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Black/African American Men's Lived Experiences of Workplace Colorism Bullying

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Abstract

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MBA, Walden University, 2009

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Bullying in the U.S. workplace is an ongoing issue that transcends industry boundaries due to perpetrators' ineffectiveness in viewing all coworkers as equals. The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis study was to explore the lived experiences of Black/African American men who endure workplace colorism bullying. Critical race theory provided the conceptual framework, which labeled racism as an omnipresent systemic force. Semistructured interview data were collected from six Black/African American men who resided in the United States and who were bullied in the workplace within the past 20 years. Data were coded via open coding to discover themes. The primary findings were that Black/African American men were bullied in the workplace because of their skin complexion, but they maintained an attitude of professionalism and continued to strive for excellence despite how they were treated. Human resource professionals, managerial personnel, and employee assistance program coordinators may benefit from a better understanding of workplace bullying from the Black/African American male perspective leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

No person is an island, and no one achieves this level of education alone. I

dedicate this dissertation to my wife of 35 years, Leslie, who has been a motivating force

and a great believer in me, even long before I began the pursuit of my dream of becoming

a PhD. She saw in me what I was incapable of seeing in myself. Your commitment to our

household and your willingness to stand in the gap has allowed me to reach for the stars.

This dissertation is dedicated to my three sons, Benjamin III "Tre" (26) who witnessed

much of my academic journey firsthand, Dwane (42) who provided as much support as

he was capable of providing, and Jonathan, who although you were not able to share in

the dream with your presence, you are as much a part of my legacy as your brothers are. I

have always wanted to make the three of you proud. This dissertation is dedicated to my

granddaughters, Juliana (12), Jenna (8), and Jocelyn (3), who along with any additional

descendants within my immediate bloodline will be able to say their grandfather

sacrificed and gave his all so that they would have a model to look to when they face

difficult life circumstances in their quests to attain greatness.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my brother, Carlton, who despite our difficult

relationship growing up has become one of my staunchest supporters and my best friend.

To the memories of my mother, Florence, and my father, Benjamin "Bennie," I also

dedicate this dissertation to you, as I carried you with me in spirit daily throughout this

process, and I think of you often. Mom, you put so much into me academically from the

beginning; you always referred to me as an intellectual, and because of your commitment

to me, I will be eternally grateful. This work is also dedicated to the memories of the

additional members of my inner circle, Johnis Romans "Bobie" (great grandmother),

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(mother-in-law), Joyce Rogee (wife's aunt), and Pamela Ellington (friend), as well as

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game; however, her commitment to my success was instrumental in bringing this project

to completion. Finally, to my ancestors who have prayed for me and supported me in

ways that I am unaware of in their totality, I thank you for helping to guide me across the

finish line.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Workplace bullying is one of the most destructive issues facing the modern

workplace (J. I. Harris et al., 2020; Sanders, 2018). Nearly every state in the United

States has laws against bullying in schools; however, none have prohibiting bullying in

the workplace (The HR Specialist, 2016). According to the Workplace Bullying Institute

(2021), the term "workplace bullying" emerged as a catchphrase when it was introduced

by journalist and activist Andrea Adams in England in 1992; however, initial research

into this phenomenon began in Scandinavia in the 1980s (Patten, 2018). Workplace

bullying entails repetitive psychologically and physically harmful behaviors inflicted on

others by an individual or multiple employees, which produce negative consequences for

the intended victim and the organization (Askew et al., 2013; Workplace Bullying

Institute, 2021).

Citing a 2019 Monster.com survey, Robinson (2019) reported that 94% of nearly

2,100 participants were victims of workplace bullying. Gaille (2017) reported similar

data, indicating a 96% workplace bullying victimization rate. Conversely, Sansone and

Sansone (2015) reported far different results, indicating that workplace bullying affects

only 11% of the workforce. The Workplace Bullying Institute (2021) reported that 30%

of the workforce is bullied at worksites and 43% of remote workers are bullied.

Due to the broad array of findings, the prevalence rates are unclear; however, the

data indicate no ambiguity regarding the seriousness of workplace bullying. Hispanics

were found to suffer workplace bullying at a higher rate than all other groups (35%), with

the rates for Whites, African Americans, and Asians reported at 30%, 26%, and 12%

respectively (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2021). The Workplace Bullying Institute (2021) also reported that men (39%) are bullied at approximately twice the rate of their female counterparts (20%). Krieger et al. (2006) found that most workplace abuse was reported by White men, although Hollis (2017) found that Black women suffered bullying more than all others in the workplace. Currently, the United States is the only Western industrialized country without federal or state laws protecting against bullying in the workplace (Okolie & Idibra, 2021; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2021); however, the presence of laws are not necessarily a deterrent because workplace bullying persists despite legislation against it in places such as Australia (O'Rourke, 2016).

According to Asante and Hall (2016), "colorism" is a term whose origin is usually accredited to writer/activist Alice Walker and is the beneficial or disapproving treatment afforded to another by those of the same race based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. Lighter skin among Blacks in the United States was initially realized due to the sexual accessibility of the African female slave to her White slave masters and slave traders, whose resulting offspring were afforded plantation privileges. These privileges included living in and/or working in or near the master's house based on the lightness of their skin, when compared to other Blacks (Asante & Hall, 2016). Blackness was associated with despicability and savagery, while Whiteness was linked to refinement, purity, and attractiveness (Reece, 2018; Ryabov, 2013). Close proximity to the master and his family gave the lighter skinned slaves a misguided feeling of belonging and specialness to the inhabitants of the master's house, and at the same time a feeling of separation from their darker skinned fellow slaves who worked in the fields (Asante &

Hall, 2016), and thereby skin shade conflicts among African Americans were born in the United States.

Background

The practice of racism has proven to be a societal scourge despite the identities of the perpetrators or the victims it is inflicted on. Although racism is displayed in the viewpoint of presumed preeminence of one race over another due to racial differences, Tharps (2016) expanded on Walker's theme, noting that this proclivity for lighter skin is practiced not only by people of color worldwide but also by Whites in their interactions with Black and Brown people, thereby allowing colorism to transcend racism in its level of treachery inflicted on its victims. In this experience, darker skinned African Americans are most adversely affected (Tharps, 2016). There was a gap in the literature regarding how Black/African American men internalize workplace colorism bullying (WCB) and whether self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying.

For the purpose of this study, the terms Black and African American were used interchangeably. Institutionalized colorism has been an impediment to advancement for Blacks with darker skin, as well as a boon to those with lighter skin within the workplace (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018; Hollis, 2020). Anderson and Cromwell (1977) concluded that White Americans have been at the forefront of skin color discrimination and have placed Black skin color at the lower rungs of their value system. In nearly every aspect of normal life, Blacks do not do as well as Whites (Bridges, 2018; Monk, 2021).

Because there are no laws against workplace bullying in the United States, claimants must proceed using civil rights statutes such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act

of 1964 (prohibits workplace discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, religion, color), the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress; however, these claims are very difficult to prove and in order to have their claim considered, the claimant must belong to one of the protected classes (Reyes Lola, 2017; Sanders, 2018).

Hunter (2007) concluded that all Blacks experience racial discrimination. Hunter also concluded there are differences in the intensity and frequency of racial discrimination that people experience, as well as the impact of the discrimination, which is dependent on skin tone. Similarly, other researchers found that regarding mistreatment within the workplace, some have it far worse than others. Braverman et al. (2022) defined racism as the assignment of people of color to an inferior classification due to unsubstantiated opinions and natural inferiority. Black and Brown people not only have the pressure of being discriminated against by Whites due to their skin color but are also frequently affected by racism even within their own race. This is known as *phenotyping*, defined as "the act of assigning value to external facial features and distributing opportunities and consequences based on skin color" (McCray, 2012, p. 149;). Although workplace bullying is not always due to discrimination, it is always attributable to an imbalance of power between victim and perpetrator (Patten, 2018; Tye-Williams et al., 2020). Similarly, Maddox and Perry (2018) found a direct link between Black men who looked typically Black (darker skin, kinky hair, broad nose, thick lips) not faring as well as lighter skinned more European looking Black men (straight hair, narrow nose, thin lips) when encountering the criminal justice system. Mistry and Latoo (2009) also

reported that Black minority ethnic doctors experience more workplace harassment and bullying than their White colleagues.

According to Hunter (2007), the perpetuation of White supremacy is based on the concept of abasement, repulsiveness, and inferiority with regard to dark skin, while Whiteness is defined by contrasting adjectives. Hunter also found that many people are oblivious to their penchant for lighter skin because the prevailing image of White beauty is deeply rooted within the culture. Additionally, occurrences of colorism may be difficult to prove because most lawmakers appear oblivious to its existence (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, Reece, 2019).

With the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, race and color-based discrimination within the workplace became illegal (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008). Margolis (2018) found that because color and race are viewed as the same both informally and legally, the difference may not be obvious, and although skin color is typically used in making racial distinctions, race extends beyond skin color. Lamm (2020) reported that regarding the race/color dichotomy, the legal system must be cognizant of the multidimensional effects of intersectional discrimination and understanding how this is viewed externally is important. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission concluded that although there is an overlap between race and color, they are different; therefore, color-based discrimination can occur between those of similar or dissimilar ethnicities and races (Data, 2019; Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008).

In a press release, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2021) reported receiving 72,675 workplace discrimination complaints in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and 3,415 (4.7%) were color based. In one of the first cases litigated in the United States (Felix v. Marquez) regarding workplace color discrimination, Hall (2018) found that it was obvious to both plaintiff and defendant that it was better to have lighter skin than darker skin. McCray (2012) found that in matters of employment, a dark-skinned African American male having more education and work experience was not a deterrent to him being passed over in favor of a lighter skinned counterpart. As it is in many areas of life, colorism may also be present in relation to sentencing disparities between Blacks and Whites in the criminal justice system (Burch, 2015). Bennett and Plaut (2018) reported in relation to legal matters that questions of legitimacy arise with regard to a criminal justice system that haphazardly considers skin tone and facial features in its decisions.

On the other hand, Hairston et al. (2018) found that although skin tone bias was not evident in their study, its debilitating effects on Western culture are undeniable and the harm it produces should not be disregarded in the comprehension, existence, and sometimes hidden biases associated with it. Because the criminal justice system has been severely altered, the result has been an intensification in racial inequality (Munger & Seron, 2017). Bonczar and Beck (1997), in a United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, reported that 1 in 4 Black males are likely to go to prison sometime in their lifetime, contrasted with 1 in 23 White males.

In the workplace, Eisenberg (2016) found that restorative practices provide a blueprint for team building aimed at preemptive processes that prevent and reduce discrimination and promote shared learning. On the other hand, Opie and Laura (2017) noted that with regard to Blacks in the workplace, attempts at restorative justice are thwarted when the existence of racism and its resulting harm is denied. George et al. (2021) found that comfortability in calling into question a person's character and potential on the basis of skin color misleadingly absolves decision makers from all responsibility in admitting their decisions are impactful to individuals' lives in addressing questions of system legitimacy as well as honestly assessing claims of system reformation efforts.

Problem Statement

Although research on this topic is plentiful regarding Black people in general (Reece, 2021), and Black women (Cable News Network, 2013; Hollis, 2020), Black men and their lived experiences regarding WCB was as an underresearched topic. The current study was unique because it addressed the dearth of research on Black men and their experiences with WCB and whether self-reported skin tone influences descriptions of workplace bullying. Although it may be concluded from tacit knowledge and anecdotal data that African Americans suffer discrimination and bullying in the workplace based on their ethnicity and color, it was not known how Black men handle the trauma they endure because of it and whether their experiences differ based on the hue of their skin color. The current study addressed a gap in the research regarding how Black men internalize and handle the pressures of WCB, how they manifest the evidence of the trauma

experienced, and whether their pressures and manifestations differ depending on the shade of their skin color.

Purpose of the Study

Ethnic workplace bullying can be overt and subtle (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). Subtle acts of harassment can often shake the confidence and threaten the self-worth of African American men (Aymer, 2010). Meyers (2012) reported that although researchers agree that workplace bullying may be frequent, it is not always recognizable. Loud and intensified speech, rigorous scrutiny of another's work, and willingness to exclude may be incorrectly identified as strong supervision, an employee's lack of goal attainment, and personality differences (Meyers, 2012; Patten, 2018). The purpose of the current phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black men who endure WCB. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), researchers in clinical psychology doctoral programs in Britain should conduct six to eight interviews. Data obtained through interviews with six participants recruited from the Walden University participant pool and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) were analyzed using manual coding to identify themes in the study. The use of field notes and memos in accordance with other collected data is common among researchers when analyzing interviews (Mattimoe et al., 2021).

Research Questions

The main research question of the study was as follows: What are the lived experiences of Black/African American men who endure workplace bullying? The subquestions of the main research question were as follows:

RQ1: How are these bullying experiences described by Black/African American men?

RQ2: How does self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying?

Descriptions of skin shade are subjective. Participants were required to reveal to me the results of their individual self-assessment of their complexions as a criterion for participation. According to Gyimah-Brempong and Price (2006), there are seven classifications of skin hues of Black skin: fair, light, light brown, medium, medium brown, dark brown, and dark.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was critical race theory (CRT) developed in the early 1970s, attributed to Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, among others (E. Taylor, 1998). According to Gates (1993), CRT developed from a student boycott of the Harvard Law School course Race, Racism and American Law in 1981 after university officials failed to consent to student demands that a person of color instruct the course. As a result, the students organized an informal alternative course, inviting guest lecturers (lawyers and law professors) to participate on a weekly basis. Crenshaw was one of the student organizers, Mari J. Matsuda (law professor/activist) was a participant, and Delgado and Charles R. Lawrence III (former Harvard Law School assistant professor) appeared as guest lecturers (Gates, 1993). CRT challenges the notion that race does not negatively impact the economic and social standing of racial minorities, and that racism is not inherent in all walks of life (Iheduru-Anderson et al.,

2021). Although CRT initially gained prominence in the legal arena, it has also been applied in education, gender studies, public health, and nursing (Iheduru-Anderson et al., 2021).

Exploration of Black/African American men's experiences when exposed to WCB was the focus of the current study. Edelman et al. (2018) reported that few aggrieved employees in the workplace pursue reparations despite having equal employment opportunity laws in place, and that empirical sociolegal and CRT studies found that even when justice is pursued, satisfactory results are rarely achieved. Carbado and Roithmayr (2014) posited the following foundational principles of CRT:

- Racial inequality is hardwired into the fabric of the social and economic landscape.

- Because racism exists at both the subconscious and conscious levels, the elimination of intentional racism would not eliminate racial inequality.

- Racism intersects with other forms of inequality, such as classism, sexism, and homophobia.

- The racial past exerts contemporary effects.

- Racial change occurs when the interests of White elites converge with the interests of the racially disempowered.

- Race is a social construction whose meanings and effects are contingent and change over time.

- The concept of color blindness in law and social policy and the argument for ostensibly race-neutral practices often serve to undermine the interests of people of color.

- Immigration laws that restrict Asian and Mexican entry into the United States regulate the racial makeup of the nation and perpetuate the view that people of Asian and Latino descent are foreigners.

Racial stereotypes are ubiquitous in society and limit the opportunities of people of color. E. M. Brown (1995) reported the necessity for critical race theorists to include White perspectives and attitudes toward racism, not only by Black narratives and storytelling but also via more scholarly methods of reporting, lest the more modern and sophisticated race protagonists fail to recognize themselves as complicit in systemic racism matters. Nan (1994) reported that although the dominant culture believes Blacks should be appreciative of affirmative action programs supposedly meant for their benefit, Bell and Delgado expressed skepticism due to a distrust of the American democratic system. According to Culp (1994), the notion of a color-blind society is mythical, and when race is discounted, racially marginalized communities become further disadvantaged. However, according to Bohonos (2019), there are also occasions when Whites feel embarrassed when taking into account their actions toward people of color as a result of the moral concessions, they feel duty bound to make so that their communities will be pleased with them.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the experiences of Black/African American men related to WCB and whether the experiences were different based on skin tone. Qualitative interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the victims, and common themes were identified via coding analysis. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), compilation, structuring, and giving careful thought to the data's importance via coding and making it easy to verify by others is the manifestation of good analytical work habits and is useful in most qualitative research.

Qualitative research provides a way for the researcher to not only investigate but also to comprehend what and why people attribute responsibility to a particular societal issue that requires change, where common themes are identified with data interpretations (Creswell, 2009). This research is a type of social action that focuses on peoples' understanding of their social experiences and how they put them into perspective (Mohajan, 2018). According to Kaivo-oja (2017), in the absence of qualitative analyses, the shaping of the future is an impossibility, and the potency of qualitative analyses is connected to an in-depth comprehension of social change, social patterns, and configurations.

The advocacy/participatory worldview approach is used because it is believed to be less restrictive than the postpositivist worldview in that it lends greater consideration to those who are marginalized and focuses more on social justice and change, thereby providing a voice for the voiceless (Creswell, 2009). The phenomenological research

design is appropriate because it allows for intensive study of the lived experiences of a small number of participants, and a narrative strategy is used by soliciting stories from the participants, thereby providing context of the combined lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

Definitions

Colorism: Benefits or disadvantages distributed based on skin shade by members of the same race, where lighter skin is usually considered to be more privileged (Asante & Hall, 2016; Tharps, 2016).

Racism: The assignment of people of color to an inferior classification due to unsubstantiated opinions and natural inferiority (Braverman et al., 2022).

Skin hue: The classification of Black skin shades that are categorized as fair, light, light brown, medium, medium brown, dark brown, and dark (Gyimah-Brempong & Price, 2006).

Unconscious bias: A stereotypical opinion or idea formed about others outside of one's own awareness (Perez, 2019).

White colorism: The favoring by Whites of lighter skin Blacks over Blacks with darker complexions (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018).

Workplace bullying: The repetitive psychologically and physically harmful behaviors inflicted on others by an individual or multiple employees, which produce negative consequences for the intended victim and the organization (Askew et al., 2013; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2021).

Assumptions

Because honesty and openness are important in qualitative data gathering, I assumed the study participants would be forthcoming and would become more comfortable with the style of research inquiry as the interviews progressed, and because I have set the proper interviewing climate prior to the interviews' commencement, thereby creating a reciprocal level of trust. I also assumed that I would become more comfortable with the interviews as the number of interviews increased, and that I would be sensitive to the interviewees' verbal and nonverbal cues regarding any discomfort that may have ensued. Because participation in the study was voluntary and because the interviewees were active participants in setting the schedule, I also assumed the timing of the interviews would not be a deterrent in getting the best possible product with regard to the information being revealed by the interviewees. Finally, I assumed that my personal biases with regard to the study's topic would be sufficiently set aside so as not to contaminate the findings.

Scope and Delimitations

The method by which the data are collected is also of great importance. Guest et al. (2017) found that although the participants of their study provided equal amounts of unique data via individual interviews and focus groups, the individual interviews garnered a wider range of data. The scope of the current study was limited to individual interviews of Black/African American men who had been bullied in the workplace. Although other groups were important, limiting the study to this group would allow me to better understand the experiences of Black/African American men with WCB.

With regard to a shift from quantitative data gathering to more instinctive qualitative research methods, the connection generated between the researcher and the interviewee may result in a product that may be understood in more intuitive ways (Burkette, 2021). Korstjens and Moser (2017) reported that qualitative researchers consider the natural context in which the study participants operate, therefore creating a deeper understanding of real-world issues. The sense of connection produced between interviewee to the researcher may deliver a product that statistical data gathering could never capture.

Limitations

Qualitative researchers must determine the appropriate sample size. According to Vasileiou et al., (2018), no standard among researchers regarding what constitutes a sufficient interview sample size has been established. On the surface this would seem to call into question the validity of the phenomenological design; however, it should not invalidate the richness of the data gathered. In the current study, one limitation was that I chose to conduct all of the interviews with regard to distance and safety considerations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of face-to-face contact may have prevented me from seeing important cues with regard to body language during the interviewing process. According to Meherali and Louie-Poon (2021), distance data collection presents an additional limitation because researchers relinquish control of the study environment created as a result of the participants' various locations where confidentiality may be compromised. Finally, limitations regarding possible technological breakdowns and constraints could also be a factor.

Significance of the Study and Implications for Social Change

This study was useful in filling the research gap because managers, employee assistance program coordinators, and human resource professionals in the workplace may be assisted in identifying and thwarting bullying incidents, thereby preventing incidents that may result in a loss of productivity, high employee turnover, and negative impacts on the mental health of employees in organizations. According to Opie and Laura (2017), Blacks are not highly regarded in the American workplace, sometimes resulting in being intimidated to work and receiving either no pay or a lower wage than their colleagues. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020) found there is no area of life that is unfettered by systemic racism, and as a result, African Americans are relegated to a permanent lower-class status based on racism and White privilege. Although some literature addressed Black men and their experiences in the workplace related to bullying and racism, this phenomenon was not well misunderstood.

Pitcan et al. (2018) found that Black men working in workplaces that are mostly White may experience more intense or a greater number of racial slights compared with Black men working in more culturally diverse workplaces. The current study filled the gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of WCB of Black men, and whether the experiences were different based on skin tone. A better understanding of the experiences of WCB of Black/African American men may benefit managers and other workplace leaders.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black/African American men regarding WCB, and whether the experiences were different based on skin tone. Although an abundance of literature exists regarding workplace bullying experiences in general, not much was found that was specific to Black/African American men. Chapter 2 provides a description of CRT and a review of literature on racism and colorism, racial profiling, skin bleaching, White privilege, unconscious workplace bias, and workplace bullying and its impact on victims' mental health.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to explore current themes and literature related to WCB and how it affects Black men. This review revealed a gap in the literature because there was an abundance of literature about women and Black people in general; however, there was a dearth of literature about Black men. Additional relevant connecting themes such as childhood bullying, CRT, racism/colorism, bullying behaviors, unconscious bias, racial profiling, and workplace bullying/mental health are explored.

The public's interest regarding bullying is occasionally piqued, and people are appalled when they hear of an adult who has been bullied, and also horrified when informed of the negative outcomes of it, which could include mass shootings, suicides, or both. This reaction may be because many people view bullying as a childhood phenomenon carried out in the schoolyard or because someone has been denied access to the lunch table where the popular kids sit. Research has indicated that bullying is much more than this because the schoolyard bully sometimes becomes the workplace bully who chooses their victims due to a myriad of reasons including race and color (Homisak, 2018). When racism and/or colorism are the purported reasons for the bullying, it becomes more complex because these types of experiences are not always clearly defined.

The theory that was the foundation of this study is CRT. Its development has been attributed to Derrick Bell and others in the early 1970s (Taylor, 1998) and to a group of protesting Harvard Law students, including Kimberle Crenshaw in the early 1980s

(Gates, 1993). A guiding principle of this theory is that racism is an omnipresent force. For example, if the White and/or Black cashier at the local grocery store fails to greet the Black customer after greeting and conversing with the White customer they served before them, then racism and/or colorism could be at work. According to D. A. Bell (1995), CRT is often disruptive because its commitment to antiracism extends beyond easily recognizable social justice programs. Carbado and Roithmayr (2014) theorized that racism is inherent in all walks of life, and the eradication of intentional racism would not eliminate racial inequality. CRT was a key component in the study by Horsford (2009) addressing the experiences of eight Black school superintendents as they journeyed through schools with only Black students enrolled, and how those experiences assisted in shaping their educational philosophies subsequent to desegregation. Additionally, Ballard and Cintron (2010) used CRT as an analytical framework in compiling data via interviews regarding the habits of five successful Black/African American male doctoral degree recipients.

Literature Search Strategy

The central topic of the study was workplace bullying, which was narrowed to focus on the reasons that Black/African American men experience bullying in the workplace and the manifested effects. The databases used included PsycInfo, Sage Premier, ProQuest, ABI/Inform Complete, EbscoHost Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Science Journals, APA Psych Articles, ERIC and Business Source Complete for peer-reviewed articles. Google Scholar and the internet were also used to locate articles in the area of interest. Various search terms and combinations of terms were used

including *workplace bullying victims*, *colorism*, *Black men*, *light skin*, *slavery*, *male*, *female*, *women*, *girls*, *white privilege*, *childhood bullying*, *mental health*, *workplace discrimination*, *racism*, *critical race theory*, *boys*, *males*, *young men*, *unconscious bias*, *racial profiling*, *skin lightening*, and *bleaching*.

Theoretical Framework

CRT, the theoretical framework of this study, challenges the notion that race does not negatively impact the economic and social standing of racial minorities, and that racism is not inherent in all walks of life (Iheduru-Anderson et al., 2021). The theory is used not only to comprehend but to also change the social construct of race within society; however, acknowledgement of White privilege by Whites is critical for advancement to occur (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2020). According to Chrobot-Mason et al. (2020), White privilege came to prominence within the workplace during the period of industrialization; however, due to the advent of deindustrialization and worldwide competition that brought economic expansion to a halt in the United States, right-wing politicos were able to draft disenchanted Whites, pitting them against civil rights laws that were depicted to unfairly favor African Americans and members of the Democratic party (Munger & Seron, 2017). Solórzano et al. (2000) found that within all types of academic settings, negative incidents involving Blacks were attributed to all Blacks as a whole by Whites, while positive attributes by Blacks were deemed by Whites to be rare and inconsequential, as if those Blacks were successful only because they were somehow able to dig themselves out of their derelict circumstances. With the recognition of racism's systemic presence within American society, CRT places social justice and

challenging false accounts at the forefront, which are connected to marginalized communities (Wilson & Thompson, 2020).

Using CRT as an investigative tool, Hall (2018) found that dominant race power structures are indirectly sustained at the expense of those who are seen as inferior. With regard to teaching, Pratt (2021) reported the meaninglessness of providing abstract content for students that merely meets an educational diversity mandate without any real substance. Stauffer (2020) found that any critical analysis of White privilege requires an examination of both blatant racism via the domination of people of color and White privilege via the acceptance of everyday realities with regard to White values, standards, and culture, as well as the covert racism that comes with it.

DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020) reported that to deal with race-related pressures in the workplace, Blacks rely on different coping mechanisms including forming support groups, open confrontations, or keeping their heads down. Pitcan et al. (2018) reported that Black men working at companies where the employees are mostly White have to navigate a different set of rules regarding outward demonstrations of emotion related to microaggressions (racial slights and insults). With regard to education, Bell and Busey (2021) found that teacher instruction at all levels focuses on the needs of the White majority class, and the learning needs and lived experiences of people of color are seldom taken into account. In today's workplace, Blacks are exposed to multiple types of discrimination; however, Blacks are not a monolithic group, and their perceptions of racial discrimination are varied (American Sociological Association, 2019).

Dickens et al. (2019) found that when Black women are the only representatives of their gender/racial group within their work environment, they may choose not to respond to discriminatory actions by a non-Black counterpart so as not to be viewed as conforming to cultural stereotypical norms. Organizational upward mobility was found to be more difficult for Black employees than for Whites because promotion to managerial positions took longer (Boone, 2020). CRT is relevant to the topic of WCB because one of the tenets of the theory is that racism is inherent in all aspects of life. Although there may be rule, policy, and organizational structural changes that appear to be for the benefit of all, they still may be inadequate in addressing the needs of people of color and may leave them disadvantaged (Wingfield & Chavez, 2020).

One contention of CRT is the awareness of racism as an omnipresent, never-ending, everyday occurrence for people of color (Iheduru-Anderson, et al., 2021). CRT is used to bring clarity to the myth that societal colorblindness is a benefit to marginalized populations, while also challenging the dominant ideology to work toward the attainment of equity for all by focusing on the concerns of each person (Wilson & Thompson, 2020). Conversely, Woodson (2016) found that although not necessarily intentionally discriminatory, Black workers employed at predominately White firms have fewer opportunities for success due to the institutionalized and inherent practices of Whites to gravitate to those who look and act more like themselves.

Hall (2018) reported that the worldwide phenomenon of light skin being favored over dark skin may be fate with regard to the legal system, beauty standards, and marital patterns; however, there were no such coincidences in matters of income compensation

because lighter skinned individuals are clearly paid more. College-level instructors have demonstrated a reluctance in supporting first-generation students of color in ways that are most applicable to their individual situations (Bell & Busey, 2021). Pratt (2021) reasoned that describing education as part of a system in which racism is imbedded and everlasting is vital, similar to locating and defining a lingering condition in order to treat it. The second step is to begin treating the condition by evaluating the success or failure of the treatment process and engaging in the application process of perpetual treatment.

Stauffer (2020) reported that racism is systemically normalized into everyday life and commonly affects most people of color on a daily basis. A second foundational building block of CRT, material determinism, is that racism benefits both wealthy and working-class Whites because of a merging of their interests in preserving the social pecking order. Bohonos (2019) found that because racism exists in the workplace, the workplace becomes menacing, discriminatory, and unfair.

Although literature abounds on the positive societal contributions of critical race theorists, Cole (2020) expressed a different view and reported that proponents of CRT had no real strategies regarding the reduction of racism and the economic/political empowerment for people of color. Comprehending racism in non-White societies worldwide that is attributable to White supremacy remains difficult (Cole, 2020). Conversely, in noting the societal advantages of Whiteness, K. L. Harris (2018) reported colorism as an obvious reason that induces people to identify only as White, and to be seen by other people as White across biracial groups. This attempt to invalidate the existence of White supremacy and racism further demonstrates the importance of CRT

advocates. CRT has also been used to show that the perception of race and the definition of races are socially constructed and are altered to benefit the White majority (Stauffer, 2020).

Racism/Colorism: An Overview

When White Americans categorize immigrants as looking less ethnic and more like them, they are less likely to profile them (Kunst et al., 2018). Visser (2017) concluded that due to societal Whiteness preferences in the United States, lighter skinned employees are placed in higher job classifications when compared to their darker skinned counterparts. Uzogara and Jackson (2016) reported that deep-seated cultural biases dating back to slavery against darker skinned African Americans persist today. Conversely, Woodson (2016) found that although not necessarily intentionally discriminatory, Black workers employed at predominately White firms have fewer opportunities for success due to the institutionalized and inherent practices of Whites to gravitate to those who look and act more like themselves. Having a more European appearance elicits the receipt of distinct advantages and a higher social standing for lighter skinned Blacks over those with darker skin (Banks, 2021; Reece, 2018). Pitcan et al. (2018) also found workplace advancement problematic for those whose identities were misaligned with White male norms.

Despite the societal benefits of having lighter skin, having lighter skin does not guarantee that someone will be treated favorably. This may be due to prototypical Black women's (darker skin, kinky hair, broad nose, thick lips) beliefs that African American women of a lighter hue could not identify with their plight (Uzogara & Jackson, 2016).

Although complaints of workplace colorism discrimination often involve a darker skinned individual being the aggrieved party, it is not always the case, thereby revealing the nuances of colorism as being both diverse and complex.

Wilder (2018) reported that a lighter skinned employee filed a lawsuit claiming colorism against the Internal Revenue Service and the Secretary of the Treasury for her wrongful termination. Her supervisor who ridiculed her because of her lighter skin was a darker skinned African American woman. The defense prevailed, with the judge ruling the termination was likely due to poor work performance and not colorism; however, this case was important because it was the first to be argued between two African American parties based on color, forcing Congress and the Supreme Court to consider race and color as distinct entities (Wilder, 2018).

Colorism: Yesterday and Today

With regard to colorism and racism, the lines have become blurred as the lives of African Americans and other people of color continue to be adversely affected in many areas of life on a daily basis. Belasen and Belasen (2019) reported that most of the literature indicated that darker skinned National Basketball Association stars earned less than their lighter skinned counterparts in salary and endorsements; however, Belasen and Belasen also found that darker skinned stars usually sold more team jerseys. Abdel-Khalik (2018) reported the casting call for the movie *Straight Outta Compton* included a request for certain types of female characters categorized as follows: B. Girls, attractive and light skinned C. Girls, medium to light skinned D. Girls, poor and not in good shape, medium to dark skin. Abdel-Khalik also noted that these stereotypical entertainment

industry categorizations are legally protected by copyright law (scenes a faire doctrine) because they denoted a type of character being requested that emanated by way of the creative process. Freeman (2017) reported on the inconsistencies regarding faulty algorithms that favor White applicants and customers in the granting of credit cards, the collection process, and societal perceptions.

K. L. Harris (2018) found that critical to Alice Walker's outing of colorism, light skin proclivity emanates both from an individual personal decision and one's social group connectivity and comfortability. K. L. Harris also found that this is an indication of societal in/out group formulation based on complexion and other physical characteristics as well as how these attitudes permeate downtrodden racial minority communities. Dhillon-Jamerson (2018) found that although colorism is widely believed to be practiced only among Blacks (intraracial), interracial or White colorism (the practice of Whites favoring lighter skinned Blacks over those with darker skin) was not only practiced during slavery but still exists today. The belief that a connection exists between skin tone and character is a concept that has been entrenched in American society since slavery (Harvey et al., 2017).

Although a historical path can be traced to the advent of colorism, contemporary evidence of colorist ideologies is also connected to social media. Abrams et al. (2020) reported there are millions of Instagram posts with light skin and/or dark skin identifiers. Monk (2021) found that White supremacy thrives and is perpetuated via social pecking orders that enlist racial minorities to participate in their own domination by the majority class; therefore, the unconscious grooming process begins at an early age, which results

in failure for Black men and success for their White counterparts (Wilkins, 2015).

Among adults, bullying has become widespread in the workplace, in academia, and in

social interactions (Misawa et al., 2019).

Racial Profiling

Racial profiling is the belief and unfair scrutinization of others' involvement in

wrongdoing based on their color, race, and/or ethnicity. Quezzaire and DiLascio (2019)

reported that it can be traced to the 1800s where European and American scientists

sought to confirm that people with certain body types possessed positive and negative

personality characteristics attributable to their physical features. Dukes et al. (2017)

reported that one's racial biases may lead to racial profiling, or the belief that people of

color are more likely to be involved in criminal activity than Whites. Baskin (2020)

found minorities are notably treated inequitably when compared to Whites in matters

regarding law enforcement, where clandestine racial profiling has resulted in the misuse

of authority. Farina (2019) reported that between 2001-2007 more than 150 suspects were

fatally wounded by tasers in the United States, although they were considered to be non-

lethal by law enforcement and used disproportionately on people of color—including

children, pregnant women, and senior citizens.

According to Christian and Walker (2021), minorities are more apt to be arrested

and convicted, and to receive longer prison terms than Whites who have committed the

same crimes. Despite the age group, Black men are arrested and incarcerated in state and

federal prisons at higher rates than all others (Teasley et al., 2018). Although the

denunciation of racial profiling is established, it is the norm with regard to immigration

policing (Schueths, 2019). Karlsen and Scott (2019) found although the realities are common, many Whites reject the notion that Blacks being unfairly treated in consumer settings is a systemic issue and speak out against efforts to avert it; however, proponents of CRT reason that to use color-blindness as a measurement of equality, disqualifies the relevancy of racism as commonplace in the United States (Karlsen & Scott, 2019).

Accordingly, Quezzaire and DiLascio (2019) found there are some who deny the very existence of racial profiling, instead attributing the targeting of specific groups and geographic areas to fine police work. According to Lipscomb (2020), the United States Census reported that the American population is comprised of approximately 13% Blacks, and that Blacks are the primary targets and victims of lethal force incidents by police, at twice the rate of the general population. Milner et al. (2016) reported negative characterizations of Black men in the United States have been perpetuated since the time of slavery, as perceptions of racial differences continue to emerge. According to Aymer (2016), the permeation of White supremacy within all facets of American society, has denied Blacks their full rights and benefits that the law allows. Nadal et al. (2017) found Blacks to be more likely to have negative perceptions toward police than Whites and those of Latin descent, and that Black men viewed police more negatively than White or Asian men. Diversi (2016) reported the rationalization of ruthlessness toward people of African descent is constant in America, and the justification comes from the masses with a White supremacist agenda, not from a small number on the outskirts of right-wing society.

According to Berman (2016), the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

(FBI) in his speech to an audience of police chiefs, stated despite the protests prompted by the killings of Black men and boys, in the absence of actual data, Americans had no idea whether violence against Black males was increasing. And therein lies one of the central problems. It does not take an exhaustive amount of research to realize that people in many walks of life follow the lead of their leaders; however, if those at the very top of governmental institutions feign ignorance regarding the plight of Blacks, where will justice be found, and why would anyone else take this matter seriously? Additionally, because we are seemingly bombarded with reports of these killings and/or injustices committed by police against Blacks, at the very least it would seem it should prompt legitimate investigatory measures to be enacted, brought about not only by statistical measures, but also by the eye test, tacit knowledge, and reasoning.

Skin Bleaching

Skin color matters to both White European Americans and Black/African Americans. Hall (2016) found that although White European Americans are impacted, the negative impact due to skin hue is largely inconsequential. Harris (2018) however, found that critical to Alice Walker's outing of colorism, for Black/African Americans, light skin proclivity emanates both from an individual personal decision and with one's social group connectivity and comfortability. One way for Black/African Americans to erase or to make these "less desirable" features as inconspicuous as possible, is via skin bleaching (Harper & Choma, 2019).

Skin bleaching is a non-surgical cosmetic procedure intended to lighten one's skin color, and to augment their beauty and self-esteem; however, according to Fayemi

(2020), skin bleaching is morally wrong, and encourages conflict and false identity in the African beauty industry. Nyoni-Kachambwa et al. (2021) found skin bleaching appears deeply entrenched in colorism and its advocates connects it to areas such as higher employment status, increased social standing, and beauty. They also found the cosmetic industry exploits these beliefs.

Van Hout and Wazaify (2021) reported that focusing on institutionalized racism and fair skin beauty bias perpetuated by cosmetic companies, whether intentional or unconscious is warranted. Charles and McLean (2017) found in their study where the entire participant pool consisted of all Jamaicans, the majority bleached their skin to increase beauty, thus increasing self-esteem, to hide from law enforcement, and to profit from skin bleaching products via sales opportunities. Because of the shade of their skin, people of color (including African, Asian, and Latino Americans) have served as both initiators and targets of color discrimination via the Bleaching Syndrome, which includes perceptual, emotional, and behavioral elements that impact the educational experiences of students (Hall, 2016).

Yusuf et al. (2019) found in their study of 265 African (Somaliland) female health science student participants, that when compared to women who did not use skin lightening agents, despite the negative impacts upon their health, most users believed skin bleaching products increased their confidence levels, their prospects of getting better jobs, as well as their chances of getting married. Kachambwa et al. (2019), reported in their study of 270 African (Zimbabwe) women who engaged in selling skin lighteners despite them being illegal, 61.4% were unaware of their negative side effects. According

to Owusu-Agyei et al. (2020), in their study of 331 Ghanian shoppers, 40.4% admitted

past or current use of skin bleaching products. The same study also revealed a history of

usage among men (26.6%) as well as women (56.5%), and correlated lighter complexion

with beauty, higher earnings, positive self-image, and greater desirability.

According to Campbell (2021), the sale of skin lightening creams occurs in all

countries where large populations of people of color are found, and cosmetic companies

have been criticized worldwide for the perpetuation of light skin favoritism. Ricketts et

al. (2020) found that people in Jamaica who used skin bleaching products may be at high

risk of mercury exposure, because they averaged a higher amount of mercury than lotions

and soaps. According to Desai and Khanna (2021), although skin bleaching products can

be effectively used in treating hyperpigmentation conditions, overuse of these products

are harmful not only to individuals, but also to society at large, and that dermatologists

who engage in performing skin bleaching procedures on their patients agree with

perpetuating institutionalized racism.

Bullying Behaviors: The Early Years

Jang and Kim (2020) found that because of the negative impact of bullying,

proactive as opposed to reactionary educational measures must be taken early on to

prevent childhood bullying behaviors from becoming repetitive; thus, whether victim,

perpetrator, or bystander, the negative effects of childhood bullying may be imminent and

perpetual (Jang & Kim, 2020). Homisak (2018) reported bullying is not just confined to

the schoolyard among children, but also occurs within the workplace. Engaging in

childhood bullying behaviors increased the likelihood these behaviors would be

duplicated within the workplace; however, bullying victimization can be curtailed by parties relationally close to the victims, therefore improving future workplace environmental conditions (Kizuki et al., 2020). Jahng (2020) reported the negative impact of workplace bullying experienced by its victims, and the debilitating emotional damages inflicted upon the relationships between the bullying victims and their children. Therefore, the children of the primary victims having experienced transferrable anguish, may become secondary workplace bullying victims.

Workplace Bullying: Varying Tactics

Within the workplace, bullying can happen both blatantly and in subtle ways. These practices often strip a defenseless target of their dignity and self-esteem, as a result of an abuse of power by the offender (Okolie & Idibra, 2021). Today's bully is more aware and cunning than in previous times, regarding concealing their bullying tactics from others, even when the reasoning for bullying is race and color based, as well as the victimization of other protected classes (Tye-Williams et al, 2020). According to Misawa et al. (2019), because the victim of workplace bullying connects the bullying experience with disgrace, family and friends are often not informed of the situation, and that women are more likely than men to become victims of workplace bullying. Additionally, it may be overt or covert where the perpetrator may deny the violation ever occurred (Battle, 2016).

Wilson and Nagy (2017) reported that leaders who participate in exhibiting workplace bullying behaviors may unwittingly signal to their peers and subordinates that these behaviors are acceptable, perhaps resulting in an increase in bullying throughout the

organization. Conversely, Lindsey et al. (2017) found that when an organization demonstrated the importance of diversity via equal opportunities, the perception of a high degree of behavioral integrity was likely throughout. However, they also found that individuals within an organization with a propensity to mistreat others, may take their cues from an organization having a low degree of ethnic representation, that these behaviors are acceptable; therefore, creating individualized ideologies of low behavioral integrity, and then begin to mistreat others who are ethnically different from themselves.

Managerial personnel are the most frequently reported perpetrators of workplace bullying (MacMahon et al., 2018). According to Arfat et al. (2018), abusive management can escalate the intensity of unjust practices, damaging politics, and workplace exclusion, which causes a disconnection between the organization and its employees. Although workplace bullying is typically experienced via a power imbalance between a senior employee and a subordinate, that is not always the case.

Occasions may also arise where a managerial employee feels bullied by a junior associate, such as with threats of false allegations from a subordinate, and as a result the senior employee harbors fears of employment loss (Cassie & Frank, 2018). Citing a study by Birks et al. (2014), Bolling (2019) reported upward bullying as both unspoken and a toxic type of workplace bullying, where bullying by a subordinate goes unreported by most managers, for fear of appearing to not have control, and being less than authoritative. Similar to sexually harassed employees, the bullied manager is unable to explain the psychological toll the bullying experience has taken, regarding employment pressures and with threats of job security (Bolling, 2019).

. Cassie and Crank (2018) found that bullying sometimes occurs between colleagues of equal organizational power, and although organizational congruence appears to be present, the victim may eventually be worn down by the actions of the perpetrator. Caffrey (2020) reported on the covert phenomenon of horizontal violence, noting that although similar to workplace bullying, they differ because no power disparity exists between victim and perpetrator. According to Taylor (2021), workplace bullying among peer teachers in educational settings is systemic, where the perpetrators of bullying behaviors are sometimes rewarded with promotions to leadership positions. Zukauskas (2020) found that lateral or horizontal violence within the workplace although rarely physical, is the end result of frustrated and oppressed employees being victimized by superiors, who in turn emotionally victimizes their perceived weaker colleagues, because of their own inability to retaliate against their oppressors. There is a difference in how members of different minority groups experience workplace bullying, and Black employees are less comfortable than Whites with publicly venting about negative job occurrences, therefore creating additional stress (Attel et al., 2017).

Unconscious Workplace Bias

Unconscious bias, sometimes referred to as implicit bias, is a stereotypical opinion or idea formed about others outside of one's own awareness (Perez, 2019). According to Oberai and Anand (2018), biases are formed when the brain receives, identifies, and categorizes information as positive or negative and then applies this information arbitrarily. Within the context of the workplace, Kearins (2019) found this can lead to either unfairly discriminating against, or unfairly showing favoritism towards

a particular group. Goodman (2018) reported that microaggressions or slights and insults are deeply imbedded, unconscious and often unintentional small expressions of a bias against others, based on core identity characteristics such as race, gender, age, and physical appearance, among others.

Sheppard (2018) reported a primary organizational responsibility of leadership is to promote diversity and to ensure ethical behavior is vital, because allowing one group to disproportionately affect the direction of the organization, leads to harsh feelings and decreased productivity. Citing a Deloitte survey of 3, 000 United States professionals, Rawson (2020) reported that although most (80%) felt their companies were taking positive steps toward developing inclusive cultures, almost two thirds (64%) had either personally experienced or had witnessed others experiencing the negative effects of bias within the previous year. Additionally, 84% of the victims reported negative impacts on their confidence, happiness, and well-being, with almost three quarters of them (70%) becoming less engaged and less productive at work as a result.

Citing a survey by Ultimate Software, Trueba (2019) reported 60% of employees voluntarily terminate employment due to concerns regarding their psychological safety, and that toxic workplaces can lead to employees' voluntary terminations, while also harming the productivity of those who remain. The undeniable presence of unconscious bias exists in us all, and can negatively impact organizational culture and diversity, in addition to workplace policies and procedures (Oberai & Anand, 2018). Hernandez (2017) found that although there are times within a job that an individual does not advance because additional ability and an advanced skillset is required, oftentimes the

unconscious biases of the decision makers have thwarted the employee's progress.

According to Turnbull (2016), the natural human instinct is to renounce open-minded inclusiveness, or at the bare minimum to be skeptical of it and that inclusivity is not just the external implementation of a program, but that it comes from within. Research indicates that even the most well-intentioned individual innately automatically gravitates towards others who are like themselves, categorized by easily identifiable areas such as race, gender, and physical traits, as well as subtle areas such as background, personal experiences, and like-mindedness (Yacovelli, 2019).

Okorie-Awé et al. (2021) reported microaggressions and unconscious bias stems from one's societal exposure and is dependent upon whom they are socialized by during their formative years, as well as being subsequently further reinforced systemically via institutional exposure. To refrain from the use of racial epithets is not necessarily an indication of the absence of unconscious bias, and empathetic attitudes toward the Black/African American community will assist in its prevention and eradication (Ellison-Taylor, 2020). Chun (2019) found that although there are instances and situations that come under the banners of unconscious bias and microaggressions, these simple categorizations fail to adequately address broader issues of conscious biases and marginalization that also exist.

Fan et al. (2019) reported research indicates gendered and racial inconsistencies are omnipresent in all aspects of an organization's operations, no matter how forward-thinking a workplace may be, but universities may reduce these inconsistencies by either hiring a more diversified faculty or by providing bias training for its students; however,

on the other hand, Emerson (2017) reported research has indicated traditional bias training programs are impediments to solutions, because heightening people's awareness of their reliance upon stereotypes, only gives credence to stereotypical thinking. Murray (2016) also found a lack of legitimacy with conventional training programs, because he reported unconscious bias is attributable to science or how one's brain works as opposed to learned behaviors, and that making a person aware of their shortcomings with regard to unconscious bias reinforces and does not halt the manifestation of the behavior.

Accordingly, Noon (2018) found little value in psychology-based conventional unconscious bias training, where awareness does not equate to the elimination of racism but reported that sociological based unconscious bias training where types of racism would be identified would be more effective. In offering a dissenting viewpoint to proponents of unconscious bias training, Feilder (2020) reported its uselessness, because of employers' attempts to probe into the unconscious thought processes of employees via mandatory training, resulting in disciplinary action if refused, and because it is being delivered by those who are unqualified to do so. Mezu-Ndubisi (2021) reported organizational initiatives that include team building, diversity, and unconscious bias training are only good starting points, because they merely scratch the surface in bringing about true healing regarding racial injustice. Although an organization focusing on diversity is a good thing, it is just a portion of the process, because inclusivity focus is where the heavy lifting occurs (Chamberlain, 2016).

Weiss-Ford and Sibbernsen (2019) reported an organization communicating the importance of inclusion and diversity to its workforce, as well as employee education

initiatives regarding recognizing and thwarting unconscious biases, are vital to the advancement and progression of an organization's business model. Freed (2018) found that eradication of unconscious biases must first include awareness and acknowledgement. With inclusivity in mind, self-examination may allow us to eradicate our own implicit biases, which are mostly grounded in incorrect beliefs and the absence of knowledge (Kearins, 2019).

Breslin (2019) found that the two elements necessary in the development of an inclusive culture are bias comprehension and psychological safety. According to PR Newswire (2021), organizations with inclusive and diverse cultures list improved productivity, financial stability, and innovation among their benefits when compared to companies absent of diverse and inclusive cultures. Although some may be encouraged about the reported positive aspects of diversity/inclusion initiatives, there still appear to be opportunities for improvement. Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Survey (2020) reported, despite the presence of diversity and inclusion policies in most organizations (66%), employee expectations remain unrealized (proper policy implementation, 40%).

Cahill Pope (2019) found that inclusion is about relationships developed and connections fostered at work, and the work produced as a result, not about policies, procedures and company-wide surveys. Conversely, Meyer (2018) lauded companywide assessments as a key component with regard to strategically counteracting the effects of implicit bias. The diversity and inclusion process takes time and varies, because a more established larger company with prior similar initiatives, may not require the level of work needed for a much smaller organization starting from the ground level (Zelevansky,

2019). The desire that people have that leads them to want to change is often stronger than the fear powered by the absence of comprehension (Pitman, 2019). According to Hernandez (2017), it is incumbent upon every leader to take a personal self-assessment to recognize what characteristics they may have that impedes their growth, which also includes recognition of their own unconscious biases.

Wolper (2016) found that companies create obstacles regarding building inclusive cultures, due to the failure to include it in their strategic planning, despite their attempts to hire a more diverse workforce. According to the HR Specialist (2018), the success of implicit bias training programs normally depends upon whether they provide strategies on how to move forward, as opposed to correcting already firmly imbedded attitudes and beliefs. Being made aware of our unconscious biases is a time when defensiveness can set in; however, being defensive is an impediment to learning, because an ongoing commitment to the eradication of one's own unconscious biases once acknowledged, can bring about improvement (Ellis, 2019).

According to Faragher (2017), acknowledgement does not necessarily equate to a solution, and companies can lessen the effects of post-training apathy by providing their workers gentle reminders after receiving unconscious bias training. Regarding recruitment efforts, Brennan (2021) reported employee referrals are largely ineffective in developing a more diverse and inclusive workforce, because employees generally refer candidates similar to themselves. According to Marino et al. (2021), it is important to recognize and promote diversity/inclusion efforts, and despite total eradication of unconscious bias remaining elusive, progress is possible.

Paul (2020) reported that not only must diverse groups of people be included in developing and managing organizational processes and procedures, they must also be allowed to express their thoughts and opinions, and that those thoughts and opinions must be given considerable weight. In the accounting industry, Padar (2021) found it is important to remember that organizational philosophy change is a long-term perpetual process, not a one-time initiative to be discarded once certain goals are reached, and that big changes are needed to be truly impactful. Sojo and Wheeler (2021) found that Blacks experience persistent outward and clandestine racial discrimination worldwide, and the notion that Black men are especially prone to disruptive behavior leads to them receiving excessively harsh judgments. They also reported the ineffectiveness of diversity training if it is administered at an organization that has mostly White leadership and, if diversity training initiatives are not ongoing.

Accordingly, Cuellar (2017) reported the work regarding inclusivity and diversity is never complete, and issues of this type must be continuously addressed for advancements to be realized. Turner (2017) conversely found that although the word bias also brings with it a negative connotation, it is not necessarily bad, and can be good, because it just comes with being human. She also noted that although used interchangeably, there are differences between the words implicit and unconscious regarding bias, because one who has implicit bias has awareness of it, but may choose to leave it unverbalized; however, when unconscious bias is present, the person who has it is unaware of it.

White Workplace Privilege **and the Willingness to Exclude**

Although workplace discrimination affects all marginalized groups overall, African Americans are more negatively impacted than all others (Whitaker, 2019). Melaku et al. (2020) found that White organizational leaders have contributed to stagnant or failed diversity and inclusion efforts, because instead of effectively dealing with workplace exclusion, they have acquiesced to the HR department, and denied the existence of racism within their organizations due to their discomfort in broaching matters of this type. Han and Leonard (2017) reported White privilege is obvious both historically as well as in the present day, and discomfort regarding in depth examinations of systemic racism, whiteness, and White privilege make these mostly avoided topics by Whites. They also found when teachers purposefully avoid discussing race they devalue the culture, history, and issues that are of importance to children of color.

Moreover, these actions or inactions simultaneously deny White students the benefit of understanding and facing how White privilege is a systemic boon to them, but also negatively impacts the lives of others (Kozleski & Proffitt, 2020). White children in schools also benefit when they see Black men in powerful positions, because stereotypes and lifelong learned negative perceptions are then debunked (El-Mekki, 2018). Zukauskas (2021) reported the addressing of the issues of White privilege and White supremacism are becoming more widespread, as well as the boon these systems are to White women. Additionally, she found that although some White feminists are aware of the benefits of their skin color, many experts believe in addressing these areas the women's movement must also link racism, classism, and sexism to be truly effective.

According to Reddick (2021), one's cultural humility and self-awareness, as well as an honest self-assessment regarding the benefits that membership to a particular cultural brings, can be a first step in learning about other cultures. Additionally, he found this can be beneficial in comprehending how pre-conceived notions about others are formed. Culver (2017) reported that White law professors who purposefully build relationships and use their whiteness to create opportunities for diverse law students, ultimately will be conduits toward thwarting systemic prejudices, therefore promoting positive change. White colleague mentorship of Black women is one path toward advancement within the corporate sector (Erskine et al., 2019).

Yes, having catchphrases aimed at the seemingly underachieving party seeking to advance such as, "you must build your network" and "teamwork makes the dream work" surely sound reasonable enough. However, there is absolutely no way the person of color and more directly the Black male, can advance within the workplace nor within society at large, if White males continue to choose systemically and automatically those who look like themselves and refuse to advocate on behalf of Blacks. More importantly, despite outward appearances to the contrary, advancement will continue to elude these same African American men if White men only provide lip service as it relates to providing them legitimate access to networks and building meaningful relationships within the public and/or private sectors. Citing a 2019 survey by the salary website PayScale, Greenfield (2019) reported that employees who have a White male sponsor who will speak on their behalf when they aspire to ascend to higher organizational levels, are paid at a higher rate—and that many of these employees were White men, with Black and

Hispanic women most likely to be excluded from networks of this type.

Oliver (2020) reported corporate Canada's failure of being truly committed to equality with regard to Blacks, and the need to halt the window dressing of corporate tokenism by just allowing a few Blacks superficial advancement. One way to describe White privilege is to see it as being in accordance with racism, or the other side of the same coin, because although some Whites can easily find fault with racist acts, they simultaneously will not acknowledge the benefits that are inherent in being White. Additionally, perpetuation of a double standard and Whites' obliviousness has existed for many years regarding the unlevel playing field and the institutionalized differences in treatment between Whites and Blacks (Mcfeeters, 2019).

Rauscher and Wilson (2017) found Black female teachers' subject matter expertise challenged by White students and parents due to racism, and that less credence was given to complaints from Black teachers as it related to their workplace fatigue and stressors, than what was afforded to White teachers whose complaints were similar. Bristol (2020) found high turnover among African American male teachers exposed to more restrictive and intense environments with minimal diversity, with the restrictions sometimes coming from Black administrators both male and female. And therein lies one of the major problems with negative Black male experiences in all walks of life, because if sensitivity to their plight is not felt by the few Black leaders available, then where will the sensitivity be found? Like previous periods of slavery where a few Black overseers were "elevated" and meant to keep Blacks in check, Black administrators/leadership i.e., gatekeepers may sometimes be exploited to control the masses.

Borowski (2021) reported that most teachers from kindergarten through high schools are White females, and that just two percent are Black men, recognized more as disciplinarians, but not as subject matter experts. Although Bristol and Goings (2019) found similar instances as it related to colleagues of African American male educators calling into question their credentials, on the other hand they also reported colleagues of African American males believing them to be overqualified for their positions, therefore evoking feelings of jealousy from the Black males' White counterparts. The recognition of the presence of inherent bias among school administrators is substantially important with regard to plugging the racial school discipline gap (Gullo & Beachum, 2020).

Although not in every case, Edwards and Ross (2018) reported that Black faculty at predominantly White institutions of higher learning expressed multiple concerns which included the lack of mentorship, social isolation, and attaining tenure and advancement. Minority medical school residents are frequent recipients of racial microaggressions, but rarely report it, and residency program administrators mostly rely on minority residents to promote diversity themselves rather than creating programs for them from the top (Osseo-Asare et al., 2018). Citing a study by Nunez-Smith et al. (2007), Snyder and Schwartz (2019) reported the resentment felt by Black doctors who ascended to senior position status from White colleagues, and how feelings of incompetence crept into their own psyches as a result of being exposed to micro-aggressive behaviors from Whites while at work. Filut et al. (2021) found discriminatory treatment, and the lack of credentialed confidence was prevalent from patients of physicians of color. Truitt and Snyder (2020) reported on the presence, prevalence, and pressures of systemic workplace

discrimination and racism (both overt and covert) of Black nursing professionals and certified nursing assistants.

According to Underwood et al. (2020), despite greater numbers of Blacks seeking degrees at the collegiate level, Black males encounter major obstacles regarding retention and graduation rates. Like an unrecognizable cancer left to fester, racial microaggressions tear down the relationships between people, and frequently transforms into overt, perpetual, and institutionalized racism in multifaceted life experiences (Otuyelo et al., 2016). Citing an analysis conducted by the job search firm Hired, Perry (2020) reported that on average, White tech professionals were offered approximately $10, 000 more in annual salary than their Black counterparts. Just three percent of educators at the collegiate level are Black males, and Black male underrepresentation at this level presents a critical threat to diversity and social change (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

Images of White success are viewed as societal norms, and disadvantaged minority group members are perceived as underachievers when they fail to meet the standard (Lowe & Wallace, 2017). McCluney et al. (2018) found the impact of race to have a profound effect upon occupational opportunities via institutionalized policies and informal procedural norms. Simon and Azzarito (2019) reported the need for teachers and school leadership to disassemble systemically White privileged and color-blind ideologies ingrained within education, and to also demonstrate support for those educators who endeavor to do so. The principal factor in securing an equal existence for all, is a conscience decision to become anti-racist as opposed to non-racist (Alter, 2020).

Workplace Racism

Blacks' perceptions of racial slights may be dependent upon economic status because, Blacks with higher incomes reported more incidents of racial microaggressions, and lower income Blacks were less likely to reach out to law enforcement when in need (American Sociological Association, 2019). Additionally, States News Service (2020) reported organizational positioning as a determinant in how Blacks view racial discrimination within the workplace. Being employed in an organization where mostly White people also work, may provide a reason for high socio-economic status African Americans reporting more discrimination and poor mental health, with gender not being a factor (Assari & Lankarani, 2018).

Although Fekedulegn et al. (2019) found women to be mistreated more than men within the workplace, they also found the mistreatment was not race-based. Dickens et al. (2019) found that Black women sometimes change how they look, their speech patterns and behavior to fit in with Whites, thus avoiding being stigmatized within the workplace. It is common knowledge among people of African, Asian, Latino descent and among Whites, that lighter skinned women of color are deemed to be more attractive than women who are of a darker hue and are farthest away from White ideals of beauty (Hall, 2016). Diversity within the workplace is of more importance to millennials when compared with other generational groups; however, despite efforts to conceal discriminatory acts by perpetrators, research supports their continued existence (Boone, 2020).

The presence of racism within an organization, is not necessarily a reason to deem

it a racist organization. Accordingly, Wingfield and Chavez (2020) found there are individuals who act upon their own racist beliefs and ideologies despite any strides the company may have made toward diversity progressiveness or advancement. Regarding workplace discrimination as it relates to Blacks, there appears to be no area left untouched. Carter (2019) reported Blacks who wear natural hairstyles within the workplace have been subjected to covert and overt discrimination. According to Harper and Choma (2019), White beauty is the standard aspired to in many worldwide locales, mostly regarding women of color whose features are deemed less desirable than White women, desiring to emulate White women's fair skin and straight hair.

Perhaps all is not lost, because it appears recent social activism movements have sparked a consciousness among Whites, because the concerns of Blacks are now being listened to; however, despite the difficulty in having a meaningful dialogue, the exchange of ideas must continue for true change to occur regarding racial discrimination (Carter & Murphy, 2017). Imoagene (2018) reported that only 43% of second-generation Nigerians had suffered racial workplace discrimination while working in the United States. Most however, (57%) believed the contrary, that they were victims of workplace discrimination, likening the experiences to those suffered by African Americans. Conversely, others felt they had received support due to their minority status (Imoagene, 2018). Creswell and Draper (2019) reported that Adidas, a major athletic footwear/sports apparel company, boasts of many popular African American sports and entertainment figures as its spokespersons; however, marginalization of its scant African American employee group is not uncommon. To achieve true change with regard to racial

discrimination, the focus must be on the appropriate issues, lest reformation efforts veer off course.

Marcus (2020) reported his belief is that institutionalized racism is truly addressed when resolution to systemic failures occur, since in doing so also addresses a sizeable portion of individual racial discriminatory claims, as opposed to improperly focusing upon statistical disparities and presuming structural problems. Hyams and Hammell (2020) found that to absolve themselves from responsibilities of racial discrimination claims, organizations are engaging in forced arbitration, where as a condition of employment, job applicants are required to sign a document relinquishing their rights to sue the company for claims of illegalities—including civil rights cases. In doing so and opting not to have the case heard in court before an arbitrator, the allegations are kept secret and unable to be accessed by the public.

Carthon et al. (2021) found that Black nurses reported higher levels of job dissatisfaction, citing a lack of clinical independence and autonomy, as it relates to patient care decision making. Citing a 2008 survey in California by Seago and Spetz, Doede (2017) reported minority nurses are impeded to a greater degree than White nurses, as it relates to progression in their careers. Racism and gender-based discrimination also appears to be an issue prior to entrance or reentering the workforce. Kuroki (2017) found no racial discrimination correlation for unemployed obese minority men; however, being an obese, Black unemployed woman heightened their perception of racial discrimination over that which was suffered by their White counterparts. Farrell (2020) reported within the workplace, Blacks who identify with one race, but who

believe they are seen as members of another, receive the greatest amount of unfair treatment (Blacks, 17.84%, Latin, 11.32%, Whites, 2.67% respectively), with those being treated unfairly when seeking healthcare following a similar pattern (Blacks, 9.68%, Latin, 5.45%, Whites, < 2%, respectively).

In their study of the healthcare industry (hospital workers), Thrasher et al. (2016) reported discriminatory treatment in the workplace as one of the most pervasive types of discrimination reported by Americans and is therefore a likely reason for racial/ethnic health disparities. Black African youth experienced racial microaggressions in overt ways, which affected their ability to secure employment, including discrimination in pre-employment hiring procedures, linguistic discrimination, names that sounded Black given less consideration, and post-hiring workplace discrimination (Zaami & Madibbo, 2021). Lu et al. (2020) found longer tenured minority emergency medicine faculty were more likely to be exposed to workplace racist behaviors and discrimination.

Workplace Bullying and Mental Health

Parker et al. (2017) reported a correlation between the physical effects of workplace discrimination and current cigarette use for Black males, suggesting the utilization of smoking as a coping mechanism for unfair workplace treatment. Thrasher et al. (2016) also found workplace discrimination to be a contributing factor of absenteeism, attrition, and decreased workplace efficiency, as well as alcohol abuse as a means of dealing with the disparate treatment. Although more discrimination was suffered by racial/ethnic minorities than Whites in this study, there were no differences in in the amounts of stress experienced; however, Whites reported they were more likely to abuse

alcohol than racial/ethnic minorities because of the treatment they suffered.

Harris et al. (2020) found that mental health providers employed within the Veterans Health Administration, who had also experienced mental health challenges, were more susceptible to bullying than the general population. Additionally, Balducci et al. (2020) reported there were many reasons for workplace bullying that were interrelated, such as mentally impaired employees, deprived working environments, and stress. Similarly, Gray et al. (2019) found that many factors in all walks of life contributed to mental health within the workplace, and the complexities by which individual changes affect the environment makes it extremely difficult to specify and gauge their effect. Because Black males employ the use of cigarettes as a coping mechanism to mitigate the effects of workplace discrimination, they also intensify their susceptibility to smoking-related health conditions like lung cancer and emphysema (Parker et al., 2017).

Kendrick (2017) found low morale resulting from workplace bullying adversely affected academic librarians' mental health, bringing about depression and other stress related conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Once targeted, victims of workplace bullying have a 70% chance of losing their jobs either by dismissal or voluntary separation (Okolie & Idibra, 2021). Kumako et al. (2017) found that workplace bullying has been connected to post-traumatic stress disorder, emotional and mental fatigue, psychological stress, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts in effected employees. Additionally, they found it is also connected to escalations in sickness, absenteeism, and turnover rates as well as lower productivity, lower job satisfaction, and

a decrease in focus and interest in one's work. Workers who are highly motivated in their everyday work practices, are less likely to be bullied, and therefore are more inclined to stay with their current organizations (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2016). According to Magee et al. (2017), **w**orkplace bullying is a vital HR concern, because it negatively impacts the security, career paths, and efficiency of victims, spectators, and those suspected of bullying.

Glambek et al. (2016) reported upon revealing their victim status to others within the organization, targets of workplace bullying may then be cast in the role of accuser, thereforee placing themselves at risk of internal job relocation, being pressured to leave, termination, or experiencing intensified health deficiencies that decreases their ability to perform in their position. Bernstein and Trimm (2016) found bullying targets frequently received minimal support from the HR departments in their organization, experiencing being pushed from one person to another when they voiced their concerns. Feelings of embarrassment, isolation and possible relocation because of HR, in some cases, supporting the bully instead of the victim. In such unsustainable situations, victims often resign from their positions. Bullied individuals may also suffer increased absenteeism, because of physical or mental illness or so that they may avoid exposure to bullying incidents (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

Furthermore, should the bully in turn choose to continue engagement in bullying covertly, it would appear this toxic behavioral pattern can exist indefinitely if one's acting ability is sufficient to pull it off. Additionally, frequent bullying occurrences may encourage victims to take unplanned days off from work, due to damages to their mental

health (Magee et al., 2017). Stratton et al. (2020) did not find a connection between workplace bullying and workplace discrimination; however, they also reported that victims of discrimination were five times more likely to suffer depression and four times more likely to suffer anxiety.

Regarding workplace bullying, women reported more work stress and decreased levels of mental health quality than their male counterparts; however, they were less inclined to leave their organizations (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2016). Crawshaw (2016) found that abrasive leaders who engage in workplace bullying, employ their aggressive behaviors as a defense mechanism to mask their insecurities and fears, regarding being deemed incompetent by their targets. In order for true change to occur within an organization's bullying climate, the entire organization must take ownership of the process (Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2020). Wood et al. (2016) reported managerial abuse of any kind may result in absenteeism, and that employees miss work after experiencing abusive behavior, both because of an inability (psychological pressures) to work and an unwillingness (resistance) to do so.

Dåderman and Basinska (2021) found it vitally important for the bullying target to be strategic in building alliances throughout the organization; thus, a profitable and vast network may insulate the target from perpetrators of workplace bullying. Chatziioannidis et al. (2018) reported victims of workplace bullying who also self-identified as such, and were present when others experienced bullying, showed signs of psychological stress. They also found that regarding psychological stress and workplace bullying, patterns are not necessarily perfectly aligned. Workplace bullying victims who subsequently received

mental health support did better than those who did not; however, employees who were not bullying victims and used mental health services, did not do as well as those who were not bullied, but did not receive mental health assistance (Chatziioannidis et al., 2018).

Chomczyński (2020) found that in many occasions mobbing or workplace bullying needs a perpetrator, a victim, and an audience whose bystanders are often relieved they have not been targeted by the bully. Skuzinska et al. (2020) reported older workers and those with the longest employment tenure, found it more difficult to deal with negative consequences within the workplace, than their younger counterparts. Organizational change may intensify the psychological pressures of employees prior to change initiatives, thus heightening those conditions and processes leading to relational skirmishes and bullying (Spagnoli et al., 2017). Workplace bullying victims are adversely affected both physically and emotionally, with the evidence of workplace bullying including decreased morale, heightened absenteeism, and turnover as well as inferior customer service provided (Homisak, 2018).

Although the utilization of coping strategies and their effectiveness garnered varying results, victims' attempts to improve a workplace bullying situation may not be futile; however, care must be taken to employ the correct strategy for positive results to occur (Hewett et al., 2018). In citing Atkinson et al. (1996), Hairston et al. (2018) reported the biases relating to skin color regarding clinical diagnoses by mental health professionals in training, after just viewing photographs of Blacks and Whites, White

mental health professionals deemed Blacks as having more severe mental health issues when compared to the photos of Whites.

Summary

Although the literature regarding Black/African American men and WCB/racism specifically was scant, there were several associated themes that emerged such as unconscious workplace bias, White workplace privilege, and skin bleaching that allowed me to make connections between the primary and sub-themes of the study. Whether via peer reviewed journals, online books, or internet articles, a distinct literature gap was revealed regarding Black men and WCB. In chapter three the research method will be discussed, including areas such as the research design, the role of the researcher, instrumentation, participant recruitment strategies, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the firsthand lived experiences of Black men regarding workplace bullying and whether these experiences become increasingly negative based on skin tone. The findings may assist HR professionals in identifying and thwarting bullying incidents, thereby easing tensions that may result in a loss of productivity and high employee turnover. Similarly, organizational/executive coaches, mental health counselors, and/or employee assistance programs may benefit because the mental health environment within their organizations may be positively impacted.

This chapter includes the qualitative research design, the role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation and data selection, recruitment and participation, and data analysis. Trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are also discussed. Regarding a shift from quantitative data gathering to more instinctive qualitative research methods, the connection generated between researchers and interviewees may result in phenomena being understood in more intuitive ways (Burkette, 2021).

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological design was appropriate for the current study. According to Alase (2017), phenomenology was posited by Husserl in 1931 as a viable method to comprehend and give context to the lived experiences of people and to give meaning to those experiences. Howson (2021) found that detailed interviewing is one way for qualitative researchers to acquire insight from the perspective of the interviewee,

while learning their point of view regarding their lived experiences. The purpose of the current study was to understand via individual interviews the lived experiences of Black/African American men who suffer WCB. According to Comas-Díaz et al. (2019), racial trauma, a type of race-based stress, refers to marginalized and indigenous individuals' responses to hazardous incidents and real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination.

Regarding CRT in the United States where White privilege is dominant, Burton et al. (2010) found that racial assignments attributable to racial differences create hierarchies and are the tenets for racism and inequality. However, in Japan to conceptualize CRT globally, Arudou (2015) found that CRT could also be applied to societies in which Whites are the minority because racism is about power and therefore perpetuates the self-interests of the dominant culture. Mayberry (2018) reported the applicability of CRT in the workplace, because the African American women participants in the study expressed frustration in not being able to advance to the executive ranks within the White male-dominated corporate structure due to racial and gender discrimination.

The main research question of the study was as follows: What are the lived experiences of Black/African American men who endure workplace bullying?

The subquestions of the main research question were as follows:

RQ1: How are these bullying experiences described by Black/African American men?

RQ2: How does self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying?

In this study, the appropriate method for data collection that I used was personal interviews because this method allowed me to comprehend the problem and the research question (see Creswell, 2009). To become a participant in this study, each male interviewee of color needed to self-identify as a victim of workplace bullying, either currently or in the past, and reside in the United States. The ideal candidates were Black/African American men who were at least 18 years of age, who were willing to have their interview audio recorded, and who had been bullied in the workplace within the past 20 years by a peer, subordinate, or manager so that the lived experiences of the victims could be documented, and the richness of the experiences could be obtained.

The participants were also required to reveal to me the results of their individual self-assessment of their complexions as a criterion for participation. According to Ranse et al. (2020), phenomenological research addresses participants' experiences and their spirit as they are consciously viewed and restated by the individual. Additional demographic data that were solicited were age, location, and type of industry in which the participant works. Once I received six responses from prospective participants, I contacted each participant to determine an interview time. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), researchers in clinical psychology doctoral programs in Britain should conduct six to eight interviews. Finally, each participant was required to provide informed consent to participate in the study. Participants were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded for accuracy, that only pseudonyms would be used as

identifiers, and that up until a week before publishing, they could opt out with no consequence for choosing to withdraw from the study. Anyone who did not meet the criteria was disqualified from participation.

Role of the Researcher

According to Clark and Vealé (2018), subjectivity is unavoidable when conducting qualitative research and frequently enhances the study; however, this issue is addressed via a positionality statement that is included with the study's results, thereby revealing the difficulties related to bias prevention and the researcher's motivations for conducting the study. The qualitative study's main theme is also referred to as central phenomenon in scholarly writing, with qualitative research producing revelations in ways that quantitative research is unable to do (Yates & Leggett, 2016). For productive interviews, qualitative researchers include preparatory steps such as subject matter familiarity, test interviews (at least one), and a short summary statement explaining the research project to the interviewee prior to the interview (McGrath et al., 2019). This also aids in rapport building between the researcher and interviewee (McGrath et al., 2019).

To this end, I revealed to each interviewee that my interest in the subject of WCB derived from me having been bullied many years ago, although I was previously unaware that I was being bullied. During this time, I was unaware there was a name for the treatment I received from the members of my former management team. I believed this revelation was a key factor in the study participants being both more comfortable with the interviewing style, as well as developing rapport with me. This made the participants more comfortable, because they realized I was a recipient of the same type of treatment

and experienced a similar pain. Moser and Korstjens (2018) reported the researcher is

critical in creating a comfortable atmosphere that is conducive to obtaining in-depth data.

I also explained that although I may have biases regarding this issue, the plan was to be

as objective as possible. I maintained as much objectivity as possible by mentally putting

my experiences aside. Objectivity was achieved by not guiding or coercing the

interviewee into giving responses that matched my experiences. In my view, this measure

of transparency was vital in guiding the interviews toward full productivity.

Methodology

The participants of this phenomenological study were recruited from the Walden

University participant pool and from social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, or similar

platforms) where the criteria for participation were communicated. Snowball sampling

was also used to obtain enough participants because this strategy is both valuable and

proficient (see Leighton et al., 2021). The ideal candidates were Black/African American

men who were at least 18 years of age, living in the United States, willing to have their

interview audio recorded, and were bullied in the workplace within the past 20 years by a

peer, subordinate, or manager so that the lived experiences of the victims could be

documented and the richness of the experiences could be obtained. The participants were

also required to reveal to me the results of their individual self-assessment of their

complexions as a criterion for participation.

Participant Recruitment

The participants were recruited via Walden University's participant pool, and

social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, or similar platforms). Family

members, friends, and acquaintances were asked to post the recruitment flyer on their

respective platforms at least once per week until the required number of participants was

reached. Snowball sampling was also used by me prior to the completion of each

interview (this step was skipped after the interview with Participant 6 because the

required number of participants had been reached). Once the participants expressed

interest in the study, I communicated with them via text message to solicit their email

address to send them the informed consent form. Once I received the informed consent

form, the participant was asked to provide three possible times when an interview could

be scheduled. This was done to accommodate the schedule of the participant, thereby

exhibiting the flexibility required to assist in building a relationship of trust and

comfortability between me and the participant. Each participant was sent a Zoom

teleconferencing invite. All participant questions were addressed prior to the

commencement of each interview.

Participant Selection

The ideal candidates were Black/African American men who were at least 18

years of age, living in the United States, and willing to have their interview audio

recorded. Participants were those who had been bullied in the workplace within the past

20 years by a peer, subordinate, or manager so that the lived experiences of the victims

could be documented, and the richness of the experiences could be obtained. The

candidates were also required to self-assess the shade of their skin and to disclose it for

the purpose of the study. According to Gyimah-Brempong and Price (2006), there are

seven classifications of skin hues regarding Black skin: fair, light, light brown, medium,

medium brown, dark brown, and dark.

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) qualitative design was used because this design gives the researcher the greatest level of understanding of the innermost thoughts and lived experiences of the participants (Alase, 2017). The IPA also allows the researcher to understand the personal perceptions of the interviewee while also taking into account larger societal ramifications (Zounlome et al., 2021). According to Creswell (2009), other types of phenomenological research data gathering (e.g., observations, document collection, and the reviewing of audio/visual documents) present disadvantages, because some information may be disclosed that the researcher is unable to report (e.g., private data not for public consumption) and that may be difficult to interpret.

The participants for the current study were chosen via criterion sampling from the Walden University participant pool and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Instagram, and similar platforms). Snowball sampling was also used. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), criterion sampling involves selection of participants who meet a predetermined criterion of importance. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), researchers in clinical psychology doctoral programs in Britain should conduct six to eight interviews. Once I received six responses from the prospective participants, I contacted each participant to determine an interview time. The duration of each interview was 14 to 61 minutes, and the participants were recruited via the Walden University participant pool and social media platforms. The interviewees were not asked if they believed the bullying was the result of racism and/or colorism until the interviews were

nearly concluded, so as not to lead the participant and skew the data.

Additional demographic data that were solicited were age, geographic location in which the participant works, and type of industry in which they were employed. Each interviewee was required to provide informed consent to participate in the study. They were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded for accuracy, that only pseudonyms would be used as identifiers, and that they could elect to opt out of the study at any time without consequence.

Participants

The study consisted of interview responses from six participants. All participants met the following criteria:

- Black/African American men who resided in the United States

- at least 18 years of age

- bullied in the workplace within the past 20 years

- willing to have their interview audio recorded

- willing to provide a self-assessment of their skin complexion

The interviews were recorded via Zoom teleconferencing and were also recorded on my cellphone as a backup in the event there were any problems experienced with the Zoom recordings. Once I confirmed there were no issues with the Zoom recordings, I deleted each recording from my cellphone. The interviews consisted of nine questions (see Appendix B) with one additional inquiry regarding the current occupation, tenure, and the feeling each participant had about the job where the bullying took place. If a response required additional clarification, the participant was asked an additional

question to ensure I understood the essence of the experience. At the conclusion of each interview, a closing statement was read to each participant (see Appendix B). Each interview was recorded via Zoom for subsequent playback on a password-protected laptop. Each interview was then individually transcribed and manually coded, which allowed for greater familiarity with the data and made emerging themes easily identifiable.

Data Collection

According to Emery and Anderman (2020), IPA was developed as a means to allow researchers to derive meaning from the personal experiences of traditionally overlooked populations. E. J. Noon (2018) reported that researchers' endeavors to attain an innermost perspective of participants' personal experiences has created a reliance on the fundamentals of phenomenology (thoughts, feelings, memories), hermeneutics (interviewees' ability to communicate experiences and interviewers' dissection of an experience), and idiography (focus on individual importance, deeper understanding, and analysis). Buser et al. (2016) found that IPA combines close proximity of the interviewee experience to the researcher and thorough researcher analysis of the experience reported by the interviewee.

Structured interviews follow a specific course of inquiry, where the questions are unchanging, with negligible variations in the interviewing conditions (Canals, 2017, p. 397). On the other hand, semi-structured interview data allows the researcher a deeper look into the intricacies produced by the human brain as it attempts to make sense of its social surroundings (Price & Smith, 2021). The chosen method of data collection for this

researcher was semi-structured interviewing. The information sought was solicited via

the Bullying and Harassment Interview Schedule created by Woodrow and Guest (2017),

(see appendix A) and was modified for the purposes of this study, as well as any

additional applicable questions formulated by the researcher that will deal with the aspect

of WCB (permission granted to utilize instrument, see appendix C). Zoom

teleconferencing was used to conduct the interviews, because it has a built-in feature that

used meeting recording and/or transcription.

I received approval to collect the data from Walden University's Institutional

Review Board (IRB). The approval number for this study is 06-27-22-0071786, and it

expires on June 26, 2023. During the data collection phase, some process revisions from

the outset of the study were required and made with IRB approval, regarding recruitment

and the data collection processes. For example, the number of years for the bullying

criteria was extended from five to 10, to 20 years in the effort to achieve the number of

participants required.

I collected the data via Zoom teleconferencing interviews and transcribed each

interview manually. While transcribing each interview, I went back to listen to each

interview as many times as necessary to ensure that I captured not only the correct

verbiage, but also the true essence of each participant's experience. The manual

transcription process allowed me to become intimately familiar with the data. Each

prospective participant was required to respond "I consent" to an informed consent form

sent to them via email before they could participate in the study. The interviews were

conducted from July 14, 2022, through November 17. 2022 (see Appendix B for

interview details), and with each participant's consent, recorded the interview via the record meeting feature in Zoom teleconferencing. The time required to conduct all the interviews ranged from 14-61 minutes.

Data Collection Issues

The data collection process was primarily carried out without incident; however, there was one issue with the first interview, because the Zoom teleconferencing format converted from a total non-payment format for individual users despite the length of the call (confirmed in two previous test calls), to only the first 40 minutes being free. The call was dropped in the middle of the interview. Because I received a message via Zoom at approximately the 30-minute mark that the recording would be stopped after 40 minutes, I alerted participant number one (P1) this may happen and if so, I would re-open a Zoom call where the interview could then be resumed. The call was terminated after 40 minutes, and we did have to resume via an additional Zoom call. As a result, the interview was recorded in two segments instead of one. To prevent this from happening in subsequent calls, I then purchased the unlimited Zoom teleconferencing plan, and all other interviews were recorded with no similar issues.

Instrumentation

Semi structured interviewing allows the researcher to compare qualitative data and affords the opportunity for open ended inquiry (Wilcoxen & Lemke, 2021). Budzan and Van Vliet (2021) found that semi structured interviewing provides an in-depth understanding of a small number of distinctive cases. Galbusera et al. (2019) reported in their study on body-oriented psychotherapy (BPT), six participants were interviewed, and

their experiences analyzed using IPA. According to Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2018), IPA is a psychological qualitative research design, used to comprehend study participants' individual experiences, where the researcher must interpret the experience and the meaning connected to it. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) found that researchers in clinical psychology doctoral programs in Britain should conduct six to eight interviews. I conducted six interviews to ensure maximum mean saturation was achieved.

The main research question of the study was as follows: What are the lived experiences of Black/African American men who endure workplace bullying? This question will be answered by asking "How are these bullying experiences described by African American men?" Examples of subquestions to this inquiry were: 1) Please describe any bullying and/or harassment, from managers or from other staff you have experienced within the workplace, and include the frequency, 2) Please explain the impact on you in terms of attitude and behavior toward those involved (also probe for changes in commitment, motivation, behavior, morale towards the job), 3) What action, if any, was taken to follow it up or make a complaint and, if so, how was it remedied or prevented from reoccurring? The second question was "How does self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying?

Examples of subquestions to this inquiry were: 1) Explain any other bullying incidents that you may be aware of within your workplace and the color of the victims and perpetrators, as well as the color of your perpetrators, 2) Would you describe your skin tone as fair, light, light brown, medium, medium brown, dark brown, or dark, and if applicable describe how you believe your skin tone may have affected how you are

treated at work? 3) To what extent does the management keep you informed about policies and practices that affect the way you are treated as a member of staff or the way you do your job?

Interview Protocol

Previously prepared primary questions, as well as follow-up questions (if applicable) were used. A follow up question(s) was asked for further clarity, dependent upon the response given to the primary question. Prior to the start of the actual interview and when the study participant was contacted to schedule the interview appointment, I attempted to "break the ice" with general greetings and discussions (was not recorded), but at the same time realizing people are different, and that it was important to "meet them where they were." Each participant was alerted when the recording of the interview was to begin and asked if they were fine with the interview commencing.

The interviews were conducted using the Bullying and Harassment Interview Schedule created by Woodrow and Guest (2017) and were modified for the purposes of this study (permission granted to use instrument, see appendix C). According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), despite the technique used, the desire to reveal the story of human experiences is the main purpose of qualitative researchers. Qualitative researchers gather data regarding peoples' life experiences, to study various elements of human experiences, and the best method of doing so is via interviewing (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Solicitation of data via interviews is inviting others to reveal their personal stories and becoming adept at the art of interviewing assists researchers in advancing interviewees as they navigate through the storytelling process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) reported the importance of novice researchers using an interview protocol to help with data gathering. The interview protocol is more than just a list of questions, but also incorporates the interviewing process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). This includes the pre and post interview scripts, informed consent, prompts and reminders for the interviewer regarding the data that needs to be collected, because interview protocols are not just a list of interview questions, but it also serves as a road map for the novice interviewer to navigate through the process. (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Prior to the commencement of the interview, rapport building was important, and questions were ordered from easier to answer to more difficult questions to answer to allow the interviewee to proceed through the interview as comfortably as possible (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), the phrase "tell me about" is an excellent way to lead the interview into a path of open dialogue, and the phrase makes it nearly impossible for a question to be too intricate to respond to and may lead to beneficial previously uncharted thoughts and concepts. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) reported the researcher should not be reluctant to ask follow up questions if deemed necessary, the interview should not exceed 90 minutes (for sensitivity regarding the uncompensated time donated by the interviewee), and that the researcher should schedule a shorter second interview, if applicable, to ensure maximum clarity has been achieved. For interview protocol (see Appendix B).

Location

The practicality of conducting face-to-face interviews has been severely diminished due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of this situation, Zoom audio

teleconferencing was used to conduct the interviews, due to the built-in features and ability to record and/or transcribe the conversation. According to Heath et al. (2018), virtual interviewing is a viable alternative to conducting face-to-face interviews, because some body language and other nonverbal cues may be detected, which is not possible with phone interviews. Audio was recorded for the purposes of this study.

Data Analysis

According to Oxley (2016), IPA researchers attempt to convey meaning to the major events that people experience in their lives. Although the basis of IPA is experiential, it is recognized that the comprehension of the experience by the researcher is limited to what is verbalized by the study participant, because the researcher cannot directly share the experience (Oxley, 2016). Because of this circumstance, two filters exist between the researcher and the participant, 1) the participant communicates the experience via their personal viewpoint and, 2) the researcher translates what the participant has verbalized (Oxley, 2016). "This difficulty is acknowledged by IPA researchers and becomes part of the methodological stance, positioning people as meaning makers" (Oxley, 2016 p. 55).

The method of data analysis the researcher employed for the purposes of this study is the idiographic approach to IPA. Oxley (2016) reported the emphasis of idiography is upon the actual happenings of the event and the specific details. "IPA is an excellent example of a research methodology which is well suited to taking an idiographic approach as it focuses on small samples of participants, drawn from 'expert groups', with no attempt being made to generalize findings more widely" (Oxley, 2016 p.

57). Citing Smith (2004), Oxley (2016) reported the pertinence of each individual case on its own merit. Using the IPA idiographic methodology of viewing each interview as its own individual case allows direct focus upon one individual, giving the researcher the opportunity to gain a more in depth understanding of the personal experiences of each participant (Oxley, 2016).

The focus of IPA is meticulousness with regard to each case, and the attempt to render insights on how an individual in a given setting makes sense of an experience (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). Researcher absorption in the data collected is the initial step in the process, and analyses move back and forth through a myriad of ways of thinking and reflection (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). To this end, each case was analyzed in its entirety before moving on to any subsequent cases. To become refamiliarized with the interview, the researcher listened to each interview in its entirety prior to transcription, where the previous interview notes were updated via journal entries by the researcher, as applicable. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is a suitable method of analysis when seeking to comprehend experiences, feelings, or actions within a data set. The most universally acknowledged framework for performing thematic analysis includes a six-step process: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Step 1: Familiarizing Yourself With the Data

I became familiar with the data by thoroughly reading and reviewing each case individually. This was accomplished by listening to each audio interview and creating a

verbatim word document to be used throughout the data analysis process. Each transcript was read and then re-read as many times as necessary to become thoroughly familiar with each individual case. Kiger and Varpio (2020), reported that first becoming intimately acquainted with the data collected in its entirety is essential, and is the foundation for each of the steps to be performed thereafter. To ensure accuracy, I initially listened to each audio recording, and then again listened to the audio recordings several times while creating the verbatim word document. After each interview transcript was created, I then listened to each audio recording, and re-read each of them simultaneously with the recording to ensure that not only was the verbiage accurate, but to also be able to understand the spirit in which each response was given.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Coding assists the researcher in data examination by exploring specific items of interest and by making connections with other pieces of data, where codes and not themes will be generated at this juncture (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), this can be done manually or via computer aided devices. As such, I accomplished this by creating a thorough set of notes. I then manually coded each interview, resulting in increased familiarity with the dataset and the experiences of the participants. This manual coding process consisted of initially reading each individual transcript, categorizing similar responses via color coding (common categories and responses were color coded similarly).

Step 3: Searching for Themes

Kiger and Varpio (2020) reported that theme identification is at its core an active

an interpretative process. The themes emerge via examination, analysis, mapping, and comparisons made by the researcher as they relate to how the codes are connected (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). At this stage, despite the enormity or disparity in themes discovered, every theme is important because, the researcher cannot determine which themes are most important until the themes are reviewed (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). During this phase, as I read each individual transcript, I was able to recognize and to group common themes that emerged as well as standalone themes. For example, once I read each individual transcript, I was able to pull out pertinent responses to the study and placed them in their respective categories. Once these responses were grouped and color coded individually, I then reviewed each transcription, and compared them with the others (cross interview comparisons) to determine how to re-categorize them thematically. This allowed me to recognize commonalities as well as differences among the participant responses.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), step four requires that the researcher reviews the coded data identified within each theme to confirm they are properly positioned and that themes may be added, combined, divided, or deleted, as deemed appropriate. During this phase, detailed notes should be maintained by the researcher as they record their thought processes regarding how themes were created, connected and/or removed (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Kiger and Varpio (2020) found the researcher should repeatedly consider themes as they relate to the aggregate data set and that the thematic map should distinctly indicate the correlation between the themes and the area of interest. During this phase, I clustered themes that fit together; however, standalone

responses/categories were not necessarily disqualified when I determined they added value to the overall project. For example, if all the participants except one, gave a similar type of response to a question, if the different response of that individual added value to the study, it was not discarded.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme highlights an essential aspect about the data in relation to the research question and embodies some level of patterned response or value within the data set. Once the thematic map has been enhanced, this step requires that the researcher produces a definition and narrative description of each theme, including why it is essential to the primary research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this juncture, labeling and the categorization of themes should also take place for the final report to ensure they are concise and sufficiently informative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this step, I performed a final grouping and regrouping of all of the relevant themes, to ensure all of the themes were properly placed, so that the final report would be both coherent and logical. For example, if some of the participants responded to the bullying perpetrators with anger, and some with dismay, I coded and grouped these reactions into one common theme, if applicable.

Step 6: Producing the Report

Braun and Clarke (2006) reported that the finalization of the report and the findings should occur during this phase of the process. The flow of the report should provide a coherent and logical account regarding not only how the researcher interprets the data, but also why the emergent themes were important to the study (Braun & Clarke,

2006). Because of what has already occurred from the overlap while completing the previous steps, Kiger and Varpio (2020) reported that portions of this section will already be in the production phase.

Once the transcription was completed verbatim, the data collected from the six interviewees were then coded manually and themes were also identified. According to Williams and Moser (2019), despite possible detailing errors, manual or open coding is a relatively effective data-gathering method. This was the method utilized, thus allowing me to become intimately familiar with the data. This was done by listening, transcribing, and grouping the interview responses throughout, for grouping and theme identification procedures to be easily performed.

Upon completion of the data collection process via personal interviews, I then transcribed each interview via word document creation by listening to each interview individually. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) found that despite the personal time investment required when compared to having this service performed by others, when the researcher performs the transcription process by reading the collected data several times, an intimate relationship with the collected data is formed. The researcher will then separate the data, identifying common themes by grouping or coding via thematic analysis (TA), a commonly utilized procedure employed across all qualitative designs (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

According to Karacaoglu, (2018), the utilization of data coding highlights important points. Qualitative interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the victims, where common themes were identified and analyzed via

coding. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), compilation, structuring, and giving careful thought to the data's importance via coding and making it easy to retrieve by others to verify, is the manifestation of good analytical work habits, and is useful in most qualitative research approaches.

Qualitative research provides a way for the researcher to not only investigate, but also to comprehend what and why people and their affiliates attribute responsibility to a particular societal issue, that requires change where common themes will be identified with data interpretations provided (see Creswell, 2009). This type of research methodology is a type of social action that focuses upon peoples' understanding of their social experiences, and how they put them into perspective (Mohajan, 2018). According to Kaivo-oja (2017), in the absence of qualitative analyses, the shaping of the future is an impossibility, and the potency of qualitative analyses is connected to an in-depth comprehension of social change, social patterns and configurations. Finally, although categorizing, coding, grouping, and theme identification occurred throughout the data analysis phase of the project, I again reviewed my notes to ensure all pertinent data was included for the final report.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was maintained throughout the study, because this is a tenet of qualitative research that must be present both with the researcher, and with each study participant. According to Shufutinsky (2020), eliminating self from the data may promote openness and trustworthiness. This can be achieved by removing the influence of the researcher from the data and concentrating on the spirit of the experiences of the study

participants (Shufutinsky, 2020). This was achieved by bracketing. According to

Wadams and Park (2018), bracketing is when researchers take care in dismissing their

preconceived notions and experiences, thus making a study more rigorous. I met this

objective by not coercing or attempting to influence the responses of the participants by

interjecting my personal experiences into the narrative. This objective was also achieved

by giving minimal reactions to the responses of the participants. I also did not over

emphasize my personal experiences with bullying within the workplace. Additionally,

because each participant was promised a $30.00 Mastercard or Visa gift, card for

participating, they were sent the gift cards within two days of concluding the interview,

further assisting in maintaining a climate of trustworthiness and credibility. Stahl and

King, (2020) reported trustworthiness as a mutual reality where readers and writers may

locate harmony within their constructive practices. Christenbery (2017) also found that

regarding qualitative studies, trustworthiness is shown when the processes are applicable,

the data is thorough, and the findings are impartial. According to FitzPatrick (2019),

trustworthiness is even important when implied statements are made.

Credibility

According to Kroeger et al. (2018), conflict disclosure is a good first step in

establishing credibility; however, it alone is not a guarantee the objective has been

achieved, because research quality and reliability are what matters most. To this end, I

disclosed any personal exposure to workplace bullying, and I also ensured the credibility

of the study through the quality of the evidence included, as well as staying fully

committed to the finished product. I also attempted to continually build trust with each

study participant by disseminating only truthful information, whether solicited or unsolicited. When one feels they can believe in the person who provides the information, trust is organically built. Casey et al. (2021) reported that study participants' trust level of the source/messenger, as the single most important criteria when evaluating the credibility of the information received.

Transferability

Boot and Bosma (2021) found that in qualitative research, external validity is contingent upon whether transferability to another context is feasible, and that transferability relates to whether or not the knowledge acquired gives a more complete understanding of how health is affected by the workplace. To this end, the connection between transferability and validity was established via the comprehensive information solicited and received by the type of questions asked during the interviews; thus, the method of inquiry demonstrated that for any work environment that employs men of color who are bullied, this type of study will be applicable. The semi-structured open-ended and applicable follow up questions asked, ensured that a complete understanding of each experience was achieved. The methodological details discussed made this study transferrable with the capability of being replicated.

Dependability

Wang and Lien (2013) found that written transcription and photographs alone cannot be fully representative of the richness of an interview and lauds the advantages of data gathering via the use of video equipment, because researcher/participant interaction and participant non-verbal cues can be captured, as well as a permanent record can also

be maintained. The interviews for this study were audio recorded only, via Zoom teleconferencing meetings, which when applicable, allowed the participants to maintain a measure of anonymity. Having both the audio recordings and the transcriptions available ensured the study would be accurate and dependability would be achieved. Although dependability is not easily achievable in phenomenological studies, repetition is one of the primary characteristics of studies of this type. I demonstrated dependability by continually listening to the interviews and Zoom teleconferencing recordings, and by repeatedly cross-checking the transcriptions with the recordings. An additional step I took in achieving dependability was member checking. This was done by sending a copy of their transcribed interview to each participant via email and having them confirm the accuracy of the transcription. Citing Miles et al. (2015) and Harvey (2015), Brear (2019) found that member checking allows study participants to confirm research data accuracy and to make corrections, while also noting it to be a deeply rooted and accepted qualitative research technique.

Confirmability

According to Connelly (2016), confirmability relates to the level the findings of a study are consistent and can be replicated. Some ways in which confirmability can be achieved include keeping detailed notes as decisions are made and by member-checking with the study participants to ensure accuracy was maintained. To achieve confirmability, I kept detailed notes and sent each participant a copy of their transcribed interview via email (requesting confirmation via email responses) to ensure that the interviews were captured as the participants remembered them. Shenton (2004) reported to achieve

confirmability, care must be taken to ensure the findings of the study are the reflections of the participants, and not the preconceived notions of the researcher. This type of confirmability can be achieved because of triangulation, which in addition to interviews, can also involve observation. I was able to achieve this type of confirmability, because the interviews were audio recorded via Zoom meetings, which allowed me to intently observe the participants' verbal and non-verbal cues.

Ethical Procedures

Chenneville and Gabbidon (2020) found that according to the American Psychological Association (APA), participant confidential information can only be revealed without the consent of the participant or a legally authorized party, in instances where harm to the participant or others is at issue. According to Brown et al. (2020), in the United States the protection of human research participants is mandated by federal regulations, and one of the ethical stipulations placed upon public universities is the requirement of having an internal review board which evaluates research where humans are participants. At Walden University, this responsibility lies with the IRB to make these evaluations. Prior to petitioning the IRB, my dissertation committee's chairperson reviewed and approved the study proposal, where the study was then sent to the committee member for approval and was then subsequently sent to the university research reviewer for approval.

Once these steps were completed, the IRB approval process began, as approval forms were completed and submitted. To ensure the study participants are protected, I fully complied with all ethical procedures currently in place, which includes participant

informed consent forms to be completed, since participant awareness is essential. As per the informed consent form, the study participants were also assured of their study opt out option, because they will be able do so at any juncture without repercussions or harm, and they will also be assured of confidentiality regarding their identities being made known to me exclusively. Dooly et al. (2017) reported that researchers should take every precaution to be as ethical as possible when data analysis occurs, and to ensure that the data is representative of the responses given by the participants and not allow researcher bias to influence the study.

To prevent this, I ensured that every participant received a copy of their transcribed interview verbatim, within four weeks of interview completion, and requested confirmation that the research accurately represented their responses. They then had a week after receipt of the transcription to provide comment, to edit, or to revoke usage. Discussing personal and sensitive topics may bring to the surface unforeseen or traumatic reactions for a participant. To this end, I was prepared to immediately end the interview if any evidence of trauma was detected, and to offer support. If follow up counseling appeared to be required due to any information the participant shared or due to any of the questions asked, I was prepared to refer them to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) referral helpline at 1-877-SAMHSA (1-877-726-4727). Finally, the study's materials will be maintained on a password protected laptop for the duration of five years and will be subsequently deleted.

Summary

In this chapter research design, the role of the researcher, and the research methodology were discussed. The other topics discussed within the chapter included participant selection, instrumentation, and data collection/issues/analysis. Trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability; as well as dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures were also discussed. Chapter 4 includes data analysis of the results of the study. Finally, data collection, transcription, and coding and implications for social change are also discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the firsthand lived experiences of Black/African American men regarding workplace bullying and whether these experiences became increasingly negative based on skin tone. Semistructured Zoom interviews were conducted with six participants. The participants answered open-ended questions; when additional clarification was required by me, the semistructured format allowed me to diverge from the original script. The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How are these bullying experiences described by Black/African American men?

RQ2: How does self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying?

In Chapter 4, I present the themes that emerged from the analyzed data.

Theme Identification

Two main themes and seven subthemes emerged during the data analysis phase. See Table 1 for the codes that contributed to the development of the themes. The main themes that emerged were emotional impact and race matters (see Table 2).

Table 1

Codes and Themes

Domain	Subdomain	Theme
Internal reactions to bullying	Anger, frustration	Emotional impact "I became so upset"
First impressions	Contentment, satisfaction	Prebullying attitudes "I loved the job"
The aftermath	Threats of violence, verbal retaliation	Postbullying attitudes "I said, I probably would've killed one of them"
Continued focus	Excellence the key	Postbullying professionalism "I was coming to work to do the job I was hired to do and doing it to the best of my ability"
Victimization rate	Repeated casualties	Bullying frequency "It would definitely be something he has to see every single day"
Racial disparities	White means right	Race matters "It seemed more so like people of color were looked at as incompetent, that we didn't know what we were talking about and couldn't provide any real value"
Bully identification	Mostly White men, some White women	Race of perpetrator "Always White, every single time"
Trustees	White/Black	Workplace network "It was always a mixture of Black and White, and I'm going to say that it was very pleasant"
Complexion self-identification	Light brown to dark	Skin tone of victim "The lighter you are the more they might accept you"

Table 2

Theme Summary

Theme	Subtheme
Emotional impact	Prebullying attitudes
	Postbullying attitudes
	Postbullying professionalism
	Bullying frequency
Race matters	Victim workplace networks
	Race of perpetrator
	Skin tone of victim

Participants

A participant recruitment flyer was posted on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, or similar platforms) after I received IRB approval from Walden University. Black/African American men were recruited to participate in the study. Six men responded, and all six agreed to be interviewed. Participants met the following criteria: at least 18 years of age, bullied within the workplace in the last 20 years, and willing to have their interview audio recorded. Upon being sent and reviewing the informed consent form, all participants agreed to adhere to the criteria of the study, which included providing an individual self-assessment of their skin complexion. The participants were from various locations, were from different age groups, and worked in different industries. Additional demographic data pertinent to the study was recorded during the interview process. See Table 3 for participant demographic data.

Table 3

Participant Summary

Pseudonym	U.S. region of residency/employment	Age	Industry categorization
P1	South	60–70	Service
P2	Mid-Atlantic	60–70	Education
P3	Mid-Atlantic	60–70	Government
P4	Mid-Atlantic	40–50	Maintenance
P5	West	20–30	Service
P6	Mid-Atlantic	30–40	Construction

Zoom teleconferencing interviews were conducted to obtain the required data for this study. The main research question of the study was as follows: What are the lived experiences of Black/African American men who endure workplace? The guiding research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How are these bullying experiences described by Black/African American men?

RQ2: How does self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying

Nine interview questions were used, with one additional inquiry addressing the age of the participant, region of residency, current occupation, tenure, and feeling each participant had about the job where the bullying took place (see Appendix B). The detailed responses provided by the participants revealed the essence of each workplace bullying experience. The codes and emergent themes were developed via the interview responses provided by each participant. Lived experiences were obtained due to the open-ended questions used, where detailed responses were required. These responses revealed

common and uncommon experiences of the participants. Several themes emerged from the responses given. The two main themes were the importance of the emotional impact of the experiences of the victims (e.g., the positive feelings toward their jobs that the victims initially had, which changed after the bullying was experienced [see Figure 1]) and that race mattered to both victims and perpetrators of WCB (see Figure 2). The figures indicate both the main themes and the connecting subthemes. The open-ended inquiry format allowed the participants to provide detailed responses that revealed differences and commonalities in what they experienced. The themes and subthemes were as follows:

1. Emotional impact
   - Prebullying attitudes
   - Postbullying attitudes
   - Postbullying professionalism
   - Bullying frequency

2. Race matters
   - Victim workplace networks
   - Race of perpetrator
   - Skin tone of victim

Figure 1

Emotional Impact
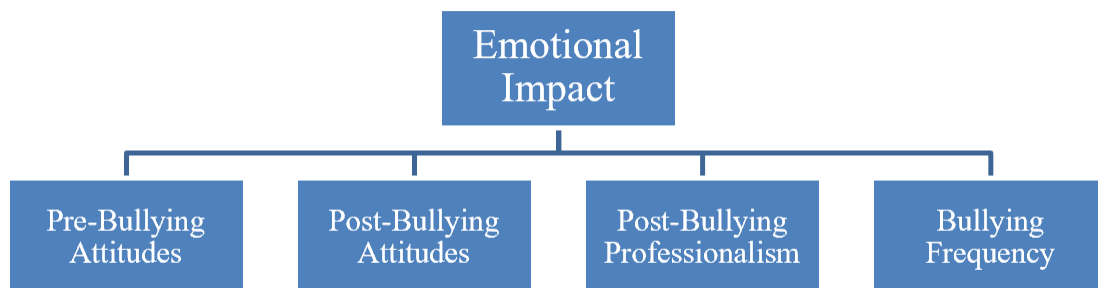
Figure 2

Race Matters
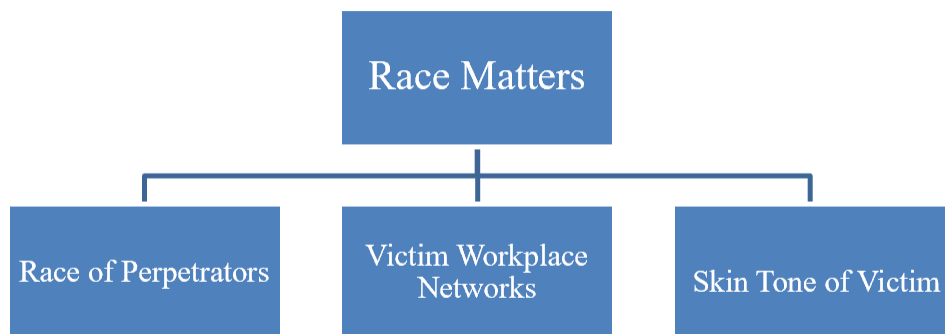
Themes

To provide evidence supporting the identified themes, I include excerpts from the interviews conducted. Two main themes were derived from the responses provided by the participants.

Theme 1: Emotional Impact

The responses provided in this main theme and subthemes revealed various reactions. The participants discussed the emotional impact and initial reactions to the bullying behaviors they experienced. Their stories highlighted how different the reactions were to the bullying. There were no reactions that could be generalized among all of the study participants, and only P2 reported his concerns regarding the treatment to the next managerial level. P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6 indicated that because of the bullying they experienced bewilderment, frustration, and anger, while the P5 seemed to reveal acceptance and indifference because the perpetrators were managerial employees.

P1 was surprised and appalled by the treatment of the newly hired manager, because he was highly regarded and recognized for his performance. P1also made it obvious early on that he would not be subjected to a work environment he deemed unsuitable and intolerable. P1 stated "I became so upset with him that I said you know what then, well I want to give you notice I am going to resign in 2 weeks."

Despite how he was treated, P2 did not withdraw and seemed to believe that if he continued to work hard, offer suggestions, and share his concerns with upper management, the conditions at the workplace would improve. P2 shared "on many occasions I got eyes rolled at, physically tossed items, total disrespect." The statements

from P3 and P4 demonstrated how their situations could have led to violence. P3 revealed

how volatile and toxic his work environment had become as he recounted a situation that

was not work related: "I had one during the OJ trial, he got upset because OJ got off. And

I started laughing, and he wanted to fight, and I was ready to oblige him." The frustration

from the behavior encountered by P4 was such that he seemed to believe he needed to

protect others like him whom he believed were being treated unfavorably. P4 asserted "he

lets all the White kids go and stops the Black kid and starts giving him grief." P4

continued "right there at that moment, I almost forgot that I was in the workplace, but I

had to remember that at the end of the day, you still got to remain professional."

P6 realized early on that his workplace environment would improve if it were

more diverse. P6 shared "like if I've got a Black guy on the crew with me it's like we

always can connect, and it's like we understand each other." P5 seemed resigned to the

fact that the best strategy was to go along to get along: "there was really nothing else that

we really thought or tried to do, because this was the district manager".

Subtheme: Prebullying Attitudes

Prebullying attitudes refer to how the participants expressed how they felt about

their jobs prior to having been bullied. When asked how they felt about their jobs prior to

their bullying experiences, most participants had no negative feelings that were connected

to their places of employment. P1, P3, P4, and P6 expressed positivity from the outset,

and their initial reactions also revealed their having found a soft-landing spot in their

newfound employment status. It was apparent the bullying behaviors they eventually

experienced were much different than from the workplace environment they initially encountered.

P1 asserted "I loved the job," which was like the experiences of P3 who stated, "loved my job, loved meeting the people, my customers." P4 and P6 expressed similar sentiments about their initial on-the-job experiences. P4 asserted "like I said, I was there 15 years, so I knew my job very well … in the beginning I didn't have any problems," while P6 declared "as far as the work, I liked the work, it was very profitable … I learned a lot, so it was a good experience from that aspect I would say."

Being the lone exception, P2 appeared to experience bullying within the workplace at the very beginning of his employment experience. P2 immediately questioned himself whether he was mistaken in his acceptance of his newly acquired position. P2 shared:

> the following week she introduced me to other co-workers … and this one lady, as she was introducing me to the other co-workers looked at me and rolled her eyes at me … and I initially was trying to decide whether I wanted to stay and complete the hiring process.

Subtheme: Postbullying Attitudes

Postbullying attitudes refers to how the participants expressed how they felt about their jobs after having been bullied. When discussing how the participants felt about their jobs after their bullying experiences, none expressed positive feelings about their places of employment. In fact, even though the workplace environment experiences encountered by P5 were indicative of one who still wanted to excel within his workplace, the actions

of the perpetrators had obviously taken a toll upon him. P5 asserted "I still in the back of my mind felt what was the point if I was just going to be berated and told I was wrong anyway, regardless of what I did." The experiences of P4, P6, and P3 indicated high degrees of agitation, with the bullying incurred possibly progressing toward physically violent encounters. P6 shared "so, when I checked him, I basically just told him, watch your mouth, I kind of used profanity when I said it … so he kind of respected it after that." P4 stated "I was being harassed so bad at one point … like to the point where it could get ugly."

And, although P3 initially loved his job, he eventually reached a point where the repeated bullying had caused him to take drastic measures to give him what he thought would be relief from the bullying. P3 declared:

> I called two family members at the time to meet me after work to watch my back because I was going to confront them, so they had me in with a union rep and the supervisors and the managers, but they asked me what I would have done, and I said I probably would've killed one of them.

Subtheme: Postbullying Professionalism

Postbullying professionalism refers to how the participants felt about their levels of professionalism and/or job performance after being bullied. In this area of discussion, the common theme that emerged was that the participants continued to perform to the best of their abilities, despite their bullying experiences. All of them expressed a similar need to maintain an attitude of professionalism and to perform well. The following

excerpts seem to indicate that no matter the negative circumstances they encountered, performing with excellence was vital to the study participants.

Although their experiences were different, P1 and P3 seemed to have found similar pleasures when engaging with their customers. P1 asserted "so I'm not just a person that came to work and just do the minimum, you know, I enjoy helping people." Similarly, P3 found enjoyment in engaging with others outside of the building where he reported to work, away from the bullies, allowing him to stay focused upon the task at hand. P3 shared:

> well, to be honest, I started to hate the job, but I still … even to the day I left, I still loved coming in once I got on the street, and I would meet my customers … that was the great time, that was the best time.

On the other hand, P2 and P4 seemed to have different motivations when deciding to maintain their excellence, appearing to "dig in their heels", to reach their goals. P2 stated "I'm currently a retired army Sargent and we deal with things, get it done, and handle it … do what you've got to do … complete your mission." P4 asserted:

> I stayed committed, my work ethic never changed, I stayed dedicated, actually I think I went above and beyond just to kind of prove that I wasn't going to be pushed out or run away from my position due to other people's actions.

Subtheme: Bullying Frequency

The bullying frequency theme refers specifically to how often the participants expressed they were bullied. All the participants reported experiencing repeated bullying behaviors, with one (P6) reporting experiencing bullying daily. Two of the participants

(P1, P2) began experiencing bullying very early in their interactions with their

perpetrators. The perpetrators of the bullying experienced by participants P1, P4, and P5

were managerial employees, while participants P2 and P3 reported incidents of bullying

from managerial and peer personnel. Only participant P6 reported bullying solely from a

peer employee. Participants P3, P4, and P5 were aware of others being bullied, while

participants P1, P2, and P6 were focused mainly upon their own experiences.

On any given day P6 knew that he likely would be incurring some type of

bullying. P6 shared about his perpetrator, "yeah, I would say maybe like around 20 days,

most of the month, it would definitely be something he has to see every single day."

Although P1 was ostracized daily by his manager from the time the manager began

leading his team, approximately one to two months later, he recalled how the bullying he

initially experienced escalated, with being threatened with termination. P1 shared "the

very first time I met with him; he gave me a warning." P1 continued "so, a month later I

get a call to come in his office again, and he says, so I'm putting you on a final warning."

Although P4 had experienced being bullied directly, a little more than once per week, he

was also bullied somewhat covertly by the person who oversaw his site, when this person

began to sing slave songs, which can be a triggering point for many African Americans.

P4 asserted "he was testing the mics just to make sure the mics were on, he started

singing Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

Theme 2: Race Matters

In discussing whether race matters, race appeared to be a defining factor when the

bullying perpetrators appeared to carefully choose their victims, or in choosing whom to

protect. In the views of the participants, race was an issue, not only because their perpetrators were White (one of the perpetrators was a person of color), but because the victims were Black. Five of the six study participants reported either experiencing bullying or observing when the perpetrators of bullying either treated the White employees in a more positive manner than the Black employees, or that being White seemed to automatically place an employee in a more favorable position.

For example, participant P1 observed what he thought may have been inherently biased behaviors from his manager because his manager was White, while P5 believed Whites were automatically favored over minority employees. P1 stated "maybe it was unconscious you know, but whether it was unconscious or conscious, it was because of my ethnicity, because of me being Black, so, there's got to be a bias." P5 declared:

> it seemed more so like people of color were looked at as incompetent, and the people that were Caucasian while not listened to as well, were listened to and their opinions were taken more into consideration while ours were completely negated.

P3 believed that even in instances of criminality where White employees were involved, managerial personnel went out of their way to protect them. P3 asserted:

> I can think of one other incident where they tried to catch the clerks, they would put marked money in different areas of the post office and even in the mailboxes to catch people stealing, well it wasn't a Black guy who stole it, it was a White girl who stole it, but at the end they had to fire her, because all eyes were watching.

Subtheme: Race of Perpetrator

The race of the perpetrators was an emerging theme that was common among all the study participants, and although this study highlighted the importance of race when the race of the victims was Black, the race of the victimizers also cannot be overlooked. Every participant reported being bullied by at least one person who was White, while one participant (P5) also reported an Asian perpetrator. White men were the dominant race and gender of the perpetrators, by far (83%). Two of the participants (P1, P6) had just one perpetrator, while four (67%) reported having multiple perpetrators (P2, P3, P4, P5). Only one (P2) reported being bullied by females only.

Although not always being able to cite precisely how many times he was exposed to bullying behaviors, P5 did not waver when identifying those who victimized him personally, or by identifying those who victimized his coworkers. P5 stated "It was always between an African American employee and one of the managers who were either Asian or Caucasian". P1 was also steadfast in identifying the race of his victimizer. P1 shared "He was a Caucasian male". P6 was also certain the bullying he incurred was because the perpetrator was White, and he also observed how different his White counterparts were treated by his victimizer. P6 asserted "but I already know what it is like it's more so, it's a race thing, because another White guy will come in and you won't say nothing to him." P2 recounted a unique situation when compared to the other study participants, because his perpetrators were White women. P2 stated "well, there was only one and that was the Caucasian, that was the White lady, the lead teacher … she was basically the only one, the Caucasian teacher and the director." P4 asserted "he was

White, ok, again another White man, always White, every single time, always White, any type of racist situation in the district was always a White person … every single time."

Subtheme: Workplace Network

Workplace network is a theme that defined who the participants confided in, socialized with, or trusted while at work. All these Black men entrusted Blacks as members of their workplace networks, with 50% of them associating exclusively with Blacks. Three of the participants reported the employees they communicated with or confided in, as being White and Black (P1, P2, P3). The participants who had mixed race networks are now 64 and 65 years old, while the younger study participants (ranged from 25-47 years of age) only interacted with their own race. It was difficult to determine whether the ages of the participants were a factor in their workplace network choices, if there was a trust issue, or if either of these issues were of major importance.

P1 appeared very contented about the membership of his diverse employee network. P1 shared, "it was always a mixture of Black and White, and I'm going to say that it was very pleasant." Although it did not appear P2 had developed any close personal working relationships regardless of the race of his coworkers, the climate among those who were not his victimizers appeared cordial. P2 asserted "it didn't matter, I would socialize with all of them … at our monthly meetings." P3 communicated how he had attempted to develop good working relationships with some of his Black coworkers, although some of those relationships were not maintained; however, race was not an issue, because he also befriended some of his White co-workers. P3 shared "I considered them friends at one point, but they had turned on me tremendously … but I still had the

other Blacks … we all had a good relationship." P3 continued "overall my relationship with a lot of them [Whites] was very good, throughout my whole tenure." P4, P5, and P6 were staunch in their preferences for a predominantly African American employee network. P4 declared "I pretty much, I stuck with my own, my own kind … I was around Blacks more than anything."

Subtheme: Skin Tone

The theme of skin tone that emerged proved interesting, because two of the six participants did not follow the expected pattern of beliefs regarding receiving favorable or disparate treatment due to the shade of their skin. These two participants reported their beliefs were that they were bullied because of race only, but not necessarily because of their skin tone (P1, P5). P1 who self-reported as having the lightest skin tone of all the study participants (light brown) believed that race exclusively and not complexion was the determining factor in how he was treated, while P5 whose skin tone was among the darkest of the participants (dark brown) believed the same. P1 shared:

my skin tone is light brown, I believe it's because I'm a Black male, and I believe that even if I was a fair complexioned Black person, I think it would have been the same thing, he was going to have a bias against me no matter what.

P5 stated "dark skin … and yes, but not because of the fairness of my skin, but just because I was Black in general, dark brown." Participants P2, P3, P4, and P6 were definitive in their beliefs that skin tone was a factor in how they were treated. P3 asserted:

I'm dark brown, and do I believe it was affected, yeah, I believe my race … if I was a White boy, I would have no problems, definitely…if you were a fair skinned Black, you got treated a little better.

P4 declared "I'd say medium brown … it definitely affected how I was treated at work … I can only imagine if I was dark skinned, I probably wouldn't have never gotten hired." The complexions of all the study participants ranged from light brown to dark skin; and there were none that identified as having fair or light skin.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the first hand lived experiences of Black men regarding workplace bullying and whether these experiences became increasingly negative, based upon skin tone. Semistructured Zoom teleconferencing interviews were used via the responses of six interview participants. The participants answered structured open-ended questions; however, when additional clarity was required, the semistructured format allowed me to diverge from the original script. The interviews consisted of nine questions, with one additional initial inquiry regarding occupation, tenure, and the feeling each participant had about the job where the bullying took place. This chapter discussed emergent themes and study results. The analysis of the data and identification of the common themes emerged via the responses provided by the study recipients. Chapter 5 will consist of the interpretations of the findings, the limitations of the study, and the implications for social change and future research recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the firsthand lived experiences of Black men regarding workplace bullying and whether these experiences became increasingly negative based on skin tone. I addressed the gap in the literature regarding understanding the lived experiences of Black men who endure workplace bullying. My goal was to hear directly from the participants regarding what they experienced related to being bullied in the workplace and whether they felt the shade of their skin was related to the bullying behaviors inflicted on them from managers, peers, or others. Interviews with six Black/African American male participants were conducted via Zoom teleconferencing calls. The semistructured interview format allowed me to ask additional questions for clarification of responses, if necessary. Participants were white-collar and blue-collar workers.

The two research questions that guided this study were the following: How are these bullying experiences described by Black/African American men? How does self-reported skin tone influence descriptions of workplace bullying? Although all participants reported experiencing bullying behaviors in the workplace and all reported aspects of their experiences that were not considered negative, the negative experiences outweighed the positive. Additionally, although some of the participants intimated that their experiences in the workplaces where the bullying occurred were not all negative, they all expressed dismay as to why they were subjected to the treatment they received. Included in Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results, interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and social change implications.

Interpretations of Findings

The uniqueness of this study was demonstrated through the exploration of the lived experiences of Black/African American men regarding bullying behaviors perpetrated on them in the workplace, and whether the complexion of their skin was a factor in how they were treated. The findings help to extend the literature, because not much was known about the lived experiences of bullying among Black/African American men in the workplace (see Hairston et al., 2018). Much of the literature focused on Black women (Abrams et al., 2020; Cable News Network, 2013) or Black people in general and their lived experiences regarding colorism (Asante & Hall, 2016; Hollis, 2020; McCray, 2012).

Two main themes were identified in this study: emotional impact and race matters. The subthemes of emotional impact were prebullying attitudes, postbullying attitudes, postbullying professionalism, and bullying frequency. Subthemes of race matters were race of the perpetrator, workplace network, and skin tone. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to answer the research questions by exploring the lived experiences of Black/African American men to reveal common themes. The first research question addressed how Black men described the negative treatment they received in the workplace, and the second research question addressed whether they thought that treatment was related to the shade of their skin. The findings revealed that the participants were clear in identifying the negative treatment they received (either covert or overt and implicit or conscious) and that racism and/or colorism was the reason for it.

Regarding the first main theme, emotional impact, the findings indicated how

these Black men entered their workplaces with positive attitudes but later viewed their

workplaces negatively, because they were bullied. For example, P3 expressed how much

he loved his job at the beginning, but later hated going to work and only experienced

relief when he was outside interacting with his customers. P6 expressed how much he

liked the job due to the income he received. He also revealed how much he grew to

dislike his job because of the treatment he received from his bullying perpetrators.

Although most participants initially viewed their workplaces optimistically, their

subsequent experiences indicated how things changed due to WCB. The revelations

expressed by the participants align with the findings of Jahng (2020), who reported the

negative and debilitating effects workplace bullying can have on its victims. For example,

P3 asserted how he initially "loved his job" and then due to the bullying behaviors he

subsequently "hated" his job. Additionally, P4 shared how he initially did not have any

problems on the job, then subsequently expressed that he informed others that because of

the bullying he thought "things could get ugly."

Regarding the second main theme, race matters, the findings revealed how race

was a key component not only to the perpetrators but also to the victims in the workplace.

Although it may be obvious that a perpetrator who inflicts treatment of racism and

colorism behaviors on Black men may have issues with Black men, the findings of the

study also revealed that the way African American men related to the people they

interacted with varied among the participants. Although Black men are often taught of the

reality of racism and how to recognize it at an early age, they are also taught to be wary

of a system that can go from good to bad to worst in an instant. It is also not uncommon

for Black men to learn that when they are given what is often referred to as "the talk" in the African American culture, that they will not be afforded the same courtesies and benefits given to others. These findings are in alignment with those by Christian and Walker (2021) who reported the inequities experienced by Black men when compared with their White counterparts when exposed to the criminal justice system for the same crimes. None of the current participants expressed surprise or dismay by the treatment they received from their perpetrators. The findings of this study support the theoretical framework of CRT that contends that racism is an omnipresent systemic force (see Carbado & Roithmayr, 2014).

P5 asserted that Whites were automatically more highly regarded when compared to Blacks at his place of employment. The findings of this study are in accordance with the studies conducted by Iheduru-Anderson et al. (2021) and Bohonos (2019) that indicated racism as an omnipresent, never-ending, everyday occurrence for people of color and that because racism exists in the workplace, the workplace becomes menacing, discriminatory, and unfair. For example, the findings of the current study revealed that in almost every instance White men were the perpetrators of racist and colorism based bullying behaviors inflicted on African American men; but despite this, 50% of the victims considered their White colleagues as members of their workplace networks. The other 50% of the participants expressed that they almost exclusively interacted with other Blacks. What is not clear is whether their lack of communication with Whites was due to chance, whether they entered the workplace distrusting Whites, or whether they developed a lack of trust toward Whites because of the bullying behaviors. Anti-Black

bias among Whites is perpetual and negatively impacts both Black and White Americans, and many adult Black Americans are excluded from White social networks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021).

Finding 1: The Importance of Vigilance and Action

Because of the treatment experienced by the participants in the workplace, all asserted they were victims of workplace bullying. The responses of the participants revealed that bullying in their workplaces was probably not an unusual occurrence and that bullying culture consistency may have been prevalent. Although all the participants except one indicated they had other employees they confided in or who were members of their workplace network, only one indicated that they talked to others at least informally about the bullying behaviors they experienced. This did not include the formal follow-up measures that some of the participants disclosed that they took, such as reporting the treatment to their union or by filing grievances. Also, because some of the bullying was done overtly, it was unlikely that other employees including managerial personnel were unaware this climate existed.

The results of the study indicated that the bullying culture was present and considered normal before the participants were hired at their places of employment, and six conditions were revealed during the interviews: One perpetrator was hired after the participant and was permitted to engage in repeatedly bullying the participant, one participant became a victim almost immediately after being hired, and one participant whose normal duration on each was only 2 months due to bullying, which demonstrated that if he was bullied within that short a period of time, the bullying culture likely

preceded his tenure. Three additional participants revealed conditions that demonstrated evidence of bullying cultures prior to their employment (e.g., the normalcy demonstrated by his coworkers regarding the knowledge of a manager displaying family photos where confederate gear was worn, the regularity with which one participant was asked to show his identification at his job sites while his White counterparts were not asked, and the fact that one participant was made aware of how management demoted his predecessor because he made suggestions he believed would improve the working environment).

Additionally, although none of the participants mentioned fear as a component in the workplace, four out of six revealed that there were instances when they had reservations about speaking up or reacting because they had concerns about maintaining employment. One indicated his reluctance to report the behavior to a manager because the perpetrator and the manager were of the same race, and another participant indicated he was accepting of the behavior because the perpetrators were managers. When a person faces the threat of financial security, a fear-based environment has been created and is evident. One characteristic displayed that was also evident due to the responses provided by each participant was their commitment to maintaining an attitude of professionalism and to continue to do the best job they could do despite the bullying. Despite the misgivings they may have had toward the perpetrators of the bullying behaviors and how they may have felt about the job after experiencing the bullying, each participant maintained a commitment to their job, if not to themselves, to perform with a spirit of excellence. Based on the results of this study, bullying was experienced by each of the participants, and the repetitiveness of the bullying behaviors indicated that workplace

bullying was an established culture, not a series of unfortunate singular incidents.

Finding 2: Matters of Inclusivity

Research question 2 addressed whether the skin tone or complexion of Black/African men was a factor regarding them experiencing workplace bullying. Although tacit knowledge and historical references support the existence of racism, colorism is a more complex issue that has not always been recognized or understood by society. The irony in this is that colorism exists because of conditions that were not created by people of color. This dynamic in the United States can be traced to the enslavement of Africans who were brought to the United States by White slave traders and slave masters; because of forced sexual relations between female slaves and White men, lighter skinned offspring were produced (Asante & Hall, 2016). Enmity, separation, and strife between lighter skinned and darker skinned Blacks was created by Whites.

Although colorism affords benefits to and favors lighter skinned Blacks over those with darker skin (Asante & Hall, 2016), this is not always the case (Wilder, 2018). The results of the current study indicated that although all six participants believed they were bullied in the workplace because of racism, only four believed it was due to colorism. The experiences of the participants included being excluded/ignored, receiving unwarranted discipline, increased scrutiny of their work, yelling and screaming, racist remarks, and the public singing of negro spirituals. These experiences took place in some cases daily, and were almost exclusively committed by men, with most of them being White; however, one of the participants responded that one of his bullying perpetrators was of Asian descent.

Six participants self-identified their complexions as light brown to dark, and none seemed to be ambivalent regarding the reasons for the bullying they incurred. The results also indicated that despite the daily pressures of the bullying environment, no participants reported diminished workplace performance even if their morale was negatively impacted. One participant was a director, one was a manager, and others identified as line employees, although one was a former supervisor.

Although some of the bullying was overt and some was covert, no matter how covert the incidents were, the results indicated that workplace bullying was a result of racism and colorism. The results also indicated that each of the workplace environments appeared to be filled with tension and that being bullied due to colorism with the automatically imbedded component of racism appeared to exacerbate these environments. Furthermore, because of the colorism dynamic normally favoring the lighter skinned person, it was not surprising that the light brown participant did not identify colorism as the reason he was bullied; however, it was surprising that a participant who identified as having dark brown skin had identical feelings, believing his race and not skin tone was the reason he was bullied. The other participants identifying as having dark, dark brown, and medium brown skin believed they were bullied due to colorism.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was that there was no representation at the executive level and that only two of the participants were managerial employees (one director, one manager). The other four participants were line employees. The absence of participants who identified as fair and/or light skinned African American men created another

limitation because their perspectives regarding the reasons for workplace bullying among them were not considered. Another limitation was the small sample size. Although the sample size was adequate for this study (see Galbusera et al., 2019; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012), the ability of the study to be replicated may also be called into question due to this issue. Additionally, although I had no reasons to doubt the credibility of the participants in the interview responses provided, an additional limitation was that I had no ability to authenticate the answers I received. A final limitation was my recognition of the reluctance of Black/African American men to identify with having been bullied because culturally this is sometimes viewed as a sign of weakness.

Recommendations

The results of this qualitative study demonstrate that Black/African American men continued to perform at a high-level despite being bullied in the workplace. The study participants provided detailed responses regarding the impact of the treatment they incurred. The data collected via the research question responses, demonstrated both the desire and the adaptability by the study participants to perform well, despite encountering conditions and obstacles that would suggest a decreased capacity to remain highly motivated and productive within the workplace. With these thoughts in mind, my recommendation is that further research is conducted regarding what motivates African American men in the workplace. For example, Babalola et al. (2021) found that acknowledging and compensating employees for ethical behaviors should be encouraged in the workplace. Attaching additional incentives to typical employee appraisals may prove invaluable in promoting a more positive workplace environment.

In their study, Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) found anti-Black bias among Whites is perpetual and negatively impacts both Black and White Americans, and that many adult Black Americans are excluded from White social networks. One of the recommendations in their study was that perhaps organizations could somehow incentivize Whites to work with people of color. Although this recommendation may have been well-meaning, it is both short-sighted, coercive, and unnecessary. People of color are not workplace scourges and should not be viewed as experimental projects where the dominate class should need to be placated to engage with them in the workplace or otherwise. I recommend research funded by organizational HR professionals could be far better spent in the exploration of the reasons why there may be a reluctance of Whites to work with and to interact with Blacks in the workplace.

Accordingly, Gompers and Kovvali (2018) reported how much improved team decision making becomes with increased employee diversity, as well as the lack of women (eight percent) and employees of color (two percent Hispanic, < one percent Black respectively) among venture capitalist firms. Because of this diversity dearth in this field, I recommend increased minority recruitment, training and hiring efforts. This may result in an almost automatic workplace culture change, because they also found an increased proclivity (39.2%) to work together among members of the same racial group. Woodhead et al. (2022) found that racial minority healthcare staffing leadership in the UK was underrepresented, while also finding that racial minorities were disproportionately exposed to disciplinary proceedings within the workplace, resulting in emotional challenges for employees at lower levels. My recommendation is that

increased efforts towards authentic minority advancement and senior management mentorship take place, because despite obvious workplace inequities regarding decreased employee satisfaction, minorities also need to see others that look like them in leadership positions for the creation of a more aspirational workforce.

I also recommend that further research is conducted on how management, employee assistance programs, as well as HR can work toward creating a safer workplace environment where bullying can be both prevented and/or eradicated. Additionally, I would recommend further research is conducted on whether management and HR should create employment retention strategies for bullying victims, and why bullying victims continue to perform with excellence after their bullying experiences. Furthermore, the overall results of this study also indicated that the bullied employees demonstrated competence while performing their normal workplace duties; however, because managerial confidence in their abilities was not evident, sincere, and consistent attempts by management to create a more cohesive relationship with their staffs would greatly contribute to the bottom lines of companies, organizations, and industry.

Implications

The overall results of this study indicated that Black/African American men experience bullying at work due to WCB, although some of the study participants did not identify this phenomenon as a factor. Although none of the participants reported all their workplace experiences as negative, with some even reporting positive workplace experiences, WCB was still found to be an issue within the workplace. Organizations must not wait to hope this scourge magically disappears when they become aware of the

presence of this type of behavior. Although the effects of workplace bullying have been likened to those experienced by victims of domestic violence, Brophy (2021) found that immediate action upon discovery would be helpful as it relates to eradication of workplace bullying. Tagoe and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) found that lower incidents of workplace bullying equate to higher employee engagement. Accordingly, Kuntz and Searle (2023) commended the benefits of intervention training for witnesses of workplace bullying and its role if/when it becomes applicable, and the psychological safety and positive social change it promotes within an organization. Barratt-Pugh and Krestelica (2019) noted the inadequacy that policy alone offers to effect culture change. Brown et al. (2018) reported the improvements employees believed they made when given workplace violence trainings, which included active shooter simulations and post-training surveys.

Gillen et al. (2017) in their review of workplace bullying trainings found them to be of low quality; however, Benmore et al. (2018) reported training interventions with modifications indicate slightly improved results in the workplace environment. In the absence of changes in culture and HR policies, I recommend training interventions with ongoing modifications be carried out as deemed appropriate, because to do nothing is representative of a defeatist attitude. WCB is an issue of major importance.

The overall results of the study indicated that although some supervision is needed and even beneficial in some cases, the right type of manager to employee relationships are what is inspirational to employees and generates an acceptable level of productivity. The dynamic created in positive manager to employee relationships, may or may not be applicable to positive peer to peer relationships; however, it is undeniable that

a more positive working environment may be conducive to good health and to the bottom line of an organization. The overall study results also revealed not only a high degree of productivity from Black men in the workplace who experienced WCB, but also the desire to continue to perform at a high level despite their negative experiences. Despite the negative conditions they were exposed to, sometimes daily, and sometimes on multiple occasions in a single day, the overall study results also revealed them to be highly adaptable and resilient. The findings of the study suggests that Black men not only want to be valued in the workplace, but also do not want to be evaluated based on the implicit negative views of others which lead to distrust and disharmony. Pitcan et al. (2018) found that Black men put forth more effort than all others to excel and to be viewed positively within the workplace.

The social change benefit of this study is that entire organizations will be more aware and attentive to the atmosphere created by these negative interactions; therefore, creating resolutions that are proactive instead of reactive, and that serious and sometimes catastrophic incidents may be averted; however, the willingness to invoke change by Whites must be present. As previously noted, the acknowledgement of White privilege by Whites is critical for advancement to occur (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2020). Also previously noted was that according to Reddick (2021), one's cultural humility and self-awareness, as well as an honest self-assessment regarding the benefits that membership to a particular cultural brings, can be a first step in learning about other cultures. Reddick additionally found this can be beneficial in comprehending how preconceived notions about others are formed. If these steps are taken, the social gains may be highly

beneficial. Because the overall data in this study indicated that all the participants were exposed to perpetrators that were White men, this would be a viable starting point.

Conclusion

This phenomenological qualitative research study investigated the experiences of Black/African American men regarding workplace bullying, and if the complexion of their skin was a factor in incurring this type of treatment. The study participants were Black men who were at least 18 years of age, who live in the United States, who had been bullied in the workplace within the last 20 years, who consented to have their interviews audio recorded, and who also were willing to self-assess and reveal the complexion of their skin to me. The participants gave detailed accounts of their experiences. As a result of the data provided by them, the following nine themes were developed:

1. Emotional impact

   - Prebullying attitudes

   - Post-bullying Attitudes

   - Post-bullying professionalism

   - Bullying frequency

2. Race matters

   - Victim workplace networks

   - Race of perpetrator

   - Skin tone of victim

The study results generated via analysis of the data created from semistructured interviews and the above themes, provided a clearer understanding of how Black/African

American men described their workplace bullying experiences, and if a connection exists

between those experiences, and the complexion of their skin. The overall study results

indicated that not only are Black men bullied in the workplace due to colorism, but they

also continued to perform at a high capacity despite the negative treatment inflicted upon

them. Value can be found in a myriad of places—even among Black/African American

men. They should not be judged based on valueless criteria. The suggested

recommendations in this study were presented to further explore the perceptions of Black

men regarding their workplace bullying experiences, and to further understand how to

make the workplace a more conducive and productive environment for all.

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Appendix A: Woodrow & Guest

1. Have you personally experienced any bullying and harassment, from managers or from other staff, in the past year or so? If not within past year, then when?

   1.1 If yes, was this an isolated event or did it recur a number of times?

   1.2 If no, have you observed others being bullied or harassed?

2. Can you please think of a specific example of bullying or harassment and describe to me what happened? In doing so, can you please anonymize it so that individuals cannot be identified by name.

   2.1 What kind of people were involved?

   2.2 What were the causes?

   2.3 What were the consequences?

   2.4 What was the impact in terms of attitudes and behavior on those involved (probe for changes in commitment, motivation, behavior, morale, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), intention to quit)?

   2.5 What action, if any, was taken to follow it up or make a complaint and, if so, what? (If none, probe why not.)

   2.6 What action, if any, was taken to remedy the situation or prevent it from recurring? (Probe—Did you or others take any action? If no action taken, probe why not.)

   2.7 What effect, if any, did this instance of bullying and harassment have on the quality of service provided to customers/clients?

3. What should be done to reduce or prevent cases like this in the future?

4. More generally, what can be done to reduce bullying and harassment by staff?

5. Bullying and harassment is just one of a number of issues that can affect your relationship with the trust and its management. In general, how would you describe the relationship between the trust management and staff like you?

6. Was this treatment exclusive to you? If yes, in your opinion, what do you attribute it to? If no, what were the colors/races of the other victims, and do you believe treatment was racially and or color based motivated?

7. Would you describe your skin tone, as dark, medium, or light and if applicable describe how your skin tone may have affected any bullying you experienced at work?

8. What are the specific feelings you experienced as a result of the bullying behaviors you incurred? Was your attendance affected? What were your feelings as you prepared for work on a daily basis?

9. Finally, to what extent does the trust management keep you informed about policies and practices that affect the way you are treated as a member of staff or the way you do your job?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Preliminary Meeting

Purpose: The purpose of the first meeting is to establish rapport with the participant, describe and explain the study, explain the reason for the interest in the study topic by the researcher, review informed consent, to test the audio-conferencing equipment, as well as to schedule the interview. If at all possible, the researcher would prefer to conduct each interview within a week of the preliminary meeting, so that the interview will stay within the current consciousness of the participants.

Length: Maximum, 20 minutes

Agenda

- Have discussion in private, absent of background noise •

- Describe/Explain study •

- Review Informed Consent and secure signature/confirmation •

- Reveal reason for interest of researcher in study

- Practice and test audio conferencing software •

- Schedule Interview •

- Solicit questions from participant

Study Interview

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to understand the first-hand, lived experiences of Black/African American men with regard to WCB.

Length: 90 minutes maximum

Format: Semi- structured interviews

Opening & Introduction

- Express gratitude to each participant for agreeing to share his story

- Revisit purpose and importance of the study

- Explain to the participant their role as a co-partner with researcher in telling their story

- Interview process overview, review informed consent, remind participant of recording

- Ask participant if they have any questions prior to beginning the interview

Opening Question

- Please tell me about your current occupation, tenure, and how you feel about your job.

- Explain to me how management keeps you informed about policies and practices that affect the way you are treated as a member of the staff, and the way you do your job. (RQ1)

- Tell me about how Blacks and Whites are treated? (RQ2)

- Without using names, please describe any bullying and/or harassment from managers or from other staff you have experienced within the workplace and include the frequency. (RQ1)

- Tell me about bullying incidents involving others (probe about what behaviors from bully and/or victim that led up to the incident) (RQ1)

- What action did you or others take if any, to follow up on incidents of bullying or make a complaint and if so, how was it remedied or prevented from reoccurring? (RQ1)

Mental Health

- How would you describe the racial makeup of your workplace network? (RQ2)

- Please explain the impact on you in terms of attitude and behavior toward the perpetrators of the bullying incidents (probe for changes in commitment, attendance, motivation, behavior, morale towards the job). (RQ1)

- Colorism/Racism

- Explain any other bullying incidents that you may be aware of within your workplace and the color of the victims and perpetrators, as well as the color of your perpetrators. (RQ2)

- Would you describe your skin tone as fair, light, light brown, medium, medium brown, dark brown or dark, and describe whether you believe your race and/or skin tone may have affected how you were/are treated at work? (RQ2)

Closing

This concludes our interview and I really appreciate your willingness and openness to take part in this study. Your contribution has been invaluable. Bullying within the workplace is a very serious topic that should not be taken lightly. Please be assured that although verbatim responses will be used, your identity will remain confidential, as your real name will remain anonymous. You will be informed regarding the outcome of the study. Upon completion of all of my interviews and before, during, or after my analysis, I

may need to contact you for a brief follow-up session. If so, I will contact you so that we

may schedule a time slot conducive to your schedule. In the meantime, if you require any

additional information, you may reach me via cell phone or email. Thanks again for your

valuable input.

Appendix C: Instrument Use Permission Granted

Good Afternoon Benjamin Spady

Thank you for your email.

Sorry to hear you have experienced issues gaining permission.

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Appendix D: NIH Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies

that Ben Spady successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course

"Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 06/14/2011

Certification Number: 702687