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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE CRITICALITY OF MENTORSHIP ON THE TRAJECTORY OF IMMINENT BLACK
FEMALE LEADERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Jeanette E. Vaughn

September, 2023

Kay Davis, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Jeanette E. Vaughn

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Doctoral Committee:

Kay Davis, Ed.D., Chairperson

Stephen Kirnon, Ed.D.

Deatra L. Neal, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. Isaiah 43:2 NIV

First and foremost, I thank God for his lovingkindness and faithfulness towards me.

To the most intelligent, kindhearted person I know, my husband. Dr. Mark D. Vaughn has continued loving, encouraging, and supporting me since we met in college. He promised my dad that he would ensure I finished my higher education when he asked permission to marry me.

To our legacy and gift from God, our five miracles and in-loves - the best and most supportive children ever Karissa (Brandon), Kyela, Cullen (Jamela), Carrington, and Clayton. And to our gifted grandchildren, Alani, Jeremiah, and Calea Jeanette Vaughn (10/23), bring us so much love and joy.

To my loving parents, Gus and Mildred Brooks, Jr., and my supportive siblings (Patricia, Cheryl (Joe), Allen, Michael (Annette), and Tasha), who love me unconditionally. My forever cheerleader, Aunt Doris!

I am the legacy of Gus and LueElla Brooks, Sr., and Masco and Vera Swans, who both served God and the people as leaders in the church. Both of my grandparents were landowners and entrepreneurs.

To my church family (Faith to Face Ministries), Women Reaching Women Global, Inc. (WRWG), my spiritual daughters and sons, and my father's brothers (Thadford, Charles, and Carl), extended family and friends, who have kept me in their prayers along with encouraging words, I love you.

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I am thankful for the dynamic and gifted scholars in my cohort that I met and worked with during this journey. You increased my intelligence and made me a more profound thinker. Thanks to my girls (Trene, Heather, Renae, and Melissa) and Alan. We started together and have supported each other through this process.

VITA

Jeanette Elaine Vaughn**EDUCATION**

- Ph.D.** Pepperdine University, West Los Angeles, CA 2019 - Present
 Doctoral Candidate, Global Leadership and Change
 International Mission Scholarship | GPA 4.0
 Dissertation: The Criticality of Mentorship on the Trajectory of Imminent Black Female Leaders: A Phenomenological Narrative Inquiry
 Comprehensive Exam: MJM Publishing Company: A Leadership Development Framework to Improve Employee Engagement for the Retention of High-Performing Employees in the Education Division
 Committee has provided the following comments:
- Candidate clearly understands the various theories and did a great job pulling them together.
 - Candidate was a polished speaker who knew her theories.
- Cert. A.S.** SUNY COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT, Brockport, NY 2010
 School District Leadership
- MS. Ed** ELMIRA COLLEGE, Elmira, NY 2006
 Elementary Education
- BS** ELMIRA COLLEGE, Elmira, NY 2004
 Business Administration/Accounting

WORK EXPERIENCE

- STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY) GENESEO, Geneseo, NY 2022 – 2023
Adjunct Professor
- REACHING WOMEN GLOBAL, INC., Corning, NY 2014 – present
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
- ADDISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, Addison, NY 2016 – 2017
Elementary Principal
- WEST STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Geneva, NY 2010 – 2013
Director of Head Start/Pre-Kindergarten

CERTIFICATIONS

Certification of School District Leader (SDL),
NYS Professional Certification in Childhood Education (1 – 6)
NYS Initial Certification in Childhood Education (1 – 6)
Consulting Certificate Pepperdine in Partnership with Kairos 2022

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Sixteenth Global Studies Conference, at Oxford Brookes University (2023)
“We Hold These Truths to Self-Evident – All Leaders Are Not Created Equally”

Hawaii International Conference on Education (HICE) 2020 - COMBATTING EXTREME
ABSENTEEISM AND TARDINESS WITH STRATEGIC TRIAGE AND INCENTIVIZED
PROGRAMMING

Author, “*Investors and Connectors: Health, Safety, and Education*,” February 2010, Journal of
The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

GRANTS AND AWARDS

NYSED UPK Mid-Year Expansion Grant (\$108K), 2013
Dads & Dudes Family Engagement Grant (\$10K), Wyckoff Family Foundation, 2013
Summer School Investigation Program for Preschoolers Grant (\$7K), Wyckoff Family
Foundation, 2011

Global Leader Award, All Women Rock, 2019
Geneva City Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Program Academic Achievement Award, 2013
New York State Lottery/WETM Teacher Award, 2006 – 2007
Phi Delta Kappa International Member, 2005 – 2007

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

Faith to Face Ministries
Geneva Head Start Program

ABSTRACT

As members of two minority groups, Black women are often required to overcome dueling obstacles in the workplace. Black women are the most underrepresented in leadership positions compared to other groups. For most Black women, the American dream is merely a glass-ceiling-laden reality. For Black women to ascend to the upper echelon of leadership positions, executives and organizations in various industries must alter how administration and operations best practices are conceived, executed, and monitored as they pertain to recognition and promotions. Mentoring helps to optimize professional potential, build skills, and enhance performance by assisting mentees in managing their learning to become the people they want to be.

This qualitative study combines phenomenological and narrative inquiries that explore thirteen Black women's lived experiences as mentees faced with intersectionality and social behaviors in the workplace and how the mentoring relationship supports their efforts to attain leadership positions. Four theoretical models (Critical Race Theory [CRT], Leader-Member Exchange [LMX], Social Exchange Theory [SET], and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) guided this exploration.

The study examined how formal and informal mentorship supports Black women on their path to leadership and the impact of intersectionality (race, misogyny, and workplace systems) on mentorship for Black women. Semistructured interviews allowed the participants to narrate their live interactions within the mentoring relationship and the exchange of leadership skills in the workplace. Four conclusions were gleaned from those themes: (a) the perpetuation of color blindness continues to exclude and impede Black women in the workplace; (b) mentoring is ineffective when there is a dearth of purpose, clarity, and engagement; (c) Informal mentors

within and outside organizations are most effective in supporting Black women's advancement into leadership positions; and (d) When effective mentoring for Black women occurs, it develops their capacity to mentor others. The study recommends that leaders and mentors in all industries strongly encourage mentorship by establishing, developing, or strengthening their color consciousness, thereby positively influencing the people and systems within their organizations. A holistic top-down and bottom-up approach is necessary to comprehend and rectify the ingrained institutional and cultural realities.

Keywords: Black women, critical race theory, intersectionality, leader-member exchange, Maslow hierarchy of needs, mentorship, reverse mentorship, and social exchange theory

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

As the world continues to recover from the global pandemic, much has been said about settling into a new normal. While, indeed, much has changed since the historic crisis that the international community has collectively endured, there is still a great deal that has not changed. For example, opportunities for support for some demographics in the workplace remain limited. Research and current cultural practices clearly indicate the impact of differences in race, ethnicity, and gender on leadership opportunities as well as on mentoring relationships (Ragins et al., 2012). According to Lankau and Scandura (2002), leaders in organizations can effectively use formal or informal mentoring methods to cultivate leaders with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In addition, historians and scholars have found that women who identify as Black have been underrepresented in myriad leadership sectors, most notably in corporate, public, private, and even academic organizations and institutions. Diversity must be purposefully incorporated into a company's decision-making processes to gain and sustain a competitive advantage (Nyberg et al., 2014). Today's human capital requires a plan to develop a diverse set of effective leaders (Hunt et al., 2018; Larson, 2017).

Black Women in Leadership

There is limited recognition that Black women continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in leadership positions such as deans, directors, C-level executives, government officials, and CEOs (Domingue, 2015; Tassie et al., 2018; Zulfqar et al., 2019). More conclusive evidence exists that increasing the representation of women in general (and for the purposes of this study, Black women in particular) in leadership positions benefits an organization's overall reputation and social performance (Mondisa, 2018), and increases

financial performance (Hunt et al., 2018). Black women are able to academically advance in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in the fields of education, health, STEM, and business but struggle to attain leadership positions in the aforementioned fields in the workplace. Recent data reflect an increase in Black women earning post-secondary degrees (Darling, 2006; Pierre, 2019). Whether in the private or public sector, Black women have the capacity to be excellent leaders in the workplace but frequently are not provided the opportunity nor the support necessary for success. Mentorship has long been known to be vital to employee careers, and many businesses recognize its benefits (Straus & Sackett, 2013). Therefore, investigating mentorship as a potentially effective method for providing more opportunities for Black women to serve in positions of leadership in spite of the barriers posed by both systems and individuals is essential.

Studies published over the past 20 plus years have determined that Black women are disproportionately underrepresented in positions of leadership throughout the world (Bandura, 1997; Brown, 2019; Prince, 2022). The research on the effects of mentorship on Black women who aspire to be in leadership positions is lacking, but an exploration of the potential for mentorship to contribute to the advancement of Black women into leadership positions reveals that mentorship may lessen the gender-based disparities seen in professional and workplace settings. In their 2013 study, McDonald and Westphal (2013) sought to explain why minority women who were first-time directors received comparatively less mentoring than other first-time directors. They also contend that racial minorities who are first-time board members receive fewer appointments to other boards when mentoring levels are low (McDonald & Westphal, 2013).

Educated Black Women in the Workplace

Black women are the most educated minority group in the current labor force; however, they make up only a small percentage of leaders who rise above mid-level management (Johnson & Fournillier, 2021). In many business sectors, Black women do not sit at the decision-making table. Academic credential attainment demonstrates the ambition and perseverance of Black women. Black women earn 64.1% bachelor's degrees, 71.5% master's degrees, and 65.9% doctoral, medical, and dental degrees (Corbett, 2022). Despite their academic efforts, Black women are still underrepresented in the upper echelons of organizations and governments (Brescoll, 2016). The fact that the most educated group is underutilized should concern the organization's leadership and stakeholders.

Today's top-performing leaders across industries have a plethora of knowledge and expertise. Still, these leaders are ill-equipped to develop all individuals to construct local, national, or global organizational environments for many reasons (McManus & Perruci, 2015). Inadequate awareness of the convergent identities of others can obstruct the visibility of gifted and talented individuals. Understanding the impact of leadership aspiration on female leaders' underrepresentation is critical since aspiration is a significant predictor of hierarchical development. Mentoring relationships with women can significantly impact perceived success for leadership as possessing characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men generally (Brenner et al., 1989). Another factor that cannot be overlooked is the impact of the organization's top leaders, who are concerned about the underutilization of the most educated members and benefit significantly from their overall outcomes. Leaders who pay close attention to the organization's chain of command are cognizant of the dyads they engage in and the significance of relationship building in identifying potential future leaders. Therefore,

internal pipeline management, both formal and informal, may help women executives achieve the highest levels of organizational leadership in business organizations, both national and international.

Women, in general, encounter numerous challenges in corporate environments in the United States and throughout the global economy (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990). In contrast, women experience greater levels of support and management and, as a result, exhibit higher levels of aspiration for leadership under a female supervisor (Fritz & Knippenberg, 2019). Black women who want to be leaders in their careers do not have many chances to connect with someone who has been through or knows about organizational culture challenges and has overcome them to serve in key leadership roles. The ongoing challenge is that with fewer Black women in these positions of leadership, there are fewer mentorship opportunities for aspiring Black women leaders. Many will assume that the lack of opportunities is the result of the pervasive systemic racism in our American society. Others, meanwhile, may speak of experiences with bias and microaggressions that suggest those in positions of authority are simply uninterested in developing relationships with Black women.

Intersectionality of Black Women

The role of White women in leadership has evolved, but the number of Black women (women of African, Asian, and Caribbean descent) in these positions has not changed much. One explanation for this is that, unlike their White female counterparts who may benefit from White privilege (Frankenberg, 1993; Frost, 1980; Morgan, 2020), and Black men who benefit from patriarchal practices, Black women do not share either race or gender with the dominant group—White men (Morgan, 2020). Black women encounter double discrimination—sexism and racism. Gender, race, and class are the three areas of inequality that Black women must address,

according to the concept of intersectionality. Bunn (2019) reported that, on average, 58% of Black Americans face racist contact at work; the Midwestern states report 79% while the Northeastern states report 44%. The Center for American Progress identified that the intersection of racism and sexism continues to pose obstacles for Black women in organizational settings (Frye, 2019). On average, Black workers are not hired, promoted, or paid in a way that matches their level of productivity based on their experience or education (Connely, 2021). The many obstacles that lead to difficulties for Black women desiring leadership positions begin early in a woman's career and are rooted in early-onset institutional barriers and global systemic prejudice (Buckles, 2019). When Black women are hired, they encounter discrimination and racism ingrained in most organizations' cultures, which can significantly impact career opportunities and mentoring relationships. Meeuwissen et al. (2019) indicated that formal or informal mentorship helps Black women realize their full potential by navigating the workplace culture while developing leadership skills to advance into leadership positions.

Statement of the Problem

Berry and Bell (2012) found that Black women were just as capable, qualified, and skilled as their male counterparts but were often overlooked due to a lack of confidence in their abilities and effectiveness. Access to authentic mentorship is as essential today for advancing Black women into leadership positions as it has always been (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olivero, 2014). Clutterbuck (2002) said that because of their race and gender, Black women may not know about formal mentoring opportunities or choose not to take part in it and opt for a formal process. It is vital not to gloss over the reality that, due to the predominance of White leaders in most industries, Black women may not be included in the leader's in-group. As a result, they may be excluded from mentoring, networking, and promotion opportunities.

There is a knowledge gap in the literature about the impact of mentorship on Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions. There is also a paucity of research on how mentorship addresses intersectionality to aid Black women in attaining leadership positions in various industries. When considering how inequalities persist, it is preferable to view categories such as gender, race, and class as overlapping and mutually constitutive as opposed to isolated and distinct (Crenshaw, 1991), particularly in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. In the United States and around the world, there is a great deal of discourse about race at present. Conversations concerning race can be fruitful for Black women to attain more authentic mentorship opportunities, which will help pave the way to leadership positions.

Within the scholarly literature, there are studies (Beatty, 2017; Fairfax, 2005) focused on undergraduate experiences, with scholars more recently investigating the intersection of race and gender for Black female undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members (Baker, 2015; Brown, 2020). These studies often use Black feminist thought, a theoretical frame that addresses the intersection of race, class, and gender for African American women (Tassie et al., 2018). The Black feminist frame has brought to the forefront the reality of systemic racism continuing within our society. The scarceness of research examining Black women's encounters with mentorship in the workplace and within the context of systemic racism, which does affect one's self-actualization and, consequently, leadership achievement. This provided me with strong motivation for this study.

The experiences of Black women who have participated in both formal and informal mentorship as mentees seeking leadership positions in various settings were the focus for this research. Exploring the themes that Black women encounter in their mentoring dyads around intersectionality with White men and women and how these impact their self-actualization will

further the research of many previous scholars (Anderson, 2021; Patton & Harper, 2003; Russell, 1992). Other researchers have explored the preparation of mentors, emphasizing mentees' achieving positive outcomes (Butts et al., 2008; Eby, Allen et al., 2008; Haggard et al., 2010), especially for Black female mentees. However, this study shifted the focus from the mentor to the mentee and their individual experiences and relationships through the mentoring process.

The Purpose of the Study

The phenomenological narrative inquiry study was to explore how formal and informal mentorship supports Black women in or on their journey to leadership, in spite of the complexities of Black women and the effects of slavery on succeeding generations, which may limit opportunities to be mentored for top leadership positions in a variety of industries. The intersectional complexities that Black women are subjected to (Crenshaw, 2017) daily were investigated. Exploring how these complexities influence social behaviors, mentorship relationships, and exchanged tangible or intangible skills in the workplace impacts Black women in the workplace. Intersectionality (race and sexism) can negatively impact mentorship opportunities for Black women due to bias, discrimination, and racism that could be within the organization's culture and leadership.

Research Questions

This qualitative study explored Black women's lived experiences as mentees to understand how the exchange of tangible or intangible activities within the mentoring relationship support their efforts to attain leadership positions. The study was guided by one central research question with two subquestions:

- RQ: How does formal and informal mentorship contribute to the advancement of Black women into leadership roles?

- SQ1: How do the race and gender of a mentor impact the trust and other aspects of the mentoring relationship, if at all?
- SQ2: How, if at all, did the outcome of the mentoring relationship meet the needs of the mentee's professional aspirations?

Research Approach and Design

The research explored the potential effects of mentoring on Black women desiring or in senior leadership roles. While considering ideas in this study that impact social justice for this underrepresented group in the workplace, there were many. This study focused on the complexity of the interactions between Black women mentees and their mentors and the themes of their lived experiences. The philosophical presumptions used in this qualitative study involved an interpretive framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In social research, phenomenology seeks to understand the perceptions and experiences of research participants (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). This data will add to the literature on how to comprehend the world in which Black women live and work (Hall et al., 2011) in building their careers in leadership that comprise the social constructivist perspective. Nevertheless, the constructivist position does not go far enough in its advocacy for action agendas that will aid marginalized people.

Methodology

Creswell and Creswell's (2018) transformation paradigm. The transformation paradigm, rather than only a social constructivist view, better served as the interpretive framework for this study. By exploring mentorship experiences of Black women and the possible effects mentorship has on Black women's pathways to leadership or senior leadership roles while considering current conversations about race that affect social justice for this underrepresented group in the workplace can expand understanding and lead to transformative changes. This transformative

worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) is foundational for critical race theory (CRT), a theory that attempts to address the alienation, suppression, oppression, and inequality Black women face in the workplace (Hall et al., 2011) that can prohibit the mentoring needed for Black women to achieve success and promotion to leadership careers. The study explored 12 to 15 individuals who self-identified as a Black woman who either held or aspired to hold a leadership position and participated in some form of formal or informal mentorship within the past seven years. The participants were from various work sectors, such as education, health, corporate, nonprofit organizations, and government.

The phenomenological narrative inquiry methodology fit this research in several ways (Wells, 2011). The phenomenological design enables Black women who have engaged in mentoring relationships en route to or in a leadership position to share their experiences to tell perhaps a common story about the phenomena of mentorship. In contrast, the narrative inquiry design allowed for the construction of unique mentorship narrative themes extracted from each of the participants. This selection of two design approaches was influenced by my philosophical beliefs; conducting interviews helped to explore and understand the advantages of mentorship for Black women pursuing or in leadership positions. However, also hearing the Black women's stories of their mentorship relationships en route to or in a leadership position considering the tenets of CRT provided more than simply the advantages of mentorship.

The phenomenological inquiry of this study was heuristic, focusing exclusively and continually on Black women's experiences with the hope of discovering meanings regarding their lived mentorship experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas's method allows practitioners and researchers to explore internal and personal questions. According to Pinnegar and Daynes

(2007), narrative inquiry begins with the experiences of individuals as expressed in their lived stories.

Positionality

As the researcher, I sought to understand the significance and meaning my study participants ascribed to their experiences, such as how mentoring influenced how they engaged and how it benefited other professional relationships, especially those that could assist them in attaining and sustaining a leadership position. As a Black researcher and as one who has held numerous leadership positions in various industries, my biography, values, knowledge, and assumptions informed or shaped this research (Cohen et al., 2017).

In 2014, I established a nonprofit organization to assist women. As we worked with women pursuing leadership positions in various industries in multiple U.S. states, Liberia, and Ghana, we discovered that most Black women lacked mentorship across many disciplines and careers. I acknowledge that I approached this topic based on being married with children and being an older member of the Generation X Black female population. I was born and grew up in a manufacturing city in New York State with my parents, two sisters, and two brothers. I was the fourth child in the family. I was part of the bus desegregation program in the mid-1970s. I have held leadership positions in business, churches, and education organizations but had very few mentoring relationships. I can empathize with those who, despite having the necessary education and work experience to qualify for a leadership role or a promotion to a higher level of leadership, are not even given the opportunity to be interviewed for the position. When confronted with their intersectionality and social behaviors in the workplace, I wanted to learn more about how mentorship can assist Black women in obtaining leadership positions or promotions.

Assumptions

The following research assumptions were implicit in this study:

- Black women have barriers to mentorship dyads, which prevent them from achieving or sustaining leadership roles.
- Black women who have aspired to or held leadership roles for at least two years would have relevant and diverse experiences that would be worth documenting in this study.
- Black women's beliefs about being marginalized continue to prevent them from being authentic in the workplace (Bunn, 2019) and from achieving upper-leadership roles. As a result, they are forced to engage in cultural code-switching, or they experience impostor syndrome.
- Participants comprehensively understand themselves, their experiences, and their mentoring relationships.
- Participants will give forthright responses to interview questions.
- Participants' memories may be erroneous, difficult to recall, or recalling earlier experiences may activate emotional responses linked with suffering, compelling them to withdraw from the interview.
- The research participants' experiences would overlap, demonstrating the study's value while also bringing new insights into the field of mentorship.
- I would compile data that demonstrate consistencies, leading to construction of a mentoring research model for leaders in organizations to assist Black women aspiring to or in leadership roles.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2018), addressing assumptions in a research study aids in comprehending participants' experiences and perspectives. My assumptions may have influenced how the study was conducted with a specific population sample of Black women who aspired to or held leadership positions, sharing their lived experience as a mentee in a mentorship dyad. Using open-ended questions, the participants were asked to discuss their stories and lived experiences. The goal was to add to the existing literature Black women's narratives and real-life experiences of mentorship on the pathway to leadership in the workplace.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual and theoretical framework of this study exploring formal and Informal mentorship involved several existing theoretical models. First and foremost were the five tenets of the CRT (Delgado et al., 2017), LMX, SET, and the Maslow hierarchy of needs to increase the number of Black women in leadership positions. With these theoretical frameworks, I was able to observe and investigate significant social behaviors that may reveal to company leaders the value of mentorship opportunities for Black women aspiring to leadership roles.

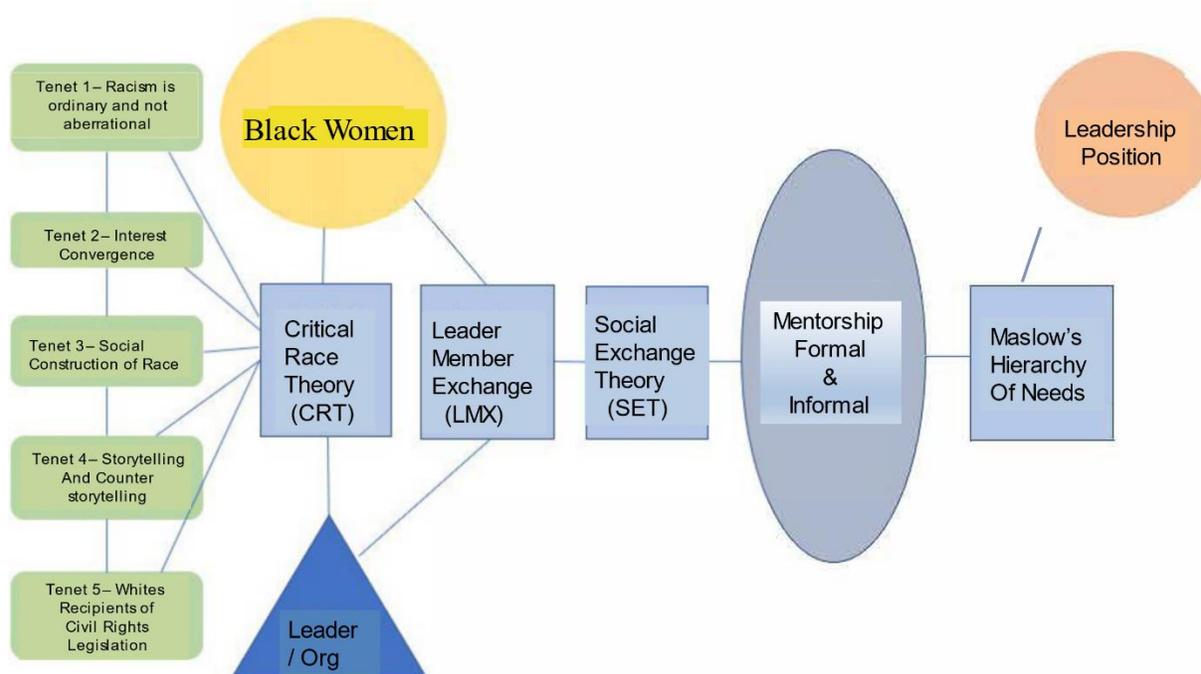
Academically, Black women are obtaining advanced degrees and are capable of assuming leadership positions. There is a need to investigate why so few Black women attain the highest levels of leadership, as well as the significance of mentorship for Black women pursuing or in leadership roles.

Whether mentoring is formal or informal, relationships are the foundation. According to CRT, institutions, systems, and policies are designed to reinforce, codify, and perpetuate socioeconomic and racial group-specific exposures, risks, and opportunities. Understanding how to overcome these barriers to give chances for underrepresented Black women who aspire to be in leadership roles may be contingent on mentors and leaders recognizing the value of sharing

their time and resources. Mentorship can help Black women achieve self-actualization in the workplace, thus positioning them for leadership roles. Figure 1 illustrates this study's conceptual and theoretical framework. The selected theories inform and assess the pathway for Black women aspiring to or currently holding leadership positions attaining mentorship that can support them achieving leadership positions.

Figure 1

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework



Mentorship

While both mentor and mentee should ideally benefit from a mentorship relationship, the mentor must recognize that it is asymmetrical in nature, with the mentor's primary focus on the mentee's educational, professional, and personal development and benefit. While mentoring may not have a universal definition (Cassidy et al., 2014), providing direction and support is frequently emphasized throughout the process (Ragins, 2002). The distinction between

mentoring and coaching is essential in this study. The literature frequently depicts mentoring as a process of listening, questioning, and facilitating, which is in stark contrast to telling, restricting, and finally directing, which are characteristics of coaching (Jones, 2015; Jones et al., 2009). Mentorship is formulated through relationships. Dr. James Comer noted without a meaningful relationship, no significant learning occurs. Mentorship models are dyads or groups that are operated by corporations, whether mandated, self-elected, or completely optional (Johnson & Fournillier, 2021). Mentorship is frequently used interchangeably with coaching, advice, role modeling, and sponsorship (Choi et al., 2019). In the context of mentorship, all these actions are possible and reflect the numerous activities that take place in the psychological and career mentorship functions (Borus, 2013). Black women and leaders are impacted by the culture and environment of the workplace. The workplace in U.S. organizations (private, public, or nonprofit) is influenced by historical events, policies, systems, and bias. Therefore, Black women's mentoring relationships is determined by their level of awareness and deliberate intention.

Critical Race Theory

Black women have frequently been marginalized, rendered invisible, and overlooked as study subjects and researchers (Lanehart, 2018). According to Morris and Parker (2018), when viewed through the lens of CRT, the conveyed narratives have the weight of liberation and contradict the marginalization and deficit portrayals of historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups. Tenet number one of CRT is that racism is a central aspect of American culture (Delgado et al., 2017; Eastman et al., 2021), thereby impacting the workplace. Researching the lived experiences of Black women who are leaders or aspiring leaders provided vital data on the extent of racism in the workplace. Conversations about racism in the workplace frequently prove to be

difficult and deeply unsettling, but they are essential. The study also concentrated on the dominant group's self-interest, power, and privilege, the second tenet of CRT, and how it influences mentoring (Delgado et al., 2017; Eastman et al., 2021). The examination of tenet three is an integral component of racial inequality that affects the professional advancement rights of Black women. In the meantime, addressing the proverbial glass ceiling faced by Black women in leadership positions (Brooks, 2018). The interdisciplinary perspective is the fourth tenet of CRT (Eastman et al., 2021). The interdisciplinary approach requires that issues of race and racism be situated within both the present and the past. Thus, the very nature of documenting Black women's lived experiences with mentorship in the workplace, exploring the literature, and a Black woman listening to and documenting their stories (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998) was used to examine tenet number four.

In September 2020, the president of the United States issued an executive order in prohibiting the inclusion of diversity training in federal contracts. This executive order contradicts the fifth tenet of CRT, which is to eliminate all forms of subordination (Perez & Salter, 2020). Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate the effect on workplace environments and mentoring programs for Black women. Table 1 denotes three researchers who have identified the five tenets; despite capturing the tenets in a variety of orders, their fundamental beliefs and definitions are the same. This study utilized Eastman et al.'s (2021) tenets' number order and title themes.

Table 1*Critical Race Theory Five Tenets*

Tenet 1	Racism is ordinary and not aberrational	Centrality of race & Racism in Society	Centrality of Race & Racism in Society
Tenet 2	Interest Convergence	Challenge to Dominant Ideology	Challenge to Dominant Ideology
Tenet 3	Social Construction	Centrality of Experimental Knowledge	The Commitment to Social Justice
Tenet 4	Storytelling and Counter storytelling	Interdisciplinary Perspective	Centrality of Experimental Knowledge
Tenet 5	Whites recipients of Civil Rights	Commitment to Social Justice	Interdisciplinary Perspective
	(Delgado & Stefancic, 1998)	(Eastman et al., 2021)	(Solorzano, 1998)

Leader-Member Leadership Exchange

The foundational relationship in the workplace begins with the leader interaction with the Black women who are their subordinates. Leaders in the workplace have the potential to be the impetus for bridging relationship formation, thus making it necessary to understand mentoring dyad structures and the impact they have on identity (Mondisa, 2018), which, in turn, has an impact on how authentic relationships are formed in the workplace. LMX theory is concerned with the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, communication, and bias awareness to optimize interactions between a leader and a follower (subordinate; Danesh & Huber, 2021). The LMX theory posits that leaders in an organization should develop individualized working relationships with each team member and begin to assign social value, known as SET. LMX was essential to this study for this reason.

Social Exchange Theory

SET was an additional theoretical approach used in this study to investigate patterns of social behavior exhibited when a mentor and mentee enter or avoid a mentoring relationship. Each person determines whether the relationship is beneficial. This SET method is known as cost-benefit analysis (Blau, 1964). The theory correlates well with how mentors and mentees invest in mentoring relationships. Leaders impacted by societal racist systems and views may put Black women in out-groups, therefore not providing them with mentoring. Consequently, the belief and behavior within the relationship affect Black women's access to leadership positions. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), researchers hypothesize that perceived high-performance HR practices (HPHRP) are indicative of a supportive work environment that would encourage positive employee engagement.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The final theory of the study measured the impact of all the other theories on the Black woman aspiring for a leadership position. Consequently, this study reviewed how Black women mentees in a mentoring relationship succeed by exploring the trends on how Black women's mentorship experiences resulted in increased performance and opportunities for promotion considering the levels of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory behaviors. Therefore, understanding what impacts the behaviors of the mentorship dyad could increase the probability of self-actualization of the Black woman mentee.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this qualitative phenomenological narrative inquiry study the following defines the context in which the following terms were discussed and used throughout the study.

- *Black women.* Women with dark pigmentation skin whose ancestry originates from the African diaspora. The term "African American women" can also be used interchangeably with this terminology.
- *Formal versus informal mentoring.* Formal is an organization-structured and -managed mentoring relationship between mentors and mentees for the purpose of the mentee's development and advancement. (Laiho & Brandt, 2012; Ragins et al., 2000; Wanberg et al. 2003). Informal a naturally evolving developmental relationship between a mentor and mentee initiated for the development and advancement of the mentee (Kram, 1983) for the benefit of the organization (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1999).
- *Intersectionality.* A term coined by Crenshaw (1991) to express the multi-layered forms of discrimination experienced by women while being Black. When feminist and anti-racist debates reveal gaps in the experiences and challenges of 'women of color,' a theoretical lens is used to fill in those gaps and help them achieve greater empowerment (Crenshaw, 1991).
- *Mentee.* An employee who is under the guidance of a more experienced employee so that the mentor can help them develop personally and professionally.
- *Mentor.* A person in an individual's chosen profession who is actively working to integrate a new person into a professional role. A mentor is a more experienced professional who helps a less advanced colleague grow professionally and personally (Williams-Nickelson, 2006). The mentor is invested in the mentee's success (Dean, 2009; Haggard et al., 2010; Landefeld, 2009).

- *Mentoring*. A type of interpersonal relationship that changes over time and includes intentional processes of nurturing, support, protection, guidance, instruction, and challenge within mutually agreed upon and ethical parameters that include the integration of personal and professional aspects of an individual's life (Ragins & Kram 2007). Mentoring is a developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context.

Significance of the Study

Many Black women face persistent entry barriers; consequently, they are underrepresented, undervalued, and frequently disrespected in the workplace (Carrazana, 2020). The many obstacles that lead to difficulties for Black women desiring leadership positions begin early in a woman's career and are rooted in early-onset institutional barriers and global systemic prejudice (Buckles, 2019). When most Black women are hired, they encounter discrimination and racism ingrained in most organizations' cultures, which can significantly impact career opportunities and mentoring relationships. Despite constituting 7.4% of the U.S. population, only 4.4% of Black women hold management positions, and only 1.4% have C-suite positions (Danesh & Huber, 2021). According to CRT, racism is the norm in America and how we operate as a society daily (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Consequently, organizational leaders may not view the cost-benefit of mentoring Black women as valuable.

The old-fashioned view that men are more suitable and effective in leadership roles means that women are frequently ignored for leadership positions (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). The tactics are intended to position males in high-paying leadership positions to support their families financially. As a result, mentorship opportunities were made available to males

aspiring to leadership roles (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). According to a meta-analysis by Allen et al., mentored employees earn more than their non-mentored peers (Allen et al., 2017).

While it is true that White women leaders also face obstacles in the workplace, racism and sexism continue to pose more significant challenges for Black women (Connely, 2021). Less is known about how the intersection of race, class, and gender influences the position of specific individuals. In all the talk about Black people's falling economic status and the role of Black women, little attention has been paid to the workplace as a cause or solution to the problem. The issue of how employment and leadership influence the income, experience, and skills of specific labor forces and, particularly, how work has transformed the status of Black women has received scant attention, according to Woody (1989). Despite efforts to diversify leadership in the workplace, the number of Black women in positions of authority is still deficient. In workplaces emphasizing cultural, racial, and gender bias awareness, Black women hold leadership positions. There is a compelling need for additional research in this field. Much research argues that the lack of women in top leadership positions reflects a limited pipeline of experienced female candidates, especially Black women, to fill senior executive roles (Colaco et al. 2011; Parrotta & Smith 2013).

Dickens and Chavez's (2017) research emphasized the significance of inclusive workplace cultures that welcome and respect diverse cultural values. According to research, diversity initiatives in the workplace often target blatant discrimination rather than microaggressions (Shih et al., 2013). Many women suffer from poor self-esteem because of a lack of encouragement for women to build a strong sense of autonomous self-confidence and independence (Barber & Watson, 1991) in the workplace. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that women may hold biased self-evaluations of their abilities, which may influence their

decisions to pursue high-level leadership positions (Correll, 2004). Women can gain confidence and independence when they are supported and encouraged, therefore needing the expert support of a mentor. The progression of a woman's career, as well as her experiences and accomplishments over time, demonstrate that mentoring is vital in achieving advancement for women (Armenti, 2004; Catalyst, 2021; Kellerman & Rhode, 2018; Valian, 2005). While mentoring is expected to benefit one's growth, high-achieving women see mentors as both a help and a hindrance and their absence as both a benefit and a deficit (Tolar, 2012). Women are less inclined to invest emotionally in relationships with male coworkers simply because friendships between women need a great deal of time-earned trust, honesty, and sharing (Barber & Watson, 1991). According to Barber and Watson (1991), after being sabotaged, some women develop an aversion to other women and a reluctance to work collaboratively; some eventually become saboteurs.

The Center for American Progress said that the intersection of racism and sexism continues to pose obstacles for Black women in organizational settings (Frye, 2019). On average, Black workers are not employed, promoted, or compensated in ways that reflect their level of productivity based on their experience or education (Connely, 2021). As a result, White leaders increase the likelihood of Black women being overlooked for mentorship opportunities due to sexism and racism. Black employees, from long-term employees approaching retirement to millennials, feel pressure to work harder to prove themselves (Connely, 2021). However, they face barriers to advancement that are largely invisible to White professionals. Mentorship relationships can benefit individuals in their ascension and retention in leadership roles. Mentorship complements other developmental processes like teaching or coaching to support mentees in developing knowledge and skills and is essential to holistic development (Dean,

2009) It is also important to consider diverse concerns and to be conscious of equality in the mentoring relationship when engaging in effective mentorship practices (Pfund et al., 2012). Effective mentorship relationships would then be critical for the advancement and development of Black women into leadership roles (Crawford & Smith, 2005; McGlowan-Fellows & Thomas, 2003; Olivero, 2014).

Explicit sexual discrimination, particularly against Black women, continues to limit women's entry to top levels of management (Hollis, 2022). Women's advancement chances are limited, particularly for Black women (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016). Accumulating research suggests that mentoring practices that include navigating power differentials between mentors and mentees, particularly across racial or gender differences, reducing stereotype threats, and affirming a sense of belonging and science identity may assist in increasing the representation of individuals from underrepresented groups (Byars-Winston et al., 2008). As a result, this addresses the Maslow hierarchy's lowest fundamental requirements and increasing social exchange for Black women aspiring to and in leadership positions.

This study is essential to explore the necessity of building relationships and opportunities through mentorship to break the glass ceiling for Black women while simultaneously establishing a solid succession pipeline for leadership positions. United States business leaders should encourage diversity of thought at the decision-making table. In 2004, African American women represented only 1.1% of corporate officers in Fortune 500 companies. Although the number of Black women seeking executive roles in Fortune 500 firms in America has increased, significant progress is still required (Catalyst, 2021). Black women held 11.7% of board seats and no CEO roles in 2017 (Catalyst, 2021). A systemic problem exists when a sizable portion of

the population is ignored or seen as inferior. Unless there is intervention, the system will proceed as usual.

This research will contribute to the body of knowledge by documenting all or little mentorship experienced by Black women who currently have held a leadership positions. My transformative worldview approach was to explore and acquire a newfound understanding that could serve as a catalyst for establishing mentorship pathways for Black women leaders and provide pertinent information for all leaders and organizations. Turner (2019) suggested that mentoring can help women develop greater self-awareness and self-confidence by showing them what they can do to achieve their goals. Opportunities for mentorship with robust and purposeful dyad relationships can build confidence and provide women access to new skills and competencies that equip them to be active and successful leaders.

According to Barber and Watson (1991), women who are not encouraged to develop a healthy sense of confidence and independence on the job are more likely to have low self-esteem. Consequently, because sexism, racism, and classism all work together, one of the most educated groups in the current labor force may not have this important thing, encouragement, the lack of which leads to systemic oppression (Croom, 2017). There are fewer opportunities for Black women mentees due to a lack of formal or informal mentors (McGlowan-Fellows & Thomas, 2003) who understand the benefits. The findings may catalyze individuals in positions of authority to support and influence other aspiring Black women into leadership roles. When it comes to assisting more Black women in attaining leadership positions, the organization's leadership may decide to use mentoring as a means of achieving this goal (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016), thereby enhancing diversity within the organization's leadership.

This study can serve as a springboard for additional research on mentorship practices to assist and inspire Black women to rise into leadership roles. A mentor can help Black women overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of their career goals (Rowley, 2021). This is especially true if the mentor has been in the same situation. Mentorship can assist more Black women's attainment of leadership positions (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016).

Summary

The chapter introduced the existent problem of the underrepresentation of Black women in leadership positions and the barriers to accessing formal or informal mentorship for Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions. Explanation of the influence of the theoretical framework, five tenets of CRT, LMX, SET, and Maslow's hierarchy on Black women's access to mentorship, which have a high return on investment, aid in their advancement to upper leadership positions. This study aimed to determine how mentorship can help Black women who aspire to gain leadership positions or those already in leadership roles maintain or receive high level leadership roles. The purpose of the study, significance, definition of terms, limitations, assumptions, and the existent gaps in research regarding the impact of mentorship for Black women in leadership were covered in this chapter.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

The literature reveals the significance of both formal and informal mentorship. In this study's literature review, mentorship is examined from the perspectives of history, its various structures, and components, the four theories selected to inform and evaluate it, and as a pathway to leadership positions.

Mentorship

Many organizations acknowledge that mentoring is an essential element of professional development and can be highly advantageous for both mentors and mentees in the workplace (Tichy, 2012). Research suggests that formal mentorship comes from consulting firms, with a limited amount of study on program design (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Many formal programs have been established and are currently in operation (Pincho et al., 2005). Some scholars have offered suggestions on what should be included in formal mentoring programs but denote it is more anecdotal in nature and less scholarly in nature (Ragins et al., 2000). The gaps in the literature underscore the importance of conducting additional research on the structure of formal programs and the factors that influence their performance.

According to Tichy (2012), leadership support helps organizations that need a strong foundation of mentoring to build and retain upcoming leaders and a healthy workforce. As a profession, mentorship is one that requires a trusting relationship and a long-term commitment from both parties. Tichy continued his analysis by suggesting that people can maximize their professional potential, develop skills, and improve performance through the support of a mentoring relationship, which helps to support people in managing their own learning so that they can become the individuals that they want to be. Mentoring is both timely and effective. Jung (1996) emphasized the concept of transformative shifts (metanoia) in the development of

the personal and professional self that results from successful mentoring relationships. Higgs and Titchen (2001) suggested that such shifts begin at unconscious levels of "being" but eventually influence overt "doing" and "knowing."

The architecture of informal networking or this form of interaction, referred to as mentorship, is the first step for Black women reaching or maintaining leadership roles. Studies also found the existence of the gap between research and practice has narrowed significantly over the last decade, owing to the ongoing surge in interest and demonstrated need for formal mentoring programs, as well as the use of mentoring in diversity, leadership development, and international programs (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Research studies suggest leaders and organizations in multiple industries must shift how things are conceived, carried out, and produced for Black women to rise to leadership positions. Clawson (1996) specified that mentorship has supported and endured significant paradigm shifts and that its documentation across millennia indicates that it is a highly common facet of human experience. Throughout history, mentoring has proven to be a significant social development phenomenon that has survived paradigm transformations and will likely survive the current transition in the United States and around the world citing the three most prominent types of social phenomena: historical, behavioral, and political (Clawson, 1996).

The Social Phenomena

Institutional influence on people is a significant factor in studying behavioral and political social phenomena. Social phenomena consider historical events and behavioral trends. Mentoring surviving the Golden Era of Greece 500 years before Christ by Homer's description of Telemachus' relationship with his teacher. Then, in the Middle Ages, the trade guilds of Europe developed a formalized mentoring structure in which the masters were accountable not only for

themselves but also for their apprentices' competence in the trade and output of hours-long activities and behaviors (broad and more profound influence from a senior and more experienced individual). Then, with the advent of mass transportation and the existence of large corporate organizations, the Industrial Revolution evolved and began to change the shape of mentoring (a narrow scope protégé would learn one thing from the teacher). Today, organizations are presented with a new managerial paradigm, which has been labeled as the information age.

Historical Events

While interest in mentoring is relatively new, mentoring is an ancient paradigm with origins in Greek mythology (Ragin & Kram, 2007). Mentor was the son of Alcimus, who, according to Greek mythology, was entrusted with the care of his friend of old age, Odysseus's son Telemachus (Lippi & Cherry, 2011; Ragin & Kram, 2007). While Odysseus was away fighting in the Trojan War, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, appeared in front of young Telemachus to advise, instruct, and protect him (Lippi & Cherry, 2011). Ragins and Kram emphasized the mentor archetype's male and female embodiments. This archetype offers a radical definition of mentorship as a connection that is timeless, gender-neutral, and cross-cultural (Ragin & Kram, 2007). Thus, for thousands of years, it has been a vital element of social life and the workplace. Additionally, it becomes clear that Telemachus is taught by the goddess Athena, a fact that is frequently overlooked in literary works (Kobor-Escobar, 2000). As was the case with Athena, women today are still often overlooked and not credited for their contributions.

While the exact beginnings of mentoring may not be known, some have argued that its start is inextricably linked to human language growth and use (Lippi & Cherry, 2011). Language is important to build and engage in relationships. This passing of information and wisdom from

generation to generation is at the heart of what many would consider to be the conventional mentoring process (Merriam, 1983). Lippi and Cherry (2011) recognized that language is not only used to communicate with people in the present instant, but also to develop, retain, and transfer an accumulating pool of knowledge and wisdom into the future to ensure an individual's and their descendants' well-being. Even in current culture, mentoring is frequently defined as the process by which an older, wiser individual takes a younger, less experienced individual under their wing and offers direction, protection, and access to their acquired knowledge and wisdom (Fagan & Walter, 1982; Levinson et al., 1978; Murray & Owen, 1991; Ragins, 1997; Zey, 1984).

Behavioral Trends

Mentorship is particularly successful at facilitating the transfer of knowledge to the workplace, as mentees can seek assistance with specific professional issues (Benabou & Benabou, 2000; Hegstad, 1999; Lankau & Scandura, 2007). A collaborative relationship between an individual with more experience and an individual with less experience, in which both parties share responsibility for achieving goals that are mutually specified, defines a mentoring relationship (Dirks, 2021). Mentoring is an effective approach for retaining skilled personnel that also benefits the development of experienced employees and succession planning for advanced positions (Dirks, 2021). A traditional mentoring relationship involves one mentor providing a wide range of supportive and guiding functions to a mentee (Kram, 1985; Haggard & Turban, 2012). Mentoring imparts topic knowledge, promotes personal development, promotes good decisions, and assists the protégé in making transitions (Zachary, 2002). Mentoring is also about providing the mentee with an educational experience. Mentor-mentee relationships can develop informally or formally, and they can occur across a variety of professions. Relationships are a

fundamental component of mentorship with the potential of impacting career growth, regardless of profession, gender, race, or other characteristics, and is vital component of mentorship (Miller & Choi, 2012). Mentoring relationships can evolve over time, involve repeated interactions (Haggard & Turban, 2012), and frequently last as long as the participants deem it valuable (Dirk, 2021).

According to Crumpton (2015), mentoring is primarily a series of interpersonal and social interactions; thus, an emotionally intelligent mentor is better equipped to provide a more pleasant and supportive atmosphere for a mentee. It is possible for toxic mentoring to arise; for example, if the mentor's goals or expectations are unreasonable, the mentee does not perceive the value in the connection, confidentiality is breached, or a conflict of interest exists that prioritizes the mentor's interests above the mentee (Race & Skees, 2010; Scott & Smith, 2008).

The importance of having a mentor at every stage of one's career cannot be overstated (Miller & Choi, 2012). Dirks (2021) specified that mentoring was recommended to prepare individuals for leadership positions. Diversity in a mentor-mentee relationship provides a wide range of benefits, including specialized skills that can impact business (Miller & Choi, 2012).

Political Climate

Unfortunately, efforts to increase diversity in the United States have been less than adequate (Placik & Galarza, 2021). According to Choi et al. (2019), a growing body of literature has documented the positive impact of mentorship on various outcomes, including research productivity, academic promotion, faculty retention, career satisfaction, and faculty diversity and leadership. Successful mentoring programs should, in theory, produce successful mentors who will in turn create a more supportive and diverse community. Yet, the political climate, specifically in the United States, has been a detrimental factor in positioning women, specifically

Black women, since their entrance into the workforce (Symonds, 2021). Frye (2019) suggested that racism and sexism combine to build barriers for Black women in the workplace and erode their chance for upward mobility. Awareness of the challenges of recruiting and retaining minorities in leadership positions (Brillat et al., 2013) necessitates a strong commitment from leaders at all levels to develop the next generation of mentorship which supports the development of underrepresented leaders in the workforce, as well as a need to foster an environment for mentees and mentors to seek out and create successful and meaningful mentorship opportunities (Choi et al., 2019).

Therefore, having an option for formal or informal mentorship may result in the best results for the mentorship dyad and the organization. While mentoring is intended to be a beneficial experience for both mentor and mentee, the literature does discuss potential downsides that leave one or both without substantial benefit. According to Borus (2013), mentees sometimes have unrealistic expectations of their mentors. Occasionally, the mentee's skills may exceed the mentors, but the mentor is unwilling to acknowledge this fact and help the mentee find a more suitable mentor.

Mentorship Structures and Components

There are two structures for mentoring: formal and informal. Under both structures, mentoring relationships consist of a mentor who serves as an advisor, coach, or guide and a mentee who is a protégé. The two individuals, the mentor and mentee, develop a connection or relationship that supports the mentee's development within the environment in which they function. This relationship could develop within a work environment, a friendship group, or even within one's family. The work environment typically produces a more structured and practical

mentorship relationship. A measured and more formalized approach to guidance is not required for all types of relationships and programs.

Formalized mentoring programs are meant to accomplish certain goals set forth mainly by the organization, but informal mentoring is an effective and beneficial tool for employee development (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Studies suggest mentoring is beneficial if the mentoring relationship, whether formal or informal, is extremely fulfilling for the mentee. Komives et al. (2005) showed that mentoring is an essential component of the process of transitioning between stages. Mentors, regardless of the structure, help their mentees develop their talents, skills, knowledge, and abilities, which are all components of their human capital. Human capital is a person's skills, knowledge, or other intangible assets, such as connections, that can be used to create economic value (Becker, 1994; Mincer, 1957; Schultz et al., 1961). Collins (2001) asserted that the distinction between good and great organizations is the ability to hire the right people and place them in positions that maximize the organizational performance impact of engaging their specific human capital.

Mentees who participated in effective mentoring programs reported more fulfilling mentoring interactions than mentees who participated in inadequate mentoring programs. While effective mentoring can result in great outcomes, ineffective mentorship can be detrimental or, in some situations, worse than no mentoring at all (Lippi and Cherry, 2011). Ragins and Kram (2007) explained that formal and informal mentoring differs primarily in the formation of the dyadic relationship. An organization's leadership may construct formal mentorship dyads, while informal dyads may emerge from naturally occurring interactions (Ragins and Kram, 2007). The mentoring function for both formal and informal mentoring consists of providing the mentee

with challenging assignments, coaching, and role models to improve the mentee's skills (Ragins and Kram, 2007).

Kram's (1985) original work identified two components of supportive mentor behaviors: career-related and psychosocial support. These two components of support Kram identified help mentees deal with concerns about self, career, and others by developing knowledge, skill, and competence, and in identifying effective personal and professional dilemma-solving approaches. The career-related component support entails mentor actions that assist the mentee in comprehending how the organization functions and prepares the mentee for advancement. Consequently, the mentor provides challenging assignments, direction, exposure and visibility, sponsorship, and safety. The psychosocial component support consists of mentor behaviors designed to aid mentees in the development of a sense of professional identity, self-efficacy, and self-worth. The mentor provides the mentee with unconditional acceptance and affirmation, guidance, and friendship, and serves as a role model.

Subsequent research by Scandura (1992) found support for a three-factor conceptualization of mentoring that included vocational support (equivalent to career-related support), psychosocial support, and role modeling with its third component. Career-related and psychosocial support behaviors are conceptually and empirically distinct, as demonstrated by Eby, Rhodes et al. (2013).

Psychosocial support, professional growth, and role modeling are the mentoring dimensions examined in much of the literature on mentorship contribution. Affect, loyalty, and professional respect are the dimensions of leadership/supervision. Kram (1983) considered friendship a basic element of the mentor-mentee relationship, and Sosik and Godshalk (2000) described the relationship as one that is close. Haggard and Turban's (2012) research results

were consistent with Ragins and Cotton (1999) in that the formal mentees received fewer psychosocial functions than did informal mentees. In formal mentorship relationships, mentors and mentees did not perceive or expect relational obligations. The focus of the relationship tended to be meeting the requirements of the program, demonstrating the number of times they were to meet, or action items to cover regarding job tasks. The lower perceptions of self-obligations in formal relationship may explain why formal relationships were not found to be as successful as informal relationships (Underhill, 2006).

The mentor's role is multifaceted, providing the mentee support in myriad ways throughout their development. Table 2 provides some of the roles identified by several researchers (Baker, 2015; Capello & Sprunt, 2020; Ganser, 2006).

Table 2

Mentor Roles

Mentor Roles	Behaviors
Advisor	Suggest opportunities for development
Teacher	Share expertise; facilitate application of knowledge of practice
Coach	Provide feedback on how to improve in specific areas
Protector	Foster socialization; provide guidance in setting limits
Sponsor	Introduce to others in network; assist in navigating workplace politics
Resources	Share information about organizational and external resources
Sounding board	Create a safe environment to share concerns and ideas
Challenger	Encourage reflection and problem-solving
Role Model	Model professional standards and values

Note. Adapted from Baker, 2015; Capello & Sprunt, 2020; Ganser, 2006.

Tangible and Intangible Activities

Mentors can assist mentees in identifying and enhancing intangible qualities that emphasize behaviors, personal characteristics, and cognitive abilities that may be more crucial than ever (see Table 3). Intangibles, also referred to as soft skills, are innate personality traits and innate abilities or talents. Reasoning, imagination, and endurance are examples of intangibles. Soft skills, also known as interpersonal skills, are sometimes difficult to define (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Relationships with other people are characterized by soft skills or character traits, which are fundamental abilities. These transferable skills help achieve success in one's professional and personal lives. The term "transferable skills" refers to abilities applicable to a variety of careers and occupations. It can be acquired and refined over time, a prerequisite for leadership. Mentors can give mentees activities to help them learn and improve non-tangible skills and teach them how and when to use these skills most effectively.

Table 3

Intangible Activities

Intangibles Skills	Evidence of Skills
Profession Attitude	The way you present and sell yourself, communicate, interact, and create meaningful relationships with people
Problem Solving	Resolve problems and reach your goals
Leadership	Teamwork and collaboration, flexibility, problem-solving, strategic thinking, creativity, and the ability to lead by example. perseverance, confidence, and inspiring others by setting a positive example
Time Management	Effectively planning and accomplishing your goals
Communication	Transferring information or news from one person to another by writing, speaking, or using some other medium. In addition, listening, speaking, observing, and empathizing constitute communication skills
Language	The ability to speak, listen and comprehend a language.

Intangibles Skills	Evidence of Skills
Interpersonal	Effectively communicate, interact, and work with individuals and groups. These include a variety of skills, such as active listening, teamwork, persuasion, and public speaking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict management skills • Skills at building cohesive teams Motivating staff
Critical Thinking	Ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking • encompasses both reflection and independent reasoning mental process involved in solving a problem or creating a product.
Adaptive	Enable you to effectively navigate your environment and adapt your approaches
Negotiation	Allows two or more parties to come to an agreement These skills often include abilities such as communication, persuasion, planning, strategizing, and cooperating.
Work Ethics	“Moral values” or “values related to work”

Note. Adapted from “Literacy Leadership: The Importance of Soft Skills,” C. C. Bates & D. N. Morgan, 2018, *The Reading Teacher*, 72(3), p. 412, (<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1755>).

The tangibles are known as hard skills, which must be learned and are frequently job or industry-specific and measurable (see Table 4). The mentors can show their mentees how and when to get the skills they need to move up the leadership ladder. It can be acquired and refined over time, a prerequisite for leadership.

Table 4

Tangible Activities

Tangible	Skills
Specific work	Expertise on physical work skills and knowledge
Navigating the organization’s culture	Building social capital
Team building/Conflict Management	Building cohesive teams and solving conflict among parties

Tangible	Skills
Networking	Interacting with others to share knowledge and create social or professional contacts
Formal study and training	Courses and on the job training (certificates, degrees, and licenses)

Note. Adapted from “Literacy Leadership: The Importance of Soft Skills,” C. C. Bates & D. N.

Morgan, 2018, *The Reading Teacher*, 72(3), p. 412, (<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1755>).

Formal and Informal Components

Historically, mentorship studies have compared the relative value of informal and formal mentoring. Mentors in both formal mentoring programs and informal mentoring relationships can provide mentees with three types of support, regardless of the type of mentoring program. The first is emotional and social assistance (i.e., mentor behaviors that promote personal growth such as counseling, friendship, and acceptance), The second is the provision of specific instruments (also referred to as career support and vocational support, which refer to mentor behaviors that facilitate mentee goal achievement, such as coaching), and lastly through role modeling (i.e., mentor behaviors that the mentee identifies with and wants to imitate; Eby, Rhodes et al., 2013; Scandura, 1992). The protégés of informal mentors viewed their mentors as more effective and received a higher compensation than the protégés of formal mentors. Furthermore, protégés with informal mentors experienced greater career success than those without mentors (Allen et al., 2017). Qualities that were important for informal mentoring were likewise important for formal mentoring, though some qualities received a higher rating. For informal mentorship, the highest-ranking responder characteristics were collaboration, partnership, trust, and communication. In comparison, the most highly rated formal mentor characteristics were knowledge, experience, and goal setting.

Formal Mentorship. Seventy percent of Fortune 500 companies now provide some sort of formal mentoring program, reflecting the rising popularity of such initiatives (Beheshti, 2019). Creating effective matches between mentors and mentees is a crucial component of formal mentorship programs. The way mentors and mentees are paired can set the tone for their professional relationship, influencing the success or failure of mentoring programs (Forret, 1996). Black women may face their greatest challenge or experience their greatest empowerment during the mentor-matching process. Allen et al. (2017) surveyed a matched sample of mentors and mentees in four organizations' formal mentorship programs. The researchers discovered greater perceived input into the matching process from both mentors and mentees was associated with greater mentorship quality and role modeling functions. There is a gap in the literature concerning whether Black women who aspire to leadership positions participated in mentor-mentee matching. Literature has demonstrated the significance of the connection or relationship between the mentor and mentee, and the environment in which they operate.

Organizations' formal programs establish meeting frequency guidelines which were deemed to be more effective than those programs without guidelines. The mentors voluntarily paid or unpaid entering the relationship were marginally more effective (Pinho et al., 2005). Mentees with mentors in different departments reported much higher levels of satisfaction than those from the same department. Even the most well-designed program may fall short of being successful if the mentors responsible for developing mentees are ineffective. A formal mentoring program may contain official assessments based on multiple measures of action items or progress made by mentors and mentees which occur regularly through a continuous cycle (Harker et al., 2019). In effective programs, these assessments focus beyond gauging participant satisfaction with the program. Providing multiple measures allows for a more accurate gauge of

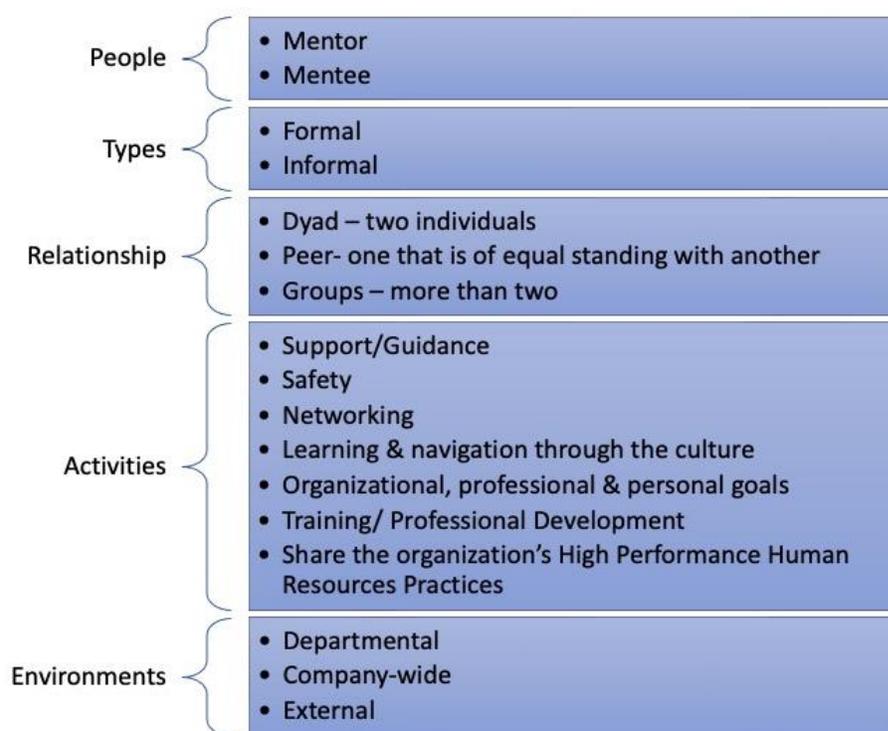
the impact of a program on the participants' skills, abilities, and future careers (Harker et al., 2019). Research demonstrated that programs designed to advance the careers of mentees had a significantly stronger relationship with attitudes than with orientation programs.

In certain instances, unscheduled and unplanned events lead to the formation of informal mentoring relationships. Informal mentoring is any naturally occurring relationship between two individuals who identify as caring, reliable, supportive, and trustworthy. In informal mentoring contexts, where expectations and roles are typically distinct for all parties, there is less tension than in formal mentoring contexts. The organic nature of informal mentoring relationships allows the mentoring dyads to recognize the value of the time and effort invested more quickly than in formal mentoring relationships. When conversations about racism in the workplace are frequently challenging and deeply unsettling, the likelihood of the organic nature of informal dyads decreases when racism is a central aspect of American culture, thereby affecting Black women in leadership positions. A rapport of safety between participants enables the mentee to take ownership of the experience and feel like a partner. This informal mentoring can occur in various settings (Sykes et al., 2014). Successful informal mentoring relationships require a goal, even though they develop organically one-on-one or in a group.

Similar to formal dyads, informal dyads place a premium on compatibility. To facilitate informal mentoring, organizational leaders must take the time to identify similarities between themselves and Black female colleagues. It is challenging to feel helpful if the mentee does not share a perspective on work-life balance, if their priorities are in different areas, and if they are unwilling to listen to or follow advice. Mentorship structures, components, activities, and the types of work environment is captured in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The Structures, Components, Activities, and Environments of Mentorships



Note. Adapted from Farkas, A. H., Bonifacino, E., Turner, R., Tilstra, S. A., & Corbelli, J. A. (2019). Mentorship of women in academic medicine: A systematic review. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 34(7), 1322–1329, (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-019-04955-2>).

Efficacy of Formal and Informal Mentorship

According to researchers, formal mentoring has been demonstrated to be less beneficial than informal mentoring. The efficacy of formal organizational mentoring can be measured in terms of addressing the needs of all employees to have the opportunity to be mentored, to learn from the knowledge, experience, and mistakes of others, and to expand the mentee's career options (Bell, 2000; Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Formal mentorship programs are commonly touted for their ability to identify and develop managerial talent and leadership development (Hegstad, 1999; William, 2002). By utilizing structured mentoring programs to accelerate the

growth of some individuals into management roles, mentees develop their skills early and better understand how to use them inside the workplace (Barbian, 2022). However, businesses that take this approach to mentorship risk being accused of favoritism or prejudice and are therefore warned to exercise caution when selecting mentees for these types of programs (Forest et al., 1996; McDonald & Hite, 2005).

The majority of the literature on formal mentorship comes from consulting firms, with a limited amount of study on program design. Much of the literature indicates that what should be included in a formal mentoring program is more anecdotal and less scholarly (Ragins et al., 2000). As a result, this emphasizes the importance of conducting additional research on the structure of formal programs and the factors that influence their performance. To determine the strength of the relationship between formal mentors' and mentees' perceptions of their relationship with each other, Beehr and Raabe (2003) compared mentor-mentee relationships with supervisor-subordinate relationships, as well as coworker-coworker relationships in terms of mentee outcomes. Many formal programs have been established and are currently in operation in companies. Organizations focusing on developing a culture of mentoring that emphasizes high levels of leader-member exchange with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs and promoting the use of supplemental informal mentoring (Holt et al., 2016).

The American Society for Training and Development (2019) conducted a human resource development survey to determine how learning occurs in organizations. The research sought to determine how learning occurred within companies. According to the results, 71% of the companies surveyed used coaching or mentoring, so mentoring was seen as a method of

learning for employees (Benson, 1997). This finding is important for leaders to understand how mentoring is a conduit for learning in the workplace.

According to Cotton and Ragins (1999), informal mentorship is more beneficial than formal mentorship in the workplace. Informal mentors performed more career development functions, such as mentoring, demanding assignments, or boosting exposure and visibility for their mentees, than formal mentorship programs. Informal mentorship occurs through everyday workplace interactions and social, professional, and familial settings. People who have an informal mentoring connection acquire insight, wisdom, and support from the other's friendship and support. In informal mentoring relationships, it is up to each individual to initiate and maintain the mentoring relationship. Informal mentors are more likely to engage in positive psychosocial activities such as counseling, facilitating social interactions, role modeling, and providing friendship (Inzer & Crawford, 2005).

Mentoring relationships in informal contexts are not confined in terms of frequency, length, or subject of encounters between the partners (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007). The dyad's members may appear to be meeting casually, but they likely have formed a set of guidelines for conducting their sessions. Mentors and mentees often build informal bonds as a result of their shared experiences and interests. When a mentor sees himself or herself in a mentee, it's natural for the mentee to want to be more like that person. The mentor and the mentee choose who they want to work with. The relationship formed between the mentor and mentee can last for years, and it can be very beneficial for both people (Nemanick, 2000). The relationship within the mentorship happens when two people agree to form a relationship on their own. A mentorship relationship over a long period of time becomes a friendship first, then learning and work follows (Beatty, 2017). Mentors are not necessarily supervisors or managers.

However, much of the literature proposes that successful supervisors and managers often serve as mentors. Mentoring must evolve into a fundamental component of any leader's position that focuses on progress (Bell, 2000).

Successful and Ineffective Mentoring Programs

Studies indicate that successful mentoring is contingent upon both partners committing to the process and sharing responsibility for learning (Baker, 2015; McAllister et al., 2009) in a relationship where psychosocial support is provided (McAllister et al., 2009). Evidence shows that mentoring relationships should be based on trust, engagement, and authenticity (Liang et al., 2002). The relational aspects of mentoring have significant effects on the overall satisfaction of the experience and self-actualization, and must be valued (Boddy et al., 2012). Kram (1988) states that mentors should focus on the mentee's personal, educational, or professional learning and development and employ a variety of psychosocial, educational, and career-related functions, such as role modeling, counseling, coaching, sponsoring, and befriending. Mentee readiness for change, growth, the ability to overcome adversity, and focused tasks with practical assistance from mentors correlate with successful mentoring relationships. Without these components, mentees are less likely to accept advice or practical assistance. Several studies have shown that satisfactory mentor relationships are often associated with perceived similarities, while dissatisfaction is associated with perceived differences (Eby et al., 2000; Ensher et al., 2002; Lankau et al., 2005). These perceived differences between the mentor and mentee are based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation. According to Boddy et al. (2012) mentorship requires reciprocal relationships based on equality as an important factor to many mentors and mentees. When mentors imparted their own life experiences, both positive and negative contributions were made. The research found that reciprocity appeared to cement

the foundations of safety and having a non-judgmental relationship, which supported perceived similarity and equality between both parties (Boddy et al., 2012) along with building a strong relationship (Sore et al., 2008). Also, an active position in the mentoring relationship may indicate the woman's growing confidence and capacity to engage in different relationships as a partner rather than only as a recipient of support and guidance.

Mentors are willing to participate in challenging inner transformative work rather than only aiding their mentees in attaining technical or professional skills and knowledge (Meeuwissen et al., 2019). These were insightful perspectives from mentors and mentees who have been through the process of mentoring. Formal or informal mentoring relationships benefit greatly from the mentor's ability to demonstrate emotional intelligence (Crumpton, 2015). Several studies have found that the most effective leaders possess strong abilities in the emotional intelligence competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Crumpton tied Goleman's (1998) theory to mentoring practice by identifying the characteristics of a competent mentor's emotional intelligence. Table 5 exhibits Lippi and Cherry's (2011) mentors' emotional intelligence competences to provide support and develop for mentees versus Hilanza (2017) mentors incompetence that hinders the mentorship relationship.

Table 5

Mentor's Emotional Intelligence Competences Versus Incompetent Mentor

Characteristics: Competent Mentor	Versus	Characteristics: Incompetent Mentor
accurate self-assessment trustworthiness conscientiousness		break promises of advice, support, and other assistance continually bitter, disgruntled, and peeved about anything and everything MIA (missing in action)

Characteristics: Competent Mentor	Versus	Characteristics: Incompetent Mentor
adaptability optimism empathy diversity leveraging timely communication generous and selfless listens		nosy tear down and disrespect emotionally draining adversarial

Note. Lippi, J. F., & Cherry, N. L. (2011). Athena: Mentor, Myth, and Metaphor, *Creative Approaches to Research*, 4(1), 44–56.

Mentoring requires a tremendous commitment from the mentor, including deferring current projects, to establish an intensely engaged environment conducive to learning through observation, conversation, and participation (Hurt & Shou, 2019). As a result of the mentor taking responsibility for the mentee’s work, practice and errors were encouraged as part of a safe learning environment. Both the mentor and the mentee benefited from the relationship’s two-way communication and exchange of knowledge and experience (Callan, 2006; Capello & Sprunt, 2020). Regardless of the time commitment, the dedication to developing an immersive peer connection aided the mentee in adjusting to a new role by cultivating necessary skills and confidence, collaborations, and job efficiency (Hussey & Campbell-Meier, 2017). The examination whether the focus of mentoring should be on short-term goals and coaching, or on relationships and reciprocal learning (Farrell et al., 2017). While some organizations consider mentoring as a means of achieving short-term goals, others view it as a means of communication and mutual learning between mentor and mentee (James et al., 2015). When the mentor attends

to the mentee's emotional and social requirements, it aids in the acquisition of work skills and completion of assignments. Farrell et al. (2017) examined psychosocial mentoring and professional performance and found three distinct psychosocial barriers to effective mentorship: racial microaggressions, imposter syndrome, and exhaustion (Farrell et al., 2017).

Selected Theories to Inform and Assess Mentorship

I reviewed the literature to identify and highlight the significant social behaviors in the workplace with the help of the four selected theories. Using CRT, LMX, SET, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theories to lay the foundational pathway for how and why an organization can provide mentorship opportunities while overcoming the barriers that may prevent Black women from achieving self-actualization in the workplace, thereby positioning them for leadership positions.

Critical Race Theory

Mentoring for Black women may be understood better through the lens of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) by delving into its five central tenets: (a) the significance of race and racism in society, (b) challenging dominant ideology, (c) experiential knowledge, (d) story and counter storytelling, and (e) a commitment to social justice. CRT challenges how race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture and society (Crenshaw et al., 2007). CRT dates to publications made in the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) by well-known American legal scholars such as Mari Matsuda, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Alan Freeman, Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, and Richard Delgado. CRT is a growing body of legal scholarship that "challenges the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture and, more generally, in American society as a whole (Crenshaw et al., 1995). These works served as the foundation for the CRT.

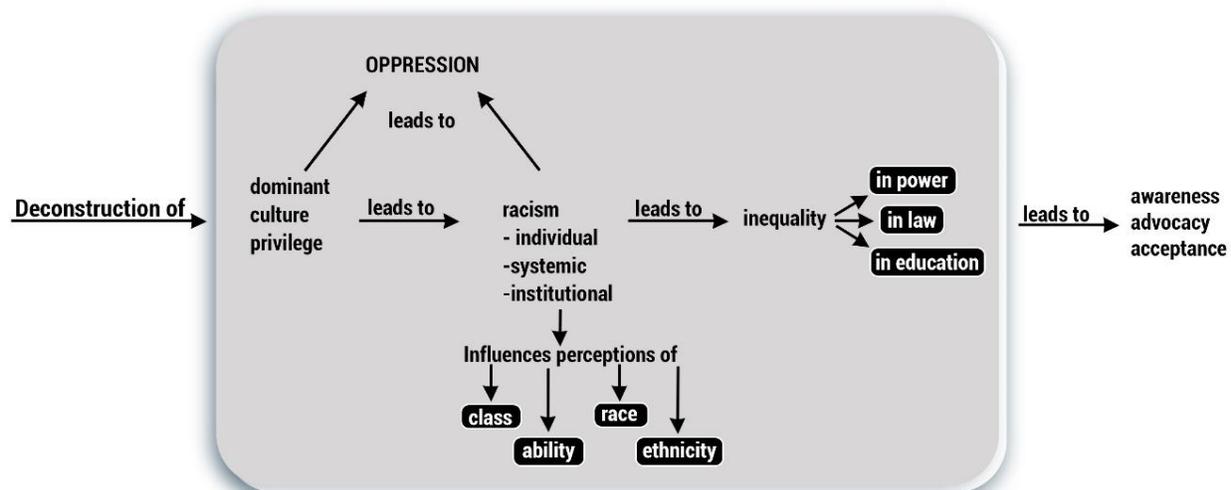
Derrick Bell, a professor of law at Harvard, developed several courses that examine the American legal system from a racial perspective. Bell resigned from Harvard Law, citing the institution's discriminatory practices as the reason for his departure. In 1980, he accepted a position as the dean of the school of law at the University of Oregon. Harvard canceled Bell's courses and students of color who were enrolled in Harvard Law School orchestrated a series of protests in order to bring attention to the lack of racial diversity in the school's curriculum, student population, and faculty. Two female students, Mari Matsuda and Kimberlé Crenshaw, participated in a boycott and went on to design an "alternative course" based on Bell's fundamental ideas (Ellingwood & Ellingwood, 2021). By the 1980s, it morphed into a movement that reworked the existing theories of critical legal studies to place a greater emphasis on race. CRT exposes insufficiently informed research that distorts, disregards, or marginalizes the epistemologies of people of color. It also asserts that existing traditional knowledge serves to conceal the privilege, power, and self-interest of society's dominant groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Examining the role of race in the U.S. legal system, structures, and society is divisive and racist, according to opponents of the CRT framework. Some critics have even asserted that critical race theory is derived from Marxist ideology, whose central premise is that America is fundamentally evil and White people should feel guilty about their skin color. There are two fundamental perspectives on the connection between CRT and law. CRT hypothesizes that civil rights legislation in the United States has continued to serve the interests of White people. In order to explore the lived experiences of our Black women participants regarding mentorship in the workplace in order to advance their desired leadership careers, this study must consider these

fundamental perspectives. Movius (2021) model Figure 3, of CRT exhibits the deconstruction of the theory that can lead to awareness, advocacy, and acceptance.

Figure 3

Deconstruction of Critical Race Theory



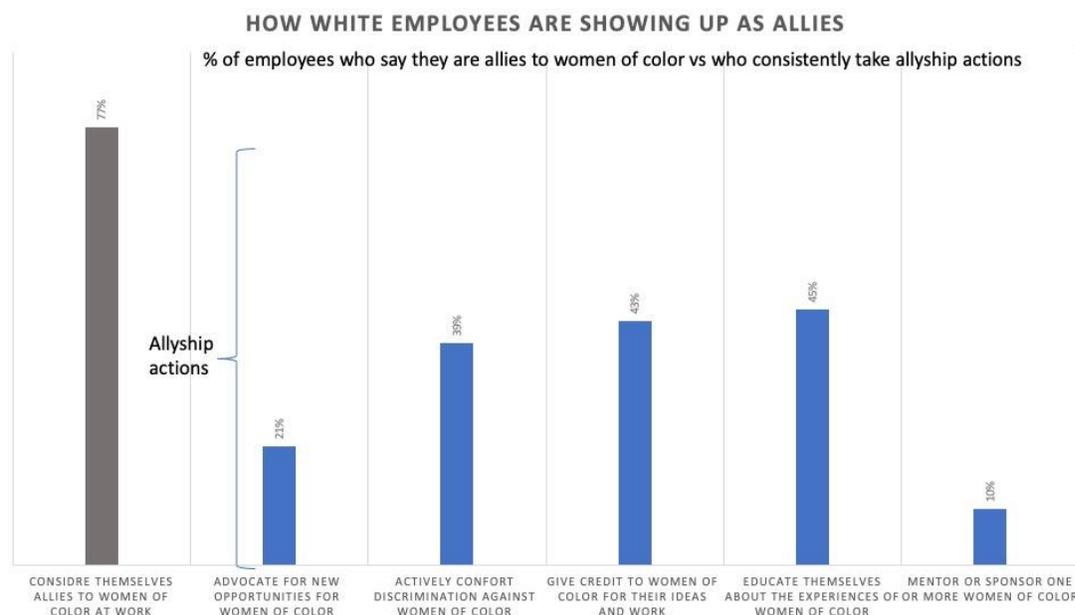
Note. Adapted from Movius, Sarah E. “Critical Race Theory.” *Theoretical Models for Teaching and Research*. Joy Egbert and Mary Roe. Pressbooks. Accessed on October 26, 2022. Web.

The Tenets of CRT. There are five tenets of Eastman et al.’s (2021) CRT. The first tenet is the centrality of race and racism in society, which asserts that racism is a central component of American life. The second tenet, the challenge to dominant ideology, challenges the claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy in society. Third is the centrality of experiential knowledge. The Critical Race Theory specifies that the experiential knowledge of people of color is valid, legitimate, and a vital aspect of studying and comprehending racial inequity. The fourth is commitment to social justice for Black women who are qualified for leadership opportunities in the workplace. Last is the commitment to social justice, a framework that is committed to a social justice agenda to eliminate all forms of subordination of people that

effect beliefs, behaviors, and practices, which influence whether Black women receive mentorship and of what style. Black women can obtain social justice when White allies advocate for their advancement. Figure 4 depicts the percentage of White employees who view themselves as allies for Black women, however, the percentage of mentorship is low. To increase the number of White people in positions of authority who serve as allies and mentors for Black women in the workplace, social justice awareness must be promoted.

Figure 4

White Employees Showing Up as Allies



Note. Adapted from Baker, V. L. (2015). People strategy in human resources: Lessons for mentoring in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 23(1), 6–18, (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2015.1011034>).

An Infirm Construct. Tenet number one of CRT is important to consider in this study because of workplace culture. A central tenet of CRT, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), is that racism is normal rather than abnormal and deeply ingrained in U.S. culture.

Therefore, the leaders of American organizations need to move towards a race-consciousness perspective to address this significant obstacle that may hinder the richness of mentorship for Black women attaining or in a leadership position. Integrationist ideology promotes racial oppression within the social structure through prejudice and stereotyping based on skin color (Peller 2012).

Black women in the workplace are more than three times as likely as White women to hear people express surprise at their language skills or other abilities, according to Women in the Workplace's most comprehensive study of women's status in corporate America. The study was launched in 2015 by LeanIn.org and McKinsey & Company, whose goal was to provide companies with insights and tools to promote gender diversity in the workplace.

Black women are more likely to report workplace bias and discrimination and to face retaliation than their White male counterparts. They are also the most likely to take the initiative as mentors and sponsors for other women of color in the workplace ("Advancing African American Women," 2021). In addition, there is a disparity between the growing commitment of companies to racial equity and the lack of improvement in the day-to-day experiences of Black women.

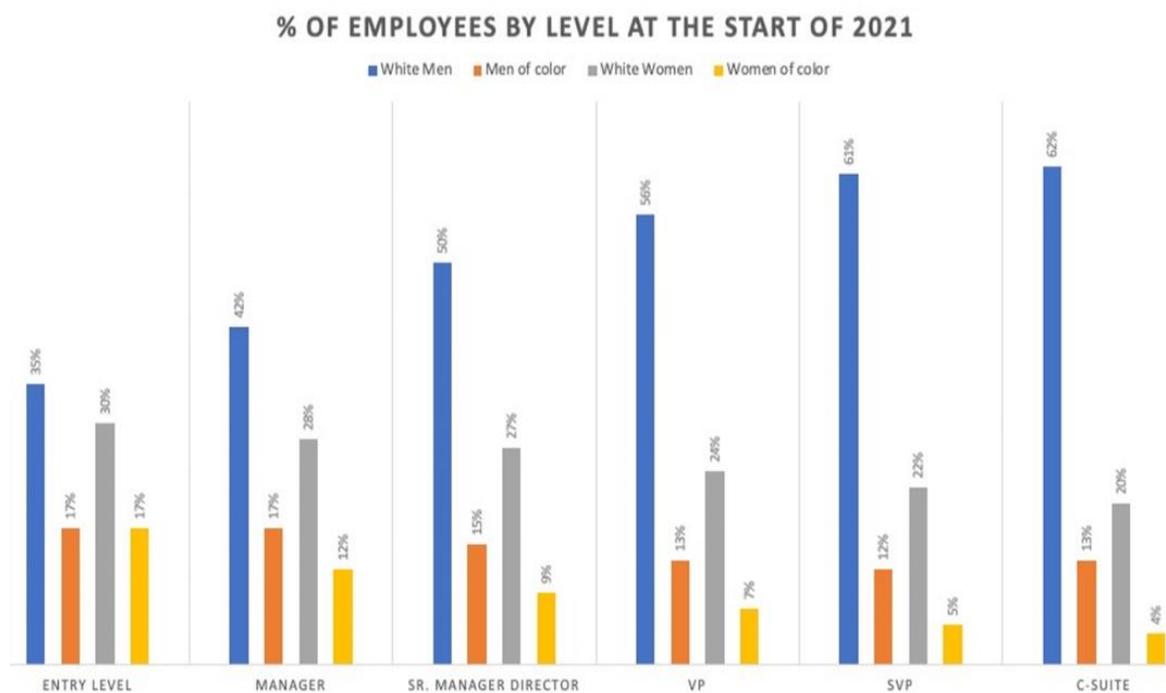
The Impact of the Privilege on Mentoring. CRT challenges the claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy in the dominant ideology. Race has been understood through a set of beliefs that promote and promulgate a notion of color blindness (Crenshaw, 2019) and meritocracy. The acceptance of color blindness enables racism and White people to flourish and maintain their social influence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT would like to replace color blindness with color consciousness. Color blindness has caused Black women en route to leadership positions to face internal and external pressure to perform while

navigating microaggressions, double standards, and unconscious bias, the constant questioning of Black women's leadership abilities, and the inability to express any emotion, let alone anger or frustration, without being labeled aggressive or threatening (Eastman et al., 2021).

The second tenet of CRT will explore the self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant group in relation to mentorship. Interest convergence is the notion that Whites will permit and support racial justice/progress to the extent that it benefits them, or a convergence between the interests of Whites and non-Whites (Bell, 1992a). For many White Americans, being made aware of their privilege is a rare and unwelcome occurrence, for White men especially, who continue to hold the most top leadership positions in all work sectors. Figure 5 illustrates the gender and race of those who attain positions in an organization, from entry-level positions to the C-suite. This statistic lends credence to the privilege that is enjoyed by white men and women.

Figure 5

Representation in the Corporate Pipeline by Gender and Race



Note. Adapted from Bell, D. A. (1992a). *Faces at the bottom of the well*. Basic Books.

The majority of White people have not been required to reflect on their privilege and doing so may be unsettling or incongruous with the prevalent narrative about social and political changes over time (McClain, 2021). According to McIntosh (2001), men operate from a position of unacknowledged privilege, and much of their oppressiveness is understood to be unconscious. In proportion to how confident, comfortable, and oblivious White men became, other groups likely became insecure, uncomfortable, and alienated. Whiteness shielded White men from a variety of forms of hostility, distress, and violence, but allowed them to advance in the workplace despite lacking the necessary qualifications. It also increased their access to mentoring and leadership positions. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass declared 149 years ago that power concedes nothing without a demand (Bulhan, 1985).

Those with privilege and power who are deemed to unwittingly oppress others can either encourage or promote mentorship. The privileged and powerful would need a mental shift to

recognize their self-interest in their belief that there is room in leadership for others, including Black women. The holder of power tends to put their own interests ahead of those of others, thus resisting when a critical mass of mobilized individuals in social justice movements make demands on power and pursue radical social transformations (Martin-Baró et al., 1994). Fear of these social justice movements consequently prevents workplace conversations regarding racism, which frequently prove to be challenging and profoundly unsettling.

Racial Inequality in Mentoring. It is critical to investigate the third tenet of CRT and the effects of racial inequality on the ability of Black women to benefit from mentoring relationships and rise to positions of leadership. Racial inequality impacts Black women in the workplace differently than other race and gender groups. Zhang (2021) identified that White employees are still over 50% more likely to be managers than Black employees, although an increase in normative support for racial equality in organizations has been observed in the United States. The public discourse and mainstream media have become increasingly vocal about the need for more underrepresented racial minorities in management. The relationship between persistent racial inequality at work and White opposition to equal opportunity policies has garnered scant empirical attention by social scientists. Researchers contend that a comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape workplace inequality must consider the race-related attitudes and beliefs of Whites in positions of authority as well as those Whites who are most likely to compete with racial minorities in the workplace (Smith & Hunt, 2021).

The fourth tenet of CRT challenges ahistoricism and the undisciplined focus of most analyses, insisting that race and racism be placed in both a contemporary and historical context using interdisciplinary methods. CRT values people of color's experiences. There is no presumption that minoritized groups have a unique or accurate interpretation of reality. Rather, it

is acknowledged that by experiencing racial dominance, such groups perceive the system differently and are frequently uniquely positioned to comprehend its workings. Derrick Bell's scholarship, centuries-old traditions of storytelling in minority communities, and historic records served as inspiration. This method gives voice to those people of color who have been left out of the larger or dominant narrative. With the inclusion of counter-narratives, CRT scholars acknowledge the experiences of marginalized people. Additionally, CRT scholars acknowledge that there is a dominant and traditional narrative, and that Whiteness is constructed as property (Harris & Cundell, 1995).

One of the foremost proponents of the need to name one's own reality, Delgado and Stefancic (1989) argues persuasively for the use of narrative and counter-storytelling as a means of presenting a different reading of the world, one that challenges taken-for-granted assumptions and destabilizes the framework that currently sustains and conceals racial injustice. Bell (1992b) reminds us of the persistence of racism, and how CRT provides a framework for analyzing race in relation to numerous aspects of our lives, such as leadership. There are Black women leaders who are conscious of who they are, and how they want to impact the world through leadership, thereby enhancing their capacity to advocate for others. These effective and ineffective mentorship stories must be told and explored.

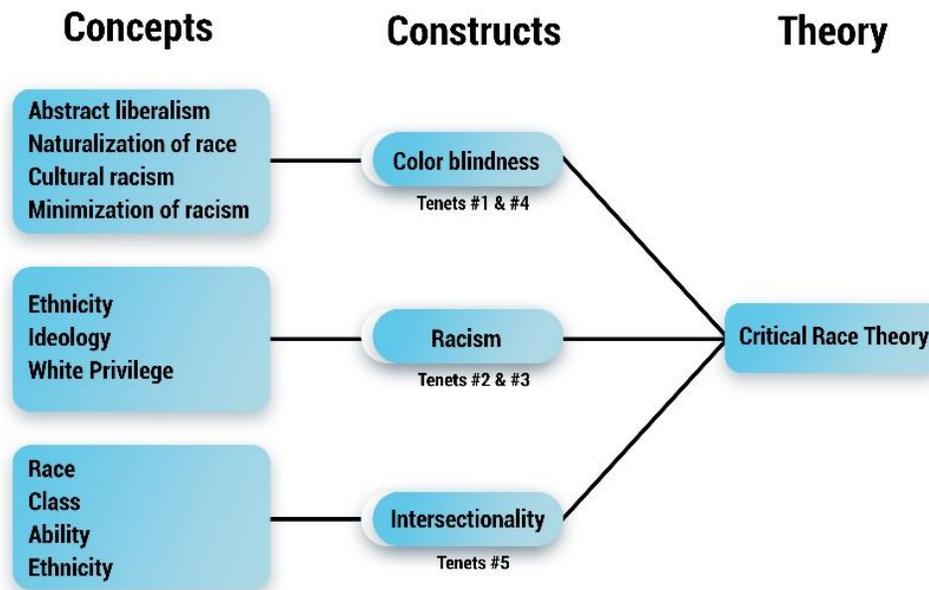
Social Justice and Mentoring. Critical race theory's fifth tenet is social justice, and its central tenet is the total eradication of racism. In the struggle for social justice waged by critical race theorists, the abolition of racism is a component of the larger objective of eradicating other forms of subordination, such as gender, class, and sexual orientation (Matsuda, 1991; Perez & Salter, 2020). A Black first-year student was quoted in the *New York Times* in 1990 as saying, "We need Black women role models," according to Banks, who asserted that a dispute at

Harvard Law School over the lack of Black women on the faculty was brought to light by this statement. When a second Black female law student articulated that the Harvard Law faculty had years to identify a Black female tenure-track faculty member, the statement met with little attention. Again, students believed the college desired to maintain the status quo by selecting a White man. Professor Bell announced his unpaid leave of absence in 1990 because he believed Harvard was discriminating by not hiring a tenured Black female faculty member. As he had been for Black male law students, he believed that Black female law students should have a Black woman as a role model and mentor.

CRT was founded on this principle, to eradicate systemic injustice by broadcasting the wrong. The concern expressed by these Black female students supports the current research of McKinsey & Company (2022), which indicated that Black women will speak out when injustices occur. The former president of the United States issued an executive order in September 2020 prohibiting the inclusion of diversity and inclusion training in federal contracts. This executive order contradicts the fifth tenet of CRT, which seeks to eliminate all forms of subordination (Perez & Salter, 2020). Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate the effect on workplace environments and mentoring programs for Black women. Figure 6 is a breakdown the concepts and constructs of CRT and includes the align each of tents to the constructs of the theory.

Figure 6

Concepts and Constructs of CRT



Note. Adapted from Movius, Sarah E. “Critical Race Theory.” *Theoretical Models for Teaching and Research*. Joy Egbert and Mary Roe. Pressbooks. Accessed on October 26, 2022. Web.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1998). Critical race theory: Past, present, and future. *Current Legal Problems*, 51(1), 467–491, (<https://doi.org/10.1093/clp/51.1.467>).

Leader-Member Exchange Leadership Theory

Many traditional leaders today are unaware of the talent for which they are responsible due to factors such as their own limited leadership skills or bias. As a result, the leaders' capabilities are hampered, which could potentially lead to the demise of the company. The LMX theory is an old theory that was derived from the work of Dansereau et al. (1975), Graen and Cashman (1975), and Graen (1976). LMX theory examines the importance of relationships, communication, and bias awareness to optimize interactions within a dyad consisting of a leader and a follower (Danesh & Huber, 2021). LMX theory proposes that leaders in an organization develop individualized working relationships with each team member. The LMX suggests that leaders develop a spectrum of relationships with their subordinates, ranging from low quality

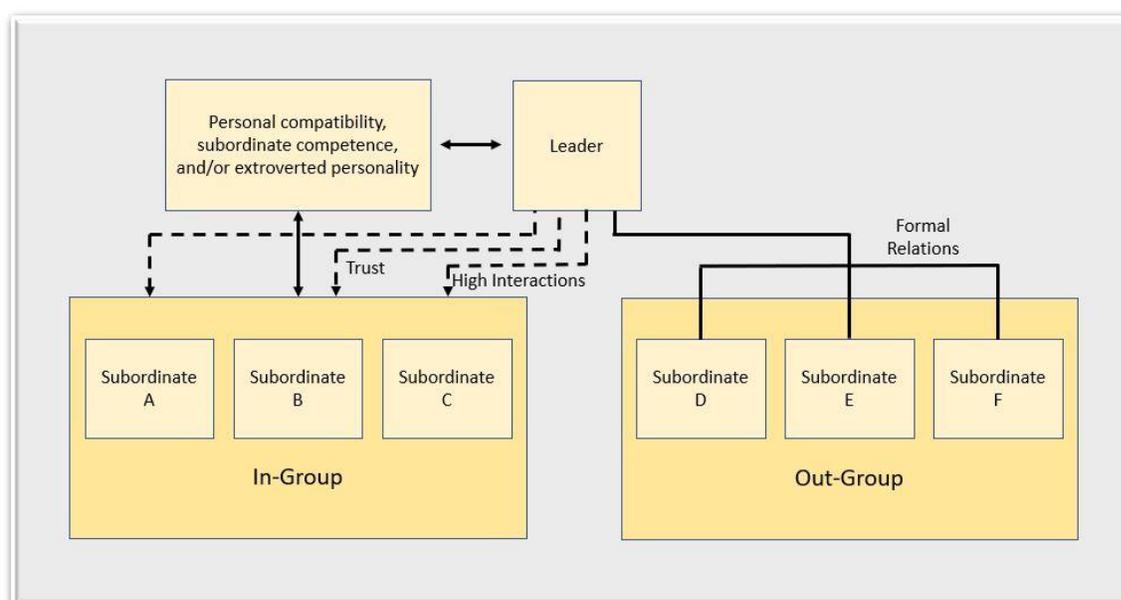
relationships characterized by formal relations, little interaction, and limited support to high quality relationships characterized by high levels of trust, support, and information exchange (Aggarwal et al., 2020). In addition, a leader can protect a person from overt and covert forms of discrimination, lend legitimacy to a person or position, provide guidance and training in the political operation of the organization, and provide inside information about job-related functions (Fagenson, 1989). Although LMX is an older theory of leadership, it is one of the most influential theories regarding the quality of a leader's relationships with their subordinates because it emphasizes the nature of those relationships (Stinglhamber et al., 2021).

The dyad is the foundation of LMX theory's characteristics and applications (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015). LMX theorists suggest that members who prove themselves loyal, trustworthy, and skilled are put into the in-group. A high-quality LMX is characterized by respect, support, development opportunities, and other valued resources that lead the employee to feel treated like a human by their employing organization, rather than as a tool or instrument for the organization's ends (Stinglhamber et al., 2021). In-groups receive more one-on-one time with their managers. And this group receives the most attention from managers, who provide challenging and interesting work and opportunities for additional training and advancement. Typically, members of this group share a personality and work ethic with their manager. Members who betray the manager's trust or demonstrate a lack of motivation or incompetence are placed in the out-group. The work of this group is frequently limited and unchallenging. Members of the out-group typically have less access to the manager and fewer opportunities for advancement. Therefore, members of the out-group may be incapable of advancing or engaging in professional development. In this idea, which is based on the concept of social exchange, there is a link between the process of mentoring and the process of leadership (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

Leadership is traditionally defined as "the process of social influence between leaders and followers" (Kruse, 2013). Regardless of one's leadership style or framework, one must pay close attention to whether they place Black women in out-groups. Figure 7 depicts how connections between leaders and members (subordinates) impact the group into which the subordinate is placed, thereby influencing interactions and behaviors between the leader and member.

Figure 7

Leader-Member Exchange Dyads



Note. Adapted by Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2015). Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory: An introduction and overview. In Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of leader-member exchange* (pp. 3–9). Oxford University Press.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theorists' view mentoring as an opportunity to incite commitment from employees. SET is defined by Homans (1961) as the exchange of tangible or intangible activity between at least two individuals. The exchange of tangible or intangible activities, such as training and professional development, show the employee that the organization values its

employees, resulting in employee loyalty and commitment and, consequently, reduced turnover intentions. Tangible or intangible activities in social exchange theory are the same ones presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Notably, supervisory mentoring involves the mentor and mentee participating in a transactional obligation rather than nonsupervisory mentoring relationships (Haggard & Turban, 2012). Therefore, suggesting that the supervisory mentoring relationship differs from the traditional mentoring relationship in the higher level of career-related obligations that both mentor and mentee feel they owe and expect from the other party. When formal mentors (supervisors) do not believe that mentees owe them deference or friendship, a lack of obligation to behave with deference could signal that the mentor perceives the mentee as an equal partner in the relationship and must always acquiesce to the mentor's wishes. Mentoring is a type of interpersonal relationship that evolves and involves the intentional process of nurturing, support, protection, guidance, instruction, and challenge within the context of mutually agreed-upon ethics including the integrating of personal and professional aspects of a person's life (Ragins & Kram, 2007). As a result, a mentor needs to have faith that the time and effort they put into their mentee will pay off, first for themselves and then for the organization.

The origins of the SET date back to the 1920s, as Malinowski (1922), Homans (1961), Blau (1964), and Emerson (1974) have deemed social exchange theory one of the major theoretical perspectives in the field of social psychology. Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2004) specified that SET has theoretical ambiguities and empirical needs. SET has been utilized in the study of a variety of social phenomena, including a commitment to exchange relations (Cook & Emerson, 1978), exchange and fairness (Jasso, 1981), and exchange and emotion (Lawler, 2018,

Lawler et al., 2015). When Homans's perspective on social behavior considers the framework of reward and punishment, he outlined five fundamental propositions:

1. The success proposition promotes behavior that generates favorable outcomes because it is likely to be repeated.
2. The stimulus proposition argues that rewarded behavior is repeated.
3. The value proposition indicates that the greater the value of an action to a person, the greater the likelihood that the action.
4. The deprivation-satiation proposition states that the more frequently an individual has recently received a specific reward for an action, the less valuable an additional unit of the reward will be.
5. The concluding premise specifies when individuals will react emotionally to various reward situations (Cook & Rice, 2003).

Therefore, when Black women encounter leaders who have placed them in the out-group (LMX), they are deprived of the opportunity for social interactions, training, and professional advancements.

According to Blau (1964), the fundamental idea behind social exchange is that one person will help another person out with the implicit understanding that they will repay in some unspecified way in the future. Other theorists, who also defined social exchange theory as a series of interactions that generate obligations, have agreed with Blau's definition of social exchange, and have lent their support. Leaders who do not understand Black women's culture hinder mentorship opportunities.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) observed that individuals who do not aspire to be the best they can be are prone to be infelicitous in the workplace. Maslow's hierarchy is used in this study to gain more knowledge on leadership aspiration as a personal goal for Black women. Even when one's goal appears less attainable due to gender biased or racially biased perceptions of leadership advancement, Black women are likely to achieve self-actualization and promotion to leadership (Larkin et al., 2016) with outstanding mentorship. By gaining leadership positions, Black women can break the glass ceiling in their field of work.

Maslow's theory describes the prerequisites that must be met before a person can be motivated to learn, as well as the role that interaction plays in the development of self-efficacy and learning motivation. Maslow (1943) also suggested that the safety needs (lower-level needs) must be fulfilled before the individual's desire for self-actualization needs (higher-level needs). This kind of hierarchy can be modelled by the bi-level optimization (Colson et al., 2007), where one problem is embedded within another. In accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Figure 8 illustrates the levels of human needs and behaviors.

Figure 8

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

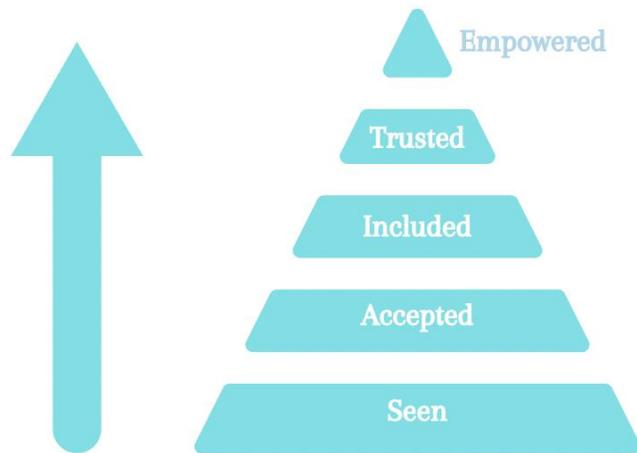


Note: The hierarchy of needs inspired by Maslow (1943) shows that employees need to be seen, accepted, included, and trusted to achieve empowerment.

Black women mentees can accomplish self-actualization through mentorship (Fletcher, 1998). Maslow (1971) described self-actualization individuals as being devoted and engaged in activity that is valuable to them—some calling or vocation in the traditional, priestly sense. Therefore, they can uncover and develop their true abilities and creative passions and then relentlessly pursue those activities to the pinnacle of excellence. The hierarchy of needs inspired by Maslow (1943) shows that employees need to be seen, accepted, and trusted to achieve empowerment (Dolan, 2020). Figure 9 depicts the various levels of human needs and behaviors that can assist with leadership advancement.

Figure 9

Maslow's Theory in Context of Leadership



Note. Adapted from the hierarchy of needs inspired by Maslow (1943) shows empowered leadership.

Mentorship: A Roadmap to Leadership

There is a disparity in the access Black women have to formal and informal professional networks, which are crucial to the advancement of their careers (McGee, 2018). According to the literature, even though the gap between research and practice may have shrunk, Black women are still underrepresented in leadership positions (Morgan, 2020). While it is true that White women leaders also face obstacles in the workplace, racism and sexism continue to pose greater challenges for Black women (Connley, 2021). In corporate environments in the United States and internationally, women face numerous obstacles. In fact, there are solid grounds for concluding that the full inclusion of women in executive positions increases profitability. In addition, the competitive behavior of multinational corporations that employ women in managerial positions may contribute to the elimination of gender barriers and traditional roles (Dworkin et al., 2012).

Multiple scholarly disciplines have identified specific barriers or obstacles for Black women seeking access to the highest levels of organizational leadership (Lyness & Thompson, 2000; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990). Despite efforts to diversify leadership in the workplace, the number of Black women in positions of authority is still extremely low. In workplaces that emphasize cultural, racial, and gender bias awareness, Black women hold authoritative positions (Morgan, 2020). For Black women to succeed in positions of authority within organizations, those organizations must first acknowledge the obstacles that Black women can encounter and make great efforts to cultivate their leadership skills and social capital. There is a need for additional research to determine the ways in which mentoring can assist Black women in achieving leadership success by fostering self-efficacy (Harris, 2009).

Mentors are not always managers or supervisors. Successful supervisors and managers, on the other hand, should serve as mentors. Mentoring must evolve into a critical component of any leader's role that is progress-oriented (Bell, 2000). Leadership continues to serve as a highly debated topic among academic scholars, particularly as it relates to the leader-follower dynamic. Research often focuses on understanding the impact leaders have on followers in terms of behavioral change (Salancik, 1977). One of the specific research areas of the leadership-follower dynamic is the influence of leadership style on employee commitment. Leadership style heavily affects an employee's commitment to the company, delivery of their job performance, and future leaders (Jaussi, 2007).

Leadership Identified and Broadened through Mentorship

Research and current cultural practices clearly indicate the impact of differences in race, ethnicity, and gender on leadership opportunities as well as with mentoring relationships (Ragins & Kram, 2008) to facilitate success. Whether in the private or public sector, Black women have

the capacity to be excellent leaders in the workplace but frequently are not provided the opportunity nor the supports necessary for success. No matter where they work, Black women have the potential to excel as top executives in both the private and public sectors (Darling et al., 2006). Numerous studies published over the past 20 plus years have determined that Black women are disproportionately underrepresented in positions of leadership throughout the world (Bandura, 1997; Domingue, 2015; Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

One of the areas often researched is the specific research area of the leader-follower dynamic and the influence of leadership style on employee commitment. Leadership style heavily affects an employee's commitment to the company, delivery of their job performance, and future leadership (Jaussi, 2007). Much of the current research focuses on transactional-transformational leadership, and employee commitment is disposed to the environmental and cultural exigencies (Puni et al., 2020).

Mentoring is crucial for individuals who desire to be leaders or are currently in leadership roles (Brown, 2019). Mentorship is priceless and has been shown to be beneficial (Borus, 2013). Research suggests the benefit of some leadership styles is that they can broaden an individual's intellectual processes and their openness to support other leaders on their journey (Gumus et al., 2018). A leader's approach can enable a mentee to expand their worldview from a confined local perspective to a broader global perspective (Miller & Choi, 2012).

Mentorship for Black Women in the Workplace

Due to Black women's historical role in the success of U.S. capitalism, researching and discussing their workplace experiences redefines the historical omission of Black women's stories from mainstream discourse (Collins, 2001). The opportunities of support are limited for Black women in the workplace. Historians and scholars have found that women who identify as

Black have been underrepresented in a variety of areas of corporate leadership. In their study, McDonald and Westphal (2013) explained why minority women first-time directors receive comparatively less mentoring than other first-time directors. They also contend that racial minorities who are first-time board members receive fewer appointments to other boards when mentoring levels are low (McDonald & Westphal, 2013). More conclusive evidence exists that increasing the representation of women, including Black women, in leadership positions benefits an organization's overall reputation and social performance (Mondisa, 2018). There has been some recognition that Black women continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in leadership positions such as deans, directors, c-level executives, and CEOs. When Black women can advance into leadership positions, they do so in PWI in the fields of education, health, and business, but struggle to attain leadership positions in areas outside of higher education.

According to Fernandez-Mateo and Fernandez (2016), job candidates may self-direct in anticipation of how demand-side screeners will respond to them. When people avoid applying for certain jobs and promotions because they anticipate being discriminated against, then the candidate pool will not only reflect the choices made by the supply side, but it will also be influenced by the expected discriminatory behavior of the screeners on the demand side (see Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013; Pager & Pedulla, 2015). When Black women in the workplace seek out leadership promotions a mentor could help them navigate the expected discriminating behaviors.

Black Women in the Educational System. Black women are frequently viewed as members of an established group who have been marginalized (Flowers, 2016), particularly when they begin their undergraduate studies. Several research studies have documented challenges faced by Black students attending PWIs, including dealing with unfavorable campus

climates (Maton et al., 2011; Palmer et al., 2010), and fears of conforming to stereotypes (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Steele, 2003). McClain and Stewart (2014) researched Black students negotiate their identities on college campuses. These problems in the educational system can have a large impact on Black women students' academic performance and social interactions, which can lead to a lack of support and more isolation. whereas Apprey et al. (2014) discuss academic and social isolation in higher education. Even though Black women graduate with multiple college degrees, they often find themselves seeking work in PWIs but have limited success to leadership positions. Apprey et al. (2014) case study was to document how an academic support through the implementation of a cluster-mentoring model at a R1 university can best promote support the academic and leadership success of Black undergraduate students. All institutions of higher education should value the recruitment, retention, and success of students from underrepresented groups in general, and Black female students in particular, because society benefits from a well-educated, talented, and competent citizenry that represents all spectrums of society.

Saddler (2010) noted that mentoring can help to combat the negative experiences and obstacles faced by Black women. In some cases, mentoring can help Black women build safe spaces where they can talk about their problems and get help and advice on how to be successful in PWIs and other organizations (Brittian et al., 2009). Mentoring can be an effective tool for assisting Black women in PWIs and other organizations by developing their sense of self-actualization. According to Mondisa (2018), mentors' approaches should reaffirm Black women mentees' identities and provide engaging learning experiences in their mentoring relationships to foster persistence. Mentoring, as a socialization process, can help individuals develop their

professional identities and careers. As faculty, professionals, and leaders, Blacks may face situations in which students and colleagues doubt their capabilities or qualifications.

Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring. Historically, formal mentorship programs have been geared toward women and minorities to increase diversity in the managerial ranks (Benabou & Benabou, 2000; Gibb, 1999; Jossi, 1997). There are some institutions and organizations that develop formal mentorship programs specifically for women and minorities to increase access to mentoring, to validate diverse mentoring relationships, and to assist mentees in advancing their education and careers, all while educating mentors about the difficulties women and minorities face in the workplace (Kininmonth, 2019; Kram & Bragar, 1992; Ragins, 2002).

Mentorship difficulties exist in a variety of dyad configurations for formal program mentorships with targeted initiatives, particularly when the focus is on a checklist of actions (Ragins, 2002). Formal mentorship programs are the opposite of most traditional mentoring relationships. Formal mentorship programs foster authentic relationships between one mentor and one mentee by providing a mentee with a wide variety of mentor functions (Haggard & Turban, 2012; Kram, 1985). According to Liang et al. (2002), women favor relationships which are process-oriented and involve authenticity, empathy, and empowerment.

Cultural factors such as race, gender, and ethnicity may influence and impact how mentors and mentees interact in mentoring relationships. Understanding racial and ethnic differences can be connected to cultural contexts and distinctions between racial and ethnic identities, as well as gender, in mentoring processes (Darling et al., 2006; Green, 2015; Griffin, 2013). According to research, mentoring can mitigate the negative experiences and obstacles faced by Blacks (Saddler, 2010). Mentoring can help protégés address issues and overcome obstacles (Brittian et al., 2009).

Summary

Despite the narrowing gap between research and practice, Black women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions (Morgan, 2020). According to the research, Black women in the workplace have a high rate of academic graduation and a large presence in the workforce. Black women in the workplace continue to be underrepresented in positions of leadership in a variety of industries. Mentorship has been used to assist White men achieve leadership position. Social phenomena, historical events, behavioral trends, and the political climate all point to why some companies recognize mentoring as an integral part of professional development that can be extremely advantageous for both mentors and mentees in the workplace (Tichy, 2012). Based on the literature the structures and components of mentorship can be considered from the lenses of CRT, LMX, SET, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This could provide a road map to help Black women into leadership positions or promotions to top leadership in various fields.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This phenomenological narrative inquiry study looked at mentorship as a way for Black women to become leaders. The study also explored intersectionality and social behaviors in the workplace. I looked at how the following critical race theories CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998), LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), SET (Homan, 1958), and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) can explain why mentorship can possibly help Black women secure leadership positions and strengthen leadership capabilities.

Design

This qualitative research combined two methodologies: phenomenological inquiry of Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions in the workplace and narrative inquiry of Black women's mentorship stories on the way to or in leadership positions. The qualitative, phenomenological component of the study was designed to provide an explanation and additional insights regarding the lived experiences of 10 Black women mentorship relationships in the workplace as they aspire to or are in leadership positions. Phenomenology is regarded as a philosophy of experience and the transformation of that experience into consciousness (Vaivada et al., 2011; Zahavi, 2003) Moustakas (2001) heuristic phenomenological approach was used. The participant's experiences with the phenomenon will be revealed through an in-depth interview process.

Chase (2011) defined narrative inquiry as being centered on a specific life experience of the narrator. In a narrative study, interviews are guided more by the narrator's story rather than a tightly structured, predetermined interview guide (Clandinin, 2019). To achieve the objectives of the study, I used a loosely structured interview guide enabling participants to share their lived experience narratives.

Research Questions

This qualitative study explored Black women's lived experiences as mentees to understand how the exchange of tangible or intangible activities within the mentoring relationship supports their efforts to attain leadership positions. The study was guided by one central research question with three subquestions:

RQ1: How does formal and informal mentorship contribute to the advancement of Black women into leadership roles?

SQ1: How do the race and gender of your mentor impact the trust and other aspects of the mentoring relationship, if at all?

SQ2: How, if at all, did the outcome of the mentoring relationship help meet the needs of the mentee's professional aspirations?

Qualitative Paradigm

This qualitative research combined two designs: phenomenological inquiry of Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions in the workplace and narrative inquiry of Black women's mentorship stories on the way to or in leadership positions.

As the researcher, my role was influenced by both philosophy and psychology. Listening to the participants responses to the semi structured questions they had some similarities in the philosophical and psychological experiences throughout their journeys. The philosophical assumptions used in this qualitative study to interpret the data helps the transformation paradigm. In social research, phenomenology research seeks to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). The study considered how current conversations about race may impact social justice for this underrepresented group in the

workplace. This framework sought to examine the benefits of mentorship for Black women and the role mentorship may play in advancing into leadership positions.

It is prudent to consider a researcher's presumptions in relation to the sample population, data collection, methods, and anticipated results. Therefore, the lens through which the study was approached was from a Black female who has held numerous leadership positions gaining crucial skills, values, knowledge, and presumptions that shaped the research (Cohen et al., 2017). Gemignani (2011) stated that continuous dialogue and self-evaluation monitor the tension between the researcher's involvement and detachment from the research to improve the study's rigor and ethical standards. The ethics of the relationship between researcher and research requires decolonizing the discourse of the other and ensuring that the interpretation of findings is continuously conducted through the researcher's eyes and culture.

The goal was to understand the significance and meaning of the participants' lived experiences; thus, I focused on self-knowledge and sensitivity to understand how self-created knowledge and self-monitor biases, beliefs, and personal experiences shaped the study's understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The principal benefits of reflexivity in qualitative research are accountability, trustworthiness, clarity, and personal progress. The researcher engages in genuine self-reflection implementing practices to better comprehend the research procedure. Therefore, readers will have a better understanding of how researchers arrived at a particular conclusion, improving public perception because the researcher's candor and openness regarding their belief systems, underlying biases, and background allow for a stronger connection with the audience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For practices of accountability, a reflexive diary was used to keep my thoughts, emotions, and experiences transparent throughout the research process.

Sampling Plan and Procedure

In this qualitative study, 13 Black women participants who provided an in-depth and specific information about the phenomenon under investigation were recruited using a method known as purposive, nonrandom sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The method facilitates the researcher's comprehension of the phenomena and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With purposive sampling, the selection of a specific participant was governed by the predetermined criteria. Emails to known qualified participants (Appendix A) along with invitations posted on the social media platforms Facebook (personal and leadership group), Instagram, and LinkedIn (personal and Black women's leadership group) (Appendix B) were used to invite participants to the study. To ensure the required sample, snowball sampling was also used to further expand the number of subjects to 13. The number of potential non-random participants from friends, family, and colleagues of the existing sample participants. The researcher asked selected participants to recommend additional individuals who meet the inclusion criteria and may be interested in participating in the study.

All respondent volunteers who met the inclusion criteria of the study received a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix C) that was reviewed with them over the telephone to address any questions prior to participation in the interview. The informed consent included a provider resource website (Therapy for Black Girls – <https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/>) in case they needed emotional and/or psychological support due to the interview. After the participant received the informed consent, they received a call from the researcher (Appendix D). Following the telephone conversation, a follow-up email confirming the interview time and the Zoom link was sent to the participant within 24-48 hours (Appendix E).

Data Collection Strategy

For this study, semistructured interviews served as the data collection method to gather information on the Black women's lived experience of mentorship. The interview questions (Appendix F) were designed to be intentionally broad so that participants could share their beliefs in greater depth (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). The participants were able to elaborate in their own words. By asking predetermined open-ended questions, it was possible to accurately understand a participant's comprehension of a situation or question and elicit each participant's underlying attitude and beliefs. This adaptable method permitted for emerging themes throughout the interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to be explored.

Semistructured interviews are interactive between participants and the researcher and reflect the real-world conversation. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), interviewing involves a dialogue between the researcher and the participant on the research study questions. The data derived from deductive, qualitative interviewing using semistructured, open-ended questions will explore the lived experiences, beliefs, and insights of Black women in or aspiring to be in leadership positions in various fields of work will help fill in the gaps in their narrative stories. The challenge is that semi structured interviews can generate substantial data for analysis (Jennings, 2005).

The interview via Zoom began by asking each participant to share about one formal or informal mentoring relationship they experienced. Each participant was asked scripted questions during a semi-structured portion of the interview. The semistructured interviews were interactive between each of the participants and the researcher, therefore reflecting real-world conversation. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) articulated that studying a phenomenon through the eyes of the study's participants can elucidate specifics with rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomenon.

Interview Protocol

This phenomenological narrative inquiry research (Butler-Kisber, 2010) looked at what Black women go through by utilizing unbiased interpretation and analyzes of the data. The data for this study were gathered through virtual interviews with Black women. The virtual interviews were scheduled with the participants using Zoom, an online software platform that allows synchronous annotation and screen sharing. The interviews were recorded using an audio recording device. There are several benefits to using Zoom for qualitative interviewing including convenience, ease of use, enhanced personal interface to discuss personal topics, accessibility using various devices, saving time, and no need to travel (Gray et al., 2020).

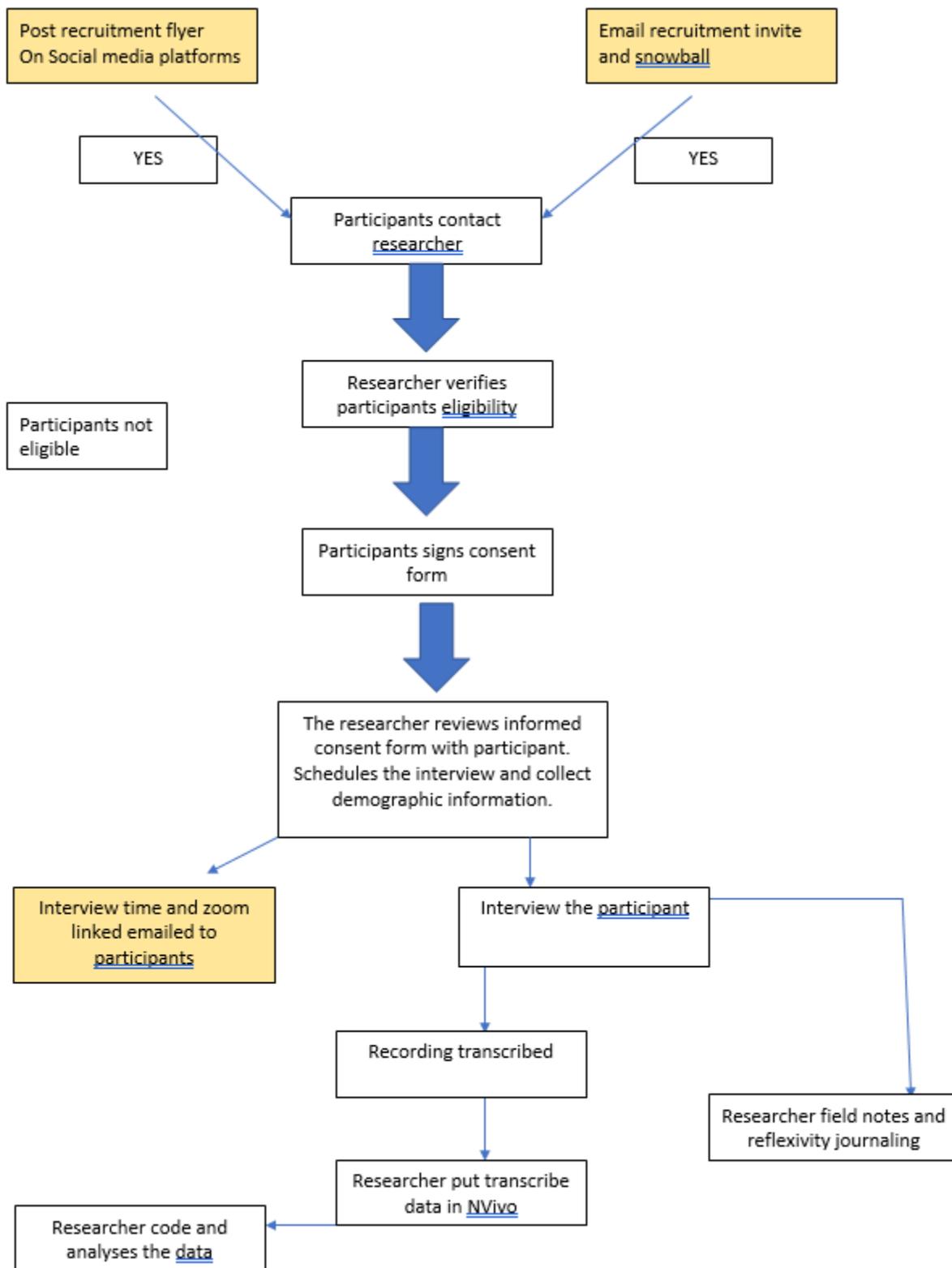
The interview questions were derived from the research questions and allowed participants to share their stories and answer freely based on the interview protocol (Appendix F). Each of the 13 interviews ranged from 35 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participant's permission before the start of the interview. The protocol included a scripted introduction that provided the following information to the participant: (a) a greeting, (b) the purpose of the study, (c) information regarding the structure of the interview, and (d) information regarding informed consent. The participants gleaned what to expect from the interview through the protocol. Interviews began with formal introductions and providing definitions of the key terms used during the interview. Time was allotted for the participant to ask questions before the start of the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The interview included preliminary questions designed to ease the interviewee into the content questions and to allow me to build rapport. The open-ended questions were designed to be broad to encourage participants to elaborate and tell their stories. Participants were asked follow-up probing questions to delve deeper into their experiences. The interview's closing

instructions permitted me to express gratitude to the participant and explain how they could review the study's findings. During each of the interviews, field notes were taken to provide context and to record observations. Figure 10 is the flow chart of the recruitment and interview process.

Figure 10

Flow Chart for Recruitment and Interview



The interview protocol was validated using a content validation procedure to ensure that interview questions accurately reflected the participants' perspectives on the investigated phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Two colleagues with research and interview strategy experience, as well as expertise in the complexities of intersectionality for Black women, were consulted to establish the content validity of the protocol. One pilot interview was conducted to determine whether the interview structure and questions elicited the necessary information to answer the research questions and to confirm the interview length and functionality of the audio recording device.

Human Subject Considerations

In many ways, phenomenological narrative inquiry research can be invasive as the participant allows the researcher access to their personal experiences that can be associated with the phenomenon (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher was granted an exempt status from the University Graduate & Professional Schools IRB (Appendix I), after completed and meeting the requirement for each module (Appendix H). This qualified as a minimal risk study meeting the Federal requirements for research considered to be Exempt (45 CFR 46.101(b)). All participants received and signed an informed consent, outlining the fundamental ethical requirement, keeping information private, and following a strict record-keeping protocol. The informed consent included all requirements as specified by the federal guidelines.

When conducting the research study, it was essential to safeguard the safety and rights of all participants. Each participant was informed that they could terminate the interview at any time without incurring any penalties.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the Otter.ai transcription service. Once transcripts were determined to be accurate, the audio recordings were deleted. The transcripts were anonymized, and all records are being securely stored on an external hard drive in a lock box in the researcher's home office.

The participants' identities are concealed using fictitious names comprising pseudonyms and the participants' faculty rank. The fictitious names associated with accurate participant transcripts are also secured and stored separately in a locked drawer.

Data Analysis

Exploring how the conversations progressed provided insight into what the interviewee deemed significant (Jacobsson & Akerstrom, 2013). This study's narrative used the text to do analysis. The participants' stories required clustering during the analysis data under themes allowing idiosyncratic findings about the phenomenon to emerge (Nigar, 2020). Riessman's (2008) typology of narrative analysis identified one of the four combinable models: thematic analysis (which focuses on what is said). Not using the following three models: analysis of structure (which emphasizes how the story is told), structural analysis (which highlights how the story is told), analyses involving interaction or dialogue (which emphasizes the dialogic process between the speaker and listener), and analysis of performance (in which the storyteller sees storytelling as a performance).

For this study, an a priori approach is used based on the five selected themes that make up the theoretical conceptual framework. The data derived from interviews using semistructured open-ended questions to record the lived experiences, beliefs, and insights of Black women aspiring to be or in leadership positions in various fields of work with the theoretical assumptions of CRT, LMX, SET, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs either assisting or deterring

them. Analyzing phenomenological data entails categorizing and deciphering the phenomenon's essential meaning; this is accomplished through the practice of *epoche* therefore mitigating one's assumptions and experiences while analyzing narratives (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

This study used an a priori approach based on the five selected thematic categories. An initial codebook was developed, comprising codes that are grouped into five thematic categories. Five deductive thematic categories were used to code the data. Each of the five thematic categories had two or up to five themes. Each of the 13 participants' transcripts were reviewed several times and uploaded to NVivo. The five thematic categories were: Mentoring dyads, Mentors and leadership interactions with mentees, and Impacts of mentoring relationship on Black women, Experiences of Racism, Discrimination, and Intersectionality and Emotional Reactions to Mentoring.

The interview transcripts were uploaded in NVivo and analyzed in accordance with the purpose of the research, which was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of how formal and informal mentorship contributes to the advancement of Black women into leadership roles in the workplace. Exploring how, if at all the theoretical assumptions of critical race theory (CRT), leader member exchange (LMX), social exchange theory (SET), and Maslow's hierarchy of needs either assisting or deterring them. Each transcript was reviewed to locate and connect specific data passages to each thematic code. The coding process was dividing the data into smaller texts by assigning phrases or words based on themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and subthemes. Following the initial coding, additional themes and subthemes emerged from the data.

Qualitative analysis software (NVivo) recorded and managed the coding process for all transcripts to support an efficient and transparent process. The use of NVivo provided

transparency by documenting the interpretive analysis. A peer reviewer with NVivo experience was enlisted to review the coded transcripts to ensure the reliability of the interpretation. The peer reviewer recommended that the data be converted into tables to read and evaluated more easily because there was a vast quantity of material.

Means to Ensure Internal Validity

Johnson (1997) specified that qualitative research should consider internal validity. Internal validity is the confidence that the findings and conclusions are trustworthy. Determining study validation aims to test the accuracy of the methods: using a validated interview protocol, clarification of potential biases, and a rigorous process to ensure reliable interpretation (Johnson, 1997). Considering Guba and Lincoln's (1994) four major categories for establishing internal study validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For each of these categories, incorporate the perspectives of others who have written about the veracity of qualitative research, although the heaviest focus was on credibility. Involving participant data in confirming researchers' interpretations and having protocols and peer reviewers are methods for establishing credibility.

The interview protocol was validated through a content validation process to ensure that interview questions accurately reflected the participants' perspectives on the investigated phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Throughout the research process, the clarification of research bias was articulated through reflective practices and was recorded in a journal. As a Black woman researcher in a leadership position with mentorship experience, had firsthand knowledge of the study's topic. As a potential result, I acknowledge that my own experiences provided a point of bias, therefore a reflexivity journal was throughout the interview, data collections, and data Analysis process of the study. The journaling helped the researcher to be

aware and mitigate her potential biases. Qualitative analysis software (NVivo) enables a transparent and documented process for interpreting interview data. NVivo assisted the researcher in organizing the codebook's deductive thematic categories and emerging subthemes. As a result, the researcher and peer reviewer can interpret interview data transparently. Multiple reviews of the audio and video recordings and transcripts occurred concurrently with the ongoing data collection process. Engaging a peer reviewer to review coded data and to ensure reliable interpretation supported a rigorous analysis process.

Summary

This phenomenological narrative inquiry study focused on the lived experiences of Black women and how formal and informal mentorship have influenced their advancement into leadership roles. The findings are reported in a manner that is organized thematically considering the five themes. Multiple perspectives were integrated into the discussion of findings, including participant quotes serving as evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Study conclusions generated from the findings provide the basis for further understanding of the complexities of intersectionality for Black women aspiring to leadership roles in the workplace.

Chapter 4: Results

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how formal and informal mentorship supports Black women in their journey to leadership, considering the impact of intersectionality (race, sexism, and workplace systems) on mentorship for Black women. I explored the social behaviors, interactions within the mentoring dyad, and the exchange of tangible or intangible activities in the workplace that Black women experience.

Research Question

The study was guided by one central research question with two subquestions:

RQ1: How does formal and informal mentorship contribute to the advancement of Black women into leadership roles?

SQ1: How do the race and gender of a mentor impact the trust and other aspects of the mentoring relationship, if at all?

SQ2: How, if at all, did the outcome of the mentoring relationship meet the needs of the mentee's professional aspirations?

Interview Data

The data for this study was collected by conducting 13 interviews and involved a methodical process in identifying deductive and emerging themes among each of the Black women's responses. Thirteen Black women participants from various work industries took part in this study. The Zoom platform was used for the interviews and an audio recording device and then uploaded the audio files to be transcribed by Otter. Before and after each interview, time was utilized by the researcher to journal to identify any preconceptions and to ensure bias was minimal; this method is called epoché or bracketing (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The codebook

was developed starting with deductive coding and entered into NVivo. Otter.ai was used to transcribed text files and the audio recordings to review the interviews for accuracy. Each transcript was reviewed two times, prior to uploading it to NVivo software, to highlight and codes relevant to the participants' statements. The coded data were reviewed in NVivo and compiled for thematic analysis.

Each of the 13 interview transcripts were analyzed using deductive coding. The deductive codes are five themes, 18 subthemes, and 14 additional subthemes from the subthemes. Listening to the recordings of the interviews allowed for the necessary edits to the transcript, thereby providing data accuracy and clarity. Pseudonyms for participants were kept in a spreadsheet to protect their identities throughout the study. The pseudonyms were for each of the Black women and the work position they held at the time of the interview organization, whether they were in a leadership role or aspiring towards a leadership position. Table 6 identifies the pseudonyms used to code participant names to protect their identities.

Table 6

Participant Pseudonyms

Participants	Age range	Current work position	Type of organization
Tiffany	25–34	Leadership	Corporate/ Governmental
Sheila	45–54	Leadership	Governmental
Jasmine	45–54	Aspiring	Health/Higher Education
Katrina	45–54	Leadership	Nonprofit
Ebony	25–34	Aspiring	Corporation/Finance
Patricia	35–44	Leadership	Governmental
Cheryl	35–44	Leadership	Corporation
Elaine	45–54	Leadership	Education

Participants	Age range	Current work position	Type of organization
Dee	55–64	Leadership	Govt/Health
Doris	35–44	Leadership	Higher Education
Renaye	45–54	C-suite	Corporation
Lisa	55–64	Leadership	Corporation/Broadcasting
Victoria	45–54	C-suite	Corporation

After careful coding using NVivo and analysis, my coding and analysis were confirmed and validated by a peer reviewer. The peer reviewer provided helpful comments and suggestions. I went through the recommendations and made changes. After more analysis, I finalized the thematic review.

Participant Backgrounds

The primary criteria for the 13 participants were Black women of African descent aged 25 and older. Each participant had experience being a mentee in a mentorship dyad. The participants' workplaces were in different regions of the United States, each with a minimum of four years of higher education.

Tiffany attended a Historically Black University (HBCU) for her bachelor's degree and an Ivy League institution for her master's degree. She is a leader in the workplace, in her church, and in her community. Tiffany has been employed at her current job for nine years and has held multiple leadership positions. She shared that she received both formal and informal mentoring.

Sheila came to the United States to attend college on a student visa. She graduated from a Predominately White Institutions (PWI) with her undergraduate degree and her MBA. She worked in numerous positions before acquiring U.S. citizenship. Sheila is a leader in her church and community. She is a CFO for a governmental entity.

Jasmine is an Afro-Latina or Caribbean Black veteran of the United States armed forces. As a young girl, she was raised in Europe. She is enrolled in a doctoral program at a PWI while simultaneously working for a major health agency.

Katrina started her career as a substitute science teacher. She completed her undergraduate studies in science at an HBCU. Katrina wanted to combine her passion for ministry and leadership, so she returned to a PWI to further her education. She has served as a ministerial leader and is currently a college instructor.

Ebony earned her bachelor's degree from a PWI and has worked her way up from an entry-level position to a mid-level manager position over the course of three years. Before leaving and assuming a leadership position at another company, Ebony received informal mentoring within the organization.

Patricia attended an HBCU for her undergraduate education and a PWI for her law degree. She serves as a family and community leader. With hard work and dedication to learning her craft as an attorney, she was promoted to a leadership position in less than five years.

Cheryl is a hard worker, focuses on quality work, and is proactive when it comes to investigating and then vying for opportunities with new companies and organizations. She considers it a deal breaker when it comes to aligning herself with organizations that have no one women of color in leadership positions.

Elaine is an RN who has trained and instructed students. She attended a PWI for her undergraduate degree and an Ivy League PWI for her BSN/MSN dual degree. Her efforts have earned her the position of director of programs in higher education. She accepted a promotion to work for a government agency but quickly decided that the money was not worth working in a hostile environment. Elaine's involvement in her sorority, church, and community is extensive.

Dee's career began in business before transitioning to the military. Her diligence in the corporate world earned her the position of analyst control manager at a young age before she enlisted in the U.S. military. She was the first in her family to become a military officer. Before retiring and launching her own business, she served 34 years in the military.

Doris, who works at an HBCU, describes herself as highly energetic and super happy. She also noted that participating in this study powerfully affirmed her need for mentorship in areas other than the workplace. Doris secured one of the most significant financial gifts for her current organization, while completing her doctorate at an HBCU.

Renaye was born into a large, close-knit family and began her profession at an entry-level position. She is currently the chief human resource officer of a large company. She serves honorably on a variety of national boards and actively encourages and supports other Black women to apply. Within her organization, Renaye has established a mentorship and sponsor program.

Although Lisa attended and graduated from a PWI, she sent all three of her children to HBCUs for their college education. She began her career in network broadcasting before becoming a director for one of the top 300 U.S. firms. Lisa is a church minister, a member of multiple boards, and served as her sorority president.

Victoria revealed that she is an introvert by nature. She began her engineer career in a top U.S. 100 company at the age of 19. She grew up in an urban setting with her family and found herself working in a field where White men predominated. Victoria is currently a member of the company's executive team at another company.

Thematic Data Analysis

Qualitative data from participant interviews were deductively analyzed into five themes and subthemes based on the study's conceptual theoretical framework. After that, the data were sorted into predetermined, theory-based themes drawn from concepts in the literature. There were two additional subthemes—reverse mentoring and becoming a mentor—that emerged through the analysis of the data. The assigned codes aided in the organization of the data (Miles et al., 2020) using NVivo. After classifying the data into the deductive code themes, the inductive analysis consisted of constructing short sentences that connected the findings with theory and existing literature. This study's narrative data text was used to do analysis. One of the four components of Riessman's (2008) typology of narrative analysis model was used in the thematic analysis (which focused on what was said).

The first three themes (mentoring dyads, mentors and leadership interactions with mentees, and the impacts of mentoring relationships on Black women) provide data references on the study's conceptual theoretical framework. The last two of the five themes (experiences of racism, discrimination, intersectionality; and emotional responses to mentoring) reports on the study's participants experiences specifically CRT and Maslow hierarchy of needs in the conceptual theoretical framework. Each theme and subtheme are represented in Table 7.

Table 7

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme of the subtheme
1. Mentoring Dyads (relationship)	1a: Dyad Formation	1a1: Inside company
		1a2: Outside company
	1b: Race & sex of the mentors and the impacts	1b1. Asian woman positive
		1b2. Black man positive
		1b3. Black woman positive
		1b4. Black woman negative
		1b5. White man positive

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme of the subtheme
		1b6. White man negative
		1b7. White woman positive
		1b8. White woman negative
	1c: Mentoring purpose & engagement	1c. Purpose & engagement
		1c1. Lack purpose & engagement
	1d: Benefits of mentoring	1d. Benefits
1d1. Drawbacks		
2: Impacts of Mentoring Relationship on Black Women	2a: Pipeline to leadership position	NA
	2b: Self-advocate	
	2c: Self-actualization	
	2d: Reverse Mentorship	
	2e: Becoming a Mentoring	
3: Mentors and Leadership Interactions with Mentee	3a: Offered Opportunities	NA
	3b: Exchanges Skills	
	3c: Social Behavior	
	3d: Mentor Verbal Exchanges	
4: Experiences of Racism, Discrimination, Intersectionality	4a: Racism	NA
	4b: Color blindness	
	4c: Systematic racism	
	4d: Sexism	
5: Emotional Reactions to Mentoring	5a: Expressions of joy	NA
	5b: Expressions of frustration	

Theme One: Mentoring Dyads

This study's theme comprises four main subthemes exploring mentoring dyads and how dyads were formed inside and outside the organization for the participants. The dyad represents a two-person group—two people who relate to each other (Oxford Dictionary). Also, analyzing the data under this theme included the effect of the mentor's race and gender on the mentoring relationship. Another subtheme explored was the mentee's perspective of the mentoring's purpose and engagement and the benefits and drawbacks for the mentee within the dyad. The

sources and references for the mentoring dyads theme and subthemes from NVivo are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8

Mentoring Dyad Theme and Subtheme Sources and References

Theme 1	Sources	References	Definition
Mentoring Dyads (relationship)	13	187	
Subtheme 1a. Dyad Formation	13	46	Formal, informal or group (combination) formed dyads inside of the organization.
Inside of organization	13	35	
Outside of organization	3	9	
SUBTHEME 1b. Race & Gender of Mentor	13	54	Professional and personal effects of having a mentor based on race and gender
Asian Woman	1	2	
Black Man	6	7	
Black Woman	9	21	
Black Woman Negative Interactions	3	7	
White Man	4	8	
White man Negative Interactions	2	3	
White Woman	6	16	
White Woman Negative Interactions	2	3	
SUBTHEME 1c. Mentoring Purpose & Engagement	12	30	Rapport and trust; quality and quantity of time with mentor; actions to gain professional guidance or advancing one's career
Lack Mentoring Purpose & Engagement	10	21	
SUBTHEME 1d. Benefits and Drawback	13	69	Benefits that are good and actions that renders something less acceptable of being in the mentoring relationship.

Theme 1	Sources	References	Definition
Benefits	13	43	The actions that render advantages of being in the mentoring relationship.
Drawbacks	11	26	The actions that render something less acceptable of being in the mentoring relationship.

Subtheme 1a: Dyad Formation

Each participant described how their formal, informal, group, or a mix of these mentoring relationships came to be during their interview. The open-ended questions resulted in an engaging, in-depth exchange. Even though the meaning of mentorship was explained before the interview, a few women who participated in the study said their mentors were called coaches or supervisors. One of the 13 rejected formal mentoring and welcomed informal mentoring. One participant experienced an informal mentoring group outside of their organization. Table 9 shows the types of mentoring dyads and whether they were formulated inside or outside the participants' workplaces. According to the data, each participant experienced an informal mentoring relationship. Two women who received informal mentoring outside of their companies currently hold executive positions within their companies.

Table 9

Types of Dyads Within and Outside of the Organization

Participants	Formation Dyads	Mentors In or Outside of Organization
Tiffany	Formal & Informal	Inside
Sheila	Formal & Informal	Inside
Jasmine	Formal & Informal	Inside
Katrina	Formal & Informal	Inside
Ebony	Informal	Inside
Patricia	Informal	Inside

Participants	Formation Dyads	Mentors In or Outside of Organization
Cheryl	Formal & Informal	Inside
Elaine	Formal & Informal	Inside
Dee	Informal & Group	Inside
Doris	Informal	Inside
Renaye	Group & Informal	Outside
Lisa	Formal & Informal	Inside
Victoria	Informal	Inside & outside

Inside the Organization. The participants disclosed whether the mentoring relationship occurred within their respective organizations and, if so, how through open-ended questions. The data gleaned from their responses provides important insight into whether the company or its leaders support formal or informal mentoring as a tool to support the success of mentees and potential leaders inside the company. Tiffany stated, “I have an aspirational mentor, meaning I do not necessarily meet with them, but I admire them from a distance. Some of my mentors have been more formal.”

I did have one position where they said, oh, you know, we think you could benefit from a mentor, we are going to give you somebody, her name is so and so. I was surprised to find out about it being an official program. I never knew of any mentorship programs. If there were a mentorship program, they would be reticent. (Sheila)

I came into the company with a solid background, had experience, and was not a newcomer. Thus, being a mid-career hire, the experiences that I had warranted me having a higher-level manager, and I was a supervisor then. My mentor was a vice president. Moreover, my manager thought she would be a good mentor because I worked with senior-level executives. (Lisa)

It was up to me to reach out, and it is up to me to engage. It is up to me to reengage and keep people on the ball. And then, they want me to explain what I want them to do for me, which can lead to an issue. How do you know what to ask? So, it is almost like they want to spend 15 to 20 minutes max, but they want to know how to help you. So, they can say that they helped you. So, they always want a resolution. (Ebony)

Outside the Organization. The information garnered from their responses provides valuable insight into the participants' need to engage in a mentoring relationship outside the company.

We just organically created this mentorship circle, or sister circle, for ourselves. We went inward and started relying on ourselves about different things. Thus, we talk about our different company experiences to help someone else going through the same thing. So, it is an organic formation of it. However, it came out of the fact that we realized we all shared the same thing and that we needed someone internally, who would mentor us, and it was not for lack of desire or expression. We were all HR executives in the field of HR; therefore, we connected. (Renaye)

I have some mentors that I was introduced to by another mentor or senior leader who suggested that I go and talk to this person. Even if they were two or three levels higher than me. At an event where we had a chance to sit at the same banquet table, you had a chance to make a natural connection, allowing you to be in the same room and get a chance to have that personal discussion with you. (Victoria)

Subtheme 1b: Race and Sex of the Mentors and the Impacts

The analysis of the data generated in conjunction of this sub theme is described from the perspective of the participants, the professional and personal implications of mentoring dyad dynamics based on the race and gender of the mentor. Along with references from their lived experiences, Table 10 shows the number of participants who shared the race and gender of their mentors and whether it had a positive or negative effect on them, professionally and personally. Not all participants mentioned being mentored by a man, but all mentioned having a female mentor. Twelve participants recounted their experiences with a Black woman mentor, of which nine had positive interactions, and three had negative ones.

Table 10

Race and Gender of Participants

Race & Gender of Mentor	# of Mentee Participants	Positive Interactions	Negatives Interactions
Black man	6	6	0

Race & Gender of Mentor	# of Mentee Participants	Positive Interactions	Negatives Interactions
White man	6	4	2
Asian woman	1	1	0
Black woman	12	9	3
White woman	8	6	2

Positive Effects. This section describes the analysis of the data generated in conjunction with this subtheme positive effects on the participants based on the race and gender of their mentors. Participants that had positive effects in their mentoring relationship with a non-Black mentor. Tiffany said, “The first woman mentor was an Asian lady. She was a very successful engineer and seemed to be mastering the mothering thing.”

This woman was White, she didn't have to engage with me at all. She took it upon herself to keep an eye out for me. And she ultimately made sure that I got moved into what temporarily was a better position. (Jasmine)

The next three participants discussed the positive outcomes of their mentoring relationships with Black male mentors.

A Black man was my boss and mentor. He was very stern, not rude, but very to the point and wanted the best out of us and pulled the best out of us and would not take any less than the best out of us. (Patricia)

There was somebody who would be very complimentary of me, and he said, oh, you're doing great. He was an older Black male. He said, you're doing great, you keep going the way you're going, you'll go far. So, it wasn't a structured mentorship. But there was some level of mentorship. Also, a female that looks like me, has similar experiences to me. So, I guess I'm more apt to trust this person, not necessarily completely, it all depends on how the conversation goes. She showed herself friendly and very supportive. I relaxed with her; I really did relax with the White woman. And maybe that's what made the next one so hard. Because I didn't feel like I had much in common with the next person, where I've had a lot in common with that private person. (Sheila)

My first mentor was a Black man. It was what I could be, how far I can go. And that's when I started thinking, okay, yeah, I want to be more than engineer right? I want to have this big house and White picket fence and a wonderful family like him. Then Ms. BA, wow, she is an African American woman. She is sharp, she is motivating. She is

inspiring. I want to be her. I want to be Ms. BA and that kind of stuck. When you're in a place where you don't have a lot of people of color in leadership positions, specifically Black women leaders, who are not threatened by other women of color. (Victoria)

The following three study's participants discussed the beneficial outcomes of their relationships with Black women mentors.

An all-Black woman mentoring group consisting of 15 to 20 Black women. We have a common person amongst us, who we call the connector. But whatever you do, Black woman connect with another Black woman in leadership so that she can help you navigate the halls and the ways of corporate America because they can be brutal on Black women. I experience the greatest benefits when connecting with a Black woman who was in a position of leadership so that she can help guide me in terms of what it's like to be in leadership. A White woman can't tell you; a White man cannot tell you, nor a Black man cannot tell you what it's like to be a Black woman in leadership in corporate America. (Renaye)

My mentor was also African American female. So, that was extremely helpful. Because she was also African American female it was easy for me to come to her and give her examples or who did something or said something that was out of character or unnecessary or inappropriate. She understood quite well because her experience was either the same or she had already heard of that individual doing those things. It was very easy for me to be able to relate to her because we shared the same gender and of course race background. (Dee)

My eyes are opened to have a woman who looks like me, really see me not as competition, not as some sort of threat, but really sees me like you're doing a great job. She shared with me, here's where I see you burning out if you don't do this differently, or here's where I was when I started this role. It's also an exercise in trust, because she's also opening up and being vulnerable and sharing some of the missteps that she's made in her leadership journey with me so that I don't have to make the same mistakes. But she's very stylish. And she brings that to work. My mentor is a Black woman, and representation matters, not just at this level in this organization, but at all organizations. It brings out a different level of drive and how I attacked my work. (Doris)

Negative Effects. This section describes the analysis of the data generated in conjunction with this subtheme negative effects on the participants based on the race and gender of their mentors. Katrina said, "She was an accomplished Black female. But she has some deep-rooted issues who hurt my soul the most." More research participants reported their personal experiences that had a detrimental impact on them.

My first conversation with her, she seemed to want to know what my career goals were. She was very helpful, wanting to know how she could help, and give me advice. But she really ended up being a person that you had to walk on eggshells with, and a lot of other people in the company felt the same. I believe she grew up young in Jamaica, she had a rough life. And she was very masculine acting, you will come into her office, and she would have her feet up on the desk. (Ebony)

Elaine stated, “I had a White male mentor, that was because it was a formal program. That’s why he was my mentor. It did not help me.”

And he was supposed to be my mentor. But he was so busy, he canceled on me more than we met. We used to meet once a week but that got canceled and turned into twice a month. I'll take 15 minutes, over nothing.
(Jasmine)

You know, maybe if she had built me up, I mean, it's not her responsibility. I don't fault this lady at all for why it didn't work. I mean, I know, it is just because I was untrusting of the purpose of this mentorship. (Sheila)

Doris said, “I would not go back to my former boss, as a mentor, a White woman. She understood her privilege. But there was still a barrier in understanding my journey.”

Subtheme 1c: Mentoring Purpose and Engagement

The participants expressed how, or if at all the purpose and engagement in the mentoring relationship was communicated or demonstrated. This subtheme is exploring the deliberate and concise actions or not to gain professional guidance or advancing one's career, the quality and quantity of time with mentor, and rapport and trust that occurred in the dyad. Twelve participants provided 30 references demonstrating the relationship between positive engagement and clarity of purpose in establishing trust within the mentoring dyad. The one participant that did not have a reference was that, although there was an engagement, there needed to be more clarity of purpose; therefore, the trust needed to be improved. Conversely, 10 participants provided 21 references to the challenge of not having engagement and purpose. Therefore, trust was lacking. Three out of the 12 sources did not share an experience, lacking positive engagement and clarity

of purpose. Patricia said, “There is a level of expectation,” while Ebony stated, “We established trust in a relationship. My confidence level in her was high because she seemed very intelligent. She was also very personable and helpful.”

When I was teaching, I worked with two other teachers when I first went in, and it was a good relationship. They allowed me to do the things that I could do, and they often offered advice: so, this works, but this may work better. (Katrina)

For me, a safe space to help work through development opportunities and being able to have transparent conversations about things where you have to make decisions, where you're trying to understand more clearly, and where you're possibly trying to calibrate yourself. (Cheryl)

Following up on actions is essential if there was anything discussed in the conversation, like, you should think more about this, so I've tried to come prepared for the next session to chat. I see people's time as valuable no matter what level or who they are in the company, and my time is valuable. She made it a point to check in with me. (Tiffany)

Lacking purpose and engagement. This section describes the analysis of the data generated in conjunction with this subtheme lacking purpose and engagement in the mentoring relationship.

A lack of knowledge of purpose and engagement occurred when: her mentor called and said, well, how's it going? What are you working on? She just wanted to see how I was doing, but as I said, I did not know how to take advantage of their relationship. And so, I was very guarded and closed. I was very untrusting; I didn't know what to do with that then. And so, I should have taken advantage of it. (Sheila)

Elaine stated, “Mentees don't think they can get anything out of it. They think that people are judgmental. They can't be their authentic self.”

Trust is a big issue. I would say trust is an issue factor. I would say certain relationships from a mentoring perspective could do more damage than they could to improve relationships across campus. Having nothing in common. If you don't feel like that person has anything to teach you or show you or that that person's path is not similar to yours, then you might want to avoid it too. (Doris)

I'm the only woman of color on my leadership team that reports to the CEO. They went hunting, didn't invite me, didn't even ask me if I wanted to go, I wasn't going to go anyway. But you get excluded from these intangible moments. (Renaye)

Victoria said, “What will make people most uncomfortable is if it's a cold call, meaning there's no personal, preestablished relationship.”

Subtheme 1d: Benefits and Drawbacks of Mentoring From the Mentee's Perspective

Some advantages enhance the mentoring relationship, and some downsides reduce its attractiveness. According to Kram (1988), mentors should prioritize the personal and professional growth of their mentees. Participants identified at least one advantage of the mentorship connection in their interviews. Thirteen of the participants shared specific benefits, eight participants shared about experiencing more than three distinct positive benefits of the relationship. Eleven of the participants shared specific drawbacks and four shared three or more specific experiences. Table 11 shows how many benefits and drawbacks were mentioned by the participants.

Table 11

Experiences of Benefits and Drawbacks

	Total participants	One experience	Two experiences	Three or more
Benefits	13	2	3	8
Drawbacks	11	5	2	4

Benefits. Participants describe the benefits to mentorship as a mentee. Doris expressed, “I very much lean on her expertise and her experiences” (Doris).

She's a mentor and not my evaluator. I hadn't had anyone at that point who, on a consistent basis, invested that kind of time in my career outside of my family. As a mentee to see someone who has experience, and a successful career that I'm trying to accomplish myself. (Dee)

Elaine stated, “I can be my true authentic self, but I think it has benefited me more in a positive light. I have people say you know you are doing an excellent job.”

She's always been nice and sweet. Oh, when it is a situation where I just need to vent and go to her about how I am feeling about being a boss, which is not easy. She's always there to listen and give advice. I was very confident that this was something that one was going to stay between us. She allows people to voice their opinion. without the fear of, if I voice my opinion, then something's going to happen. He was very, very stern, but not rude or anything but very to the point and wanted the best out of us and pulled the best out of us and would not take any less than the best out of us. I think promotion comes so if you've had someone as mentor. (Patricia)

What we talked about in that mentor circle not only spurred communication, but it also has a long-term impact in terms of something that we continue to do today with just conversations of understanding. We talk about that amongst ourselves, then talk about how we've handled it, if we've experienced it, how we've handled it, and provide therapy to one another, to a certain extent. It's a safe space to vent. But it's also a space to come and say, okay, here's what I experienced. Has anyone experienced this? And how did you handle it? (Renaye)

My mentor who had access to those individuals understood how they thought, and experiences that she could share that would help me to be successful. We did talk about being women, being professionals, and navigating a male dominated environment, and the specific males or situations. (Lisa)

It helps me on my journey because now I'm in those circles. You have got to have these overlapping circles in your life. Created this relationship made me believe I can trust people with a broader perspective. (Victoria)

Drawbacks. As a mentee, participants describe the disadvantages of mentorship. Sheila said, “And the other ones didn't really have any feedback,” while Patricia stated, “Not every type of person is going to mesh. And not every type of mentor mentee relationship is going to be the right fit. And you can't force it either.” Victoria added, “You don't really know what you're walking into, that will make someone uncomfortable.” Additional drawbacks in the study by participants:

In the relationship it was up to me to reach out, it's up to me to engage. I have also dealt with a lot of rejections. So, if you feel like someone's not interested in you and doesn't want to do it, there are passive aggressive ways to communicate that. (Jasmine)

If we constantly have to nurture everyone else in order for us to have this relationship, it becomes tiresome. So, again, the cost is too high. And I don't know that we ever think about sometimes the cost of mentoring relationships being too high. What do I have to do or what do I have to give up? There needs to be a more efficient procedure for matching individuals with the most suitable mentors for their talents and skills, where there is room for personal and professional growth, but most importantly for their support. It is not well thought out, and the mentors are not properly trained and screened. (Katrina)

When you are trusting that you're getting the right information, trusting that this person has your best interests at heart. And trusting that if they were to have an opportunity to expose you in spaces, that will give you an opportunity to grow and move up that they would if you don't feel like they'll do that, then I would say that that would be reason to avoid that mentoring relationship. (Doris)

Theme Two: Impacts of Mentoring Relationship on Black Women

Twelve of the 13 participants shared their lived experience as a mentee, reflecting the effects and influences of the mentoring relationship that contributed to leadership positions, self-advocacy, self-actualization, reverse mentoring, or becoming a mentor for someone else. There were 81 references total from five subthemes reported by the 12 participants. Table 12 shows the distribution of the subthemes across the theme.

Table 12

Impacts of Mentoring Relationship Theme and Subthemes Sources and References

Theme	Sources	References	Definition
Impacts of Mentoring Relationship	12	81	The effects or influence of the mentoring relationship on the mentee to lead to leadership positions; self-advocate; self-actualization; reverse mentoring; or becoming a mentor for someone else.
Subtheme			
Pipeline to leadership	10	24	Experiences that impacted the mentee's journey to (promotion) leadership; mentor speaks mentee's name in important rooms; encourages the mentee to desire and pursuit more tangible and intangible
Self-advocate	11	20	Mentee speaks on one-self's behalf and taking on projects (assignment) that boost their visibility and professional/personal advancement
Self-actualization	12	27	Mentee developing and being her authentic self and identifying her inner peace in the workplace; Self-acceptance and confidence in professional abilities

Theme	Sources	References	Definition
Reverse Mentoring	4	4	Mentoring the mentor, switching the roles and then mentoring others
Becoming a Mentor	6	6	Mentee states that they are mentoring.

Subtheme 2a: Pipeline to Leadership Position

Ten participants provided their experience with the pipeline to leadership positions subtheme, which accounted for 24 of the 81 coded passages from the impacts of mentoring relationship's theme. The data demonstrated how the participants' mentoring experiences paved the way for promotions and leadership positions. Patricia said, "My mentor absolutely affected my path to promotion as far as my accomplishments."

She pushed me towards the leadership because again, I got to see a woman doing it and at that point, it was only men who I saw in those kinds of roles. The new position that I am in now is my purpose and by mentor guidance. (Ebony)

She's helping me move up to more responsibilities. She advocates for me, which is good because she knows me. I started getting leadership experience because my faculty believed in me and asked me to apply for that job. (Elaine)

That was the first time that I felt like somebody wanted to invest in me rather than me having to search, find, and ask multiple questions. How do I get from point A to point Z so I can further my career? Every junior officer wants to be a field grade officer. When you start as a first or second lieutenant, you want to make sure you accelerate, and most of us want to become colonels, at least before we end our careers. Throughout my career, after that opportunity to spend time with that mentor that I had from the beginning of my military career, I got my promotion every time I was up for promotion. (Dee)

She gave me some very valuable advice. She said, you can't control your views or how people perceive you. She said, you can help yourself by asking yourself why you're doing this. And then focus on that and don't focus on how people are reacting to your distress, you can't really control that. You can do your best within this environment, and then reach your personal goals. And she encouraged me to finish my education. That's invaluable. (Jasmine)

Subtheme 2b: Self-Advocate

The data represents how the mentee is supported in the mentoring relationship to speak on their own behalf and to embark on projects that enhance their visibility and professional/personal advancement. For participants to engage in self-advocacy, they must be confident that there will be no workplace repercussions.

I would say just being pushed to be bold, and not just the work that I do, I think the work is clear, it speaks for itself. But how I vocalize what I want, saying it, not being afraid of not saying pushback, but just standing firm. What I say, what I wasn't saying, what I mean, meaning what I say, all of that, I think has been helpful, especially now in the role that I am in. (Tiffany)

Renaye added, "My mentor informed if we get labeled as an angry Black woman, then I will call them out for labeling us that way." Katrina noted, "I knew then how to be an advocate for myself because of how they (mentors) treated me." Ebony stated, "So, she helped me advocate in that way."

I don't really worry about confidence. I guess I should, but I don't. But as I said, I'm not going to say something that I'm afraid if it gets out there. I think because he's the president of the college. When I say stuff to him, I'm mindful of how I say it. But I'm still being true to what I'm saying. (Elaine)

Subtheme 2c: Self-Actualization

This subtheme focuses on the mentee developing and being her authentic self and identifying her inner peace in the workplace, self-acceptance, and confidence in professional abilities. Most coded responses within the theme of impacts of mentorship were shared by a substantial number of participants within the subtheme of self-actualization. Twenty-seven references from 12 of the 13 study participants.

That there's a way that Black women are socialized to come into the workforce, to have to protect themselves to have to take off their authenticity and be someone else to succeed. And coming from a place where I had to do that, and walking into a space where I could completely be myself. (Doris)

Tiffany stated, “My mentor at the time just advised me to just go for what I want. I mean, multiple people were saying that, but from a business perspective, they were saying, just don't be afraid.”

Through my own tenacity and my own stubbornness where I said, I'm going to keep going regardless because I know if she can do what I can do it, she's not better than I am. He's not better than I am. Better nor smarter. They don't work harder. Nobody can outwork me. But as a Black woman, you can't be afraid to toot your own horn. Because if you sit and wait for your accomplishments to be recognized by others, there's a lag, and it won't happen. You have got to be willing to put yourself to the forefront.

Corporate America is no place for humility regarding your accomplishments as a Black woman. Now, if it does matter to you and you are okay with not being recognized or having promotional opportunities, then say nothing. When you sit down with your leader, whether you do it on a weekly or quarterly basis, and at the end of the year, when you have your performance reviews, you better document everything you've done. Document everything and discuss how it has impacted the business. Talk about it, talk about it, talk about it. And it's because of that that I am in the role I'm in today. Listen, I've been with my company for five and a half years. (Renaye)

The interesting dynamic is that as a Black woman working with White males in higher positions who are leaders in the company and having to look down, you would see them straighten themselves up to stand taller. And I never bent down to be shorter. That's not you. So, I maintain my height. I bring my authentic self. You have a voice, so use it at the table. I realized that I could do better once I overcame the fear of making mistakes. (Lisa)

Subtheme 2d: Reverse Mentoring

The data references for the reverse mentoring subtheme are participant accounts of exchanging positions and mentoring their mentor when they were mentees. Four participants indicated mentoring their mentor. Within this reverse mentoring interaction, there is a relationship of respect and support between colleagues. Cheryl stated, “I believe reverse mentoring has also aided in bridging the gap between where mentor is coming to you now and where they want or should be.”

I also think of reverse mentorship. So, I also asked if there was anything I could provide, and I've been asked a couple of times because I've been new to a specific organization. Please give me your honest opinion from a new person's perspective. So, I offer that,

even though it's not always taken. I want to be sure that I'm not just taking from you. But I also want to let you know: how can I help you in whatever you do?" (Tiffany).

I told my mentor what she said to this single mom that it's only a \$500 deposit—just not being cognizant that \$500 could be a lot; you do not know their financial situation. And because you have that privilege, it's okay if I waste \$500 and don't get a bit. You know, be mindful of things like that. So, it's not about more than the above. It's always like, seeing like social, economic stuff to that, sometimes I think that people are oblivious to, or are not mindful of, because they're more privileged or grew up in different situations. (Elaine)

Renaye added, “Where we have mentored each other and held each other accountable.”

Subtheme 2e: Becoming a Mentor

Six of the 12 participants spoke about how mentorship has inspired them to mentor others. They have counted mentoring others as a direct impact of their mentorship as a mentee. Tiffany stated, “I started what's called a mentorship match specifically just for interns and new hires. So, a lot of this was born because I want it to be connected to the minorities who are coming into the company.” Renaye said, “We have mentored each other to kind of help one another,” while Lisa said, “I have different people coming to me now for mentoring.” Patricia noted, “Like I said, new people I took on as mentors.”

Theme Three: Mentors and Leadership Interactions With Mentee

The interactions between mentors, leaders, and the mentees reveal how the relationships can lead to new opportunities, new skills, and better communication skills. The participants discussed the effects of their mentors and leaders outside-of-work social behaviors on their relationships. There were 79 references from four subthemes reported by the participants. Table 13 shows the distribution of the subthemes across the theme.

Table 13*Mentor and Leadership Interactions with Mentee Theme and Subtheme Sources and References*

Theme	Sources	References	Definition
Mentor and Leadership Interactions with Mentee	12	79	The interactions and verbal communication of mentors and leaders with the mentee that lead to opportunities; skills, communication; and social behaviors outside of the workplace.
Subtheme			
Offered Opportunities	10	15	Support, provide opportunities for networking and assignments; recommend for work projects; and provide recognition.
Exchange of skills	12	27	The mentor gives or present opportunity for the mentee to gain tangible or intangible (leadership) skills.
Social behaviors	6	9	Mentor has social exchanges with mentee - dinner, lunch, conversations outside of work, outside activities.
Mentor's Verbal Exchanges	12	28	Comments (statements) made by Mentor to Mentee.

Subtheme 3a: Opportunities Offered

Offered opportunities subthemes focused on the participants' experiences of the support, including opportunities for networking and assignments, recommendations for work projects, and recognition from their mentors. Ten of 12 participants shared 15 references regarding opportunities offered.

She encouraged me when I volunteered for a project that didn't go well. And she asked, did you talk to the person running the project so that they can give you feedback for when the next time they have you do a project? (?)

It's forcing me to use my communication skills more. I'm an introvert. I have to become a better communicator. I have also been more concise and clearer about my intent or goals. (Jasmine)

And it was through that circle that I decided to speak out about how George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery affected me. But I also pushed our CEO to make a statement on behalf of the organization about it. Opportunity and visibility could be a project rather than working on a key or critical project they would otherwise have needed to learn about. But you get exposure to the CEO. (Renaye)

Anytime there was something new going on, they were constantly tapping me. So, you're coming with us; we're going to try this new thing, and we're going to this conference. The experiences that I've had have opened the door for me to lead at some of the highest levels in the denomination that I serve. It allowed me to be on the international stage, even when I didn't want to, and offered me excellent insight into what's most important. (Katrina)

I was doing a presentation, or we were traveling together to visit a site, facility, or manufacturing plant, and we talked along the way. Or it could have been another event where we had a chance to sit at the same banquet table, and you had a chance sometimes to make a natural connection when you were in the same room. (Victoria)

Doris stated, "Early on in our mentoring relationship, I was told that you know, you almost need to over communicate and not just your expectations, but what your needs are."

Subtheme 3b: Exchange of Skills

The subtheme of exchange of skills the mentee received from a mentor provided the participant with tangible or intangible (leadership) skills and confidence to get the work completed. Twelve of the thirteen study participants reported mentors exchanging skills with 27 references.

My mentor encouraged me to make sure to keep written records. She was there to hear me out and pointed me in the direction that I should move forward in handling that situation, which I needed to speak to after the problem happened, and the steps I needed to take. This is whom you're going to call; this is what you're going to say; this is how you will handle the situation. She has given me some tools to deal with my assistants, allowing them to voice their opinions. He taught us so much and never withheld any wisdom. I learned so much from him. (Ebony)

She was there to hear me out and point me in the direction that I should move forward in handling that situation, which I needed to speak to after the problem happened, and the steps I needed to take. This is whom you're going to call; this is what you're going to say;

this is how you will handle the situation. She has given me some tools to deal with my assistants, allowing them to voice their opinions. We learned so much from him. He taught us so much. He never withheld any wisdom. (Patricia)

They pulled me in and let me help write the curriculum. When my mentor interviewed for Teacher of the Year, she pulled me in as part of that interview, like she was grooming me on how to do and show up for an interview. (Katrina)

Cheryl said that it “helped me develop and share grace and empathy.”

My mentor made ways for me to be able to stand in front of the individuals who I needed to do those type of presentations, because she volunteered me, she prepared me now. But she volunteered me more like voluntold me that I was going to be doing this. And she made sure that I was ready. You know, the preparation that was required, looking at my slide decks and being sure that they looked appropriate, making sure that I practice and rehearse not only with her or with other people. She walked me through various processes, she made sure that I understood material in that was from the sense of, you know, the process of the studying and making sure I understood policies and making sure that I knew how to do the things that were going to be asked of me when I got to basic officer leadership course. (Dee)

Subtheme 3c: Social Behaviors

The social exchange between the mentor and mentee is the subtheme of the outside the workplace interactions. The participants shared the positive interactions that affected the relationship. Only six of the thirteen study participants reported mentors engaging with them outside of the workplace with nine references. Victoria said, “We just spent time and he spent time pouring into me and my husband,” while Ebony stated, “When we go out in public, we can see each other and hug each other, and we talk.” Katrina stated, “There was this rich relationship, but we'd known each other at this point for 15 years or so. I went on vacation with her family. We went on a cruise together.”

Connect at least once or twice a month, if not more, depending on it is like, there's, of course you connect with people because of work, but like outside of your normal work obligations, just kind of like checking in with each other and being able to run ideas off of them. We can have a whole bunch of people who mentor inside. But I think that's the difference also, too, with my formal mentor is like, it is that work, mentorship during work hours, where my informal, we meet outside of work, too. So, it you still are making those bonds and connections, I think I would have a stronger connection to my informal

mentee mentor. (Elaine)

Subtheme 3d: Mentors Verbal Exchange

The data represents how the mentor and leaders' verbal communication to the participants supported their self-actualization. Twenty-eight shared lived experiences of verbal exchanges, which were referenced by 12 participants. Lisa said, "She went on to tell me, walk in your authority, you're here, here's what they're going to try to do to you."

About a month after I got to my institution, my boss broke a record for the university's most significant corporate gift ever to have been closed. I broke her record a month later, and she was so excited for me. And I remember holding my breath, not knowing what that moment would be like. She said that I hired you to do this. This is why you're here, and she was genuinely happy. She also said I see a leader in you. Your kind of leadership is what we need on the team. Even just from a coaching standpoint, you know, people on our team need to learn your expertise, and I need to put you in a position to do that. (Doris)

My mentor advised me to go for what I wanted. From a personal perspective, he said, don't be afraid. They've given me an example; here's how you're coming off as timid, right? You come into the room and sit in the back; you come off as quiet but have great ideas. (Tiffany)

My mentor looked at me, and she said, " You handle your stuff very well. I was proud of you. My mentor said, "You are bright and gifted." And you need to ensure you don't allow them to push you into places that don't work for you. (Katrina)

Theme Four: Experiences of Racism, Discrimination, Intersectionality

The lived experiences of racism, discrimination, and intersectionality in the workplace articulated by 12 of the 13 participants is the fourth theme. The theme is comprised of four subthemes: racism, color blindness, systematic racism, and sexism. The participants' gender further hindered the potential to develop and advance in an equitable manner. The organizational policies, tactics, and procedures also inhibited the mentees' equal ability to thrive and progress. Table 14 displays the four subthemes representing 81 coded passages based on the mentees' experiences in the workplace.

Table 14*Racism, Discrimination, Intersectionality Theme and Subtheme Sources and References*

Theme	Sources	References	Definition
Experiences of Racism, Discrimination, Intersectionality	12	81	Mentees' experiences of racism, color blindness, systematic racism, sexism
Subtheme			
Racism	10	32	Negative experiences based on the mentee's race (ethnicity).
Color blindness	8	17	Mentee experiences exclusion and obstacles to advance (mentorship, work opportunities, and promotions) based on their race.
Systematic racism	8	22	Organizational policies, methods, and procedures that impede the mentee's equitable opportunity to thrive and advance.
Sexism	8	10	Mentee's gender impedes the equitable opportunity to thrive and advance.

Subtheme 4a: Racism

The subtheme of racism accounts for the participants' experiences that were based on the mentees' race. Ten participants discussed a total of 32 instances in which racism was present in either the mentoring relationship or the workplace.

In front of everyone, including the candidate, a white male colleague told me my hair and colors were different. It's one thing to say, "I like your hair," and move on. It was like a five-minute rant, and it made me uncomfortable. I know what it is: microaggression. I've not been directly told that I'm an angry Black woman. But when you hear things and see things going on, they are intimidating. (Tiffany)

Patricia stated, "I have been in situations where I've said something to someone just in speaking up. And it's taken like, oh, my gosh, I can't believe she said that. So, I have seen racism and I have experienced it." Cheryl said, "Some of the biases that I saw in my mentor with some of the

questions or maybe even some of the ignorance that existed, from a world standpoint, in some of the conversations.”

The last boss they brought in was racist. I know she was racist; she had no confidence in me whatsoever. She was pissed that I used her as a reference. And when she found out that I had the job, she said, “That’s a mighty big job for you.” (Elaine)

Statements about my physical appearance, such as how I dress or have my nails, would be made. And you are showing cleavage, which is a little too much. Can you put on a tank top? Expectations are to look like White Becky from Kmart, which are little subtle things. (Elaine)

We talk about how, in meetings, we get talked over still today as C-suite executives and being around the table as Black women. Or when you speak, it is as if you didn't, and someone else can say the same thing. There's an entirely different response or reaction to it. How do we overcome that stereotype? (Renaye)

And I remember coming back from maternity leave. And I was so proud to show off my baby girl, my first baby. And I remember one of the lead accounting saying, oh, look at that little monkey. I will never forget it. (Renaye)

I remember working late one day, and my little office, my little desk, was pushed back. So, if you walked into accounts payable, you couldn't see if I was at my desk. And I remember this girl in HR coming in, and she was telling a joke, which was a racial joke. And people were looking at her like, don't say it. And that was one of those moments when I was broke. I thought the relationship was good. It was not just telling jokes and making comments, but me later experiencing a lack of opportunities because of who I am and what I look like. (Renaye)

My experience working with White men in senior positions during my first job in a significant company kept me closed off for an extended time in my career. Furthermore, you still do not know why people are smiling in your face and trying to stab you in the back. Those people were blatantly obvious. (Victoria)

Subtheme 4b: Color Blindness

The color blindness subtheme focuses on the mentee facing marginalization in the workplace. Therefore, the participants experienced exclusion and obstacles that hindered advancement (mentorship, work opportunities, and promotions) based on their race. Eight of the participants recounted their personal experiences with 17 different types of exclusions and difficulties in the workplace.

If they say we will mentor you, they say we have decided not to do that anymore. If you think mentoring would not help me, then nothing was said. Furthermore, that was it. So, I interpreted that as okay. I was doing fine. (Sheila)

Ebony stated, "I was dealing with being bullied, gaslit, racism, and you name it. It was rough.

Nobody talks about that in the military. It was built for White men by White men. But it was very rough in that environment."

Our CHR decided that she wanted to retire. I had been on a succession plan to backfill her. They went outside the company and looked outside the company. I went to them and said, "I want to put my name in the hat for this job." I went through the interview process and talked to everybody about what I had done for this company, and they were shocked. So, I have not been recognized a lot as a Black woman. (Cynthia)

Subtheme 4c: Systematic Racism

The subtheme of systematic racism had eight participants experience 22 references of organizational policies, practices, and procedures that impede their equitable opportunity to thrive and advance. These experiences shared by the participants are within the workplace.

Ebony stated, "The Company has these mentorship programs and career circles and employee resource groups. Unlike every other group or program, there's no expectations, there's no mission, to the diversity group that is led by a Caucasian VIP woman." Patricia said, "Our office is as non-diverse as it may look, it's actually one of the most diverse offices. We had a Black leader, DA, and now we have a Hispanic DA."

I also pushed our CEO to make a statement on behalf of the organization about it. And I bring that up because we have never commented on anything socially in the company's history. We've never done it. And so, through the circle, I was conversing with all of them and hearing and understanding what they were doing, what their CEOs were doing, and what their organizations were doing. And I said we're not going to lag. (Renaye)

Lisa stated, "But it was like, there are issues with diversity. But this was different. This was a little more challenging, because it was a corporate culture on top of the issue of Black and

White.” Victoria noted, “There are disconnected activities that support Black women, growth, and mentorship.”

Subtheme 4d: Sexism

The participants shared their experiences related to how gender impeded the equitable opportunity to thrive and advance. Eight participants recounted 10 experiences of sexism for this subtheme.

A man built this company. Everybody on the board is White and male, and the infrastructure and the workers are always women, which is interesting. Mid-level management is always female. There are not enough women, period, in leadership. There are not enough Black women in leadership positions. There need to be more Black women. (Jasmine)

Katrina stated, “Here's a senior colleague, that has an opportunity to be in a mentoring role. But that became problematic. And so when I say sometimes it's too heavy a cost some of the men and, and then it became toxic.” Patricia said, “There were never any excuses, whatever my male counterparts had to do, or, or whatever standard my male counterparts were held to. I was held to the same exact standard.” Cheryl noted, “When I was interviewing, and I didn't see anybody that looked like me, like nowhere. And for my ethnic or gender there, but it wasn't anybody in leadership position.”

Theme: Emotional Reactions to Mentoring and Workplace

The emotional reaction data indicated by the participants of joys and frustrations to their mentorship is in this subtheme. The breakdown of the subthemes of the 10 sources and 31 references in the emotional reactions to mentoring and workplace is in Table 15.

Table 15*Emotional Reactions to Mentoring and Workplace Theme and Subtheme Sources and References*

Theme	Sources	References	Definition
Emotional reactions to mentoring and workplace	10	31	Mentees' words of joy and frustration regarding mentorship
Subtheme			
Expressions of joy	7	11	Mentees' words of joy regarding mentorship
Expressions of frustration	9	20	Mentees' words of frustration regarding mentorship

Subtheme 5a: Expression of Joy by Mentees

In this subtheme seven sources made 11 references to joy regarding mentorship. The words expressed the positive outcomes of the mentoring relationship. The expression of joy supports how mentorship has afforded the Black women to trust and have confidence in the workplace. Tiffany said, "I would say my mentoring relationships in the workplace have been good, and unexpected."

It becomes easy to call and talk to her and ask her questions. So, I do feel like she has an open-door policy. She's friendly, open, and engaging, which is a good sign. Okay. And she's laissez faire. So, her leadership style works for me. (Jasmine)

There was this rich relationship, but we'd known each other at this point for, you know, 15 years or so. So, that was the gift and the beauty of that mentoring relationship because it became a friend and extended family relationship. I really appreciated my mentor. (Katrina)

I was comfortable going to my mentor. So, my confidence in her was high. Why they inspired me so much is because not only was she a female, but she carried herself in such a way that I felt like, you know, it was possible. (Ebony)

Patricia stated, "I always admired her, she's very poised and very calm. I've always admired her being able to be firm, but yet, like in the way she handles situations and problems that arise.

She's very poised and calm in it." Elaine explained, "I've been blessed that I've been able to have a White woman who I felt that I can confide in. That's an advocate that has my back." "My mentor relationship was very solid, it was a trusting one. It was all these nuggets that she was just pouring out. And it was such a blessing" (Lisa). Tiffany said, "I would say my mentoring relationships in the workplace have been good, and unexpected". Victoria added, "I have been blessed enough and fortunate enough to be a part of a network of women, specifically Black women, where we have mentored each other and held each other accountable."

Subtheme 5b: Expressions of Frustration

The second subtheme of the emotional reactions to mentoring and the workplace theme had nine sources that shared 20 references of frustration regarding mentorship. The words conveyed the unfavorable interactions in the mentoring relationship, resulting in discord and sorrow in the workplace participant. The frustration within the dyads or workplace that the participants shared led to a disinterest in mentoring or the organization. Tiffany said, "I almost have to be careful of who is attaching themselves to me as a mentor. As an engineer, there's not a lot of women and there's not a lot of Black women." Jasmine stated, "I did not have a mentor and it drove me crazy. So, I did six years on my own, working on a special duty with a chain of command that was not geographically located where I was stationed." Katina added, "I had professors who wanted to be mentors, but they treated me like my brain didn't work." Ebony noted, "Before the female mentor, I was really sad and discouraged at the fact that it seemed like female mentors are rare."

The most disappointing relationships have come with other Black women. I will say that women, in general, have disappointed me. And there's probably something there about why, when you think about those folks (women), they should be able to lift you as they climb. (Cheryl)

Dee stated, “It started out as a tremendously horrific journey,” while Lisa said, “It was difficult for me navigating this quote unquote, polite culture.”

Because in the same meetings, you can have a White man banging his fist on the table. And he's considered passionate, right? But if I were to do the same thing and display that same behavior, I would be emotional and angry, and what's the matter with me? (Renaye)

I know that it will be broken; that spirit will be broken one day, and I know how I felt when mine was broken repeatedly, not just once. And so, to be there for someone—and I won't say to help avoid it because you can't avoid it—that may not sound very optimistic, but I don't think you can; I don't see the world changing anytime soon. I didn't have a mentor when my spirit was broken. It was a lonely place for me then because I didn't know I had anybody to turn to or talk to and ask how I should handle this. (Renaye)

When you know corporate America gets to you and breaks you, you see what it is. I'm the only woman of color on my leadership team that reports to the CEO. They went hunting, didn't invite me, and didn't even ask me if I wanted to go. I wasn't planning on going. But you get excluded from these moments. Okay, so everybody left the office, and I'm the only executive in the office because everybody else was hunting. (Renaye)

Chapter Summary

Thirteen Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions from various work industries and professions shared their experiences as mentees. Using deductive classification of five themes with 18 subthemes, 14 additional subthemes were identified. Chapter 5 presents the study's findings and a discussion of their implications, as well as suggestions for future research and practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion

There is a lacuna in the literature regarding the impact of mentorship on Black women aspiring to or currently holding leadership positions, including the relationship between Black women's workplace mentorship, color blindness, and systemic racism, which impairs one's self-actualization and leadership achievement. Black women are as talented, qualified, and skilled as their White male counterparts, but they are often neglected owing to a lack of trust in their abilities and efficacy from others (Berry & Bell, 2012). Black women may not be aware of formal or informal mentoring opportunities or may choose not to participate in a formal process (Clutterbuck, 2002), even though access to authentic mentorship is as essential today as it has been in the past for advancing Black women into leadership positions (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olivero, 2014). The lack of awareness and opportunities mentorship hinges on intersectionality, their race and gender and how white men and women perceive them. Through race-related dialogues, Black women can obtain more genuine mentorship opportunities, which will pave the way to leadership positions.

Black women may not be included in the leader's in-group due to the prevalence of White leaders in most industries and due to color blindness, unconscious and implicit bias, and racism. Consequently, they may be excluded from mentoring, networking, and professional advancement opportunities. When contemplating the persistence of inequalities, it is preferable to view categories such as race and gender as overlapping and constitutive, as opposed to isolated and distinct (Crenshaw, 2011)—most notably in marginalized individuals' or groups' experiences.

Significance of the Study

Black women continue to face obstacles, such as their race, gender, and stereotypes, which impede many of their attempts to enter and advance in the workforce; consequently, they

are underrepresented, underpaid, and frequently disrespected (Carrazana, 2020). While Black women account for 7.4% of the total population in the United States, only 4.4% hold managerial positions, and only 1.4% report directly to the CEO (Danesh & Huber, 2021). Beginning early in a woman's career and having roots in early-onset institutional barriers and global systemic discrimination, the various impediments that contribute to challenges for Black women pursuing leadership positions (Buckles, 2019). Firms with a culture that leads to discrimination and racism against Black women have detrimental effects on their careers and their ability to find mentors. Consequently, organizational leaders may not view the benefits of mentoring Black women as valuable. Allen et al. (2017) found in a metaanalysis that mentored employees earn more than their counterparts who are not mentored.

Even though there are problems for White women leaders in the workplace as well, the combination of racism and sexism is a bigger problem for Black women (Connely, 2020). According to the findings of this study, the references of experience by the participants were racism, color blindness, and systematic racism. Women are frequently overlooked for leadership positions due to the outdated belief that men are more suited to and effective in leadership roles (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Companies aim to place men in high-paying leadership positions to financially support their families, ignoring that many workplaces employ women who are the heads of their households. Dickens and Chavez (2017) highlighted the necessity of inclusive workplace environments that recognize and appreciate the significance of varied cultural values.

This study was necessary to investigate the importance of establishing relationships and opportunities through mentorship to break the glass ceiling for more Black women and concurrently establish a solid succession pipeline for leadership positions. The research serves as

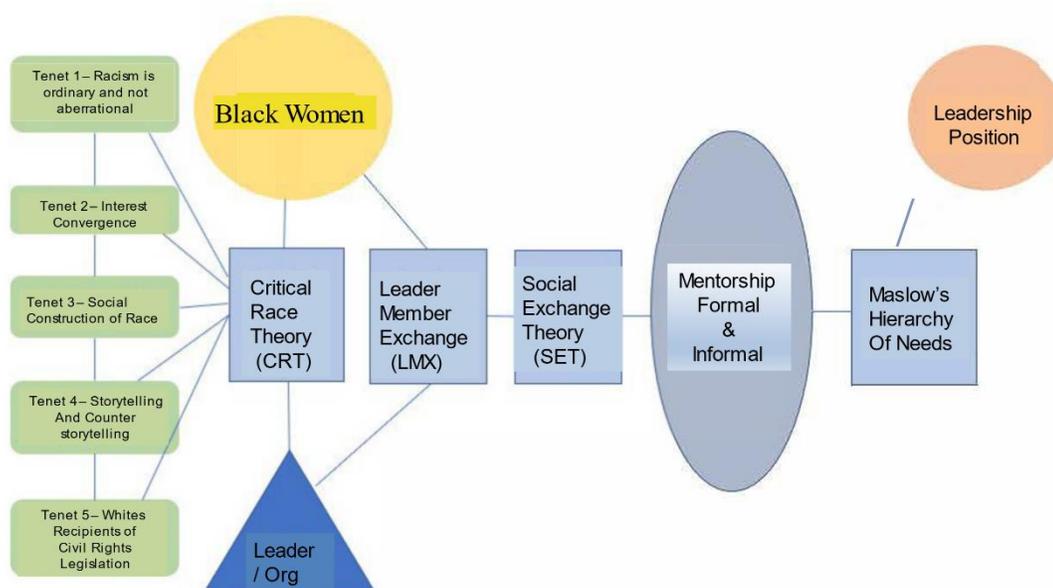
a launching point for future research on mentorship practices that facilitate and inspire Black women to ascend to leadership positions. According to Rowley (2021), a mentor can help Black women overcome challenges that prohibit them from attaining their professional goals.

Theoretical Foundation

The review of the literature for this study concentrated on the conceptual and theoretical framework of formal and informal mentorship, which involved the application of developed theoretical models. It was necessary to conduct research into the factors that contribute to the low number of Black women who reach the highest levels of leadership, in addition to examining the significance of mentorship for Black women who are pursuing or are already in leadership positions. Relationships are the cornerstone of mentoring, regardless of whether the arrangement is formal or informal. The conceptual and theoretical framework of this investigation is displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11

The Conceptual and Theoretical Framework



The five tenets of critical race theory (CRT) (Delgado et al., 2017), Leader member exchange theory (LMX), social exchange theory (SET), and the Maslow hierarchy of needs were considered the most important factors in the effort to raise the number of Black women in leadership positions. Using these theoretical frameworks, I was able to interview women lived experiences and explore crucial social behaviors, which may indicate the significance of mentorship opportunities for Black women who aspire to leadership careers.

Institutions, systems, and policies, according to CRT, are designed to reinforce, codify, and perpetuate socioeconomic and racial group-specific risks, opportunities, and exposures. Mentors and leaders recognize the value of contributing their time and resources for underrepresented Black women who aspire to be in leadership roles to understand how to overcome these obstacles in the workplace. Attaining one's full potential in the workplace and being prepared for leadership roles can be facilitated for Black women by formal or informal mentoring relationships.

Methodology

This qualitative research integrated two designs to explore the phenomenon of Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions in the workplace via the narratives of Black women's experiences as mentees. Thirteen Black women in various professions who held or aspired to hold a leadership position were interviewed as part of this qualitative study.

The focus of the semistructured interviews was to gather data on Black women's lived experience on how formal and informal mentoring plays a part in the advancement of Black women into leadership roles. To establish the content validity of the interview protocol, two colleagues with research and interviewing experience, as well as knowledge of the complexities of intersectionality for Black women, were consulted. Each of the 13 interviews was conducted

using Zoom and documented using a separate recording device for transcription purposes. To determine whether the structure of the interview and the questions would elicit the necessary information to answer the research questions, a pilot interview was conducted. In addition, the interview's length and the functionality of the recording device were confirmed during this interview.

Key Findings

The 13 participants shared their lived experiences as mentees in their various workplaces, which resulted in five deductive themes, 18 subthemes, and 14 additional subthemes from the subthemes. The five deductive themes were (a) mentoring dyads (relationship); (b) impacts of mentoring relationships on Black women; (c) mentor and leadership interactions with mentees; (d) experiences of racism, discrimination, intersectionality; and (e) emotions and reactions to mentoring. Table 16 outlines the themes and subthemes identified.

Table 16

Identified Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme of the subtheme
1. Mentoring Dyads (relationship)	1a: Dyad Formation	1a1: Inside company
		1a2: Outside company
	1b: Race & sex of the mentors and the impacts	1b1. Asian woman positive
		1b2. Black man positive
		1b3. Black woman positive
		1b4. Black woman negative
		1b5. White man positive
		1b6. White man negative
		1b7. White woman positive
		1b8. White woman negative

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme of the subtheme
	1c: Mentoring purpose & engagement	1c. Purpose & engagement 1c1. Lack purpose & engagement
	1d: Benefits of mentoring	1d. Benefits 1d1. Drawbacks
2: Impacts of Mentoring Relationship on Black Women	2a: Pipeline to leadership position	NA
	2b: Self-advocate	
	2c: Self-actualization	
	2d: Reverse Mentorship	
	2e: Becoming a Mentoring	
3: Mentors and Leadership Interactions with Mentee	3a: Offered Opportunities	NA
	3b: Exchanges Skills	
	3c: Social Behavior	
	3d: Mentor Verbal Exchanges	
4: Experiences of Racism, Discrimination, Intersectionality	4a: Racism	NA
	4b: Color blindness	
	4c: Systematic racism	
	4d: Sexism	
5: Emotional Reactions to Mentoring	5a: Expressions of joy	NA
	5b: Expressions of frustration	

Twelve of the 13 participants encountered misogyny as a subtheme of racism, discrimination, and intersectionality. Promotion and mentoring relationships were impeded by microaggressions, intimidation, and exclusion from activities and work opportunities. Consequently, participants who had attained positions of leadership discussed how genuine mentoring encouraged self-advocacy and trust and how reverse mentoring helped combat some microaggressions and intimidation.

The subtheme of race and gender of the mentor influenced the mentoring purpose and engagement of the 13 participants. There were more references regarding the participants in

mentoring engagements with women than men. Either the participants had genuine beneficial relationships with Black women mentors, or their expectations of support from women who resembled them were unfulfilled. In addition, the participants lived experiences revealed genuine beneficial relationships with an Asian woman and White women mentors but more racism or color blind interactions from White women than White men. Those mentoring relationships described as genuine and characterized by deliberate and concise actions, quality time invested, and a respectful rapport contributed to the development of trust within the mentoring relationship.

The data from the mentees' lived experiences revealed that the pipeline to leadership and self-actualization subthemes supported their ability to advocate for themselves. When the mentor advocated for them for promotions and supported them with tangible and intangible leadership skills, the mentee developed authenticity, self-acceptance, and confidence in her professional abilities. Emerging as two of the most important subthemes were reverse mentoring and becoming a mentor oneself. The mentee participants started mentoring their mentors, which resulted in them switching positions when needed or becoming mentors themselves to other people, thus answering the central research question of the study. Black women who have had positive mentorship experiences and gained authenticity, self-acceptance, and confidence in their professional abilities were promoted to positions of leadership.

The subtheme of mentors' verbal exchanges had the most significant number of references and impact regarding mentor and leadership interaction with the mentee, thereby affecting the mentoring relationship positively or negatively. When the subtheme of verbal exchanges between mentors and mentees was positive, other subthemes involving the exchange

of skills, the provision of opportunities, and the improvement of social behavior were also positively affected.

Ten of the 13 participants shared emotional reactions to mentoring and the workplace. They expressed frustration more than joy. The references to expressions of joy centered on the mentor's authenticity, while the references to frustration focused primarily on the racism and color blindness they encountered with mentors or leaders in the workplace.

Study Conclusions and Implications

The primary research question explored in this study was, how does mentorship, both formal and informal, contribute to the progression of Black women into positions of leadership? These two subquestions were considered:

SQ1: How do the race and gender of a mentor impact the trust and other aspects of the mentoring relationship, if at all?

SQ2: How, if at all, did the outcome of the mentoring relationship meet the needs of the mentee's professional aspirations?

Based on the five selected thematic categories derived from the theoretical conceptual framework, an a priori approach was utilized to examine the advancement of Black women into leadership positions via formal or informal mentorship. Within the five deductive thematic categories, there were 19 topics and 14 subthemes. Four conclusions were derived from the thematic and narrative analyses. The four conclusions presented provide answers to the central question and the two subquestions, while bolstering my conceptual theoretical framework.

1. The perpetuation of color blindness continues to exclude and impede Black women in the workplace.
2. Mentoring is ineffective when there is a dearth of purpose, clarity, and engagement.

3. Informal mentors within and outside organizations are most effective in supporting Black women advancement into leadership positions.
4. When effective mentoring for Black women occurs, it develops their capacity to mentor others.

Conclusion 1: The perpetuation of color blindness continues to exclude and impede black women in the workplace. Color blindness compels Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions to navigate microaggressions, double standards, unconscious bias, constant questioning of their leadership abilities, and the inability to express any emotion, let alone anger or frustration, without being labeled aggressive or threatening (Eastman et al., 2021). Race scholars have designated color blindness as one of the most important political strategies for maintaining White supremacy and racial inequality. One of the primary arguments is that the color blind racial framing acknowledges that the problems highlighted have a structural nature (e.g., class and racial inequalities and the absence of a sufficient safety net; Bonilla-Silva, 2020). Everyday interactions with power-blind sameness and color blind difference shield Whiteness, but Brayboy et al. (2013) argued that this privilege hinders our pursuit of equality, justice, and democracy. Consequently, inhibits the capacity to value individualism.

The experiences of perpetuation of color blindness exclude and impede Black women in the workplace address both subquestions in the study. The participants shared how the race and gender of a mentor impacted the trust and other aspects of the mentoring relationship. The impact on the relationship was determined by the mentor's beliefs in the value of Black women within the organization. Consequently, the philosophies of the mentor can be a determining factor in the mentee's professional aspirations.

The participants in the study recounted their lived experiences of these actions and verbal comments. Consequently, this affected their mentoring relationships and caused fear, intimidation, and missed opportunities in the workplace. The conclusion lends credence to the body of previous research, as well as CRT and Maslow's hierarchy of needs as paths to self-actualization within the conceptual and theoretical framework developed for this study. Racism and White privilege thrive when color blindness is accepted (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to CRT tenets one (the centrality of race and racism in society) and four (interdisciplinary perspective), color consciousness should replace color blindness. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), a central tenet of CRT is that racism is expected rather than abnormal and is profoundly ingrained in U.S. culture. Therefore, the need is of great importance, enhancing the significance of color awareness for mentors and leaders in the workplace. "Being seen" is crucial to one's opportunity to realize their full creative, intellectual, and social potential through intrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation of a person who has achieved self-actualization is the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Being seen as a Black woman opens the door to rest, acceptance, security, relationships, and shared accomplishment as their authentic selves without fear, code-switching, or imposter syndrome. When sameness is believed and pushed by a white people to be the only way to harmony, the denial of diversity is rejected and considered substandard. Leaders and mentors who intentionally or unintentionally oppress others can choose to support or encourage mentoring relationships. Ebony described, "Realize I'm in a company that wants to promote diversity but is maybe hindered by a leader who doesn't appreciate or see the value in me." Doris stated, "She understood her privilege. But there was still a barrier in understanding my journey." Lisa stated, "We always deal with the race card, we always deal with some differences and being mistreated, for example, a white woman just got a

promotion that was supposed to be mine.” Katrina added, “She would say things to me, like, you’re too Eurocentric.”

Therefore, a mental transformation would be required for the privileged and powerful to recognize their self-interest in their belief that there is space in leadership for others, including Black women. This transformation can increase leaders' awareness of what Black women's diverse thoughts and abilities would contribute to the organization, thereby increasing the leader's likelihood of incorporating them into their work in-group.

Conclusion 2: Mentoring is ineffective when there is a dearth of purpose, clarity, and engagement. Mentoring is advantageous if the formal or informal mentoring relationship is highly fulfilling for the mentee. Mentors help their mentees develop their talents, skills, knowledge, and abilities—all components of their human capital, regardless of the structure. Liang et al. (2002) indicated that mentoring relationships should be predicated on trust, engagement, and authenticity. A value must be placed on the interpersonal aspects of mentoring since they profoundly impact the mentee's sense of accomplishment and growth (Boddy et al., 2012). In the absence of a significant relationship, the lack of purpose, clarity, and engagement hinders the mentee's development, hence demonstrating within the conceptual theoretical framework of the study what will impede the ascending up Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory pyramid. Consequently, it demonstrates that the leader or mentor does not acknowledge the value (SET) of investing in the Black woman as a potential leader for the organization and has relegated the woman to the outgroup (LMX). As a result, Black women may experience employment insecurity and fail to realize their full potential within the organization. Sheila said, “I was very untrusting. I didn't know what to do with that at the time. And so, I didn't take advantage of it,” while Elaine stated, “Because mentees don't think they can get anything out of

it. They can't be their authentic self.” Victoria noted, “What will make people most uncomfortable is if it's a cold call, meaning there's no personal, pre-established relationship.”

In the absence of a distinct purpose, the participants' engagement in the relationship diminished, as demonstrated by their own experiences. Mentors and mentees should be responsible for ensuring that the relationship's purpose is explicit and that engagement is consistent and purposeful once the relationship has been established. This is a foundational component of the mentoring relationship. With clarity of purpose and engagement, trust is formed. When trust is not created, it can cause the Black woman not to believe it is safe to develop and grow within the organization.

Conclusion 3: Informal mentors within and outside organizations are most effective in supporting Black women's advancement into leadership positions. Saddler's (2010) research is on how mentoring helps to alleviate the detrimental experiences and difficulties that Blacks contend with in the workplace. Mentoring has proven to be a significant social development phenomenon that has survived paradigm shifts throughout history (Clawson, 1996). According to the literature and the findings of this study, mentoring plays an essential role on the path to leadership. Several researchers have investigated the training of mentors with an emphasis on the mentees' achievement of positive outcomes—in particular, for Black female mentees (Butts et al., 2008; Eby, Allen et al., 2008; Haggard et al., 2010). At the same time, the focus of this study switched from the mentor to the mentee, as well as their individual experiences and interactions during the mentoring process.

All 13 participants in the study had informal mentors either inside or outside of their organization that were more supportive than the formal mentors within the companies. According to the findings of this study, the participants' informal mentors possessed qualities

such as sincerity, encouragement, trustworthiness, and skillfulness. Therefore, supporting the primary research question of informal mentorship contributes to the advancement of Black women into leadership positions. The results of the informal mentoring relationship satisfied the mentee's professional goals, which was one of the study's subquestions. The research supports Liang et al. (2002), who found that women prefer process-oriented relationships that entail authenticity, empathy, and empowerment. The findings from the study support the central research question and the two subquestions. Patricia said, "My mentor absolutely affected my path to promotion as far as my accomplishments." Dee described, "Throughout my career after that opportunity to spend time with that mentor that I had from the beginning of my military career. Every time I was up for promotion, I have made my promotion." Renaye stated, "And I would also say it is also important to connect with a black woman who is in a position of leadership so that she can help guide in terms of what it's like to be in leadership."

There is a continued connection between 10 of the Black women and some of their informal mentors. These informal mentoring relationships were effective due to the consistent and genuine engagement between the mentor and mentee, along with the purpose being the mentor wanting the participant (mentee) to be successful. With the help of Black women's education about the benefits of mentorship and how to identify mentors informally, mentoring has proven to be a significant social development phenomenon that has survived paradigm transformations throughout history and will likely survive the current transition in the United States and around the world.

Conclusion 4: When effective mentoring for black women occurs, it develops their capacity to mentor others. Individuals can benefit from developing their professional identities and careers through mentoring, a form of socialization. Developing self-actualization among

Black women in predominantly White organizations can be facilitated by mentoring. Black women have been underrepresented in a variety of areas of corporate leadership. McDonald and Westphal (2013) explained why minority women new to leadership receive significantly less mentoring than other new leaders. Self-actualization was defined by Maslow (1971) as the state of being devoted to and actively engaged in a worthy activity. Mentorship enables Black women mentees to realize their utmost potential (Fletcher, 1998). Consequently, they can discover and cultivate their authentic talents and creative inclinations and then pursue them relentlessly until they reach the pinnacle of excellence.

The participants' lived experience and the literature support the study's conceptual theoretical framework on adequate mentoring building capacity for Black women, which results in increased potential in securing leadership positions. The participants discussed what mentoring meant to them as mentees in their pursuit of or advancement to leadership roles. Four of the study's participants have reached the top level of their respective career fields, and three participants are midway in leadership. Tiffany said, "My mentor at the time just advised me to just go for what I want. I mean, multiple people were saying that, but from a business perspective, they were saying, just don't be afraid." Doris stated:

That there's a way that black women are socialized to come into the workforce, to have to protect themselves to have to take off their authenticity and be someone else to succeed. And coming from a place where I had to do that, and walking into a space where I could completely be myself.

Katrina said, "I knew then how to be an advocate for myself because of who they had been for me."

Teaching and learning early in the lives of Black girls about the purpose and benefits of mentorship for themselves, the mentor, and businesses will create opportunities for more

effective mentoring relationships. Also, what was gleaned from the study is that when a mentoring relationship is effective the mentee becomes a mentor.

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for leaders and mentors in all industries to increase the trajectory of imminent Black women leaders include utilizing the findings of this research to establish, develop, or strengthen their color consciousness, thereby influencing the people and systems within their organizations. Likewise, they should be eager to facilitate opportunities for honest conversations, while also trying to hear and understand the perspectives of Black women. Leaders and mentors creating space for Black women to be seen and be their authentic selves in the workspaces. The leaders in the multiple workplaces, promoting the identification of similar mentorship goals among all workers and creating opportunities for candid dialogues about the advantages of diversity in the workplace.

To improve formal or informal mentorship, organizational and educational leaders could provide mentors and mentees with informal mentoring training. An informal mentoring-designed training would help the mentor or mentee candidates explore and identify their beliefs, biases, behaviors, strengths, and challenges in a safe environment before engaging in a mentoring relationship. Therefore, both mentors and mentees obtain the optimal dyad match, purpose clarity, and effective engagement within the relationship, including color consciousness and advocating for underrepresented Black women for leadership positions. Teaching about the dynamics of mentorship from a positive perspective early in a Black girl's education will change the dynamics of mentorship. Having been exposed to mentorship early in school, Black women who enter the workforce will know to identify informal mentors who are color conscious and

acknowledge the value of investing in them, thereby placing them in the in-group to network with others in the workplace.

Recommendations for Scholarship

This research and these recommendations can support Black women aspiring to or in leadership positions. Recommendations for future research include focusing on three areas related to advancing Black women into leadership roles. First, considering several components of the conceptual, theoretical framework and focusing on the notions of color blindness as opposed to color consciousness and how mentoring affects the mentee's Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The second area of research would center on strategies for building trust and shared aspirations within the mentoring relationship when leaders and mentors are color conscious. reverse Finally, exploration of the phenomena of reverse mentorship when leaders and mentors engage Black women in their organizations and recognize their advantages. Additional research in these three areas will increase understanding of how to effectively mentor more Black women, thereby increasing their representation in leadership positions.

Research on Color Blindness and Color Consciousness in the Workplace

It is essential to conduct additional research on the impact of color blindness and color consciousness on leaders and organizations. A holistic, top down, and bottom-up approach is essential to understanding and addressing the embedded institutional and cultural realities of these phenomena. Exploring how color consciousness can impact trust will increase effective mentoring for Black women and leadership positions for them. Limited published research on the relationship between CRT's color blindness component and business leaders and organizations exists. This study's participants revealed mentors' and supervisors' behaviors of color blindness in the workplace, which warrants additional research. The claims of neutrality, objectivity, color

blindness, and meritocracy within the dominant ideology are challenged by CRT. A set of beliefs that promote and propagate the concept of color blindness and meritocracy has been used to interpret race.

This belief appears to disregard the lived experiences of people of color and to imply that racism does not exist if it is ignored. However, within the context of enduring structural and systematic racism, racial color blindness serves as a way to disengage from conversations of race and racism entirely (Osseo-Asare, 2018). To prevent discrimination and prejudice, many businesses employ a color blind strategy, which entails ignoring racial differences when implementing policies and making organizational decisions (Dirks, 2021; Mazzocco, 2017). Their logic is straightforward: by failing to acknowledge race, racism is nonexistent in their workplace, which impacts those most affected by racism—Black men and women. The difficulty with color blind ideologies is that they fail to account for racism, both in the past and present, as a factor in explaining inequities, thus permitting microaggressions and racial bias to still occur in the workplace against Black women. One of the participants in this study shared about how when the world was viewing what happened to George Floyd, her company was ignoring it. Promoting color blindness is equivalent to promoting blindness; therefore, not seeing the value of others when interacting and working with people.

Research on Shared Aspirations to Build Trust in Mentorship

Researching factors that influence the development of trust in mentoring relationships between individuals of varying racial and gender identities in the workplace will create a strong contribution to the body of knowledge. Twelve participants spoke about having or not having trust in their lived experience as a mentee. The research should focus on the factor of trust and whether, if at all, the shared aspirations help the mentoring relationship and promotion.

According to the literature, mentoring relationships ought to be founded on trust, active participation, and genuineness (Liang et al., 2002). As a component of future research, the conceptual theoretical framework of this study could be supplemented with trust theory. The question of interest is whether the trust theory precedes or arises from mentorship. Tangentially, there is also a need to understand when and how aspirations are shared within the dyad.

Research on Reverse Mentoring as a Benefit to the Mentor

Black women's experiences with reverse mentoring emerged as a subtheme. Two participants in the study used the term "reverse mentoring" and described what it looked like during their interview. Two other participants in the study described instructing their mentor. Reverse mentoring is simply mentoring in which less experienced mentees end up mentoring their more experienced mentors. The mentee imparts any recently acquired knowledge or abilities to the mentor. Consequently, the mentee is willing to serve as a sounding board on various work assignments for the mentor. An understanding of how reverse mentoring benefits mentors can be beneficial in getting more mentors to volunteer. Reverse mentoring can be proportional to the mentor's investment, thus supporting SET. Mentors and leaders who recognize the value of the social exchange when mentoring Black women may find it more beneficial for them to initiate and maintain a mentoring relationship. Whether there is a transfer of tangible or intangible skills, the relationship between mentor and mentee is strengthened through reverse mentoring. The study participants pointed to areas that could be stand-alone themes: (a) building a culture of trust and transparency, (b) promoting diversity, (c) developing future leaders, and (d) supporting generational inclusivity.

Internal Study Validity and Study Limitations

The internal validity of this study was strengthened by the implementation of a variety of rigorous methods. Creswell and Creswell (2018) determined that the state of trustworthiness is the most important factor in determining an study's internal validity in qualitative research. It is therefore critical to ensure that the process for evaluating content contributed to the authentication of interview questions and accurately reflects the participants' data on the issues that were being investigated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, to validate the information provided, the interview protocol was first reviewed and approved by two subject matter experts on Black women. The validators for this study hold advanced degrees (doctorates), have researched Black people, and have significant professional experience with Black people and CRT.

A comprehensive thematic and narrative analysis process was applied to the data captured through interviews. To document a transparent and reliable interpretation of the interview data, analysis procedures included using NVivo, software for qualitative analysis. A codebook consisting of deductive codes was created and updated when subthemes emerged. In preparation for coding and familiarization with its content, each transcript was examined multiple times. A peer reviewer familiar with the NVivo software evaluated the coded data and ensured a reliable interpretation process. As a reflexive practice to mitigate potential bias, I used a journal throughout the process.

This study focused on the lived experiences of 13 Black women, who were mentees in a mentoring relationship and worked in a variety of professions. Although not generalizable, the present study's findings provide a valuable basis for others to explore how mentees experience mentoring inside or outside the workplace to gain leadership positions.

Closing Thoughts

This study has provided me increased insight on the underrepresentation of Black women with advanced degrees in top leadership positions in U.S. companies. Additionally, this study informs that mentors can facilitate career success. As a Black woman and a mother of two daughters, I could identify with many components of their lived experiences. All the participants are college educated and possess leadership skills; one major factor in their promotion ability was the effectiveness of their mentoring relationship.

Although many companies in the United States have incorporated DEI programs, they have not addressed color blindness. Compelling people to be color conscious can be uncomfortable. People often say, “I do not see color.” Blindness is the inability to see. This indicates that racial color blindness involves seeing not just race or skin color but also the inequities, history of violence, and contemporary pain generated by a racist culture (Camp Kupugani, 2020). CRT advocates for the need to be color conscious; color blindness may diminish diversity's worth and promote sameness, devaluing historically underprivileged races and ethnicities. Color conscious leaders and mentors bring race and injustice discussions to the forefront of organizational discourse. Race conscious leaders and mentors prioritize racial fairness and equity.

When a work environment affords all their workers the chance to bring their authentic selves, the business can benefit from the best of the whole workforce. This study can provide insight on how mentors and leaders focusing on people make them better workers. Better and appreciated workers help companies remain profitable. The findings from my study have shown that one can support Black women to achieve leadership positions in the workplace through color conscious effective mentorship.

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APPENDIX A

Personal Contact and Colleague E-mail Recruitment

Dear Colleague:

Some of you may be aware that I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Global Leadership and Change in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. As a requirement for this degree, I am conducting a research study on mentorship for Black women in or aspiring to leadership positions. I am requesting your assistance. I am looking for participants who meet the following criteria for this research study:

- Born a Black female
- 25 years of age or older
- Aspiring to or in a leadership role
- Participant(ed) in a mentorship relationship

If you are willing or know of other individuals who meet the aforementioned qualifications, please share the attached flyer with instructions or my contact information.

Email: jeanette.vaughn@pepperdine.edu

Cell phone:

Thank you in advance for your support and consideration.

Appreciative,

Jeanette E. Vaughn

APPENDIX B

Email and Social Media Recruitment Flyer

BLACK WOMEN ASPIRING OR IN A LEADERSHIP POSITION NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY!!

Seeking Black women that have participated in a mentorship relationship that is aspiring or in a leadership position to participate in an interview for a study conducted by Jeanette E. Vaughn, Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, doctoral student.

Title of study: The Criticality of Mentorship on the Trajectory of Imminent Black Female Leaders: A Phenomenological Narrative Inquiry

Purpose of Study: The phenomenological narrative inquiry study's goal is to explore how formal and informal mentorship supports Black women in or on their journey to leadership, in spite of the complexities of Black women and the effects of slavery on succeeding generations, which may limit opportunities to be mentored for top leadership positions in a variety of industries.

If you meet the following criteria:

- Born a female/woman
- Black
- 25 years or older
- aspiring or in a leadership position
- Participant(ed) or mentorship relationship

Send an email to jeanette.vaughn@pepperdine.edu

Include the following in your email:

Name:

Phone# (best time to contact you):

Your age range: 25–34; 35–44; 45–54; 55–64; 65 and up

Leadership: Aspiring; Aspired; or Current position

Field of work: Corporate; Education; Health; Govt; Not-for-profit

What the respondent can expect after sending the email: The volunteer participant will be email an informed consent form within 12-36 hours. Then the Principal Investigator, Jeanette E Vaughn will call you and verify that you meet the criteria for the study and go through the informed consent form and answer any questions. Lastly, Jeanette will schedule your ZOOM interview.

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

IRB #: 22-12-2035

Study Title: *The Criticality of Mentorship on the Trajectory of Imminent Black Females Leaders: A phenomenological Narrative Inquiry*

Authorized Study Personnel:

Principal Researcher: Jeanette E. Vaughn

Invitation

Dear (name)

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jeanette E. Vaughn under the direction of Kay Davis, Ed.D. at Pepperdine University. This form is intended to assist you in deciding whether or not to participate, as participation is voluntary. Before deciding whether to participate, you should read the following information and ask questions about anything you do not comprehend. You will be asked to sign this form if you choose to participate. Additionally, you will receive a copy of this form for your records. Please email the researcher if you have any questions.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a Black woman who is at least 25 years old, holds a leadership position or aspires to hold one, and is in or has been in a formal or informal mentoring relationship.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological narrative inquiry study is to explore mentorship for Black Women aspiring or in leadership positions. Despite the complexities of Black women and the effects of slavery on succeeding generations, which may limit opportunities to be mentored for top leadership positions in a variety of industries, it is imperative that Black women have access to mentorship programs.

What will be done during this research study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a 90-minute semi-structured virtual interview consisting of approximately 17 questions via Zoom video conferencing at a mutually agreed upon date and time. The interview instrument (questions) was created by the researcher and reviewed by the dissertation chair and committee. Two colleagues with research and interview strategy experience as well as expertise with the complexities of intersectionality for Black women will be consulted to establish the content validity of the

protocol. The interview will be recorded with your consent for the purposes of data collection and coding. You may choose to opt out of the study at any time without any consequences.

How will my data be used?

Your interview responses will be transcribed, analyzed, and aggregated in order to determine the findings to the established research question.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

This study poses a low risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional, and/or psychological distress because the interview focuses on your personal lived experiences encompassing sensitive subject matter such as race and racism. No anticipated financial, personal, social, or legal risks exist for participants.

What are the possible benefits to you?

While there are no direct benefits for the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to managers and leaders, including a greater body of literature regarding the opportunities to implement CSR effectively to support all stakeholders.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Participation is voluntary in this study. Other than deciding not to participate, there are no alternatives to participation. Participants can therefore opt out at any time.

What will participating in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to the volunteer participant to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

Voluntary participation in this research will not be compensated.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

The primary concern of every member of the research team is your wellbeing. If you experience a problem as a direct result of participating in this study, you should contact the principal researcher immediately.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be deidentified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and until the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific

meetings but the data will be reported as a group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

Before agreeing to participate or during the study, you may ask and receive answers to any questions you have about this research.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You may decline to participate in this research study or withdraw from it at any time before, during, or after the study begins for any reason. Your withdrawal or refusal from this research study will have no effect on your relationship with the researcher or Pepperdine University.

Documentation of informed consent

You are deciding voluntarily whether or not to participate in this research study. Signing this form means that (a) you have read and understood this consent form, (b) you have had the consent form explained to you, (c) you have had your questions answered, (d) you will have the opportunity to review the research questions, and (e) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant

Name:

(First, Last: Please Print)

Participant

Signature:

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

Screening and Scheduling Recruitment Script

Hello [Name],

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this important study.

My name is Jeanette E. Vaughn, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology in the Global Leadership and Change Department at Pepperdine University. Per the email or social media communique, I am conducting a research study exploring Mentorship for Black Women aspiring or in leadership positions. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Confidentiality will be maintained using a password protected laptop to store all data collected including informed consent, the recorded interview, and the transcribed data. All data will be deidentified using a pseudonym which will be assigned to each individual recording.

The purpose of these few questions is to confirm your criteria eligibility to participate in this research study. Are you okay with answering a few questions? Thank you.

- Were you born female?
- Are you Black?
- Are you 25 years or older?
- Are you aspiring to or in a leadership role in the workplace?
- Participant(ed) in a mentorship relationship?

{If participant does not meet the above criteria, the researcher will thank them for their interest and explain that they do not qualify at this time to participate, but if anything changes, they are welcomed to reach back out to the researcher to see if there is still opportunity to participate }

If the participant meets the above criteria, the researcher will continue to ask the following questions and ask demographic information:

Questions that may identify some aversions and sensitivities

- Are you comfortable discussing mentorship, gender, race, racism, and white privilege in the workplace?

Thank you for answering those questions.

Based on your answers to the questions, you are invited to participate in the study.

Next, questions regarding the informed consent form – ask if the volunteer participant has any questions. Ask them to sign it and send you a copy via email within 24 - 48 hours (prior to interview).

Lastly, schedule the 60-minute Zoom interview - and inform the volunteer participant that you will email the agreed scheduled date and time for the interview, including the Zoom link.

The interview is anticipated to take no more than 40-60 minutes and upon your consent, it will be recorded using a separate recording device. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity

as a participant will remain anonymous and confidential during and after the study. To ensure confidentiality, your name will not be recorded and will be identified using pseudonyms. The data will be stored on a secure. After the data is transcribed and validated the files on the USB drive and iCloud folder will be permanently deleted.

If you have questions, please contact me at jeanettevaughn@pepperdine.edu or on my cell phone.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX E

Scheduled Interview Confirmation Email

Dear [Name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study.

Your interview is scheduled for (date) at (time) per our phone conversation on (date). The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes.

Below is the zoom link (XXX). Please be ready to join the meeting 3-5 minutes to the start of your interview.

If you have any questions prior to the interview, do not hesitate to call me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Again, I appreciate your participation, and I look forward to our upcoming interview.

APPENDIX F

One on One Open-Ended Interview Questions

Volunteer Participate Information

Interviewee:
Age range: (25-34) (35-44) (45-54) (55-64) (65plus)
Date and time:
Length of interview:

Introduction

Prompt	Check \checkmark
Greeting	
Consent to record	
Structure and definitions	

Participant's Introduction – Please, tell me about yourself and your current workplace position?

Interview Questions

1. How would you define mentoring in the workplace?
2. Describe any formal or informal mentoring programs or dynamics at your workplace.
If no traditional programs, what have you observed at work among others and mentoring?
Have you been approached for mentoring, and why do you think that is/isn't?

3. Who is responsible for establishing mentoring relationships within your organization? How does the responsible party go about initiating mentoring relationships?
4. Describe the impact of formal (through the organization) and informal (through asking someone personally/organically) mentoring you have received at your place of employment.
5. Describe your mentor's role and your role as a mentee within the mentoring relationship. Expound on some of your experiences within the mentorship relationship and how, if at all, did your personal interactions with your mentor affect the outcome of your mentorship relationship?
6. Share your experiences of how your formal and informal mentoring relationships interactions affected/impacted your work and relationships with colleagues in the work environment?
7. How, if at all, did your mentor help you with your personal and professional goals? Share specifics about the experiences and lessons you gained while working with a mentor employed by your organization and on the track to a leadership position.
8. How has mentoring been required for promotion to a higher-level position in the organizations where you have worked? What is your perception of this relationship between mentoring and being considered for promotion?
9. As a Black woman, what has your experience been with being seen and recognized for your achievements in the workplace, and how, if at all, do you believe that has impacted your path to promotions?
10. How would you describe your trust level towards your mentor using situational examples?
11. What factors might influence you to accept or reject an offer to be mentored at work?
12. Why do you think a Black woman might choose to avoid a particular mentoring relationship? Can you give an example of a time this happened to you?

13. How, if at all, do you feel your race played a part in your receiving a mentor, and how has that (being a Black woman) helped or hindered you in achieving your professional goals?

14. Share your experiences and perceptions of the organization's mentoring efforts for Black women seeking to advance in leadership?

15. What was your mentor's race? How do you believe that impacted your relationship (positively or negatively)? How, if at all, did the gender of your mentor(s) affect your mentorship relationship and the outcome of your professional goals? Share any current racial dialogue experiences with your mentor or leadership within the organization?

Closing instructions:

Prompt	Check \checkmark
Express gratitude	
A follow-up to clarify?	
Study results	

APPENDIX G

IRB Data Management

GPS IRB Data Management/Protection Plan

Data Description

- Data collected during interviews via video and voice recording.
- Interview data transcribed by the transcriber.
- Data coded by the researcher

Existing Data (if applicable)

N/A

Format

Metadata (if applicable) Storage and backup

Voice recording data

Metadata transcribed by transcriber stored on USB disk, and electronic file stored on secure iCloud storage owned by the researcher

Metadata coded from transcription data stored on USB disk, and electronic file stored on secure iCloud storage owned by the researcher

Security Responsibility

The researcher will have the responsibility of securing the data and metadata

Intellectual property rights

The participants will own the rights to their stories. The researcher will own the rights to the metadata and the data analysis produced from the participants' stories.

A description of the information to be gathered; the nature and scale of the data that will be generated or collected.

The data gathered during this research study will be the personal lived experiences in the mentorship relationship

A survey of existing data relevant to the project and a discussion of whether and how these data will be integrated.

N/A

Formats in which the data will be generated, maintained, and made available, including a justification for the procedural and archival appropriateness of those formats.

The data will be generated via a .mp4 file produced by a ZOOM video recording during scheduled interviews and stored on a USB drive and iCloud storage folder owned by the researcher.

The USB drive will be kept in a locked safe owned by the researcher and kept at the researcher's residence.

Transcribed data will be generated as text files. Once the data is transcribed the interview recording files will be deleted. The transcribed data will be kept on a USB drive and iCloud storage folder and stored for three years.

Storage methods and backup procedures for the data, including the physical and cyber resources and facilities that will be used for the effective preservation and storage of the research data. iCloud and a USB will be the primary storage method for the data— interview .mp4 files and transcribed data files. Once the research study is completed, the interview recording files will be deleted from both the iCloud and USB storage device. The transcription files will remain archived for three years upon which time they will be permanently deleted.

A description of technical and procedural protections for information, including confidential information, and how permissions and restrictions will be enforced.

The technical and procedural protections for information will be as follows:

- Upon collecting confidential information (sensitive demographic information including name and age), the participant's name will be replaced by a pseudonym for identification.
- All data produced from interviews will be protected on secured, encrypted files and storage devices.
- Only the researcher will have access to this data.

What are the Names of the individuals responsible for data management in the research project?
Jeanette E. Vaughn, Researcher

Entities or persons who will hold the intellectual property rights to the data, and how intellectual property rights will be protected if necessary. Any copyright constraints (e.g., copyrighted data collection instruments) should be noted.

The participants will own the rights to their stories. The researcher will own the rights to the metadata and the data analysis produced from the participants' stories. No copyright is necessary for the data or data collection instruments

Access and sharing

Audience

There will be no secondary users of the data

Who are the potential secondary users of the data? None

Selection and retention periods – N/A

A description of how data will be shared, including access procedures, technical mechanisms for dissemination and whether access will be open or granted only to specific user groups. A timeframe for data sharing and publishing should also be provided.

N/A

A description of how data will be selected for archiving, how long the data will be held, and plans for eventual transition or termination of the data collection in the future.

All .mp4 files produced from interviews will be deleted once data transcription is completed and analysis is complete. The transcribed data will be archived on iCloud storage drive and USB external drive for three years. After three years, the files will be permanently deleted from iCloud storage and USB external drive.

Participants' recordings and transcripts will be assigned a pseudonym to protect the identity of participants. Confidentiality measures include not recording the name of the individual and storing the information linking subject identity to pseudonyms separately from recordings and transcripts. At no time will the participants ask for the names of their mentors or organizations where they were employed. If a breach in confidentiality occurs, there is minimal risk of harm to the participants.

Each participant will be given an electronic informed consent form prior to participating in the interview. The consent form will outline what is required for their participation and what their rights are as a participant. These documents will be signed prior to the researcher conducting any interview.

The interview recordings will be uploaded to the iCloud storage file and saved to an external USB drive as backup. Only the researcher will have access to both storage areas. The confidential information of the participant such as name, will be masked via pseudonyms.

The researcher will follow IRB's ethical principles including:

Respect for persons; respect for participants autonomy

Beneficence by maximizing benefit and minimizing harm

Justice: equitable distribution of research burdens and benefits

Budget (if applicable)

Costs associated with this research study includes but not limited to:

- Costs for USB (external storage device) and iCloud service
- Qualitative Analysis software (NVivo)

The researcher will seek small grants for these costs but will be prepared to fund these expenses.

Data organization

For each interview, a new .mp4 file will be created. The naming convention for each file will include the participant's pseudonym, the date of the interview, and a number associated with the number of interviews. For example:

Mary_12202022_1.mp4

(a female name) = participant Pseudonym

(2022) = date of interview

Quality Assurance

To ensure data quality throughout the process, the researcher will record interviews on two different devices in case one device has unexpected issues. The recordings can be checked during interview breaks for quality.

APPENDIX H

CITI Program Course



Completion Date 09-Dec-2021
 Expiration Date 08-Dec-2026
 Record ID 45933501

This is to certify that:

Jeanette Vaughn

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
 certification through CME.

GSEP Education Division

(Curriculum Group)

GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Pepperdine University

CITI
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wf045a5b4-617a-49b6-a4c9-cec5f13182ca-45933501

APPENDIX I

IRB Approval

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

Date: January 27, 2023

Protocol Investigator Name: Jeanette Vaughn

Protocol #: 22-12-2035

Project Title: The Criticality of Mentorship on the Trajectory of Imminent Black Female Leaders: A
Phenomenological Narrative Inquiry

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Jeanette Vaughn:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb*.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research