like if we don't like something, or when we speak up against something if it's not stated or said a certain way, being labeled as all this that black woman, I think it just depends on the environment that one is in. I think that could have an impact on us, especially now, in this type of climate that we're living in, you know. I feel right now, we're kind of going backward. So really, this definitely depends on where you are.

Participant 3 said,

I've had to maintain a certain amount of professionalism, and stability. Hide back some emotions sometimes. And, you know, black women sometimes get a rap, even before we enter the room. And so, you know, just having to fight some of those stereotypes, you know, like the angry black woman.

Similarly, Participant 6 said,

I've also experienced where I have not been my full authentic self because I did not want to appear to be the angry black woman. When in actuality, I am. There are things that do make me angry, and I have every right to be angry.

Participants' experiences validated that gender and racial biases remain workplace problems.

Theme 2: The Need for Perseverance Strategies

Participants in this study used perseverance strategies to overcome systemic barriers and discrimination in their careers. The need for these strategies arises from the persistence of structural inequalities that continue limiting the opportunities and prospects of underrepresented groups, such as Black women, in the workforce. In this context, resilience and persistence are essential qualities that enabled the participants in this to confront and overcome the challenges of gender and racial biases. This theme highlights the importance of investigating the specific perseverance strategies that Black women could use to navigate these challenges and succeed in their careers. With several accounts of understanding their blackness, participants shared that perseverance strategies were necessary at every point in their careers. In the study, perseverance is referred to as “grit”; it refers to the continued pursuit of goals, despite any adversity that may hinder progress. The participants shared strategies they used to intentionally cultivate the reality that allowed them to persevere and remain steadfast in the face of various barriers and challenges to help them with professional growth. In the study, participants described their need for perseverance strategies.

Participant 1 recalled, “At every point in my career, I’ve always known what I wanted to do. I’ve always known I wanted to manage people. So, it’s just at every point from beginning to end. There wasn’t a specific situation, or specific timeframe or place or anything...” Participant 3 said, “I think in every single step, though, I’m always currently focused on my current role and the skills that I need to have for that role. I’m always looking at being prepared for the possibility and opportunity of what’s next.” Participant

10 recalled, "From the point that I got my first job out of college. I mean, I always knew that perseverance was necessary. I mean, it took perseverance to even get through college. ... I think black women historically need and have exhibited perseverance throughout life." Participant 4 was very certain about the need for perseverance strategies and said, "Every single step? Every step along the way without a shadow of a doubt in my mind."

For perseverance strategies that have worked for the participants, Participant 2 said, "I always wanted to win. I always wanted to be the top performer. One of the top performers, no matter what role I was in, and I always wanted to know every aspect..." Participant 9 said, "...I definitely feel it was building a relationship, and just kind of sitting down with her and letting her [the manager] know, you know, this is what I want to do. Can you help me develop these skills so I can be successful, I wanted to follow in that person's footsteps. That's what gave me the opportunity to open up the door for me to be able to get into management." Participant 7 said, "I think you know; my relationship is one. I did go through the Consortium for Leadership Roles Program, which was specifically targeting black individuals who wanted to advance into managerial sectors of corporate, public, and private entities." Participant 1 added, "Definitely patience. I had to definitely always think before I speak." Participant 3 said, "Grit, right off the top? You know, if some days, you don't feel like you don't want to, and does that make sense? But I think you have to have I think perseverance and grit are cousins. And other strategies, being knowledgeable, and so that means you have to put in the work."

Participant 10 said, “You got to play the game. I mean, you have to, you know, put yourself out there too, you know, once I asked someone to be my mentor, and she said yes, but she didn’t hold up her end of the bargain. I had to find somebody else. I had, to resolve with myself that I had to do the job before I could get the job.” Participant 4 stated, “I would say being a black woman is a perseverance strategy. We are. ...I think the strategy may be learning how to advocate learning how to speak on my own behalf is probably the best strategy, learning how to document appropriately in order to protect my work and protect my reputation has been very important.” Participant 6 noted, “Make sure that you have a support network of people, professionals, specifically professional black women that you can get advice from professionals in order to help you navigate some of those spaces so that you don’t feel like you’re alone. ... Again, I can’t tell you enough about self-care so you can rejuvenate yourself.” Participant 5 shared, “One key perseverance strategy would be more of a social one. I will be social but keep my distance.”

Participants described perseverance strategies that guided their growth in the workplace. Some participants thought being surrounded by like-minded women who look similar, inserting self, and evaluating where you are and want to be, were significant for growth. Some participants also aligned out looking outside the organization for additional growth training. For example, Participant 2 said, “I always think that was most important for anyone, but especially a black woman, to see where they are, and to visualize where they want to be. And if you want to be in this or that seat, then take a look at the footsteps you need to take along that pathway.” Participant 7 stated, “I think that a lot of black

women try to network with other like-minded people. And sometimes that's a little tricky because, you know, you're competing, or you may be competing for the same role. But I do think that joining professional organizations, networking with professional women organizations..." Participant 1 said, "I would definitely look for opportunities, and to insert yourself into things that come up, volunteer for things, even if they're things that you're not 100% comfortable with, get out your comfort zone, and do it anyway."

Participant 10 said, "I think kind of this, the same things that I kind of did in continual learning, making sure that you are equipped with the knowledge and experience to command the seat at the table." Participant 5 said, "...tone of voice, the volume of voice, another one would be body language in terms of not moving around so much when you talk. Another perseverance strategy I feel like black women can use would be always to surround themselves with similar and you know, different women of color. Because that's where you tend to talk about these lived experiences and I think a lot of times there will be commonalities in the different you know, situations or the themes."

Participants were also transparent with the types of perseverance strategies that were necessary for growth. One of the key factors that contribute to success in this context is the ability to persevere in the face of adversity. The participants described perseverance strategies that required adopting a determined and resilient approach to progressing in the workplace, despite the potential barriers that exist. The strategies shared by the participants were crucial in professional settings where systemic barriers and discrimination often impede progress and limit opportunities for Black women. The commonalities that emerged within this subtheme included networking, joining

professional organizations, continual learning, and surrounding self with like-minded women who look similar.

Participant 2 shared,

I always think that was most important for anyone, but especially a black woman, to see where they are, and to visualize where they want to be. ...The reason why I say that is because oftentimes, we let other people dictate to us what the ceiling looks like for us.

Participant 1 suggested being open to opportunities and said, “Don’t ever cut yourself off from anything. Be open to it. Do your research first and then know yourself to be sure it’s something that you think you could tolerate and be okay with, no matter what the situation is no matter the outcome.”

Participant 7 shared,

I think that a lot of black women try to network with other like-minded people. And sometimes that’s a little tricky because you know, you’re competing, or you may be competing for the same role. But I do think that joining professional organizations, networking with professional women organizations, I think that a lot of women do seek out a male mentor a lot of times because normally they’re in a better position to help you move along in your career.

Participant 3 asserted,

So, I think that because of our history as black women, where we have had to, from slavery, our men were in the field, we were in the field, and then we were also having to manage the household. And with each generation that continued, it

may not have been a physical field. But for the majority of black women, we have had to use those multitasking skills in our personal life. And I think that they transcend our professional life.

Participant 10 shared what worked for her, “I kind of did in continual learning, making sure that you are equipped with the knowledge and experience to command the seat at the table. Do not be assertive. Ensure that you’re taking up for yourself because no one else will take up for you regardless of what is being said about you, to you. Always be professional and get your point across in the most professional way.”

Participant 4 shared

I think you need to tap into what works for you as a black woman. When you feel the irritation rising. And I say the irritation because you can feel irritation rising as you can feel it. When someone is intentionally needling you. You can literally feel it in your body. And whatever you do in that moment in order to, whether that’s taking a deep breath, whether that is having a moment of Zen re-centering yourself before you respond so that when we respond, we are responding with a smile and I keep saying that, because there’s a trope about black women having attitudes and things of that nature. No one will ever be able to accuse me of that because I’ve responded with a smile. So, we have to do these things in order to make sure that we can grow because if we do respond in a way that is not approachable, then we are quickly misaligned at work. And our thoughts, our ideas are quickly dismissed. So, I would suggest black women use perseverance strategies when they feel the irritation so that they do not respond in irritation.

Because that can detract from, or it can derail a career. And I've watched that happen. So, it's important that we don't allow it to happen going forward.

A successful manager requires many skills and attributes, including effective communication, strategic thinking, and strong leadership abilities. However, one key factor contributing to success in this role is the ability to persevere. Managers often face complex situations, make difficult decisions and effectively lead their teams. To be a successful managers, participants shared strategies that managers should adopt. As the participants advanced within the workplace, they shared the perseverance strategies necessary to be successful managers. Self-care was a common strategy. But they also shared unique perspectives for success. Participant 2 shared, “

So, one of the most important things I believe, as any manager would be to, number one, understand and accept the strengths of your team. So that's always first and foremost. Oftentimes, when you're in leadership roles, you're paying attention to it. What everybody brings to the table, but you're, you're highlighting their strengths, but you're also paying attention to what their gaps are challenges are. I would always challenge folks to focus on what people's strengths are.

Because the more you focus on their strengths, and the more relevant they feel that they can be an integral part of your team, the more willing they are then to self-discover what their gaps and challenges may be.

Similarly, Participant 9 said,

To be a successful manager, you have to learn your people, you have to learn your job, and you have to learn their job. And you have to be able to recognize, if you

don't understand something, say it, and be open about it even with your staff, but also making sure that you're coaching and developing them along the way because you want them to be able to succeed in their careers and things too.

Participant 7 asserted,

I think that one of the most important things is your mindset. I think that you have to have the mental capacity to know that sometimes. You know, it's like David and Goliath, like, you know, you're going against the status quo. And so, I think that you have to. One you need to figure out who you are. I think you have to do a self-assessment or an assessment of whether or not there are things that you need to work on.

Participant 1 shared,

Be true to my word, definitely, if I say I'm going to do something, I do it. Do not over-commit. If I know from a work perspective and personal perspective, there's something I just cannot get done at work I will not volunteer for it. I will not over-commit. It's okay to ask for help. Just ensure when asking for help you show that you have done this, this, and this and this and be specific about what you need assistance in. It's okay also to do confirmation. But when you do confirmation, do it in such a way as you're letting them know, hey, I understand this. I'm pretty confident in this. I just want to get your buy-in definitely is how you position and word things. And then let people know what you want. Like I've always told any manager no matter what company I want was where I wanted to go, what I expected, and what I needed.

Participant 3 said,

Flexibility and when I say flexibility, I mean openness in all kinds of ways. The end product is not necessarily always like you envision it. And so I think you have to be adaptable and flexible, to personalities to 'people's skill level. You have to be able to assess the breed and have some discernment. And really understand what makes your staff tick and understand what motivates them.

Participant 8 asserted,

In terms of being a manager you have to be fair. You have to have integrity. You have to stay up on whatever is going on and whatever you need is current.

Participant 10 noted,

I think to be a successful manager, you have to be a successful follower. There are times when you will lead and there will be times when you follow because managers do not know everything. That is why you have a team. You have to be able to trust your team and delegate to ensure that all the things will happen. And you have to truly manage and oversee to ensure the success of such things.

Participant 4 said,

Being a successful manager requires excellent listening skills. And to be able to give people clear directions, I have to be able to listen without bias without my own bias. So, for me, knowing that Joe Blow may have irritated me.

Unbeknownst to Joe Blow, he may not realize that what he's saying is a troll for what he's saying is, offensive for whatever reason so knowing that I may have had to correct with kindness, this person, yet I am responsible for this person, yet

I am responsible for their work, I have to have a deep well of empathy and forgiveness in order to successfully manage a team a diverse team of people with varied backgrounds.

Participant 5 stated that,

One of the strategies would be to be consistent. When I speak of consistency in this context, I mean consistency in almost everything in terms of communication, discipline, praise, criticism, and acknowledgment of peers.

Participant 6 said,

...get feedback from your staff about how you're doing. I think that is good, I think, um, because, and let me give you an example. Because if you can get motivation from your staff to that kind of validates what you're doing, and validates, you know, the hard work that you're putting in that is very helpful.

Perseverance strategies are used as a tool for achieving success. In the study, some of the participants' strategies included building supportive networks and seeking mentorship or guidance from experienced individuals or individuals who resembled them. The participants also described perseverance strategies needed in life beyond management and the workplace. Several participants saw a need for perseverance strategies to level up. Participant 7 said, "I do think that you still have to have strategies of how you not only managed, but if you're looking to go another step up, you have to have some type of strategies to keep your mental health together, because it's not easy being in management, it is just not okay." Participant 1 stated, "Yeah, I think everyone does, regardless of race and gender, you should. It just helps to elevate to the next level."

Participant 3 stated,

I think you have to have a little bit of vision. And I'm gonna say, I'm not a visionary, but I'm an executor. So, I tend to align with people who have a vision. Because mine isn't so great. So, I think some of the other perseverance strategies are really assessing your skill level and whatever deficiency you have. Get that in your life.

Participant 10 shared,

Absolutely. This goes beyond just rising in management. Like I said, from the moment I entered from the moment I went to school. With the obstacles that we face in everyday life, perseverance is necessary. That's what got us all through a year, being in your house by yourself or with one or two other people, you persevered through that year to make sure that you came out on the other side, alive, and still thriving. So, it totally goes beyond just management. Perseverance is necessary in life.

Similarly, Participant 4 said,

As a black working mother. When I leave work, I am clocking in for my other job, which is being the CEO of my household. You know, I have two black sons, and my role in their life as a mother the most important role, and just like we have to, hold it together, listen, well strategize, all of those things at work. I need to make sure that I'm doing that in my children's schools, in order to make sure that the schools know that I am here. My children are covered protected loved and cared for and you will not play with them because their mama is here. And it's

also important that we do this in the community in whatever community organization that we serve or community organizations that we serve in, we have a responsibility as black people in order to serve our community and serve those who may not be in the same position that we're in. So, you know, how am I using this access in order to advance someone else? I have a responsibility also to mentor to groom the black women coming behind me. So, I take that very seriously with the two young ladies that I mentor. So, yes, beyond management roles, we also have a responsibility to the people in our lives outside of work in order to see them grow in advance. And specifically that dang school, the school needs to know that our black boys have black mamas and daddies that are here and that are watching every single thing they do in order to make sure that they know that our children are important.

Participant 6 said,

...sometimes you need something more than a paycheck, in order to continue to be motivated on the right path. I mean, you just do. And so, perseverance strategies are something that you can apply to your professional life and your pursuit of your personal goals. It's something that you can impart to your children to help them in the pursuit of their goals, because I've used it, because I've also given it and passed on my knowledge, as far as different goal-setting strategies and things like that to my own children to help them to understand the importance of making a plan for themselves.

Participant 5 shared,

So, if you are pursuing roles beyond management roles, you will need to use perseverance strategies. Because one, the stakes are higher when you move beyond a management role into the C-suite. Additionally, you will need to use them because the higher you go, the less likely there will be people who look like you, so utilizing perseverance strategies will be imperative.

Theme 3: Own Professional Development

All participants had to own their professional growth. The responsibility for professional development often rests on the individual, who must take ownership of their learning to achieve their goals. This theme emerged in a qualitative study that explored participants' experiences as they navigated the workplace, highlighting the importance of taking an active role in their professional development. Participants in the study shared their perspectives on owning their professional development and the resources they used to achieve their goals. There was one participant who mentioned being in charge of professional development in her current role, so her access was readily available. Several participants mentioned not having access to resources and agreed to not having managerial support in some of their roles. Participant 5 stated, "I just try to create my own opportunities for professional development, whether it be serving on boards or doing things like actually paying for mentorship through organizations like Black and HR and different groups who share my plight." Participant 9 said, "I do a lot of training through SHRM, the local SHRM that we have in St. Louis, and other HR organizations, I also do a lot of training and professional development with those different groups as well." Participant 7 shared,

To say there's a lot of professional development available then I will say it is limited. Unless I'm seeking it out myself.

Participant 3 stated,

I've had to seek outside professional development through you know, different courses, I've looked up locally, you know, through colleges, seminars, workshops, or professional organizations.

Participant 10 mentioned,

I didn't have the mentors or the sponsors that many of my colleagues had in similar positions. So, I had to oftentimes seek these things out for myself or pay for them myself. Or, you know, I didn't even know that I could ask my company to pay for a coach. So, I just paid for myself, and come to find out many people got that as a form of professional development paid for.

One participant had total access to resources. Participant 6 shared, "I am in a fortunate situation. I am in charge of the professional development of my organization." One other participant, Participant 5 stated, "I will say my level of access to resources is pretty good. I believe it is only because I almost demand it in order to do my job. I just make sure I have an irrefutable justification for why I need a certain resource, regardless of the cost." Participant 1 also mentioned, "I've had pretty good access to resources and training to get me to where I am now. Um, the company I currently work for, is phenomenal and is the best one I've ever worked at. Now when it comes... well, so to this stay on that question, right now, it's been good even at every company I've worked

for, in terms of training and that type of development, it's been good." Several other participants did not have the luxury of having access to resources. Participant 2 recalled,

...what I've found is that when I've made requests for additional professional development, I've gotten declined, in organizations such as Focus St. Louis, which develops Leadership and Development Program, or anything like that. So, I've been fortunate throughout part of my career to work for one institution, where regardless of if I was black, female, or young, they believe in empowering the top performers by giving them additional leadership training, and I have yet to find another job that has that same philosophy.

Participant 7 said, "So currently, there are limited resources, I would say, I mean, I can because of my position, go to some training, but to say there's a lot of professional development available then I will say it is limited. Unless I'm seeking it out myself."

Participant 3 said, "The access is limited for training and support is limited." Participant 10 shared, "I didn't know people like my mother couldn't call her neighbor and get me a job, even entry-level. Once I actually got the job, I was looked over a lot as it relates to professional development." Participant 4 recalled,

My level of support has varied dramatically. It went from absolutely no support at all to a bounty of supporting resources during this period of time. I think the difference maker was having access to the locus of control or the locus of power in the organization that I worked for whatever that organization may be.

Three participants shared insight into the level of managerial support they received throughout their careers. Participant 1 recalled, "My managerial support... for

the training has been good. Now, managerial support, it's been sporadic. Okay. So, when I first started out, it wasn't good at all. It wasn't horrible. But it wasn't what I would have expected. And I learned a lot." Participant 8 said, "I got support from some and from some I didn't, at the second job. ... it depended on who was managing the firm as to your level of support, and resources." Participant 5 recalled, "In terms of managerial support for professional development, I wouldn't say I've had a lot of managerial support for that."

Theme 4: Important Resources for Black Women

The experiences of Black women have been characterized by systemic barriers that often limit their opportunities and prospects for success. The participants in the study have relied on a range of resources to support their growth and achievement. This theme emerged from the shared perspectives of study participants, who identified the critical resources that helped them overcome many obstacles, build networks, and advance in their careers. These resources included mentorship, access to information and knowledge, supportive networks, and perseverance strategies that enabled them to overcome adversity. Participant 2 shared,

I believe that leadership development and coaching are most relevant in any leadership in any managerial or leadership role you're taking on. There are so many different facets to being a black female and leadership that are oftentimes overlooked. So, I believe that leadership and coaching, and development through mentorship through a sister group through other people who may be experiencing some of the good and the bad in between that you're experiencing, are the second

piece to the leadership and development that you should be receiving from the organization to work with.

Participant 9 said,

I would definitely start with coaching and networking. And how do you call it mentorship or is it mentor and coaching? I definitely feel like some variations of both of those aspects are very important for African American women in leadership roles, because you have to be able to know how to navigate through the organization, navigate through the right parties, be able to speak to the right individuals, and just kind of learning about the organization learning about certain aspects or that role that they're looking for in a leader, and being able to get the right skills that you need.

Participant 1 shared,

The type of resources that are important are definitely any kind of executive training that one can take, I believe we should definitely take not only training geared towards us as individuals, but take the training that everyone takes regardless of their nationality. For one, it helps with networking. And two, it helps with some of the skills and the thought processes that they go through that that we need to understand and then acquire as well, just as managers. And as it relates to any support, I think it's very important to have a champion and that's not always easy to cultivate.

Participant 3 said,

I'd say first, a mentor is extremely important for black women. Access. So, access means being aware, and providing the guidance and direction to access and manage your roles. I think one of my benefits was for progression and management early on, I had a young lady tell me to volunteer and be on different committees outside of my primary role. And that is how I started to understand how to move up and forward. So yes, those to me are the resources and support that are important.

Participant 8 said, "Support of our bosses, those that are above me and control."

Participant 10 said, "The resources and support that they need are mentors and sponsors. They need people to speak up on their behalf when they're in the room and when they're not in the room. Because those are times when the decisions are happening most often when they're not in the room. And if there's no one speaking on their behalf, they do not get as far as quickly." Participant 6 mentioned,

So, definitely a group or a network where they can be their authentic selves and express the rewards and challenges of being a black woman in pursuit of managerial roles that are so key. That support network is so key. ...Another thing that it's really important for black women specifically is self-care. Self-care is really important. We oftentimes have to code switch, and between different environments, and we rarely have the opportunity, or we sometimes don't have the opportunity to rest and just be relaxed. ...Self-care is important to give you that strength and rejuvenate you so that you can continue to pursue whatever goals you have professionally and personally.

Participant 5 said,

I think being connected with other black women in all spaces and ages, who are in managerial roles would be important for black women, who are pursuing managerial roles in corporate America.

Several of the participants expressed having true allies and someone who would be able to speak up on their behalf, as an advocate. Participant 4 said,

I think the most important resource is a strong mentor slash advocate, not just a mentor, but a true advocate. Someone that is going to advocate on behalf of that woman, when she is not in the room. Someone who is going to ensure that the work that that woman does is credited back to that woman and not credited to another man. If there was one thing that I was missing before that I have now is a true advocate. So, I think that is the most important thing for black women. And I would also add that that advocate needs to have actual power. A lot of times black women or just women, in general, are paired with quote-unquote, “mentors”, but those mentors have no true power in the organization. If that person has no power, then they cannot extend power to the person that they’re mentoring.

Participant 7 mentioned,

I definitely think that you have to have allies. I think that there needs to be almost some type of companies that need to do a better job of promoting and helping black women have resources a lot of times unless you really seek it out yourself.

Participant 5 added,

Another important support I will add would be allies. Regardless of the role, in most workplaces in America, black women will be in the minority and will experience microaggressions. Support from allies within the workforce who are not black would be critical in retention and a sense of belonging.

Theme 5: Hindsight When Pursuing Management Roles

Pursuing management roles has been a unique path for the participants of this study. Participants shared unique insights and perspectives on what they wished they had known beforehand. This theme emerged from the shared experiences and reflections of study participants, who identified how they would have approached their careers if they had the benefit of hindsight while pursuing managerial roles. Participant 9 shared, “That’s a good question. [Laughter] So if I, if I look back at a previous employer, I would say that I probably would have taken time to learn the organization a little bit more, learn the parties a little bit more. And just kind of learn some of the historical contexts of how things happen and why things happen. For those particular reasons, I think I would have probably taken a step back and try to identify certain things that I didn’t necessarily know at that point in time that I needed to, just because I had come from places where I had been promoted constantly.” Participant 5 said, “I think one thing I would have done differently while exploring the roles would be to purposely seek out companies or organizations that truly want people who look like me there.” Participant 10 said,

I think that would have been more targeted in the companies that I chose. For a while, I was really just looking kind of chasing the money, right going, where I was getting paid more with the promise of said management roles. So I worked in

industries that I had no interest in knowing absolutely nothing about, which again, going back to that perseverance role, I had to do a whole lot more to kind of get up to speed and learn about that industry, for that whole continuous learning thing. So, I probably would have been a lot more targeted in the companies that I chose to spend time and work for.

Participant 8 shared,

I would have done at probably would have stayed with my first boss because he was very good to me; he would give huge bonuses along with from the firm. So I missed out on that when I took that directorship. He covered me and they knew not they knew not to mess with me.

Participant 3 mentioned,

Oh, I would have... So, I wanted to get a dual Master's, in social work and public health. But I was so tired of school I would have, I would have persevered and finished. Because all I needed was one more semester to get that dual degree. That's what I would have done differently. And, you know, I've considered going back, but at this point, if I go back, I'm gonna get a Ph.D.

Participant 7 said,

You know, I think I would have left my first job earlier. I think that I probably would have sought out more leadership development training, and I probably would have looked for a mentor early in my career. Oftentimes, you have to learn, you know, grow and learn as you go, instead of knowing, to be in leadership. I think that you know, women normally have to seek it out, unless you are just born

into a family that has money. But I probably would have not gone the Ph.D. route, like, there are things I probably wouldn't have done. Like, I would have probably not stayed in St. Louis. To pursue, you know, to move my career, I think that I could have climbed the ladder, faster had I been in a different city. And I think that I probably would have expanded my network a little bit sooner. Because there, you know, as I said, there is a learning curve, when you're going into management roles. And oftentimes, the training that you need is not there. So, you have to pay for it. And I probably should have to pay for some more training that, you know, before I really do. So, I think I stayed too long in my first job. And then I learned along the way how not to stay in those jobs long because they weren't working out for me.

Participant 2 recalled,

What would I have done differently? Oh, gosh. You know what a big struggle for me early on, why are people like this? Like, I was so confused, and not understanding why they are not looking at what I bring to the table. Because I felt that, I earned the right, right. I just wanted to be recognized as one of them. Simply because my work ethic, my results, my commitment to the bank, and all of those things were stronger than theirs were. But what I realized was that was an anomaly. Not only was I a young black female, but I was a young black female who was able to connect in all circles. I was able to touch people that were my age I was able to empathize with people who were older, I was able to connect with people that were black, but I was also able to connect with people that are

white because of my life experiences. So, after a while, I decided, I don't wish I had been like them. I'm actually better than them. They should be wishing that they could be like me. [Laughter] like well, sometimes I wish I had given myself more grace back then.

Participant 1 shared,

I think I would have set more boundaries with some of my direct reports. I'm a very friendly person. And, a very family-oriented person, even when it comes to friends. So, one thing I have learned in corporate America is definitely to keep boundaries up. Because you might be thinking one thing, and somebody else thinks a totally different thing. So, I learned that with one of my direct reports thought we were good friends, and turns out we weren't. (Laughter)

Participant 4 noted,

I would have tried to find an advocate sooner. I would have realized sooner that the person I thought was advocating for me was the person that was stealing from me and would have transitioned sooner to the person that is advocating alongside me now.

Participant 6 said,

I think I would have spoken up more. I think I would have asserted myself more. I know, not even say, I know, I would have asserted myself more, I would have interjected my unique perspective as a black woman into the conversation. Because there are things that are unique to our experience, that need to be recognized, that need to be acknowledged, and need to be incorporated and integrated into organizational culture.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the data analysis for this qualitative, descriptive phenomenology study. I used an interview protocol to ensure participants responded to the same questions. The results from the audio recorded web-based interviews with ten participants revealed five themes. The theme of gender and racial biases in the workplace emerged from the participants' descriptive experiences of perpetual cultural underrepresentation. The theme of the need for perseverance strategies emerged from the participants' experiences in settings where they needed to be resilient and persistent in the face of systemic barriers and discrimination in their careers. The theme of owning professional development emerged from the participants' experiences as they navigated the workplace, highlighting the importance of taking an active role in their professional development. The theme of important resources for Black women emerged from participants' experiences who identified the critical resources that helped them overcome many obstacles, build networks, and advance in their careers. Finally, the theme that emerged from the descriptions of participants' experiences and reflections was the concept of hindsight when pursuing managerial roles. Participants shared how they would have approached their career paths differently had they benefited from hindsight. This theme highlights the participants' value of reflective practice and the potential benefits of learning from past experiences. Chapter 5 will include an interpretation of findings, study limitations, recommendations, and implications for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America. Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts (Alter, 2017; Bui, 2019; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019). The information obtained in this study can assist Black women in better navigating the workplace using perseverance strategies in their ascension into managerial roles. My research findings may lead to positive social change by providing corporations with a creative way to manage diversity and bring awareness to the need for programs to address the sensitivity and professional development of underrepresented groups, such as Black women, within corporate America.

I conducted the study in Missouri through audio recorded web-based interviews with 10 Black women who served as a manager for at least 5 years within the Midwestern regions (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin). The final 10 participants were representatives of Missouri and Michigan. My study's notable findings contained five themes that described the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who may experience more gender and racial biases compared to their White male and female counterparts. The themes were gender and racial biases in the workplace, the need for perseverance strategies, own professional development,

important resources for Black women, and hindsight when pursuing management roles. In this chapter, I present the interpretation of the study's findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications.

Interpretation of Findings

To understand the phenomena of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts, I used the conceptual framework grounded in the intersectionality of gender and race focused on perseverance (Cole 2009; Collins 2000, Crenshaw 1989; King 1988; May 2015; Weber 2010). In this study, I suspended my personal views to understand the lived experiences of the Black women participants as experienced. According to Heidegger (1962/1995, p. 44), only experience can determine their meaning. Therefore, none of the participants' responses contain my interpretation of the participants' experiences. Through the act of epoché and staying true to the descriptive phenomenology design, I allowed participants to lead us to a source of meaning and existence in the world as it was experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

Gender and Racial Biases in the Workplace

My study's finding aligned with the works of several researchers on the intersectionality of gender and race and with Black women who often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts (Alter, 2017; Bui, 2019; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019). In Chapter 2, I discussed how Black women have additional barriers that affect the rate at which they ascend into

management roles, and many of these barriers stem from the history of the Black woman (Hall et al., 2012). Carastathis (2016) purported that the intersectionality of gender and race adds additional hardship to pursuing managerial roles for Black women in the workplace. Intersectionality of gender and race is grounded on the Black feminist theory, which explores the mutually exclusive categories of Black women and their lived experiences in contrast to privileged group members (Crenshaw, 1989). Bhopal (2019) and Wilkerson (2020) argued that the core of the oppression of Black women is perpetuated by White privilege or the caste system. Crenshaw noted that feminism in conjunction with intersectionality is a legal disadvantage for Black women, highlighting Black feminists set forth a problematic consequence of systemic treatment based on gender and race.

It is important to note that feminism falls short of inclusion and forms a disconnect where feminism claims to speak for (all) women, yet there is still a lack of attention to racial, ethnic, class, and sexual differences where Black women need attention placed to defend their virtue (hooks, 1987; Nash, 2008). Black women remain represented in an abnormal stereotypical manner and are invisible in relation to systemic oppression that besets Black women and hypervisibility (Mowatt et al., 2013). Hill-Collins (2000) defined stereotype as controlling the image and perpetuating the oppression of Black women. My study supported Giddings's (1996) argument that Black women are being left out of managing and leading more often because of stereotypes of appearing too angry, loud, and incompetent. Participants in the study noted that their qualifications did not hold merit for their promotions, as their leaders felt they were not

competent to have manager-level roles and beyond but felt their White counterparts who were less than qualified and experienced were more than capable. Despite the challenges of the intersectionality of gender, race, and stereotypes, Black women continue to rise into management roles and beyond in the workplace by leveraging their strengths (Giddings, 1984; Johns, 2013).

The Need for Perseverance Strategies

Another key finding of my study was that Black women played on their strengths to persist and persevere. In Chapter 2, I discussed how Black women practice resilience and perseverance to safeguard their narratives to avoid being misrepresented, misunderstood, and misidentified by stereotypes imposed upon them (Sisco, 2020). Duckworth (2016) noted that one devotes their time and seeks purpose in becoming full-hearted, which leads to challenges that exceed skill practice and mastery and does whatever it takes to improve with perseverance. For Black women, adversity through their historical representations of enslavement has been the grit that continues to help Black women persist against the odds (Duckworth, 2016; Nelson et al., 2016).

My study supported Nelson et al. (2016) perseverance reference of “strong,” which pulls on the characteristics of Black women and their desire to move beyond stereotypes rooted in the slavery era. Therefore, the perseverance strategies used by Black women in the workplace were helpful in their journey to management and leadership. Perseverance strategies that worked to their benefit included playing the game, getting connected to the “locus of power,” taking leadership development courses, joining a

leadership cohort, funding their own training, networking, continual learning, and joining professional organizations.

Own Professional Development

Owning your professional development when access to resources and managerial support is low was another key finding in my study. In Chapter 2, I discussed how Black women feel more accomplished by earning and owning their career advancement (Horak et al., 2020) and that there is no immediate return even if they invest in their professional development (Smith & Joseph, 2010). Participants reported taking charge of their professional growth by joining leadership development cohorts and paying for their own courses and certifications that supported their professional growth. Participants also noted that joining professional organizations outside of work and networking with other Black women who understood their plight was beneficial. Informal networks excluded Black women from accessing beneficial resources, however; Black women avoided integrating themselves into an informal network usually engulfed in collusion, cliques, and other negative phenomena (Horak et al., 2020).

Important Resources for Black Women

Another finding in my study was that participants highlighted important resources for Black women. The top pattern was leadership development cohorts, mentoring, coaching, sponsors, and having access to the locus of power. In Chapter 2, I described support and resources that Black women could use to help them advance within the workplace. The support and resources mentioned included mentoring and sponsorship. Mentorship and sponsorship are critical for helping Black women to advance within the

workplace (Barrett et al., 2014). Knorr (2005) shared that mentoring can help foster career development and combat inequalities often experienced throughout the journey of Black women in the workplace. The participants also noted that having advocates and allies in place that can speak up on their behalf when they are not in the room was an important resource.

Hindsight for When Pursuing Management Roles

My findings added a new perspective on pursuing management for Black women that could help focus on the things that matter in the long run. Participants in my study shared hindsight explaining what they would have done differently while pursuing management roles. One of the participants suggested that she would have taken the time to understand the impact of bias as it related to her ability to navigate the workplace. A few other participants mentioned that they would have sought out leadership development and mentorship sooner rather than later in their careers. Two participants found benefits in having access to the locus of power or the individual with actual decision-making authority. Another hindsight a participant shared was being more selective with the organization she chose to work for instead of chasing the money or status. Understanding what the company stands for was important in hindsight. Several participants mentioned that they would have done more by asserting themselves and speaking up for themselves in their pursuit of management. One participant did not assert herself enough. The hindsight of the participants in my study can be used as a starting point for those Black women pursuing management and employing perseverance strategies for their success.

Limitations of the Study

I identified several study limitations. The study was conducted in Missouri, and the participants represented the states of Missouri and Michigan. One limitation of the qualitative research study that interviewed only 10 participants in the Midwestern region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) is the potential for limited transferability of the findings. As qualitative research aims to explore the complexity and context of individuals' experiences, it may be challenging to extend the results beyond the specific participants and setting of the study (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Patton, 2015). With such a small sample size, there may also be a risk of underrepresenting specific perspectives or experiences, limiting the depth and breadth of the study's findings (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Additionally, the subjective nature of qualitative research may make establishing the reliability and validity of the findings more challenging. Future qualitative research with a larger and more diverse sample size may help address these limitations and provide a more nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. In my study, all but one of the participants had a minimum of a bachelor's degree, eight within this population had a master's, and two within this population had a doctorate. All participants self-identified as Black and had been a manager for at least 5 years. In addition, this study's findings may represent this specific participant group (representative of two states, Michigan, and Missouri) and not a generalization to the whole population. However, my qualitative research aimed to gain insight into how Black

women perceive gender and racial biases in comparison to their White male and female counterparts.

Furthermore, my qualitative study relied on me as the primary data collector for the interview and data analysis, which could result in possible research bias. However, I minimized the possibility of researcher bias by using strategies such as integrity, trustworthiness, and member-checking the data (Birt et al., 2016). Building a trustworthy conversational partnership is important for data integrity to ensure Black women managers are comfortable sharing their innate experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Credibility is one of four criteria of quality measurement used in qualitative research; the other criteria include transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Member checking refers to the researcher's ability to mitigate any bias within a study to ensure research credibility (Birt et al., 2016; Morse et al., 2015).

Lastly, the literature review suggested that the influence of race and traditional privileged gendered roles continues to infiltrate most aspects of the work environment with little progress in attaining management roles for Black women (Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019). The literature also suggested that Black women remain the highest demographics that are underrepresented in management roles (Beckwith et al., 2016; Bui, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018). The result of my study suggests the same with the direct experiences of the participants in the workplace, not gaining roles, even when qualified with education and actual work experience. The experience of having their less-than-qualified White counterparts getting the managerial and leadership roles that Black

women have worked so hard to acquire still presents inequities for Black women in the workplace.

Recommendations

Several recommendations for further research are proposed based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. First, future research should examine the experiences of Black women in pursuit of management positions over an extended period through longitudinal studies, which could extend from several months to several years. This approach would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Black women in pursuit of management positions, including any changes over time. A second recommendation for future research should explore the role of inclusive workplaces in the career advancement of Black women. This exploration would involve examining the organizational policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion and how these factors may influence the experiences of Black women in pursuit of management positions. A third recommendation should investigate the effectiveness of mentoring and sponsorship programs in supporting the career advancement of Black women pursuing management positions. This investigation would involve exploring the various types of mentoring programs available, tailoring the programs to the unique needs of Black women. A fourth recommendation for future research is to expand the study to other regions of the United States to see if the trends identified in the Midwestern region are consistent across different geographical areas. Examining the experiences of Black women in different regions of the United States could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges that Black women face in

advancing into management positions. A final recommendation for future research should compare the experiences of Black women in pursuit of management positions with those of other minority groups, such as Hispanic or Asian women. This comparison may provide a broader understanding of how gender and racial biases impact minority groups differently and where effective diversity, equity, and inclusion programs would be most effective for an organization. By addressing these recommendations, future research can build upon the strengths of the current study and continue to advance our understanding of the experiences of Black women as they pursue management positions in corporate America. These recommendations are grounded in the strengths and limitations of the current study and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and may offer opportunities for further exploration and analysis in this critical area of research.

Implications

Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts (Alter, 2017; Gee & Peck, 2018; Bui, 2019; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019). Perseverance is often used to continue pursuing goals, despite failures or adversity in progress (Duckworth et al., 2007). This study addressed a gap in the literature and provided new knowledge for understanding Black women's lived experiences and how they used perseverance strategies to ascend into managerial roles.

Using descriptive phenomenology, this research uncovered the nature of realism, where only experience can determine its meaning (Heidegger, 1962/1995, p. 44). This research study addressed a real problem, substantiated in the literature, and may promote

positive social change. Through their lived experiences, participants in the study described the phenomena of their experiences with gender and racial biases and related perseverance strategies. Participants also described important resources that helped in their journey.

My research study may impact positive social change at the individual, organizational, and societal/policy levels.

At the individual level, this study's findings can potentially and significantly impact Black women advancing into management positions in corporate America. By shedding light on the challenges and barriers Black women face, this study can help inform and empower individuals experiencing similar struggles in the workplace. Specifically, the study findings can provide a framework for navigating the workplace and employing perseverance strategies to enhance their ability to ascend into managerial roles and beyond. The study findings also bring awareness to the perpetuation of gender and racial biases. Gender and racial biases continue to affect how Black women advance in the workplace (Hall et al., 2012).

At the organizational level, the study findings can inform and empower organizations to develop policies and practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion. Specifically, the study findings can inform the development of policies and practices that promote equal opportunities for Black women to advance in management positions. The study findings can also inform the development of training programs for managers and employees that promote cultural competency and awareness.

At the societal/policy level, the study findings can inform and empower policymakers to develop policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Specifically, the study findings can inform the development of policies and practices that address systemic barriers to advancement for Black women in management positions. The study findings can also inform the development of legislation that promotes equal opportunities for advancement into management positions.

Conclusions

The results of this study imply that there is still much work to do on mitigating inequities against Black women in the workplace. Gender and racial biases remain problematic for Black women pursuing managerial roles. Black women remain the highest demographics that are underrepresented in management and are employing perseverance strategies to help them navigate the workplace effectively for their ascension into managerial roles. Bui (2019) purported that the underrepresentation of Black women in management is due to gender and racial biases, not education, experience, or skillset. The study examined the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts. The use of perseverance strategies was seen as a way to effectively help Black women ascend into managerial roles in the workplace. Positive social change may be fostered at the individual, organizational, and societal/policy level. Individuals may be empowered to acknowledge when to deploy perseverance strategies, organizations may be empowered to develop policies and

practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and legislation may be empowered to create and promote equal workplace advancement opportunities.

Hindsight perspective derived from participants' experiences on what they would have done differently while pursuing managerial roles. The participants described important resources that they used to help progress to the next level. Participants also described helpful perseverance strategies beyond management roles, such as being connected to the locus of power. The deficiency was not limited to Black women managers but extended beyond the managerial level to directors and vice presidents. Perhaps Black women pursuing management roles should consider developing an employee resource group in organizations to support Black women. Or an organization could consider providing Black women with a framework for navigating the workplace that may benefit Black women's professional growth. The results may inform corporate leaders and aid them in devising a plan to promote equitable professional growth for Black women seeking to advance to managerial roles.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Serve as a Pilot Study Participant

Date

Name

Company

Address

Dear Pilot Study Participant

I would like to take this opportunity to respectfully request your participation as a Pilot Study Participant for my doctoral dissertation at Walden University. My research will qualitatively examine gender and racial biases and perseverance strategies related to career advancement. Upon your acceptance to serve as a Pilot Study Participant, your role will be to review the interview questions and affirm alignment with the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research question. Upon receiving your feedback, I will revise the interview questions and request a secondary review to again ensure alignment. I will then revise the interview questions based upon alignment. If you should have any questions, please feel to contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or via email at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx or my Committee Chair, Dr. Karina M. Kasztelnik, at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.

I look forward to hearing back from you regarding your participation as a Pilot Study Group Member.

Respectfully,

Edo L. Branch

PhD in Management with a Specialization in Leadership and Organizational Change

Appendix B: Pilot Study Participant Questions

Dear Pilot Study Participant

I am incredibly grateful that you have agreed to participate and serve as a Pilot Study Participant for my doctoral research study titled “In Pursuit: The Managerial Journey of Black Women in Corporate America”. Your role will be to review the interview questions and affirm the alignment with the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and research questions. Upon receiving your feedback, I will revise the interview questions and request a secondary review to again, ensure alignment.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who may face more gender and racial biases than their White male and female counterparts in corporate America.

Problem Statement

The general problem was that Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions (Alter, 2017; Gee & Peck, 2018; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019). The specific problem was that Black women often face more gender and racial biases while advancing into management positions in corporate America than their White male and female counterparts (Alter, 2017; Gee & Peck, 2018; Bui, 2019; Loutfi, 2019; McFeeters, 2019; Washington & Roberts, 2019).

Research Questions

RQ: What are the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America?

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your ability to advance into managerial roles as a Black woman in corporate America?
2. Describe your level of access to resources and managerial support available to you for professional development.
3. Please describe resources and support that are important for Black women in pursuit of managerial roles in corporate America.
4. What specific gender and racial biases might currently keep you from pursuing management, or having the ability to become a manager in corporate America?
5. What specific systemic gender and racial biases, if any, have you experienced in corporate America?
6. Explain how gender and racial biases, if any, might have impeded your ability to advance into managerial roles in corporate America.
7. What specific perseverance strategies, if any, do you recall using to ascend into management roles?
8. At what point within your career did you believe perseverance strategies were necessary to ascend into a management-level role?

9. What perseverance strategy do you recall using that was imperative for your professional growth?
10. In what ways would Black women use perseverance strategies in their pursuit of managerial roles?
11. Please describe any perseverance strategies, if any, you perceive as important for being a successful manager.
12. Do you see a need to use perseverance strategies for pursuing roles beyond management roles?
13. What would you have done differently while exploring management roles?
14. Is there anything relevant to our discussion today that you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

Please make note of the answers to the above-listed questions after each interview question with your comments and changes so that I may revise the interview questions as noted and compare them to the other Pilot Study Participant's responses. Should any questions arise regarding your participation as a Pilot Study Group Member, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or via email at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx or my Committee Chair, Dr. Karina M. Kasztelnik, at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation in this research.

Respectfully,

Edo L. Branch

Ph.D. in Management with a Specialization in Leadership and Organizational Change

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Research Questions and Interview Questions

Date: _____

Location: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

Name of Participant: _____

Assigned participant Initial (First and Last): _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate and allowing me to interview you today.

As noted in the consent, I will be recording the audio of the interview.

I will take notes while you are speaking to help me keep track of keywords and highlights of your responses.

Please be advised that any notes collected during this phase will receive the same level of confidentiality of the data that is collected.

The interview should be no longer than one hour, and if it looks like we may run short on time, I will ask if you would like to extend the interview before proceeding.

Just a friendly reminder, the interview can be stopped at any juncture.

Do you have any questions before getting started?

Background Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is your marital status?
3. Do you have children? If so, what are their gender and age(s)?
4. What college or university did you attend?
5. What degree did you receive?
6. How many years have you been in management?
7. What field of management are you working in?

Interview Section

1. Research Question for Study

RQ: What are the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions regarding gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America?

Interview Questions for Research

1. Describe your level of access to resources and managerial support available to you for professional development.
2. Please describe resources and support that are important for Black women in pursuit of managerial roles in corporate America?
3. What specific gender and racial biases might currently keep you from pursuing management, or having the ability to become a manager in corporate America?
4. What specific systemic gender and racial biases, if any, have you experienced in corporate America?
5. Explain how gender and racial biases, if any, might have impeded your ability to advance into managerial roles in corporate America.
6. How would you describe your ability to advance into managerial roles as a Black woman in corporate America?
7. What specific perseverance strategies, if any, do you recall using to ascend into management roles?
8. At what point within your career did you believe perseverance strategies were necessary to ascend into a management-level role?
9. What perseverance strategy do you recall using that was imperative for your professional growth?
10. In what ways would Black women use perseverance strategies in their pursuit of managerial roles?
11. Please describe any perseverance strategies, if any, you perceive as important for being a successful manager.
12. Do you see a need to use perseverance strategies for pursuing roles beyond management roles?

13. What would you have done differently while exploring management roles?
14. Is there anything relevant to our discussion today that you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

2. Follow-up Notes, Section 2

1. Can we schedule a follow-up call now?
 - i. If you need to review your schedule, how would you like for me to reach you to schedule?
 - a. Date: _____
 - b. Time: _____

Interview Closure: Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions? If you need to reschedule the follow-up call, please email me at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx or use the contact information on the copy of your informed consent form.

Appendix D: Initial Codes and Emerging Categories

Initial Codes and Emerging Categories

Initial Code	Raw Data	Emerging Categories
Cultural Underrepresentation in Management		Management roles are not as diverse and exclude Black Women in corporate spaces
BWUND – Black women are underrepresented in managerial roles in corporate spaces		
Challenges and Barriers (Intersectionality of Gender and Race)		Prevents Black women from freely expressing themselves and presents a multifaceted burden of invisibility and invalidation. Today’s gender and racial biases are unconscious, meaning subtle discrimination still impacts Black women.
SGRBO – Systemic gender and racial biases and oppression		
HABF – Historical aspect impacts the professional growth of Black women and Black feminism		The historical aspect of slavery impacts the professional growth of Black women. Expectations surrounding Black women lean on positions held during slavery, such as sexual and labor exploitation and “Mammy” noted as stereotypes
MBW – Misunderstanding of Black women		Stereotypes give misconceptions/misperceptions about the Black woman’s character and integrity
LRD – Lack of racial discussions		Lack of racial discussions reduces the accountability of the oppressors or dominant groups who may believe race is not a concern for dominant groups

LOE – Lack of opportunity equity		“Concrete wall” in addition to glass ceilings creates a barrier for Black women in pursuit of management. Black women have additional hurdles that are harder to overcome
LOSR – Lack of support and resources		Managerial support and access to informal networks have been a staple for career support and social support. Black women have been excluded from these avenues because they do not fit the descriptions of those connected to the in-groups; individuals having access to benefits and inclusion for professional growth in corporate spaces
TRN – Training		Black women rely on educating themselves and have historically been identified as the demographics with the highest rate of academic and non-academic training. Training for Black women only supports the roles they currently occupy
MS – Mentoring and Sponsoring		Mentoring and sponsorship have been proven to help boost careers. Mentoring provides a one-to-one relationship dedicated to increasing opportunity for growth, whereas sponsorship speaks about you to others placing your skills at the forefront. Black women in corporate spaces are lacking effective mentoring and sponsorship.
Perseverance		Grit can be seen as resilience which is almost always present for perseverance. Black women endured a great deal of trauma, historically, related to
GAP – Grit and Perseverance		

		representations of enslavement and rejection due to racial discrimination. The undertone of discrimination presents the need for Black women to be resilient and push beyond the pangs of gender and racial biases
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Appendix E: Initial Codes, Emerging Categories, and Emerging Themes

Initial Codes, Emerging Categories, and Emerging Themes

Initial Code	Examples from Data	Emerging Categories	Emerging Themes
Cultural Underrepresentation in Management		Management roles are not as diverse and exclude Black Women in corporate spaces	Lack of Black women in Management roles in corporate spaces
BWUND – Black women are underrepresented in managerial roles in corporate spaces			
Challenges and Barriers (Intersectionality of Gender and Race)		Prevents Black women from freely expressing themselves and presents a multifaceted burden of invisibility and invalidation. Today’s gender and racial biases are unconscious, meaning subtle discrimination still impacts Black women.	Unconscious racial biases still exist and impact Black women
SGRBO – Systemic gender and racial biases and oppression			
HABF – Historical aspect impacts the professional growth of Black women and Black feminism		The historical aspect of slavery impacts the professional growth of Black women. Expectations surrounding Black women lean on positions held during slavery, such as sexual and labor exploitation and “Mammy” noted as stereotypes	Slavery impacts Black women. Black women are not taken seriously.
MBW – Misunderstanding of Black women		Stereotypes give misconceptions/misperceptions about the Black woman’s character and integrity	The character and integrity of Black women are often misunderstood
LRD – Lack of racial discussions		Lack of racial discussions reduces the accountability of the oppressors or dominant groups who may believe race is not a concern for dominant groups	Lack of discussions about racism
LOE – Lack of opportunity equity		“Concrete wall” in addition to glass ceilings creates a barrier for Black women in pursuit of management. Black women have additional hurdles that are harder to overcome	A thicker barrier beyond the glass ceiling exists for Black women
LOSR – Lack of support and resources		Managerial support and access to informal networks have been a staple for career support and social support. Black women have been excluded from these avenues because they do not fit the	Black women do not receive the same managerial support as their counterparts.

		descriptions of those connected to the in-groups; individuals having access to benefits and inclusion for professional growth in corporate spaces	Black women do not receive the accolades and recognition they deserve for the work they do.
TRN – Training		Black women rely on educating themselves and have historically been identified as the demographics with the highest rate of academic and non-academic training. Training for Black women only supports the roles they currently occupy	Black women self-educate outside of the workplace requirements
MS – Mentoring and Sponsoring		Mentoring and sponsorship have been proven to help boost careers. Mentoring provides a one-to-one relationship dedicated to increasing opportunity for growth, whereas sponsorship speaks about you to others placing your skills at the forefront. Black women in corporate spaces are lacking effective mentoring and sponsorship.	Black women are not being mentored or sponsored at the rate at which their counterparts are being mentored and sponsored.
Perseverance		Grit can be seen as resilience which is almost always present for perseverance. Black women endured a great deal of trauma, historically, related to representations of enslavement and rejection due to racial discrimination. The undertone of discrimination presents the need for Black women to be resilient and push beyond the pangs of gender and racial biases	Black women are taught to be strong for their families, which translates to perseverance in the workplace.
GAP – Grit and Perseverance			


Appendix F: Perseverance Strategies and Emerging Themes

RQ1: What perseverance strategies do Black women use to ascend into management positions in corporate America?

Perseverance Strategies and Emerging Themes

Perseverance Strategies Categories	Emerging Themes
Creating Development plans to review with the manager	Create a personal development plan for professional progression
Attend Conferences	Attend conferences to increase knowledge and understanding
Join professional associations Join Diverse organizations for alliances to increase visibility	Join professional and diverse associations and organizations to gain alliances
Be vocal about wants, needs/aspirations	Speak up about future goals in the workplace
Identify authentic allies to use their influences to gain access to development and growth opportunities	Gain alliances who can use their influence for personal growth
Speak about accomplishments and contributions with ease	Be confident enough to speak about accomplishments and contributions. Black women generally downplay their abilities
Network outside of workgroup	Network different (meaning outside of the normal workgroup)

Appendix G: LinkedIn Site Authorization

How can we help? 

← Your cases

Posting and Managing Your Job on LinkedIn

Created 12 days ago

Status: Closed

Case #: 210727-005152

[Reopen this case](#)

Your messages

LinkedIn Customer Support
11 days ago


Hi Edo L.,

Thanks for contacting us at LinkedIn. I hope this email finds you well.

I did have a look at the query below - please know you can post a survey. However please also be informed that if any of the participants or any LinkedIn member reports it and if it goes against professional guidelines, we will review it and remove it (if need be).

Best regards,

Natasha
Member Support Consultant

 **Edo Linette Branch, PSM**
12 days ago

Email: edolbranch@gmail.com

Alternate Email: edobbranch@gmail.com

Contact reason: Help getting started

Url or name of the Job: Research Participant Recruitment Request & Approval

What can we help you with today?: To Whom it May Concern:

I am currently a Doctoral Candidate at Walden University. I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study - participant recruitment on the LinkedIn platform.

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral candidate at Walden University, working toward my Doctor of Philosophy in Management degree with an emphasis in Leadership and Organizational Change. I am the principal researcher and am in the process of writing my dissertation research study entitled "In Pursuit: The Managerial Journey of Black Women in Corporate America" under the supervision of Dr. Karina Kasztelnik at Walden University.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Black women managers and the perseverance strategies they may need to use to navigate and ascend into managerial roles. Utilizing a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study, the study consists of one research question under investigation. The results of this study may help Black women manage and overcome gender and

racial biases by identifying perseverance strategies that could present opportunities for Black women to ascend into managerial roles. Once Institutional Review Board approval has been received I will move forward with a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study format.

To complete this study I need to recruit participants through a posting on the LinkedIn platform for a specific demographic within the Midwestern Regions which will include an Informed Consent Letter containing information regarding the study, and contact for participants to contact me directly for participation. After participants recruitment, the interview protocol will be conducted via face-to-face or via Skype, a secure site, to ensure anonymity and privacy of the participants. I would appreciate it very much if LinkedIn will allow the recruitment of participants for my study. All responses will be held in strictest confidence.

Please be assured that I respect your valuable time and the time of the group members, and will be as expeditious as possible in completing my work. The research recruitment would be approximately 30 to 60 days to gain the needed sample population of approximately 10 qualified participants in management or who may have served in management roles for at least 5 years. The direct benefit of this study to the LinkedIn platform is that a summary of the research findings will be made available to the platform and to the selected participants. The long-term benefits are the research findings could be used to formulate programs to creatively manage diversity and bring awareness to addressing sensitive and professional development of the underrepresented groups within corporate America. Do I need specific approval to do so or is the posting of the recruitment of such does not require specific platform approval?

Please scan to email a *.pdf copy of the signed site authorization to my university's email address edo.branch@waldenu.edu and my home email address edobbranch@gmail.com. I can be reached at (314) 229-9833 if you need to speak to me directly.

Respectfully,

Edo Linette Branch

LinkedIn Customer Support

12 days ago

Thanks for contacting us. Someone from our support team will get back to you as soon as possible. Regards, Your LinkedIn Customer Experience Team *** This message is automatically generated by our system to show we've received your case. In order to answer your question or troubleshoot a problem, a LinkedIn representative may need to access your account, including, as needed, your messages and settings. ***



Contact us

English (English)

Appendix H: Advertisement Flyer Language

A research study opportunity is available that is focused on developing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management positions who may experience more gender and racial biases compared to White male and female counterparts in corporate America. The proposed research study aims to understand the lived experiences through the lens of Black women and their perception of gender and racial biases. A secondary aim is to understand how Black women navigate the workplace while in pursuit of management roles, despite the gender and racial biases, and also to identify perseverance strategies they may have used in corporate America.

Criteria for Participation.

- Black women, who are in or have served in a management capacity for 5+ years.
- Should be employed at a company where there is no controlling interest
- Living in the Midwestern Regions (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin)

Benefits of participating in research.

- The aim of this study is to benefit society and the academic community by building a network that is conducive to success which may provide access to resources and/or specific perseverance strategies that can be used for the personal growth of Black professional women and to help Black women navigate the corporate environment better.
- This will add to the body of knowledge about this subject, which is presently limited.

For more information about participating in this research, please contact the researcher at xxx.xxxxxx@waldenu.edu or call (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or by direct messaging.

Research Study Flyer

Black Women, A Research Opportunity Is Available For You.

A research study opportunity is available that is focused on developing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black women advancing into management roles in corporate America. The proposed research study aims to understand the lived experiences through the lens of Black women and their perception of gender and racial biases. A secondary aim is to understand how Black women navigate the workplace while in pursuit of management roles, despite the gender and racial biases, and also to identify perseverance strategies they may have used in corporate America.

If you or someone you know fit the criteria listed below, then you are invited to take part or share this information.

Criteria for Participation.

- Black women, who are in or have served in a management capacity for 5+ years
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This doctoral study is by Edo Branch, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Appendix I: Emerging Themes

Table 5

Gender and Racial Biases in the Workplace

Initial Code (Predetermined)	Excerpts	Number of Code Occurrences	Categories	Analytic Notes on Emerging Themes Based on Categories
Impeding biases	<p>“I’ve been told that I was too Black... You know, we’re normally sitting too strong, and I don’t even know what that means.”</p> <p>“...gender biases, being a working mother comes with intrinsic gender-based biases and limitations (childcare and school involvements)”</p> <p>“I’ve been overlooked for positions. I’ve been told that I’m not qualified, even though my resume and my body of work would show otherwise.”</p> <p>“Black women are</p>	<p>Racial biases (8)</p> <p>Gender biases (2)</p> <p>Overqualified (3)</p>	Gender and Racial Biases	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systemic biases 2. Devaluing experiences and qualifications of Black women 3. Working 10 times harder (extra workload, no title change) 4. Lack of equity

	<p>overqualified, or not considered.”</p> <p>““Oh, you’re overqualified, and so we’re not sure if you’re going to stay that long.” And that has definitely been said to me when going from different managerial roles.”</p> <p>“I had to prove myself over and over again...”</p>	Extra workload (5)		
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Table 6*The Need for Perseverance Strategies*

Initial Code (Predetermined)	Excerpts	Number of Code Occurrences	Categories	Analytic Notes on Emerging Themes Based on Categories
Perseverance strategies that worked	<p>“...being able to just be transparent with them about what I was looking to do.”</p> <p>“...letting people know, that I am looking to pursue more managerial roles.”</p> <p>“I expanded my network of women to create a support group.”</p> <p>“I will definitely say building a good rapport with certain individuals in higher position.”</p> <p>“Make sure you have a support network of people, professional, specifically professional black women that you can get advice from professional advice from in order to help you</p>	<p>Self-advocate and communicate (5)</p> <p>Networking & Locus of Power (4)</p>	Need for perseverance strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowing how to communicate and self-advocate. 2. Building rapport and building relationships, specifically with the “Locus of Power” 3. Make Goals 4. Continual Learning 5. Find a mentor.

	<p>navigate some of those spaces, so you don't feel like you're alone."</p> <p>"I have a goal setting chart that I have put on vision boards."</p> <p>"I always wanted to win. I always wanted to be the top performer. ...it will be even better if I learned this department of the bank, if I learned that Department of the bank, if I learned that Department of the bank because now not only am I the go to person for the clients that are coming to me."</p> <p>had to know all the things I had to know what I didn't even know that I needed to know."</p> <p>"I would always ask to go to certain trainings. And I will find out what other trends people were taking that I thought that would benefit me."</p>	<p>Make Goals (1)</p> <p>Continual learning (5)</p> <p>Secure a mentor (2)</p>		
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	<p>“Seeking a mentor, taking leadership courses locally and nationally, looking outside of St. Louis for opportunities and support.”</p> <p>“Observation and then, of course, having, you know, mentors who are people that you observe who they don’t even know that you’re observing them necessarily, you know, so like an unofficial mentor.”</p>			
Perseverance strategies for growth	<p>“I always think that was most important was for anyone, but especially a black woman, to see where they are, and to visualize where they want to be.”</p> <p>“I think it depends on that that person’s confidence level. And I think it depends on their skills and abilities, because it’s different for each person. ... I guess for me personally, I will tell you just kind of earlier on in</p>	<p>Visualize where you are now (1)</p> <p>Confidence, network, skillset, self-improvement, continual learning (8)</p>	Need for perseverance strategies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-Evaluate 2. Network with likeminded women 3. Look for Opportunities 4. Join Professional Organizations 5. Continual Learning

	my own career, I didn't always talk to people. I didn't always know how to network and interact with people."			
Perseverance strategies for successful managers	<p>"So one of the most important things I believe, as any manager would be to, number one, understand and accept the strengths of your team. The second thing, once they understand what their strengths are, help them understand how their strengths show up in the overall strategy that you're putting into place. The third thing is make sure that they have a voice in building out that strategy. Now, as a leader, you may already have in mind what you want to accomplish. But when you have people self-discover, or they</p>	know team strengths and capabilities (2)	Need for perseverance strategies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn team and team's strength, and trust team 2. Growth mindset 3. Have a good support group 4. Do not over commit 5. Be flexible 6. Listening skills 7. Self-care 8. Be consistent 9. Have a deep well of empathy and forgiveness

	<p>and they feel that they are contributing to the work. Oh, and now my voice counts. Oh, you got me sold. So I think those three things focusing on strengths.”</p> <p>“ I think that one of the most important things is your mindset”</p> <p>“One of the strategies would is to be consistent. When I speak of consistency in this context, I mean consistency in almost everything in terms of communication, discipline, praise, criticism and acknowledgment of peers.”</p>	Managerial competencies (6)		
Perseverance strategies beyond management roles	“You should always have some sort of game plan, and some sort of desire to be consistent in what you’re	Focus on continual growth (9)	Need for perseverance strategies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continual Learning 2. The Stakes are higher 3. Needed in everyday life

	<p>looking to accomplish. And you should always be equipping yourself to overcome those obstacles that could get in your way of you being whatever it is you're desiring to be.”</p> <p>“I think everyone does, regardless of race and gender, you should. It just helps to elevate to the next level.”</p> <p>“I think you have to have a little bit of vision.”</p>			
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Table 7*Own Professional Development*

Initial Code (Predetermined)	Excerpts	Number of Code Occurrences	Categories	Analytic Notes on Emerging Themes Based on Categories
Access to Resources	<p>“what I’ve found is that when I’ve made requests for additional professional development, I’ve gotten declined, in organizations such as Focus St. Louis, which develops Leadership and Development Program, or anything like that.”</p> <p>“ in previous roles, I did have some access to leadership training and things of that sort. And then a lot of it was also based off of referral from either managers, or just if you had interest if you express interest in wanting to do something you could possibly do it.”</p>	Access to resources (7)	Own professional development	<p>1.Limited access</p> <p>2.Being in charge of own professional development gives great access</p>

	<p>“The access is limited. trainings, and support is limited.”</p> <p>“I am in a fortunate situation. I am in charge of the professional development for my organization.”</p>			
Managerial Support	<p>“My managerial support... for the training has been good. Now, managerial support, it’s been sporadic.”</p> <p>“The access is limited. trainings, and support is limited.”</p> <p>“I got support from some and from some I didn’t, at the second job. It depended on who was managing the firm as to your level of support, and resources.”</p> <p>“In terms of managerial support for</p>	Managerial support (4)	Own professional development	1. Limited to no managerial support

	professional development, I wouldn't say I've had a lot of managerial support for that.”			
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Table 8*Important Resources for Black Women*

Initial Code (Predetermined)	Excerpts	Number of Code Occurrences	Categories	Analytic Notes on Emerging Themes Based on Categories
Important Resources	<p>“I believe that leadership development and coaching is most relevant in any leadership in any managerial or leadership role you’re taking on.”</p> <p>“ I would definitely start with coaching and networking. And how do you call it mentorship or is it mentor and coaching but I definitely feel like some variations of all both of those aspects are Very important for African American women in leadership roles, because you have to be able to know how to navigate through the organization...”</p>	Mentorship, coaching, allyship, leadership development (10)	Important resources for Black women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership Development 2. Mentoring, Coaching, Champion, Sponsorship 3. Connect with Locus of Power 4. Advocate/True Ally 5. Support from Leaders 6. Support Network 7. Being connected to other Black women managers

	<p>“I definitely think that you have to have allies.”</p> <p>“ Everything that I’ve done overall, I’ve either had to seek out myself for resources. As far as support.”</p> <p>“The type of resources that are important are definitely any kind of executive training that one can take.”</p> <p>“I’d say first, a mentor is extremely important for black women. Access. So, access, meaning being aware, and providing the guidance and direction to access manage your roles.”</p> <p>“Support of our bosses, those that are above me and control. I got to go to some conferences in the beginning,</p>			
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	<p>and then depending on who the manager was managing the firm.”</p> <p>“The resources and support that they need are mentors and sponsors. They need people to speak up on their behalf when they’re in the room and when they’re not in the room.”</p> <p>“I think the most important resource is a strong mentor slash advocate, not just a mentor, but a true advocate. Someone that is going to advocate on behalf of that woman, when she is not in the room.”</p> <p>“So, definitely a group or a network where they can be their authentic selves and express the rewards and challenges of</p>			
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	<p>being a black woman in pursuit of managerial roles that is so key. That support network is so key.”</p> <p>“I think being connected with other black women in all spaces and ages, who are in managerial roles would be important for black women. who are pursuing managerial roles in corporate America.”</p>			
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Table 9*Hindsight for When Pursuing Management Roles*

Initial Code (Predetermined)	Excerpts	Number of Code Occurrences	Categories	Analytic Notes on Emerging Themes Based on Categories
I would have...	<p>“You know what a big struggle for me early on was this. Why are people like this? Like, I was so confused, and not understanding why are they not looking at what I bring to the table? ... [Laughter] like well, sometimes I wish I had given myself more grace back then.”</p> <p>“[Laughter] So if I, if I look back at a previous employer, I would say that I probably would have taken time to learn the organization a little bit more, learn the</p>	Self-realization (10)	Hindsight	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take time to understand biases that could impact growth 2. Sought more leadership development training and mentorship 3. Expanded network for reach 4. Set more boundaries 5. Continued education beyond bachelors 6. Stayed connected to the Locus of Power 7. More targeted in the type of company selected for development 8. Found an advocate sooner 9. Given myself more grace 10. Asserted more

	<p>parties a little bit more.”</p> <p>“I think I would have left my first job earlier. I think that I probably would have sought out more leadership development training, and I probably would have looked for a mentor early in my career.”</p> <p>“I think I would have set more boundaries with some of my direct reports. [Laughter]”</p> <p>“Oh, I would have. So I wanted to get a dual Master’s, social work and public health. But I was so tired of school I would have, I would have persevered and finished.”</p> <p>“I would have done at probably would</p>			<p>11. Sought companies where more people looked similar</p>
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	<p>have stayed with my first boss because he was very good to me;”</p> <p>“ I think that would have been more targeted in the companies that I chose.”</p> <p>“I would have tried to find an advocate sooner. I would have realized sooner that the person I thought was advocating for me was the person that was stealing from me and would have transitioned sooner to the person that is advocating alongside of me now.”</p> <p>“I think I would have spoken up more. I think I would have asserted myself more.”</p> <p>“I think one thing I would</p>			
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	have done differently while exploring the roles would be to purposely seek out companies or organizations who truly want it people who look like me there.”			
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