2024

A phenomenological study on tokenism and leadership style of Black executives in corporate organizations

Alan Keith Caldwell

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON TOKENISM AND LEADERSHIP STYLE OF

BLACK EXECUTIVES IN CORPORATE ORGANIZATIONS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Alan Keith Caldwell

May, 2024

Kifr Mordechay, Ph.D. - Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Alan Keith Caldwell

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:

Kfir Mordechay, Ph.D., Chairperson

Doug Leigh, Ph.D.

Amanda Wickramasinghe, Ph.D., Ed.D.

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ABSTRACT

The demographic composition of the United States is changing. In relation to race, the minority

is becoming the majority. This demographic shift creates a more diverse workforce, which

increases executive-level opportunities for Black professionals at corporate organizations.

However, data indicates that very few Black people are in corporate organizations' executive-

level (VP, SVP, and C-Suite) roles. This study investigated tokenism's role in developing Black

executives' leadership styles at global corporate organizations. The aim of this investigation

focused on uncovering the experiences of Black executives in a corporate environment,

including their leadership style. Phenomenological Inquiry served as the method to collect data.

Five Black male and five Black female executives from global corporate organizations were

interviewed to gather insights on their experiences. The data was analyzed and coded into five

thematic categories: tokenism, leadership, intersectionality, diversity, and emotional reactions.

The findings revealed that Black executives do not see themselves as tokens and that tokenism

does not determine how they lead an organization. The findings support the following

conclusions: (a) Black executives do not see themselves as tokens, (b) Black executives identify

as authentic and transformational leaders, (c) Black executives' performance and qualifications

are judged differently before they are elevated to an executive and during their time as an

executive, and (d) there is minimal support resources for Black executives. Insights from this

research advances the discussion on tokenism, particularly regarding Black executives. The

study identifies the experience of Black executives in line with Relative Deprivation Theory,

which resulted in the creation of a potential additional theory entitled Corporate Resources

Deprivation Theory, which posits that Black executives feel it is the lack of support resources

that impacts their ability to be successful and resent the fact that they do not get the same suite of

support resources as White executives. The study and potential theories provide information that

may help support the success of Black executives in corporations that are working to advance

diversity at the executive level of their organization.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

In the United Sates the ethnic and racial demographics are rapidly changing. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 population data projects the United States will become "majority-minority" by 2045 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Projections indicate that in 2045, Whites will make up less than half of the population, this will be contrasted with the percentages of 24.6% for Hispanics, 13.1% for Blacks, 7.9% for Asians, and 3.8% for multiracial populations, making a total of 50.7% (see Figure 1). The decline of the White majority is driven primarily by decreasing fertility and international migration (Frey, 2018). These demographic shifts are creating a more diverse society, which will be at the forefront of the nation's future growth (Frey, 2018; Mordechay et al., 2019).

Figure 1

Projected 2045 U.S. Racial Profile
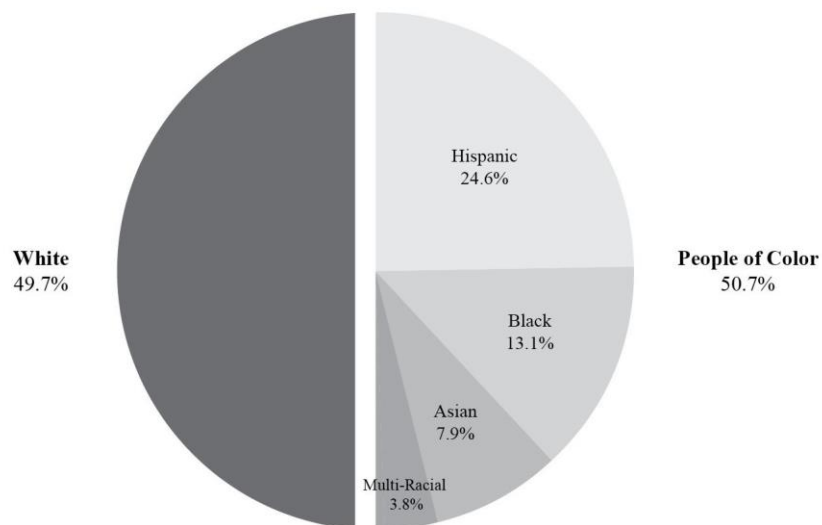
The demographic shift to a majority-minority will occur fastest for younger age groups. This shift is already visible in the demographic breakdown of newborns, where in the vast

majority of metropolitan areas, the 0-5 population has already surpassed the majority-minority threshold (Mordechay & Orfield, 2017). For individuals ages 18-29, Whites are projected to become the minority by 2027, and for individuals ages 30-39, Whites are projected to become the minority by 2033 (Frey, 2018). This demographic shift to White minority for ages 18-29 indicates that the entry-level workforces will be more diverse. A global policy think tank focusing on economic issues, has defined the entering labor market at 15-24 years of age (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OCED], n.d.). Therefore, the statistics indicate a growing diverse population and highlight the expanding diversity of America's workforce (Frey, 2018).

In a study on the challenges of how to prepare for a diverse workforce, Maroney and Williams (2013) indicate that it has taken the United States decades to fully realize the benefits and advantages of having a diversified population and how it can have a positive effect on the nation's social and economic climate. Maroney and Williams asserted, "the realization that diversity facilitates economic, social and political growth has permeated social thinking along with the acceptance that diversity is an inevitable part of a changing world order" (p. 457).

In addition to the growing ethnically diverse population in America, social issues are highlighting the racial inequities within American society and corporate organizations. One incident that served as a catalyst for the increased scrutiny of racial inequity was on May 25, 2020, which is the day a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota murdered George Floyd. The death of Floyd sparked a nationwide social justice movement. Organizations that outwardly supported social justice reforms and the phrase "Black lives matter" were questioned regarding their organizational commitment to diversity and inclusion, specifically among the executive teams and c-suite. According to a McKinsey Company report (Hancock et al., 2021), 97% of

United States companies' senior leadership does not currently mirror the racial demographics of the country's labor force and population. Women, immigrants, people of color, and individuals with disabilities will make up the majority of new workers entering the workforce (Maroney & Williams, 2013). Given that diversity of the labor force is expanding, there is an opportunity to increase programs, opportunities, and leadership development to bring diversity to the highest levels of corporate organizations.

No evidence exists that supports the assertion that having a more diverse ethnic group in leadership of a corporation will lead to higher profits (Hunt et al., 2015). In fact, some of the literature indicates that there is a paradoxical effect on work environments because of diversity. According to Kochan et al. (2003) workforce diversity may distress and enhance work environments, which may affect employee and organizational functioning. Research indicates that frequently organizations offer perfunctory diversity strategies rather than meaningful and authentic commitment (Herring & Henderson, 2012). The success of diversity and inclusion largely depends on the attitudes of leadership and the actions of management. It is critical that both leadership and management demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Without their support, the efforts towards diversity and inclusion may not yield the desired results (Choi & Rainey, 2014).

If organizations continue to explore strategies related to diversity and inclusion, then understanding the organizational challenges associated with the increased diversity of a workforce is essential for success of the employees and the enterprise. The research of sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter provides insights regarding how organizational structure forms people's sense of themselves. *Men and Women of the Corporation* written by Kanter (1977a) focuses on organizational group dynamics and how individuals respond to groups to

which they belong. One focus area for Kanter is the numerical composition of groups and how this affects the relationships among the individuals within a group. Kanter's research focuses on the total amount of people defined by some demographic category such as race or gender. For Kanter, any categorical subgroup (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) that represents 15% or less of a larger group is considered a "token" of the group. Tokens are representative of a category instead of independent individuals. Kanter posited that the position of a "token" increases the challenges of fitting in, gaining peer acceptance, and behaving naturally.

According to Kanter (1977b), social segregation and stereotyping are the result of tokenism. The workplace is a mini version of the real world and is susceptible to similar ethnic biases and forms of racism. The racial and ethnic identities of individuals cannot be left at home (Plaut et al., 2014). Plaut et al. (2014) asserted that Black professionals face some of the same situations in the workplace that they face in society. According to Plaut et al., there is a gap in an opportunity to expand the literature regarding the workplace realities of racially and ethnically diverse individuals from their perspective of being tokens within a group. This study investigated the effects of tokenism and whether or not tokenism has any significant influence on the way these individuals lead within the corporations with global operations.

Research on tokens in the workplace that explores ethnic and racial tokens has primarily been conducted from the viewpoint of the dominant group, and not from the view of the tokens (Plaut et al., 2014). The primary intent of this investigation centered around examining the experiences of Black executive tokens at their workplace and how they cope with racial bias, relate to the majority group, and enact change. Kanter's (1977a) research focuses on the implications and consequences of being a numerical minority. Kanter's conclusions indicated that most of the experiences of tokens within a group at a work organization are negative. These

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negative experiences are related to how much an individual aligns with a social identity of the group (Watkins et al., 2019). The token experience focuses on three phenomena: visibility, contrast, and assimilation.

Tajfel and Turner (1986) stated that one way to explain tokenism dynamics is through a theory known as social identity, which is when the identity of an individual is connected with social group and is salient, the individual becomes aware of the groups to which they belong or do not belong (Watkins et al., 2019). Tokens maintain higher visibility than dominant members, and others in the group or organization are especially aware of them. Higher visibility creates the potential for tokens to fear making mistakes because their performance is highly scrutinized (Kanter, 1977b). Reactions to this high visibility may lead tokens to assimilate into the dominant group's behaviors, including leadership style. Watkins et al. (2019) stated that assimilation occurs when others categorize tokens, it is the categorization that may create the impulse for an individual to feel like they must behave in stereotypical ways. For example, the dominant group's leadership style may influence the token's leadership style in ways that conflict with the token's natural leadership approach.

Leadership is the ability of a person to exert their influence over a group of individuals for the purpose of achieving a shared objective (Northouse, 2018). Effective leadership is salient to the development of corporate environment and organization citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Leadership plays a crucial role in this regard and has a great influence over these factors.

De Oliveira Rodriguez and Ferreira (2015) conducted a study that examined the differences in the Multifactorial Leadership Scale and Organizational Citizenship Behavioral Scale between male and female workers. According to their findings, leaders that are transformational have greater effect on OCBs compared to leaders that are transactional. De

Oliveira Rodriguez and Ferreira concluded that transformational leaders could influence the actions of their subordinates beyond their defined roles.

Transactional leadership describes the exchange interaction of leaders and subordinates (Northouse, 2018). According to De Oliveira Rodriguez and Ferreria (2015), the establishment of mutual agreements with subordinates motivates them to comply because it results in rewards. Transformational leadership, unlike other leadership styles, considers the personal needs of the team members. However, it also motivates individuals to work towards achieving goals of the organization, which might involve prioritizing the group's needs over individuals (B. M. Bass, 1990). Leaders who bring transformation encourage actions that raise the overall culture of the organization. Both transactional and transformational leadership may create a diverse and inclusive culture, however, their approach is different. Transactional leaders may achieve diversity to meet a quota or percentage required to obtain a good performance rating or bonus. However, diversity does not equate to inclusiveness.

Quinetta Roberson (2006) conducted a study focusing on the differences between diversity and inclusiveness, explaining that organizational demography is the focus of diversity and eliminating barriers that prevent all employees from fully participating and contributing is inclusion. Therefore, it could be argued that removing obstacles equates to a good organizational culture, which then infers that a transformational leadership style would create the environment needed to achieve inclusiveness. Leadership is a combination and the presence of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors (B. M. Bass, 1985). Combining the traits of transactional and transformational leadership, it can be contended that leaders who exhibit both styles can set explicit diversity objectives (transactional) and promote personal responsibility for behavior (transformational) to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Loes and Tobin's (2020) three foundational pillars of developing strong organizational culture provide a framework to develop organizational culture. Loes and Tobin suggest that the three pillars are the ubiquitous force of social control that affect employees' decisions and behavior, bonding employees together, letting them know that they are an integral part of the organization, and helping employees in the sense-making processes to understand organizational objectives. These pillars present a framework to embed diversity into corporate culture and help individuals focus consciously and intentionally develop strategies to expand diversity and inclusion. Given the importance of leadership style on individual employee behaviors to create corporate culture, understanding the leadership style development of Black executive tokens provides potential data on how to develop a framework to expand knowledge gaps to mitigate the effects of tokenism.

According to Watkins et al. (2019), research on tokens tends to focus primarily on the characteristics of the individual. Opportunities exist to understand how organizational culture affects tokens. For example, an organization's diversity and inclusion efforts may affect a token's experiences to some degree. Many organizations continue to advance diversity; however, the leadership level is lacking in minority representation, as per the statistics. Typically, when minorities ascend to executive leadership, they become tokens at the executive level based on Kanter's (1977a) definition of a token, which focuses on the numerical makeup of the group. The dynamics and culture within the executive leadership group may create situations that influence a token's experiences, including leadership style.

There is data that supports Kanter's assertion that low proportional representation in a group influences experiences and that those experiences tend to be negative and create challenges for individuals who are not part of the majority group. A 1995 study conducted by

Jackson et al. (1995) utilized data from a 1993 research project conducted at Princeton as the data set for their analysis of proportional representation and work-related difficulties. The purpose of the research conducted by Princeton was to analyze how Black leaders in America are connected in terms of their network structure. The data was collected via structured personal interviews and included 167 participants. Jackson et al. concluded that the stress level and depression rates are higher due to an individual's token status.

More recent research supports the historical findings of increased stress and depression for tokens. Research was carried out to investigate the interconnected relationship of how tokenism, gender, and race are perceived around policies related to policing (Stroshine & Brandl, 2011). They analyzed the variables of gender and race in policing as related to tokenism. Stroshine and Brandl (2011) were primarily interested in how tokenism affects Latino officers but included Black officers for comparison data. Stroshine and Brandl utilized a methodology that included incorporating various multivariate processes, utilizing the measurement of multiple items and identifying different comparisons in their analysis. Their findings indicate that the effects of tokenism were significant and that Black tokens face greater hardships in the workplace than other ethnic tokens. An additional finding of the study indicated that Black men and Black women experience tokenism at the greatest levels, therefore concluding that the impacts of tokenism are primarily a function of race (Jackson et al., 1995).

Understanding the effects of an organization's culture on a token may help identify frameworks and strategies to achieve a more inclusive culture to mitigate the negative experiences of tokens in a corporate organization. Expanding research on this topic creates the potential to elevate the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of Black employees and executives in a corporate setting.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored tokenism's effects on Black executives' leadership style in corporate America. The researcher tested Kanter's tokenism theory constructs of visibility, contrast, and assimilation. According to a McKinsey report (Hancock et al., 2021), companies often lack Black leaders within the organization's executive leadership. Data from McKinsey revealed that as of April 2021 among Fortune 500 companies in America, there were only four Black CEOs. At parity with the United States Black population, the appropriate number should, at minimum, be 60 Black CEOs. For Blacks who make it to the highest levels of an organization, there is often an "emotional tax": a recognition of differences that often creates a negative effect on that individual's experience at work. Travis et al. (2016) conducted research that included a sample of Black employees (322 women and 327 men) across a broad spectrum of industries which included information services, healthcare, retail, financial services, and construction confirmed the feelings of an emotional tax experienced and felt by Black employees. It can be argued that an emotional tax in conjunction with the feeling and conscious recognition of being different is the genesis of tokenism.

Previous research on tokenism and historically stigmatized groups has focused on the majority group's perspective. The majority of studies that focus on minority and ethnic experiences in a work environment tend to examine how prejudice is expressed by the majority and how the outcomes of that prejudice are moderated (Plaut et al., 2014)—focusing on the majority translates into a narrow scope of White Americans prejudice attitudes, and how it impacts the attitudes of minority racial and ethnic groups (Wildman & Davis, 1996). This perspective decenters the experiences of a racial minority group in which the current research seeks to understand. According to Nkomo (1992), this decentering has led to assumptions in the

workplace on the saliency of race and ethnicity, as well limiting the complexity related to the experiences of people of color. These workplace experiences, which tend to be negative, may become more detrimental when including the variable of tokenism. Most research on tokenism concludes that being a token has negative effects.

The gap in research related to understanding the effect on tokens in the workplace presents an opportunity to conduct empirical studies to identify the experiences of tokens. There is limited information available on the experiences of ethnic and racial minority members in executive positions within organizations, including coping mechanisms, interactions with others in their community or family regarding these issues, and their efforts toward creating change (Plaut et al., 2014). Existing studies have focused primarily on White individuals and their role in moderating their prejudiced behaviors on tokens. For tokens, within the higher levels of an organization, minimal evidence exists regarding their experiences in receiving and providing mentoring or coaching. Qualitative inquiries allow for the opportunity to engage Black executive-level tokens, analyze their lived experiences, and expand the understanding of how Black executives view tokenism within a corporate structure.

Using a qualitative approach and engaging with Black executives of global organizations may provide increased knowledge on how tokenism affects Black executives' experiences at work and how it influences their leadership style and ability to enact change within an organization. Insights gained from the study will identify scalable strategies to elevate the success of Black employees in corporate organizations. The researcher acknowledges that the impact of tokenism is not limited to Black people; the findings set the foundation for additional tokenism studies for all historically stigmatized minority groups and individuals on a global scale. Diversity without a commitment to support tokens holistically and a focus on creating

good corporate culture may potentially hinder the success of an organization. Identifying thematic constructs on the effects of tokenism may uncover insights that help organizations increase the overall effectiveness of their diversity and inclusion strategies.

Purpose Statement

Corporate organizations continue to expand their strategies to address diversity and inclusion. As of April 2021, the number of Black workers in executive positions of organizations was low (Hancock et al., 2021), which indicates that the C-suite remains homogenous. In situations where there is only one Black or 15% or less Blacks in the executive levels of organizations, according to Kanter (1977a), they are tokens, and studies indicate that most of their experiences within the organization are negative. This research study will add scholarly knowledge regarding how tokenism affects Black executives' ability to be effective leaders at global corporate organizations.

The aim for this phenomenological investigation was to discover and evaluate the effects of tokenism Black men and women executives working at international corporate entities related to tactics they deploy as leaders. For this study, there are two definitions of tokenism. The theoretical definition relies on Kanter's (1977a) definition, which states that a token is a numerically underrepresented member within a group to which they belong. The academic definition is that perfunctory efforts are made to include members of minority groups in an organization, with the intent of creating the appearance of equality ("Tokenism," n.d.). The different definitions of token(ism) are not interchangeable, and both definitions are essential in analyzing the phenomenon of tokenism.

The literature identifies several effects of tokenism. The current study specifically investigates how tokenism affects Black executive leadership development. The study's

leadership theories focused on authentic, transactional, and transformational. The findings will help organizations expand their knowledge of issues affecting Black leaders, develop strategies to mitigate negative experiences of Black executives, and support Black leadership development. The knowledge gained will be scalable from a global perspective and applicable to all tokens regardless of ethnicity or gender. Study participants included Black men and women from global corporations at the highest levels of leadership.

Research Questions

For members of various social groups, particularly Blacks the percentages for being a token remain high (Watkins et al., 2019). The continued push for increased diversity and inclusion keeps this area of research relevant. The limited amount of data on how tokenism affects the outgroup creates an opportunity to further the knowledge on the experiences of tokens in a corporate setting. There are gaps in the literature on the impacts of tokenism on Black executives' leadership style. Several hypotheses and questions from Kanter's work serve as the focal point for developing research questions for this study. First, the way an organization is structured can shape how people perceive themselves and what they believe they can accomplish. Secondly, why is social conformity so important. Finally, in large hierarchal organizations, no amount of reform can remove barriers and limitations to change. The researcher developed the following hypotheses based on Kanter's general statements about organizations. The first hypothesis assumes that Black executives know and understand the phenomenon of tokenism. The second hypothesis predicts that tokenism will affect the leadership style development of Black executives. The third hypothesis assumes that tokenism leads to negative work experiences for Black executives. The final hypotheses suggest that Black executives feel that they need to outperform their colleagues.

Data was collected using a phenomenological instrument of one-on-one interviews. The goal was to determine the effects of tokenism on Black executives' leadership style and to identify strategies to create a corporate environment that supports Black people to be effective leaders, improve inclusiveness at the executive level, and reduce negative experiences within corporate organizations. The central research question was: How does tokenism affect the leadership style of Black executives? The sub-questions are as follows:

- How do Black executives define leadership?

- What type of leadership style do Black executives believe they utilize in their corporate role?

- How do Black executives define tokenism, and do they believe they are tokens?

- What are the experiences, if any, of tokenism among Black executives in their leadership development?

- What are the experiences of Black executives with the majority group at the senior levels of the organization?

- What are the positive vs. negative impacts of tokenism on the leadership development of Black executives?

Significance of Study

The way of working was changed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Businesses are still working to navigate a workable path toward the "next normal" (Dolan et al., 2020, p. 1) for work environments. According to Dolan et al. (2020), diversity and inclusion efforts may scale back as remote and hybrid work continues to be options for employees. COVID-19 shifted support programs that targeted all employees. As a result, diversity and inclusion efforts could slow down in corporate organizations unless companies consciously focus on advancing these

goals. Inclusion becomes increasingly challenging as working from home becomes the new normal. Remote work further isolates minority workers and hinders their ability to feel connected to an organization, which may amplify non-inclusive dynamics in a remote climate. Expanding scholarly knowledge related to Black leaders who may already feel isolated due to their token status, may provide data on how to resolve isolation challenges of Black leaders at corporate organizations.

Researchers commonly perceive that the challenges of inequality are deeply rooted in the racial history of America. Specifically with respect to Black employees, there is a low representation at the executive level, a trust deficit, and a lack of allyship for Black employees (Hancock et al., 2021), which indicates that companies lack Black leaders. Black employees who make it to the top levels of an organization are typically in the minority. Data from a McKinsey study by Hancock et al. (2021) revealed that as of April 2021 among Fortune 500 companies in the United State there are only four Black CEOs. Understanding the challenges of leadership for African-Americans presents a significant opportunity to identify the barriers and potential solutions to support Black tokens in leadership development. This study investigated if there was a link between tokenism's effects and Black executives' leadership style development.

Research indicates a trust deficit among Black employees and that Black employees face more challenges than other ethnic minorities in the work environment. Racial equity in a corporate environment is a system-level challenge (Hancock et al., 2021). This research outlines specific actions at a system level that can be taken to promote the growth of Black executives in leadership. One of the primary questions focuses on the leadership style of Black executives and if their leadership style is organic or if tokenism creates an assimilation complex for Black leaders. The study aims to understand if Black leaders lead from their instincts, or do the

pressures of being a token consciously or unconsciously create the mindset of following the leadership style of the majority group?

The promotion of Black people to executive levels within corporate organizations appears to be a strategy for more diversity. However, more than diversity is required to transform an organization's corporate culture. Inclusion is the other part of the equation. Corporate organizations will benefit from this research study and learn how to increase support for Black people and reduce the negative impacts of being tokenized. The chance of being a token for people of color remains high which renders this study salient (Watkins et al., 2019).

Historically, corporate organizations' executive and c-suite levels are homogenous, primarily comprising White males. Organizations working to increase diversity at the executive level create a token status when they promote individuals of the outgroup (Blacks) to the highest levels of the organization. Gaining more information on how tokenism affects operations can improve comprehension related to the effects of tokenism at different levels of an organization (Watkins et al., 2019). Given that the elevation of Black people to the highest levels within a corporate organization is slow and just starting to advance, this research study will provide valuable insight into how to support tokens in their leadership style as executives within a corporate organization.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that it enhances the understanding of tokenism by exploring it from the viewpoint of the tokens. Studies on tokenism have primarily concentrated on the conduct of the majority group, while there have been fewer studies that have looked into the influence of the token. This study provides framework to create tools that enable organizations to better support Black executive tokens and provide insight into how an organization can create an environment where tokens regardless of the numerical percentages

feel respected and included as part of an organization. This research study illuminated the real-life encounters of Black executive representatives and recognized the obstacles they encounter while leading in a global environment. This study is important specifically for three reasons. First, highlights the challenges and negative impacts of Black tokens at the executive levels of corporate organizations. Second, the results help corporate organizations enhance token inclusion. Third, it establishes a foundation for future opportunities to analyze the implications of tokenism on the selection of the leadership styles of minority groups other than Black executives.

Definition of Terms

Following is a list of the study's term definitions presented in alphabetical order for easy reference.

- *Authentic Leadership*: Leaders lead with conviction, and embrace their individuality (Shamir & Eliam, 2005).

- *Diversity:* Each person brings a unique set of similarities and differences to the workplace. This may include factors such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status and family structures.

- *Executive:* Identified as individuals the titles of senior vice-president, vice-president, managing director, or any role within the C-suite of an organization.

- *Inclusion:* Creating an environment and culture that acknowledges, values, and optimizes the skills, talents, and viewpoints of all employees, so they feel appreciated and have a sense of inclusiveness (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, United States, n.d.).

- *Token (theoretical)*: A numerical minority of 15% or less than the majority within a group setting (Kanter, 1977a).

- *Token (dictionary):* The act of attempting to desegregate in a merely symbolic manner ("Tokenism," n.d.).

- *Transactional Leadership*: The interactions between leaders and followers are an exchange and transactional (Burns, 1978).

- *Transformational Leadership*: An individual engages with their followers to establish a relationship that leads to higher levels of motivation and morale for both parties involved (Burns, 1978).

- *Organizational Culture:* An organization's members possess a common set of guiding principles, beliefs, values, norms, and understandings. These are taught to new employees as the appropriate way of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Daft, 2008).

Operational Definitions

The following are operational definitions of research study variables and how they were defined:

- *Token*: Defined using Kanter's definition of a numerical minority of 15% or less within a specified group.

- *Negative Experiences*: micro-aggression (*subtle use of words, imagery, or interactions with undertone of prejudice, racism, and sexism*) during tenure in leadership role.

- *Leadership Style:* includes the following leadership styles - authentic, transactional, or transformational.

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Organization of the Study

This dissertation is comprised of five sections and conforms to a standard qualitative

research structure. The first chapter establishes the problem and includes the study's

background, problem statement, research purpose, research questions, significance of the

research, and definition of terms. The second chapter presents a literature review of frameworks

and theories related to tokenism, social identity, intersectionality, and leadership, as well as a

review of diversity and inclusion. The third chapter delineates the research methodology used in

the study, including the rationale for selecting a phenomenological approach, participant

selection, data collection methods, and data analysis protocols. The fourth chapter includes the

analysis of the study's findings and common themes. The final chapter of this study serves to

summarize the findings, offer recommendations aligned with the experiences of participants, and

explore potential avenues for future research. This includes identifying areas where more

knowledge is needed, discussing implications, practical applications, and ultimately, drawing

conclusions.

Assumptions of the Study

The study's results and deductions contribute to the discourse surrounding the

developmental leadership approach of Black executives in global corporations. Research

suggests that an individual's perception of tokenism is shaped by their individual characteristics

(Anisman-Razin & Saguy, 2016). This research will provide insights to support Black tokens in

leadership positions and move beyond numerical diversity to inclusion and a more egalitarian

group culture. This study offers frameworks for additional knowledge related to the experiences

of Black executives. Understanding the lived experiences of Black executives may help alleviate

the negative experiences of future executive racial tokens as well as normalize the possible positive experiences. The practical implementation of the findings expands the corporate organizations' ability to create more inclusive work cultures due to increased diversity among the executive workforces.

The actions of human beings are influenced by their interactions with various objects, individuals, occurrences, and circumstances. The study of phenomenology enables the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the significance or fundamental nature experiences that might have been previously unknown but can now be identified (Morse & Richards, 2013). The researcher does not assume that the participants are consciously or unconsciously aware of their token status or understand the effect of tokenism on their work experiences and leadership style. It is assumed that participants may not utilize the academic and research vocabulary associated with tokenism. The study assumed that participants would recount their experiences openly and candidly during the interviews and would be comfortable discussing their lived experiences in a confidential interview setting.

Despite data indicating that organizations with diverse leadership have more positive work cultures, opportunities exist to enhance organizational culture to improve minority inclusiveness at the highest levels of the organization. The researcher acknowledges that this study will not provide findings to extend to all token groups. However, the study will develop and advance the discussion on Black tokenism and help organizations identify and address corporate social inequalities.

Methods

Data collection was carried out using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that, "phenomenology describes the common meaning for several

individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 75). A phenomenological

study focuses on a single idea experienced by all research participants. Human behavior is

observed in the context of relationships to objects, people, events, and situations (Morse &

Richards, 2013). Phenomenology discusses the essence of individual experience by incorporating

"what" they have experienced and "how" they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher selected phenomenological inquiry because the objective was to

comprehend the impact of tokenism, which is the phenomenon, on the development of a

leadership style of Black executives. The study satisfies the requirements for a

phenomenological approach because it contains the single phenomenon of tokenism and a

heterogeneous racial group of Black executives. All the participants in the study were Black

executive tokens with roles at global corporate organizations. According to Morse and Richards

(2013), existence is being in the world, and phenomenology focuses on understanding lived

experiences from an individual context. Given the gaps in knowledge related to the effects of

tokenism on the token group, the selection of a phenomenological approach helps establish broad

themes for future research and discussion to address the specific impacts of tokenism on Black

executives.

Limitations of the Study

Phenomenological inquiry requires the researcher to interact directly with study

participants to understand the lived experiences of a single phenomenon. In such

phenomenological qualitative studies, the sample size is small and selected through purposive

sampling to increase homogeneity. The selection of participants and the small size create

limitations for a phenomenological study. According to Ochieng (2009), there is a limitation

when using qualitative research techniques like phenomenology; the results of qualitative studies

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are not attributable to larger populations. Additionally, statistical significance is not evaluated to determine the results of qualitative research.

The research conducted had a limited number of participants and concentrated specifically on a single phenomenon and its influence on the personal approach to leadership of Black executives. Demographic information such as age range, gender and level of education was collected in the study. The purpose was to assess whether any of these characteristics had an impact on research participants' responses. Therefore, the findings will not provide a generalization with broader implications for one specific group. The data collected were cross-sectional. Therefore, the findings and conclusions were based on a specific moment in time from the study's participants.

Participants' ability to comprehend and articulate the phenomenon of tokenism consciously may limit their ability to respond adequately to interview questions. The researcher defined key terms and objectives of the study, to ensure that all participants shared a common understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. However, the researcher acknowledges that each participant brought past experiences and different meanings to words that influenced their responses. An uncontrollable limitation of the study was the social environment and media setting during data collection. Given that survey participants were all Black, the researcher was not able to control for societal variables in the media that may influence responses, which include, for example, police interaction within the Black community, perceived unjust firing of Black employees, and political issues limiting the rights of minority groups and women.

Positionality Statement

The researcher acknowledges his bias as part of the research process. The researcher is an African-American male and a 20-year public relations and communications professional with the

government and private corporations. For much of the researcher's professional career, he was a token within the context of his professional environment. Additionally, the researcher served as the Diversity Chair for the Los Angeles Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America and was a member of the National Diversity Committee for the Public Relations Society of America.

For this study, the researcher committed to suspending judgment and personal bias and focused on collecting and analyzing data in a manner that protects the integrity of the research and allows the data to serve as the basis for conclusions and recommendations. The researcher is passionate about equitable treatment and fair opportunities for minorities and women in corporate environments. Therefore, the researcher determined that it was essential to gather evidence to help ascertain how tokenism, if at all, affects the leadership style development of Black executives to help corporate organizations focus on strategies that increase inclusion and create a more egalitarian corporate culture.

Summary

If organizations continue to focus on increasing diversity and inclusion at the executive level by promoting Black employees to executive roles, it creates an opportunity to identify the challenges Black employees encounter as executive leaders. Additionally, it affords scholars a research environment to evaluate theories and hypotheses to develop strategies that enhance corporate environments to support the success of Black executives. The work of the researcher contributes to the existing knowledge regarding the relationship between leadership style and the success of Black executive tokens.

The researcher's phenomenological study targeted Black executives from global corporate organizations and investigated lived experiences of the phenomenon of tokenism. Most research on tokenism has analyzed tokenism from the perspective of the dominant group. The

researcher approached the study with a different perspective by analyzing the phenomenon from the token's point of view. To frame the analysis and interpretation of findings, the researcher examined tokenism theory, social theory, intersectionality theory, and leadership theory, with the aim of gaining a historical perspective on the literature.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In a *McKinsey Quarterly* article, Hancock et al. (2021) analyzed data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; their findings indicate that as of April 2021, in Fortune 500 companies, only four CEOs were Black. Additionally, data indicate that 97% of U.S. companies fail to maintain leadership diversity at the executive levels of the organization. Businesses led by diverse teams were found to be more inclined to innovate and produce new products, compared to those led by homogenous teams (Dolan et al., 2020). Given the low number of Black CEOs and the indication that diverse teams are more innovative there is an opportunity for corporate organizations to enhance strategies to diversify their workforce including the highest levels of executive leadership.

U.S. labor statistics indicate that Black people are typically in the minority at the executive levels of corporate organizations. According to Kanter, the minority group members are tokens if they represent 15% or less of the group. Kanter's work is based on the work of Georg Simmel, who contended that group interactions undergo qualitative transformations due to numerical modifications. Simmel's work focused on absolute numbers, whereas Kanter's expansion of Simmel's work focused on numerical proportions. Kanter acknowledged that as group proportions become more equal, group interactions change and may improve for numerical tokens. For example, as numerical proportions approach the 15% mark, tokens experiences may change because of developing a more united and stronger voice; however, from a macro perspective they are still in the minority and may still faces challenges because of their minority groups status.

The numerical representation within an organization is a significant structural feature that holds influence within in most organizations (Jackson et al., 1995). In 1995, Jackson et al. drew their findings from empirical research conducted on Black leaders. The study evaluated the impact of representation at proportional intervals on work stress and its symptoms when analyzing race and gender. The research suggests that when numerical values associated with race are lower within a group, it can lead to an increase in symptoms of both depression and anxiety. In addition to Kanter's numerical representation of tokenism, Webster's dictionary defines tokenism as an act taken to create the appearance of being fair (i.e., the illusion of diversity), such as promoting a Black individual to the c-suite primarily based on their ethnicity. The majority of studies on tokenism focus on the viewpoint of the dominant group rather than that of the token individual (Plaut et al., 2014). In addition to analyzing the experiences of Black executives, the elevation of Black people to leadership positions creates an opportunity to investigate their leadership style and how it aligns or differs from other executives at corporate organizations.

A single definition of leadership that applies to everyone does not exist. Leadership scholars such as Bernard M. Bass, John P. Kotter and Joseph C. Rost have all offered different definitions of leadership, which Rosari (2019) strove to compare and contrast. Bass defined leadership as an individual acting as an agent of change; Kotter defined leadership as the process of moving a group in a direction non-coercively, exerting influence; and Rost defined leadership as a relationship among leaders and followers that reflects mutual purposes (Rosari, 2019).

The research for this particular study was based on Northouse's (2018) interpretation of leadership. According to Northouse, leadership is the act of guiding a group of individuals towards a shared objective. This process involves an individual who has the ability to influence

and inspire others to work together toward a common goal. In reviewing the literature, a common denominator for leadership is influence; the core of one's leadership style lies in how they influence a group as an individual. The main purpose of leadership is to generate progress and advancement. The concept of change or influence is supported in a scholarly review of leadership definitions. In their analysis of 441 articles on leadership, Reed et al. (2019) discovered that the primary description of leadership involved motivating others to achieve a particular objective and guiding organizational change. The researcher chose to investigate transactional, transformational and, authentic leadership styles to narrow the focus. The research believes these are some of the more common leadership styles and wanted to focus on contemporary leadership styles typically discussed in the academic environment.

The review of literature starts by providing a synopsis of the past implications of institutional racism on African-Americans. Additionally, it deliberates the interconnectivity of Black males and Black females by highlighting disparities in each group's perceptions of the corporate environment. The next section of the literature review focuses on tokenism theory and social identity theory, exploring the insight the theories provide into how individuals process and contextualize their environments when they belong to a minority group. The literature review also analyzes different leadership theories and how various leadership styles affect organizational culture. Lastly, the literature review provides a general overview of the current knowledge discussing inclusion and diversity strategies, which provides an aim for the research study and the potential implications of the findings for corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

Systemic Racism

The issues that Black employees confront are connected to the social, economic and racial past of America, as per research conducted by McKinsey and Company in 2021. A historical review of systemic racism provides insights on many of the root causes related to the challenges facing Black employees. The literature provides context on how racism is beyond an individual racist attitude or act, scholars provide evidence of how systems within society, particularly American society continue to perpetuate barriers for Black people and people of color in a system designed to keep them away from society's power structures. Feagin and Bennefield (2014) argued that since the 1600s, people of color have been systematically oppressed through the use of White racial framing. This framing is made up of racist stereotypes, ideologies, images, narratives, and emotions that have been rationalized over time. Feagin and Bennefield's research into the healthcare system in America determined that there is a historical record of institutionalized socioeconomic advantages for White people, discrimination, and racialized narratives stemming from centuries of slavery, segregation, and modern-day White oppression significantly impede the opportunity of racial minorities to locate sufficient resources.

Feagin (2010) explained that the theory of systemic racism outlines the primary aspects of racism in America. These include a hierarchical structure that favors one race, a pervasive framing of Whiteness as the norm, both individual and group discrimination, the perpetuation of racial-material inequalities, and institutions that support the dominance of White people. Feagin and Bennefield (2014) noted that approximately 85% (300+ years) of U.S. history is rooted in genocide, slavery, and legal segregation. The maintenance of racialized institutions and rationalization of White framing has been primarily enforced by White elites. Furthermore, White privilege has led to the subconscious support of oppression of ordinary Whites as it

benefits them. Most of the literature on systemic racism concurs that Blacks have faced the greatest challenges and negative consequences of racist systems. Facemire (2018) posited that it is possible for African-Americans face systemic racism and racial discrimination daily. The constant sociopolitical context makes racial trauma a challenging issue, as Franklin et al. (2006) highlighted in their work. Racial wounds, being an integral part of this context, are difficult to tackle effectively. The work of Massey and Denton (1988, 1989, 1993) provides empirical evidence of how segregation has disproportionately affected Black Americans and how a racialized system was constructed intentionally to keep Black Americans oppressed and at the lower levels of society.

In an analysis of segregation indices, Massey and Denton (1988) classified residential segregation measures using five distinct dimensions of spatial variation: unevenness, exposure, clustering, concentration and centralization. Massey and Denton utilized 1980 residential data for Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians to conduct their analysis. Massey and Denton's research is unique in that it measured all dimensions simultaneously for multidimensional assessment as opposed to trying to determine the best or most correct measure of segregation (Massey, 2012). According to their research, Black Americans were the sole minority group to undergo elevated levels of segregation on at least four of the five dimensions of segregation at the same time. This phenomenon was termed hypersegregation (Massey & Denton, 1989).

Hypersegregation is the theoretical construct behind American Apartheid (Massey & Denton, 1993). Massey argues that residential segregation perpetuated the disadvantages experienced by Black individuals by concentrating poverty in their neighborhoods, and by severing the link between social and spatial mobility that other groups had historically used to improve their socioeconomic status over time. American Apartheid delves into the ways in

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which this system of segregation was maintained and reinforced, and how it impacted the lives of Black Americans for generations. Massey and Denton proposed that the distinctiveness of Black segregation played a crucial part in the racial hierarchy of the American community. Indeed, segregation has been posited as a key mechanism in the perpetuation of racial inequality across a variety of domains, including housing, education, and economic opportunity, to name just a few (Mordechay, 2020; Orfield & Lee, 2005). The historical underpinning of Black racial segregation is salient in researching tokenism and Black leadership because the scholarly data supports the historical challenges faced by Black people, which can be argued is part of their identity from which they cannot disassociate when part of corporate organizations.

Intersectionality

The biological differences between men and women lead to distinct experiences of the world. By using the framework in intersectionality, we can analyze the unique experiences of Black males and Black females and how they differ. Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) created the term intersectionality, which describes how individuals with multiple minority statuses are often perceived in a way that doesn't accurately reflect the combined effects of each category. Intersectionality refers to the interacting effects of being categorized into multiple minority groups simultaneously. The idea of intersectionality encompasses how belonging to different social categories affects how individuals are perceived and their experiences in the world (Bowleg, 2012). The concept of intersectionality originates from the field of Black feminist studies. It is employed to examine biases and mistreatment that individuals face when belonging to multiple marginalized groups, including race and gender (Billups et al., 2022).

Black women face both racism and sexism, which results in a double burden of discrimination, also known as double jeopardy. They are aware of the combined impact of both

forms of discrimination (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Black women who embody two marginalized social categories are often overlooked because they do not fully fit into either category; they are not the stereotypical representation of their race (Black men) or their gender (White women; Biernat & Sesko, 2018; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Research conducted Black women indicates that being a woman of color can lead to being seen as not possessing typical qualities of either group when considered separately (Billups et al., 2022). The findings suggest that being both a Black female can result in the loss of recognition of both race and gender identity. This can lead to Black women being perceived as invisible in terms of societal stereotypes regarding both women and Black individuals.

Earlier research explored the encounters of Black female leaders have utilized different epistemological perspectives (L. Bass, 2012); epistemological approaches can serve as a guide to comprehending the encounters of Black women, specifically those in leadership roles. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) state that the perspective of Black women is important because "the suppression of the ideas of Black women in research and epistemological knowledge construction remains a force that undermines the economic, political, and social revitalization within a Black woman's world" (p. 341). The common epistemological approaches used in this field include Black feminist thought, Afrocentric feminist epistemology and endarkened feminist epistemology. Endarkened feminist epistemology, which is used to describe the experiences of Black women (Dillard, 2000), was the framework used in this research. This epistemology is based on six assumptions: (a) self-definition; (b) research as both an intellectual and spiritual endeavor; (c) the individual as an aspect of community facilitated through dialogue; (d) concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning; (e) the historical interrelationship between knowledge and

research; and (f) power relations grounded in many aspects of identity, particularly race and gender (Dillard, 2000).

Investigating the experiences of Black females is salient to this study because the literature related to Black females perpetuates that Black males do not face challenges and enjoy Black male privileges, particularly over Black women. Endarkened feminist epistemology provides a Black female perspective, the research of T. Hasan Johnson (2018) looks at the perspective of Black males in relation to their perceived privileges. In his writing, Johnson (2018) talks about the presumptions regarding privilege that are associated with Black men, and how these presumptions have affected the conversation about power, identity, and oppression in discussions of gender within the Black community. One of the primary scholars of Black male privilege is Jewel Woods (2008), who developed a Black Male Privilege checklist (Appendix A) adapted from Barry Deutsch's (2001) Male Privilege Checklist. Johnson cautioned that "Wood's checklist may be useful as an exercise in humility, but it does not address the material difference in how Black men and women experience the world" (p. 22). Johnson covers several different categories in his research; however, his findings on wealth and the wage gap provide some insights from a corporate perspective when investigating Black male privilege myth.

It is supported by empirical data that Black men who have received the same level of education as Black women earn more money. Black women typically earn up to only 89% of every Black male dollar earned. However, Johnson (2018) argues this is problematic because data sets on male income leave out those for prison and, according to Pettit (2012), not including the impact of higher incarceration for Black males inaccurately inflates Black economic progress. Labor data from 2020 shows that Blacks have the largest unemployment number at 11.5% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). The data additionally indicates that Black men tend to

have lower labor force participation, hold lower-quality jobs, and have higher unemployment rates than Black women, White women, or White men. Johnson determined that within the realm of employment, wealth, and wages, no proof exists of Black make privilege. Johnson suggested that the issue with allegations of identity-based privilege is that they depend on assumptions regarding access to resources and positions of power, while often inaccurately defining privilege.

Johnson (2018) discusses that instead of privileges a better definition of Black male privilege may be *residual benefits,* these crude advantages may seem like privileges, but they are not supported by institutional backing that they are indeed privileges. Black men's hyper visibility is accentuated by intersectionality, while the residual benefits for Black women are rendered almost invisible; however Black women's residual benefits do exist in certain ways, for example, they have a lower likelihood of being arrested and are more likely to participate in the workforce. One reason why the idea of Black male privilege has become popular, according to Johnson, is that it is promoted by Black feminism. Nevertheless, he highlighted that Black men are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and mortality rates, making them the group that suffers the most in the United States. Johnson believes that the additional social pressures faced by Black males ultimately erode any presumed privileges Black men may receive because of their gender.

Tokenism and Social Theories

Kanter's Tokenism Theory

Organizational groups are classified by Kanter (1977a) based on their proportional representation, which can be uniform, skewed, tilted, or balanced. Homogenous groups are known as uniform groups, where all members hold the same master status, and the majority to minority ratio is 100:0. In tilted groups, there is a majority with a larger minority representation,

with a ratio of 65:35. Majority members outnumber the minority group members significantly in skewed groups, with a ratio of 85:15. Finally, balanced groups are equal, with 50:50 or equal ratios among group members.

In 1977, Kanter came up with the term *token*, which refers to a subset of people within an organization who are in a numerical minority and are seen as distinct from other groups. Numerical representation served as the foundation of the theory developed by Kanter, which involves a ratio of 85:15 (Stichman et al., 2010). The larger 85% portion of a group is labeled as "dominants," and the smaller 15% are labeled as "tokens." Kanter suggested that once the representation in the workplace reaches 15%, they face fewer issues.

Kanter conducted a study that suggested that the experiences of a member of a social identity group within a work group or organization are significantly influenced by how much they are considered as a representative of that group. This representation, known as being a token, typically results in negative experiences for the individual (Watkins et al., 2019). Watkins et al. (2019) drew conclusions based on a review and synthesis of empirical work on tokens and the effects of being a token. Their review included research published between 1991-2016. Their research included a review of 83 empirical articles on tokens and included both quantitative and qualitative studies. Kanter's theory posits that individuals will encounter elevated work-related stress and increased psychological effects related to their token status when compared to non-tokens (Jackson et al., 1995). Tokens are frequently regarded as symbols, rather than individuals, representing their respective categories (Kanter, 1977b). Tokens, being symbolic representation of their type, may undergo additional pressures as they might believe that their success could impact the future opportunities of others in their social category, whether it is intentional or unintentional (Jackson et al., 1995).

Jackson et al. (1995) asked study participants if they experienced work-related pressures mentioned by Kanter, such as scrutiny, performance pressures, lack of acceptance, and social isolation. To evaluate anxiety and depression, the study used a checklist from John Hopkins that was based on abbreviated symptom scales. The checklist items that were chosen had increased factor loading on both anxiety and depression. Furthermore, these items corresponded with symptoms that were identified in the National Survey of Black America. The study included 167 Black leaders as participants and included sectors like mayors of major cities, members of Congress, high-ranking military officials, and major executives at predominantly White businesses.

The results of the study verified the impact of symbolic representation and demonstrated that Black tokens are often requested by their organizations to act as the representative of their type on various committees, panels, and policy sessions, which in turn generates greater levels of anxiety among them (Jackson et al., 1995). The findings of anxiety associated with symbolic representation align the root cause of a token's experiences in her discussion of three perpetual tendencies: visibility, contrast, and assimilation.

Visibility. Visibility occurs because other individuals in the group observe or point out the visible differences within the group. Tokens capture a larger share of awareness. According to Kanter (1977b), high visibility creates an environment where tokens may feel like they must work harder than their peers, even twice as hard to prove themselves to other group members. Stichman et al. (2010) stated that visibility also may create a belief that tokens endure increased scrutiny related to their job performance. This increased scrutiny may lead to performance pressures in which tokens fear making mistakes because their performance is being scrutinized heavily.

Tokens typically respond in two ways to performance pressures: first, by overachieving, and second, by limiting their visibility to become socially invisible (Kanter, 1977b). According to the literature, the duality of visibility is a constant challenge; tokens are working to meet performance pressures and yet, ironically, also make efforts to remain invisible (Lee & James, 2007).

Contrast. Contrast occurs when members of the dominant group exaggerate the differences between them and the token member of a group (Kanter, 1977b). Jackson et al. (1995) posited that tokens are repeatedly reminded of their differences from the majority group through jokes, interruptions, exclusions from informal activities, and various loyalty tests. Stichman et al. (2010) conducted a study to examine Kanter's theory that when a subgroup's representation reaches the numerical threshold of 15%, they face fewer issues in the workplace. Their study involved 87 officers in a municipal police agency where women constituted 17% of total sworn patrol officers. Their findings indicated that despite being over Kanter's tipping point, the female officers still believed they stood out in the department. Stichman et al. concluded that even above a tipping point of 15%, differentiation is still utilized by those in power to uphold their solidarity, culture, and authority.

The existence of a token that carries dissimilar social characteristics raises the awareness of the dominant population about their own self and makes observers more conscious about the unique traits of the dominant class. The dominant class becomes more aware of their commonalities and differences from the tokens. To preserve their commonality, dominants keep tokens slightly outside interactions with the majority group to preserve the boundary between them (Kanter, 1977b).

Contrast increases a token's feelings of isolation and polarization from the dominant group. Kanter's data included personal interviews with females at a corporation. Her findings indicated that tokens respond to contrast in two ways: they accept isolation, remain quiet outsiders, and allow discrimination; or they try to become insiders to prove their loyalty by defining themselves as exceptions and turning against their own social category. The work of Lewis and Simpson (2012) provides insight into how contrast creates an environment in which tokens take on the behavior of dominants. Their work explores the dimensions of gendered power. They recognize that Kanter's work does not focus explicitly on the gendering of organizations; however, they indicate that she discusses gender in her analysis. For example, the few women allowed to enter the male power structure create an expectation that their actions will mimic, and mirror male behavior and they will not intimately interact with other regular employees who are women. Kanter referred to these integrated women as queen bees and that they determine how other women behave at an organization and ensure that other women do not create an environment to threaten the dominate status of the males. The queen bee phenomenon highlights situations where tokens become insiders and willingly partake in prejudice against other tokens (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

Assimilation. Assimilation involves utilizing preconceived notions or common generalizations about an individual's societal classification (Kanter, 1977a). Cho et al. (2021) found that tokens tend to conform to the norms and expectations of the dominants, which occurs due to visibility and contrast, which is referred to as assimilation. The research conducted by Cho et al. involved reviewing qualitative data with a secondary analysis applied to a culture that is predominantly male, which in this case was Korean. Cho et al. and his colleagues conducted a new analysis on the interviews of 107 women leaders. They discovered that these women leaders

adapted themselves to conform to the prevailing expectations of the dominant male group. Kanter explores assimilation from the perspective of the group in the majority. In her analysis, the majority group uses the assimilation process to fit a token into a stereotypical role perceived as appropriate by the dominant group, and the characteristics of a token tend to be distorted to fit this generalization. Assimilation may force tokens into limited roles, which in turn produces role encapsulation (Stichman et al., 2010). Role entrapment (also known as role encapsulation) occurs because of the dominants' push or tokens voluntary assimilation to survive. Role entrapment may limit the tokens' advancement opportunities within the organization.

Entrapment may provide a sense of "place" for tokens but restrains their areas of permissible or rewarded action. Kanter suggested that encapsulation might incline tokens to engage in actions that are associated with their role and others' expectations rather than consistent with their own preferences. Kanter's theory views assimilation not as the token assimilating to the dominant group; rather, her perspective is that the dominant group uses stereotypes to place tokens in a role fit within the dominant group which allows the token to assimilate into the group. Tokens are aware that their simulation is undesirable; however, they feel they have no other choice for their careers (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

The three dimensions of visibility, contrast, and assimilation, in Kanter's (1977a) tokenism theory present a framework for understanding the pressures of being a token within an organization. It is ironic that tokens are easily identifiable as people who are distinct, yet they do not allow their own distinct and non-stereotypical traits to be expressed. Kanter's work provides a theoretical basis for the importance of inclusion and diversity. Diversity traditionally looks at numerical representation, whereas authentic integration of individuals into a group represents inclusion. Kanter's research provides a foundation to identify the challenges individuals may

encounter as organizations focus on diversity, particularly at the executive levels. Figure 2

provides an overview of the relationship between culture, visibility contrast, assimilation, and

resistance (Cho et al., 2021)

Figure 2

Relationship Between Culture, Visibility, Contrast, Assimilation, and Resistance
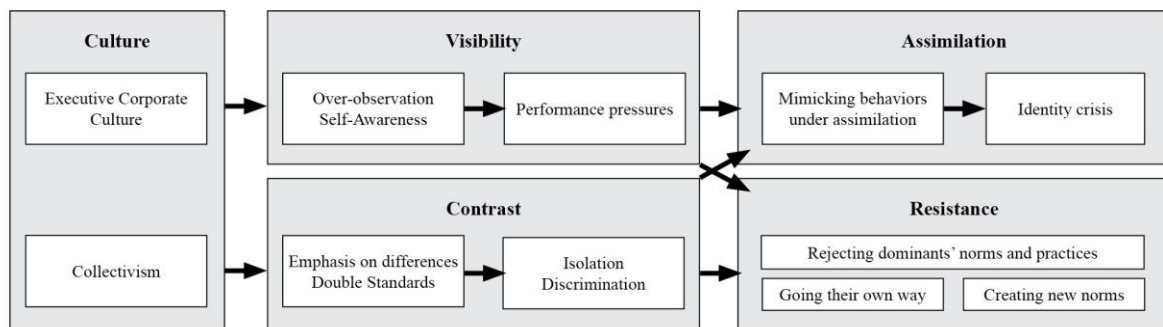
Challenges to Kanter's Tokenism Theory

According to Stichman et al. (2010), many believe that Kanter's definition of tokenism is

too simplistic in its original form because it strongly emphasizes the numerical representation of

tokens. According to Zimmer (1988), Kanter's theory is positioned as gender and race neutral,

indicating that the adverse effects of tokenism will have the same impact regardless of an

individual's social status. Kanter's position is that corporate work experiences are less related to

gender or race and have more to do with the structural constraints of the organizational system.

Regardless of their social group, Kanter believes tokens will experience similar effects of

tokenism. In her analysis of Kanter's theory, Zimmer questioned if there is a causal link between

relative numbers and work experience consequences. Stichman et al. (2010) stated that tokenism

is much more complex than a "numbers" game and that quantitative examinations alone might

not fully explain tokenism's myriad aspects.

King et al. (2010) conducted research on gender inequality and tokenism theory, examining how work environments are experienced by women who are tokenized. King et al. conducted three studies to investigate tokenism and gender, each of which investigated tokenism from the female gender perspective. All studies involved surveys as the data collection instrument. The initial study found that women who are considered tokens tend to view their organizational environments as unjust towards women. The outcomes of the second study imply tokenism is subjective and can create the perception of an unjust environment. The third study suggests that the climate of discrimination based on gender is linked to the action and attitudes related to specific jobs. The three studies collectively suggest that it would be beneficial to include the psychological climate of gender discrimination in the tokenism theory framework. The findings of King et al. align with those obtained by Watkins et al. (2019) regarding the contingent nature of tokenism because the experiences and outcomes of from the lens of the token depend on several individual (*race/gender/stereotype*) and contextual factors (*position/work tasks*).

Janice Yoder (1991, 1994), who offers one of the strongest critiques of Kanter's, asserted that tokenism is about more complex issues than numerical representation. Yoder reviewed several studies that tested Kanter's theory of tokenism and concluded that tokens generally experience consequences (especially women) in perceived gender-inappropriate professions (Yoder, 1991). Yoder (1991) argued that the effects of tokenism become salient when the dominant group feels that the increasing number and power of minorities threaten organizational advantages as dominants. According to Yoder, tokens will suffer from harassment and other inequities as their presence increases within an organization or group because dominant members will feel threatened by them. Yoder (1994) found that numerical representation of tokens alone

was not enough to produce tokenism. Yoder's findings provide a potential theoretical foundation for why organizations struggle to implement diversity and inclusion programs effectively. In analyzing the highest levels of the power structure within organizations, increasing minorities at the executive level, as evidenced in Yoder's research, creates an unwanted challenge to dominant power.

Yoder's (1991) theory provides evidence of other sociological factors that create challenges for tokens. The use of a numerical percentage could be used as a beginning stage for tokenism, but it is essential to remember the social and cultural factors of Yoder's theory highlights, as they are also significant factors that impact the experiences of tokens. Therefore, a more accurate definition of tokenism can be derived from a combination of Kanter and Yoder's findings. Kanter's theory is the foundation and starting point, and Yoder's (1994) theory is the socialization of tokenism on the token. In essence, tokenism based only on numbers fails to acknowledge the impact of organizational and societal discrimination.

Challengers to the proportional theory developed by Kanter believe that a numerical low percentage does not determine the effects of tokenism, it is instead the low social status of minority tokens (i.e. Black people and women). Turco (2010) argued that the context of the cultural positioning in which tokenism is embedded determines its effects. Turco's summative conclusion draws on research from 117 interviews in the leverage buyout industry. Turco's research compares the experiences of Black women and men tokens. Turco argued that two elements of culture influence a token's experiences: (a) cultural resources hierarchy and (b) an ideal worker image. In Turco's research on the leverage buyout industry, it was found that the variable of gender is a greater characteristic compared to a racial characteristic. However, it is important to note that this conclusion should not be applied to other industries beyond the

leverage buyout industry. However, Turco's findings support the cultural dynamic of tokenism. In addition to the cultural context, the structural elements of an organization also contribute to an individual's experiences of tokenism.

Social Dominance Orientation Theory

A study by Anisman-Razin and Saguy (2016) found that social dominance orientation (SDO) shaped how people construe ideologies. The degree to which an individual wishes for their in-group to dominate and be superior to out-groups is what constitutes SDO. Anisman-Razin and Saguy specifically investigated the way in which SDO level, gender, and feminist identification shape individual reactions to tokenism. Anisman-Razin and Saguy put forward a hypothesis suggesting that individuals' sensitivity to inequality would influence their response to tokenism. Anisman-Razin and Saguy's research findings confirmed their hypothesis and illustrated how a person's persistent sensitivity to inequality influences their responses to token practices.

The research conducted by Anisman-Razin and Saguy in 2016 suggests that an individual's response to tokenism is significantly influenced by their perception of hierarchy. Their findings also indicated that individuals' responses to tokenism are influenced by their sensitivity to justice. Anisman-Razin and Saguy have contributed to the research on tokenism by showing that individual characteristics have a significant impact on how people respond to tokenism. Their work has added to the existing literature on this topic, which supports Yoder's argument that tokenism is a complex issue that cannot be reduced to mere numbers.

According to Pratto et al. (1994), the acceptance or rejection of different ideologies and policies related to group relations can be anticipated based on a fundamental individual-difference factor called SDO. SDO is a perspective on the relationships among an intergroup and

highlights if an individual prefers equal or hierarchical relationships, meaning arranged according to superior-inferior dimensions. The results of Pratto et al. were obtained by analyzing information that was gathered from a group of university students who took part in a research study called *Social Attitudes*. The validity and reliability of measuring SDO were examined in the study through predictive and discriminant tests. According to Pratto et al.'s study, people who have a high social dominance orientation (SDO) tend to select positions and join organizations that uphold or amplify social inequality. Individuals with lower SDO would belong to institutions and choose roles that reduce inequality. Their findings indicate that individuals with increased SDO perspectives will have fewer negative reactions to tokenism than those with low SDO. The difference in reactions to tokenism is attributed to how individuals contextualize their environment; people with high SDO focus on social hierarchy and whereas people with low SDO focus on egalitarian policies and equality.

Social Identity Theory

Individuals come to identify themselves as part of a particular group, thereby deriving a sense of self, according to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981). The perception and behavior of an individual towards ingroup and outgroup members are influenced by their social identity (Brewer, 1999; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). According to Perez and Strizhko (2018), social identities are relative and malleable. Perez and Strizkho's conclusions are based on findings from their research on psychosocial, organizational, and health outcomes from token women and token Black soldiers in army units. Their data indicated that non-tokens and tokens survey responses were similar. According to Perez and Strizhko, one explanation is that the shared Army culture emphasizes the importance of the mission above individual characteristics and goals. Their findings support the importance of organizational culture. Given that individuals

respond differently to tokenism, analyzing social identity theory provides an additional theory beyond Kanter's numerical theory regarding how tokens respond to tokenism.

Social identity theory was expanded through Turner's (2010) self-categorization theory, which stated that two mutually exclusive but interconnected levels of self-definition—social and personal identity—determine how self-perception processes information, outputs a representation of the social situation and determines behavior. The construct of self-categorization supports the notion that personal identity becomes salient when a person compares himself/herself to other group members. According to Brewer's (1999) research on ingroup formation, self-stereotyping categorization occurs when people depersonalize others to make a cognitive shift from perceiving themselves as unique to perceiving themselves as having stereotypical group characteristics. As a result, self-stereotyping individuals embrace group interests and goals as their own: the assimilation construct from Kanter's tokenism theory.

Historical research supports social identity as a basis for organizational behavior (Tyler & Balder, 1997). An employee's professional demeanor is often a result of trying to conform to the norms of professional groups (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2009). Falomir-Pichastor et al. (2009) conducted a study to understand social identity on the effects of individual behavior. Specifically, they investigated whether identification as a nurse predicted their willingness to obtain a flu vaccine. They observed that the more salient a social identity (identification with a group), the higher the probability that an individual will behave in accordance with that identity. The nurses' showed a willingness to be vaccinated was significantly related to their identification with nurses as a group. The more nurses identified with their group, the more they were vaccinated in the previous year and the more they intended to be vaccinated the following year. Falomir-Pichastor et al.'s results support the idea that individual beliefs are some of the most

important predictors of behavior. Falomir-Pichastor et al.'s findings confirm that the salience of group membership (group identification) increased adoption of group normative behaviors.

Civil Rights Ideology

The ideology of Civil Rights during the mid-1950s and 1960s provided an alternative to the supremacist White ideology. It was one of the counterhegemonic ideologies that emerged during that time. According to Kelly (2007), the Civil Rights ideology encompassed the following:

1. Oppressed groups require equal opportunities and colorblind access to institutions in society due to the prevalence of prejudice and discrimination.

2. Through intergroup dialogue and interaction, people can make efforts to transform racist attitudes and societal barriers.

3. The process of change is gradual and develops over time; when laws and policies that promote racism are eliminated, everyone will receive equitable treatment.

Kanter's theory posited that tokens would encounter negative experiences at work; Civil Rights ideology provides a foundation for tokens to address those negative issues. Research conducted by Kelly (2007) presented findings that provide evidence of how individuals manage the structural realities of racial tokenism. In a recent study, Kelly explored the experiences of Black teachers who work in schools where the majority of the students were White. Her research examined how these teachers navigated their roles as both racial and numerical minorities in the workplace. Kelly presented proof that individuals who participated in the study employ Civil Rights ideology to rationalize and assess favorable aspects of tokenism. Kelly used Civil Rights ideology to support the notion that evaluating work experiences is nuanced and complicated. Kelly's research tested the negative experiences Kanter's theory predicts. Kelly found that many

in his study positioned themselves as "heroic individualists" (p. 230). According to Watts (1994), when African-Americans deal with the pressures of visibility, contrast, and assimilation, it causes them to position themselves as heroic individualists who endure stress and strain and overcome obstacles to serve a purpose. Civil Rights ideology provides additional context to Kanter's numerical token theory because being a racial token is not the same as being a numerical token. Civil rights ideology includes the social status of Black Americans and how their social status impacts their experiences on daily basis, which includes the professional work environment.

In many corporate executive situations, Blacks are double tokens: their low numerical representation and ethnicity. The additional variable of being a racial token is part of the complexity that goes beyond a simple numerical percentage. Kelly's (2007) results indicated that a positive aspect of being a racial token demands ideological work. Kelly's work aligns with that of Farber and Sherry (1995), who stated that "ideology may be as important as race or class in defining an individual's voice" (p. 288). In addition to the social theories that analyze how tokens deal with tokenism, Civil Rights ideology and heroism provide a context of tokenism from the specific racial lens of Black people.

Leadership Frameworks and Theories

Leadership, according to Northouse's (2018) perspective, is a highly esteemed and in-demand asset. Leadership does not have a universally accepted definition. There are varying perspectives on whether it should be regarded as a behavior or a trait. Additionally, some researchers view it as a relational concept, while others approach it from an information-processing standpoint. According to Northouse's definition, a person who can guide a group of people towards a shared objective is referred to as a leader. The process of this influence is

referred to as leadership. Traditionally, there are two traditional categories of leadership: assigned and emergent. The act of leadership established through holding a title at an organization is referred to as assigned. Emergent leadership pertains to a scenario where an individual's power on a team is acknowledged by others, without regard to their official title.

Leadership is different from management. In 1916, Fayol (as cited in Northouse, 2018) described management in terms of planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling. Fayol's definition still holds in modern times. Management focuses on reducing chaos to help organizations run more effectively and efficiently. Leadership focuses on influence and change within an organization. Organizations are complex systems, and the literature reveals the importance of leadership in good organizations. Leadership changes how individuals think about what is possible (Northouse, 2018). According to research findings from Hamstra et al. (2013), the attainment of objectives set by followers can be influenced by the style of leadership employed, indicating that individuals that are in leadership positions are critical in setting and pursuing company goals. The influence of transactional and transformational leadership was measured by Hamstra et al. in a multilevel study of followers of 120 organizational leaders. The results they obtained suggest that when examined at the group level, transformational leadership was linked to followers' aspiration for mastery, while transactional leadership was related to the desire for performance. Hamstra et al.'s quantitative study supports the finding that leadership is salient in terms of followership and developing organizational culture.

Leadership Approach

The results obtained from the analysis of leadership are complex, conflicting, fascinating, and often difficult to comprehend. Yukl's (2013) review of leadership literature provides

structure and categorization for different leadership study approaches, identifying the following

five approaches to studying leadership:

The Trait Approach. During the period from the 1900s to the 1940s, the initial method

of studying leadership concentrated on distinguishing characteristics that set apart leaders from

their colleagues. Leadership assessment assumes that an individual's personality, values, skills,

motives and morality play a crucial role in predicting their emergence as a leader (Day &

Antonakis, 2011). Traits are necessary to understand a style of leadership but insufficient in

themselves to determine leader emergence and effective leadership (Mendenhall et al., 2018).

The Behavior Approach. This approach was initially developed in the 1950s and

focused on leaders' behavior. The goal was to comprehend the activities of leaders during work

and determine which actions lead to effective leaders or ineffective leaders (Yukl, 2013).

The Situational Approach. This approach gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s.

Scholars wanted to understand how the environment influences the ability to be an effective

leader. The situational approach provides evidence that the situation in which the leader is placed

does matter and influences leadership outcomes.

The Power-Influence Approach. This approach focuses on leaders' influence on

subordinates. Researchers view leadership from the phenomenon of influence. Research on

power and influence aims to clarify how a leader's effectiveness is determined by the type and

quantity of power they hold, as well as how they utilize that power (Yukl, 2013). In 2013, Yukl

outlined 11 methods for exerting power, which are pressure, consultation, appeal to inspiration,

apprising, elevate collaboration, ingratiation, appeal using personnel interactions, build

coalitions, exchange, legitimize tactics, and rational persuasion.

The Integrative Approach. This approach involves the use of variables from the previous four approaches. Yukl (2013) discussed how accumulated knowledge of the other approaches enables hybrid leadership theories to be constructed. These hybrid theories include psychological, contextual, and biological variables. The integrative approach has led to the term *pluralizing leadership* (Sergi et al., 2016). According to Wheatley (2006), integrative leadership scholars study leadership from a holistic perspective and recognize the phenomenon that relationships can be complex and mutually casual when including all potential variables are part of guiding the actions of a leader.

Leadership Theories

Based on the approaches to leadership, scholars have developed leadership theories to help guide the study of leadership.

Leader- Versus Follower-Centered. Leader and follower constructs discuss the behavior of leaders and how follower react the leader's behaviors. Leader-focused theories are based on behavioral and power-influence approaches are known as The Great Man theory, which appears to center on the leader, with little attention given to other variables that are involved in the leadership process (B. M. Bass, 1990).

To expand the knowledge of "The Great Man," theory, leadership scholars also studied the role of followers' perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making toward leaders (G Mendenhall et al., 2018). Followership theories are known as leader-member exchange (LMX) theories (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). These theories focus on analyzing the quality and nature of the interactions among leaders and their followers. LMX theories conceptualize the element of leadership as a systematic approach focused on interactions between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2018). The foundational research of LMX comes from the original work of

Dansereau et al. (1975). Before Dansereau et al., the literature regarding leadership and followers argued that leadership was the same for all followers. Dansereau et al. challenged the assumption of how leaders may engage and treat each follower differently based on the dyadic relationship.

Descriptive Versus Prescriptive. According to Yukl (2013), a descriptive process attempts "to explain leadership processes, describing the typical activities of leaders and explain why certain behaviors occur in particular situations" (pp. 29-30). Descriptive theories attempt to map out the behavioral terrain and leadership tendencies to ascertain insights for scholars and practitioners.

In contrast, when there is specificity on what actions are required for leaders to be effective it is prescriptive (Yukl, 2013). Prescriptive theories analyze how leaders trigger behaviors and use the findings to determine what leads to effective leadership.

Universal Versus Contingency. Universal theories can apply to all leadership issues across any context; they can either be prescriptive or descriptive. Descriptive universal theories discuss the typical functions that all leaders perform to a certain extent. Prescriptive universal theories outline the functions required if the desire for the leader is to be effective (Yukl, 2013).

Contingency theories describe the different conditions that can impact a leader's situation and influence the leader's success or failure, which includes mapping the relationships between the variables in the situation. From the contingency perspective, the future success of any leadership act is contingent upon the degree to which that act is congruent with the external conditions necessary for it to have the desired effect (Mendenhall et al., 2018).

Leadership Style

Leadership continues to be a widely researched topic of interest among academic scholars. There is no one common definition of leadership. However, according to Northouse

(2018), the common component scholars have identified indicates that if the action of an individual is to influence a group or individual to attain a goal then it is leadership. Leadership style consists of the behaviors that leaders exhibit in their attempt to influence followers; leaders and followers are both parts of the processes related to leadership and should understand the dynamics of their dyadic relationship (Hamstra et al., 2013).

One area of research popular with scholars is how leadership develops corporate culture and influences OCBs. Individual and discretionary acts referred to as OCBs are those that are not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system of the organization (Organ, 1997). Out of the many existing theories and models of leadership, for this investigation, the review of leadership literature focused on authentic, transactional, and transformational leadership and how these leadership styles affect the leader-follower relationship and influence organizations' corporate culture.

Authentic Leadership. In 2003, Luthans and Avolio presented the idea of authentic leadership. This was formed from combining the principles of organizational behavior that is positive, and leadership that is transformational and ethical. Luthans and Avolio held the view that contemporary organizations require this type of leadership for their survival and success. Authentic leadership is a relatively new field of study in leadership, as per Northouse's (2018) findings. Authentic leadership focuses on the authenticity of a leader and if their actions are genuine and real. Authentic leaders are trustworthy, honest, and of good character. There is no scholarly consensus on the definition of authentic leadership. Chan (2005) discussed three different academic viewpoints via which scholars analyze authentic research: *intrapersonal, interpersonal,* and *developmental.*

The perspective that focuses on an individual's internal experience is closely related to the actions of a leader. This perspective involves having an understanding of oneself, managing one's emotions, maintaining a clear vision of self identity (Northouse, 2018). Shamir and Eliam (2005) shaped their construct of authentic leadership through a life story approach based in their review of authentic leadership literature. Shamir and Eliam acknowledged that their arguments are speculative but draw on previous literature and research. They contend that authentic leadership originates from one's personal life encounters, and the implications of those encounters are reflected in the leader's life narrative. The construction of life stories is a major component in the development of authentic leaders. Shamir and Eliam suggested that leaders who are authentic demonstrate true leadership, operate from a position of conviction, and are innovative. Leadership is greatly influenced by intrapersonal reflection, which involves leaders reflecting on their life experiences, contextualizing them, and giving them meaning. This, in turn helps followers to better understand and engage with authentic leaders.

The interpersonal process examines the interactions a of leader and followers' relationship (Eagly, 2005). Eagly (2005) suggested that being transparent and acting on values are not enough for leaders to be considered authentic. According to Eagly, for relational authenticity to exist, leaders must be given legitimacy by their followers to advocate for the values of the community. Members of an outgroup who have not had access to leadership roles typically find it more challenging to demonstrate relational authenticity, according to Eagly's analysis. In this approach, it is not just the actions of the leader, you cannot leave out the response actions of individuals that are followers. Authenticity is a mutual beneficial connection that is created as a byproduct of the dynamics created leaders and followers interact. When

leaders and the followers build a relationship, it creates authenticity, which is a mutually beneficial connection.

Leadership that is authentic is a result of long-term development, which may initiate important situations in life and may include a significant illness or the start of a new professional position. According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), leadership that is authentic is the result of a leader's positive psychological traits and strong ethical values, which reflect in their behavior. Self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency are four components that are interrelated and make up leadership (Avolio et al., 2009). A leader has the potential to acquire and enhance each of these types of behavior with time. Given this approach, authentic leadership occurs over a period of time. As leaders mature, they learn and grow into more authentic leaders through life experiences.

Practical and Theoretical Approach to Authentic Leadership. There are two different areas in which authentic leadership is formulated: practical and theoretical (Northouse, 2018). The practical approach is based on actual instances as well as instructional and advancement literature. The social science research findings are the basis of the theoretical approach.

Bill George (2003) has developed a practical approach to authentic leadership that emphasizes the steps required to become an authentic leader. The focus of this approach is on the practical aspects of becoming an authentic leader. George's approach draws on his experience as CEO. He explained the fundamental attributes that genuine leaders possess and how these qualities can be nurtured by leaders themselves. George's research findings suggest that genuine leaders possess an inherent urge to serve, possess self-awareness, and lead based on their fundamental values.

According to George's (2003) findings, leaders who are authentic exhibit five key characteristics. These include having an elevated purpose, possessing non-negotiable values regarding what is appropriate and inappropriate, building trusting relationships with those around them, practicing self-discipline and taking action based on their values, and displaying sensitivity and empathy towards others' struggles. A visualization of George's five dimensions, namely having passion, appropriate behavior, intimate connections, consistent actions, and having empathy, is presented in Figure 3. George believes that the process of developing skills and becoming an authentic leader is a lifelong journey that is shaped by a leader's personal experiences and life story.

Figure 3

Authentic Action Wheel
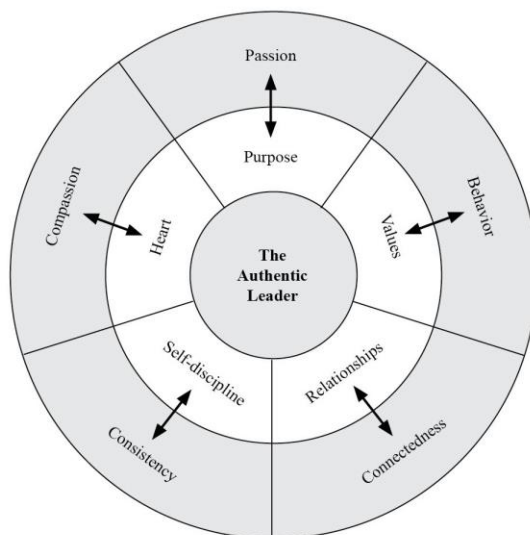
Note. Reprinted from *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, by B. George, 2003, Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2003 by the author. Reprinted with permission.

Social science literature focuses on a theoretical process. The theoretical method stems from the necessity to have leadership that is more humane and constructive and benefits the

wider community (Fry & Whittington, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Scholars developed a

theoretical model that positioned authentic leadership as a process. According to Walumbwa et

al. (2008), authentic leadership theory is based on four essential components: awareness of

oneself, perspective rooted in morality, processing that is balanced, and transparency in

relationships. These four components collectively constitute the foundation of authentic

leadership theory and are crucial for its successful implementation (as depicted in Figure 4).

Figure 4

Authentic Leadership Theory
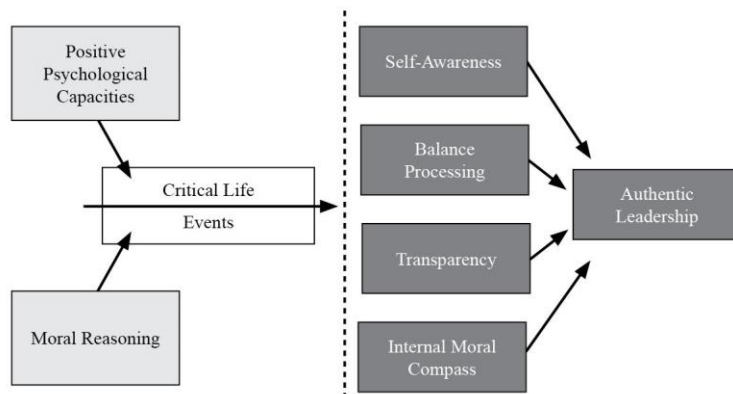
Note. Adapted from "Authentic Leadership Development," by F. Luthans & B. J. Avolio, 2003, *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, *241*(258), 1-26. Copyright 2003 by the authors.

The theoretical approach goes beyond providing practical advice, it delves into the

essence of authentic leadership and explains what authentic leadership entails. It also provides a

detailed account of the characteristics of authentic leadership. According to the literature,

authentic leaders are significantly influenced by positive psychological traits and moral

reasoning. Knowledge regarding authentic leadership continues to emerge, creating the need to

expand the current body of knowledge. There is a gap in the knowledge of how authentic

leadership relates to organizational outcomes. Scholars recognize that authenticity is essential for

good leadership but continue to explore and research how authenticity correlates to effective leadership.

Whereas authentic leadership focuses on the character and morality of a leader, the transactional-transformational leadership theories provide a set of leadership factors that that focus on the leadership and follower interaction. Table one presents the transactional and transformational factors that are based on B. M. Bass's (1985) leadership model.

Table 1

Leadership Factors

Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership
Factor 1	Factor 5
Idealized influence	Contingent reward
Charisma	Constructive transactions
Factor 2	Factor 6
Inspirational Motivation	Management by exception
	Active and passive
	Corrective transactions
Factor 3	
Intellectual stimulation	
Factor 4	
Individualized consideration	

Note. Adapted from *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, by B. M. Bass, 1985, Free Press. Copyright 1985 by the author.

Transformational Leadership. Leaders who follow transformational leadership style build a relationship with their followers that elevates motivation and morality simultaneously with the leader and follower. This leadership style is characterized by leaders engaging with their followers and establishing an understanding that elevates the overall level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower. Leaders who bring transformation are highly observant of the desires and incentives of their followers, and they strive to assist these followers in achieving their ultimate potential. According to B. M. Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational

leaders increase followers' concerns and strengthen their level of perception and acceptance of the group's vision and aims. Leaders who bring about change have the power to sway their followers by expressing an optimistic vision of what's to come (House, 1977), and creating a shared vision. For example, According to Barbuto (1997), the emphasis of leaders should be on what is shared among the team members, rather than highlighting the differences between individuals in the team.

In 2014, Mason et al. conducted a study that involved 56 leaders who participated in training programs for transformational leadership. The aim of their research was to explore whether the quality of leadership improves through transformational behavior training. The research conducted by Mason et al. indicated that transformational leadership had a positive impact on the leaders' self-efficacy, mood, and capacity to view things from different angles. Transformational leaders stimulate followers intellectually and direct them to look at situations from a new perspective (Hetland et al., 2011). The results of their study demonstrated that adopting a transformational leadership style leads to beneficial psychological outcomes for both the leader and their followers.

Transformational leadership focuses on collaboration and the team and is people-oriented and helps followers perform beyond their normal level (Mufti et al., 2020). Leaders who have transformational qualities demonstrate a strong adherence to their internal values and ideals. Their ability to motivate their followers towards actions that contribute to the common good is remarkable, as opposed to solely prioritizing their own self-interests (Kuhnert, 1994). In 1985, B. M. Bass asserted that there are four factors of leadership, which are connected to transformational leadership. These factors are referred to as idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The emotional component of leadership is referred to as idealized influence, which is the first factor (Antonakis, 2012). Leaders who are viewed as strong role models and possess qualities that followers aspire to embody, are said to exhibit idealized influence. Leaders who do the right thing and offer their followers a vision are highly regarded. The second factor is inspirational motivation, which refers to leaders who set high expectations and use symbols and emotional appeals to encourage their followers to achieve beyond their own self-interest. The third factor is related to intellectual stimulation, which refers to the ability of leaders to motivate their followers to be creative, innovative, and question their own beliefs. Intellectual stimulation plays a crucial role in promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and experimenting with new approaches to address organizational challenges. Leaders, in the fourth factor, focus on individualized consideration, where they act as coaches and advisors to their team members. This factor promotes a nurturing environment, where the leader pays close attention and listens carefully to the follower (Northouse, 2018).

Transactional Leadership. According to Burns (1978), the emphasis of transactional leadership is on the communication and exchange that occurs between leaders and their followers. Transactional leaders keep a close eye on any divergence from the established standards that have been agreed upon (House, 1971). The exchange dimension is the foundation of transactional leadership and is common in many organizations. Lord et al. (1999) state that transactional leadership emphasizes that rewards are based on accomplishments, which makes the task performance significant and creates differentiation among followers. Lord's research focuses on how follower self-concept serves as a determinant of follower behavior and reactions to leaders; his perspective highlights how transactional leadership leads to competitive organizational culture. Transactional leadership emphasizes individual over collective goals,

which reduces cooperation within teams (Kahai et al., 2003). Leaders who adopt a transactional style do not take into account the unique needs of their followers nor prioritize their personal growth and development (Northouse, 2018). Instead, transactional leaders engage in give-and-take relationships with their followers to promote their own interests as well as the interests of their followers (Kuhnert, 1994).

Notgrass (2014) stated that transactional leaders are perceived as incapable of fostering trust and mutually advantageous relationships with their subordinates. Notgrass conducted one of the earliest studies on the function of followers in the process of leadership. Notgrass employed a method of quantitative correlation to evaluate how a follower perceives the quality of their relationship with their leader and their preference for a leadership style from their leader. Positive and significant relationships were found between followers' perceived quality of relationship and their preference for a transformational leadership style, according to his research findings. Specifically, Notgrass found that followers' preference for transformational leadership behavior was positively correlated with their perception of the quality of the leader-follower relationship. The highest positive correlation with the followers' perception of the quality of leadership was found in the follower's preference for transactional leadership. This preference was focused on the behavioral factor of contingent reward.

B. M. Bass (1985) identified two factors of leadership that relate to transactional leadership: reward based on performance and monitoring for errors and deviations. Leaders work with their followers to develop an understanding of the requirements to be accomplished and the associated rewards that will come from the accomplishment. This process is known as contingent reward (Northouse, 2018). According to Notgrass (2014), leaders can achieve better results with contingent rewards if their followers have a perception of a strong and valuable relationship with

them. A management approach known as management by exception involves the act of offering feedback that is corrective in nature, which may be negative, and may include negative reinforcement. This management style can be categorized into two forms: active and passive. A leader who practices management by exception actively keeps an eye out for any mistakes or rule violations and implements actions to correct behavior. Conversely, if a leaders practices management by exception passively, intervention only occurs if standards are not achieved or problems arise.

Transactional Leadership Versus Transactional Leadership. Recognizing the need for change is transactional; however, to implement change, organizations benefit from a transformational leader (Scott & Klein, 2022). Transformational leaders implement change management with a heightened awareness of the need for fundamental, directional, and process changes (B. M. Bass, 1985). The study conducted by Hamstra et al. (2013) revealed that followers' endorsement of mastery goals had a positive relationship with transformational leadership, whereas followers' endorsement of performance had a positive relationship with transactional leadership. Hamstra et al.'s research indicates that transformational leadership improves the cognitive abilities of followers, whereas transactional leadership only produces apparent outcomes. The literature suggests that both transactional and transformational leadership affect followers' effect on their relationships with an organization. The research conducted by Hamstra et al. is in line with and reinforces the conclusions of Dinh and Lord (2012), who suggested that a leader's capacity to establish a forward-looking vision could be a critical factor in determining their effectiveness.

A follower's perception of transformational and transactional leadership may trigger intrapersonal (mastery goal) or interpersonal (performance goal) definitions of a leader's

competence. The development of interpersonal or intrapersonal followers' definition of competence aligns with Bono and Judge (2003), who revealed that transformational leadership enhances followers' self-concordance, which is the extent activities are construed as expressing individuals' authentic values and interests. Kark and van Dijk (2007) suggested that transformational leadership promotes a regulatory focus, whereas transactional leadership promotes a prevention focus. The literature provides evidence that transformational and transactional leadership relate differently to followers. Understanding how leaders should relate to followers may provide insights on how leaders engage with a diverse workforce, particularly if the workforce is more global and comprised of different ethnicities and cultures.

Global Leadership

The world has become an interconnected, global economy. Therefore, global leadership adds a new construct to organizational leaders operating worldwide. The importance of global leadership continues to emerge as a topic of interest among scholars. Global leadership involves influencing followers from multiple national cultures and jurisdictions characterized by elevated levels of tasks and relationship complexity (Mendenhall et al., 2018). The literature on global leadership is like the literature on domestic leadership. However, it extends the knowledge by focusing on the importance of understanding the cultural aspects of leadership as it relates to global organizations.

According to Weber et al. (1998), global leadership is far more complex than domestic leadership, primarily due to the dynamics and pressure of global competition. Osland et al. (2012) described global leadership as extreme leadership. McCall and Hollenbeck (2002) posited that domestic leaders develop differently from global leaders because global leader development comes from cultural experiences. Kanter (1977b) argued that global leaders should

be cosmopolitans who integrate and cross-fertilize knowledge and manage dispersed centers of expertise, influence, and production. Tichy et al. (1992) asserted that global leadership systems develop people and organizations simultaneously.

Lobel (1990), an early scholar of global leadership, identified the following relational characteristics of global leaders: "flexibility, curiosity, and openness to other ways of living and speaking, and nonjudgmental acceptance of cultural differences" (p. 40). Rhinesmith (2003) developed a global mindset model consisting of two components: intellectual intelligence and global emotional intelligence. Intellectual intelligence involves business acumen and paradox management, which relates to cognitive complexity. Global emotional intelligence, a combination of self-management and cultural acumen, comprises self-awareness, cultural adjustment, cross-cultural understanding, and cross-cultural effectiveness. Rhinesmith posited that intellectual and global emotional intelligence are the foundation of global leadership.

Brake (1997) stated that global leaders often must unlearn what made their organization successful previously. Brake's global leadership triad (see Figure 5) consists of three competencies for global leaders: business acumen, relationship management, and personal effectiveness. Business acumen is "the ability to pursue and apply appropriate professional knowledge and skills to achieve optimal results for the company's global stakeholders" (p. 45). Relationship management "is the ability to build and influence collaborative relationships in a complex and diverse global network to direct energy toward achievement of business strategies" (p. 48). Personal effectiveness "is the ability to attain increasing maturity levels to perform peak levels under strenuous conditions of working in a global enterprise" (p. 52). The focal point of Brake's triad revolves around the concept of transformational self, which pertains to an individual's potential and their personal interaction with the world. It is a journey towards

finding significance and direction in one's life, which is reinforced by introspection, effective

management of one's thoughts and emotions, and willingness to adapt to new circumstances.

Figure 5

Brake's Global Leadership Triad

Relationship Management
- Change Agentry
- Community Building
- Conflict Management and Negotiation
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Influencing

Transformational
Self

Business Acumen
- Depth of Field
- Entrepreneurial Spirit
- Professional Expertise
- Stakeholder Orientation
- Total Organization Astuteness

Personal Effectiveness
- Accountability
- Curiosity and Learning
- Improvisation
- Maturity
- Thinking Agility

Note. Reprinted from *The Global Leader: Critical Factors for Creating the World Class Organization*, by T. Brake, 1997, Irwin Professional Publishing. Copyright 1997 by the author. Reprinted with permission.

The work of Jennie Walker (2018) extends beyond the definition and characteristics of

global leadership. Walker's research provides a framework that utilizes learning methods to

better prepare global leaders. Walker performed a statistical analysis to evaluate the

effectiveness of the Global Leadership Development Ecosystem (GLDE) concept. The GLDE

model is based on an established set of global leadership skills and a combination of learning

approaches, including Cognitive, Social, Experiential, and Humanist methods. Walker's study

focused on global leadership education at business schools for 18-36 months. Given her focus on

training and education, Walker's methodology, findings, and conclusions could provide a

potential methodology for corporations working to enhance global leadership training among their leaders.

Walker's (2018) literature indicates that most training or education related to global leadership overemphasizes cognitive and experiential learning. According to Walker adding social learning components (e.g., peer learning, mentoring) and humanist learning components (e.g., experiences, reflections), creates a more powerful learning experience. Given Walker's suggestion to move beyond cognitive learning to develop global leaders and global leadership competencies her suggestion of social and humanist learning is salient to the effects of tokenism on Black leaders because tokenism is rooted in relationships and experiences of a token. It can be argued that if global leadership includes social learning, then the relationship between the majority group and Black tokens is a critical issue in developing them into global leaders.

Walker's (2018) research findings support the hypothesis that dynamic learning within the GLDE model was important for global leadership development. Walker's findings indicate that learning methods are important in global leadership development. According to Walker, the key to unlocking the door to effective global leadership is self-efficacy. In general, formal learning and experiential learning have the most direct impact on self-efficacy; however, social learning, specifically through strong mentorships, is what enhances global leadership development.

Diversity and Inclusion

Companies continue to institute diversity initiatives, which is an important business imperative (Daniels, 2001). The significance of diversity and inclusion has grown in recent years, as revealed by the 2017 survey on Human Capital Trends by Deloitte. The survey conducted in 2014 revealed that 59% of those surveyed deemed diversity and inclusion a

significant matter. However, in 2017, the same survey reported a rise in this figure to 69%.

Traditionally, diversity has focused on strategies to address recruitment, computer-based

training, identifying paths for career advancement, and programs to foster mentoring to maintain

heterogeneity of the workforce within the organization (Cox, 1991; Morrison, 1992). Scholars

observed that organizations toward the beginning of the 21st century started to broaden their

diversity strategies, to include the voice of the employees, enhanced strategic communication,

and engaging external to elevate relationships at the community level (Wentling & Palma-Rivas,

2000). Wentling and Palma-Rivas's (2000) conclusions are based on their descriptive and

exploratory study, which involved data collection from face-to-face interviews with diversity

managers and document analysis at eight multinational corporations headquartered in the United

States.

According to Harvey (1999), this new emphasis focused on removing systemic processes

that keep workers from utilizing all of their skills and capabilities. This change in organizational

philosophy created scholarly discussions questioning whether this strategy change was a material

change or wordsmithing to mitigate or negate negative reputation impacts against the claims of

the same types of solutions to diversity (Konrad & Linnehan, 1999). A Wall Street Journal

article by Deloitte executives highlight that companies are also seeking to remove prejudice from

the talent acquisition, including selecting talent, promoting processes, annual reviews,

development of leaders, how to develop success pipelines, and create equitable compensation

(Bourke & Garr, 2017). Bourke and Garr (2017) state that promoting diverse leaders throughout

organizations is increasing.

Diversity, as mentioned in organizational literature, is the makeup of groups or

workforces (Roberson, 2006). Milliken and Martins (1996) stated that visible and hidden

characteristics are included in defining diversity. Thomas and Ely (1996) stated that "the concept of diversity represents the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring" (p. 80). Inclusion describes empowering workers and expanding participation across the organization. In 1998, Mor Barak and Cherin provided a definition of inclusion, which refers to the degree to which people can access information and resources, as well as their capacity to affect decision-making processes. The essential organizational processes are the focus of inclusion, with attention paid to the extent to which individuals are a part of those processes. Miller (1998) asserted that inclusion involves an individual's ability to contribute to an organization in a complete and efficient manner.

Cox (1991) suggested that organizations may exhibit three types of structures, namely monolithic, plural, or multicultural. Plural organizations are primarily concerned with aspects of workforce composition and equitable treatment. On the other hand, multicultural organizations emphasize procedures and modes of working that enable the optimal use of human capital, thus enhancing a worker's capacity to make the most of their abilities. Cox developed a model of a multicultural organization using an adapted version of Milton Gordon's societal-integration model. He also used secondary information from early experiences of American organizations in managing diversity to construct his model. Thomas and Ely's work in 1996 contributed to the literature by suggesting a categorization of organizational diversity approaches. The typology proposed by Thomas and Ely is rooted in the extent to which the diverse knowledge and viewpoints of members from different minority identity groups are integrated into the organization's methods, functions, and policies. Thomas and Ely have categorized diversity into three paradigms:

1. Discrimination-and-Fairness: Ensuring equal opportunities for everyone, treating all individuals fairly, following compliant procedures, and recruiting personnel without any biases are the main areas of focus.

2. Access-and-Legitimacy: Expands and enhances services to specific market segments by aligning workforce demographics with those of key consumer groups.

3. Learning-and-Effectiveness: Organizational strategy, market processes, and culture are all factors that are linked to diversity.

According to Roberson (2006), organizations operating under the learning-and-effectiveness paradigm incorporate diverse employee perspectives into business processes to leverage diversity and enhance organizational growth. Under the discrimination-and-fairness and access-and-legitimacy paradigms, diversity management is managed from the viewpoint of assimilations or differentiation perspectives.

Based on a study conducted at a large public sector university in the Midwest United States, Kossek and Zonia (1993) posited that workforce composition and equality are components of employees' perceptions of diversity. Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) stated that diverse climates are composed of both individual and organizational dimensions. The individual dimension encompasses the views and feelings toward people different from them. The organizational dimension refers to management's policies and procedures targeted toward minorities and women. Kossek and Zonia found that group dynamics rather than organizational characteristics were more strongly related to diversity climate than individual perspectives. The literature indicates that diversity support is much more related to individual in-group and outgroup characteristics than organizational systems targeting diversity.

In 1999, Pelled et al. defined the concept of inclusion as the extent to which an employee is acknowledged and regarded as a member of the work system by others. Pelled et al. conducted research aimed at examining the correlation between demographic dissimilarity and three measures of inclusion. These measures included the degree of control employees have over decisions that impact them at work, the extent to which employees are informed about the company's business strategies and goals, and the probability of employees retaining their jobs.

According to existing literature, diversity and inclusion are two distinct but interconnected approaches to managing diversity within an organization. The attention on diversity is centered on the variety and makeup of the organization's demographics. In contrast, inclusion focuses on removing barriers to employees' full participation and contribution and integrating diversity strategies into an organization's systems and processes (Roberson, 2006).

Tight and Loose Cultures

The research of Michelle Gelfand helps explain and understand some of the social forces that underlie individual behaviors. Gelfand's work highlights that it is norms that guide people's behavior at all levels of social organization, including corporations. Gelfand states that culture is important and it's omnipresent, it affects you the moment you wake up until you got to sleep, but it is largely invisible, and we barely recognize how powerful it is (Nussbaum, 2019). Gelfand says, "social norms are the glue that keep us together, they give us our identity and help us coordinate and cooperate at a remarkable level" (as cited in Nussbaum, 2019, para. 4). Gelfand's research shows that some groups (organizations) have *stronger* norms and are *tight*, and others have *weaker* norms and are *loose*. Gelfand's work on tight and loose culture highlight what is called the "fractal pattern" of culture.

Regarding corporate culture particularly at the executive level the tightness or looseness of the culture may impact the experiences of tokens. For example, one of the antecedents of a tight culture is the emphasizing of threat. Change threatens the social order, which tight groups cling to in the face of threat (Nussbaum, 2019). If the majority group perceivers the inclusion of minorities as a threat to the power of the majority the culture will tighten and potentially create barriers and exclude the minority members, regardless of if it is a legitimate or perceived threat, the fear or threat of losing power will impact the culture within the executive levels of the organization.

Gelfand (as cited in Nussbaum, 2019) suggests that women and minorities tend to inhabit more restricted (tighter) environments, where they have less freedom and receive harsher penalties for any transgressions compared to their majority counterparts. Women and minorities in positions of power are more likely to face punishment because they pose a direct threat to the status quo that is enjoyed by the majority members. However, if the executive culture is loose there is more openness to creative ideas, open to more people (less ethnocentric) and open to change. Based on Gelfand's findings it can be inferred that loose corporate cultures are more diverse and inclusive and open to changing the status quo at all levels of the organization.

Summary

The focus of this study is to investigate the effects of the phenomenon of tokenism on the leadership style development of Black executives in corporation organizations. Chapter Two started with an overview of systemic racism and intersectionality, both of which play a role in developing a foundation for investigating the experiences of Black tokens. Chapter Two additionally provided a review of the scholarly literature regarding tokenism, leadership theory, and diversity. The literature also included content related to Civil Rights ideology, providing

historical context regarding how Black people dealt with issues faced in a corporate

environment. The leadership literature review focused on authentic, transformational, and

transactional leadership theories. These three leadership styles are prevalent in many

organizations and of high interest to leadership scholars. The final section of the literature

focused on diversity and inclusion.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study examined Black executives' lived experiences at global corporate organizations in relation to their leadership style. Specifically, the researcher examined if and how the phenomenon of tokenism affects the leadership development of Black executives within the highest levels of organizations. The study utilized a phenomenological method to gain insights and develop meanings from the interactions with research participants. The investigation of the life world's lived experience is known as phenomenology (van Manen, 1990). The world of life, as per Husserl's (1970) philosophy, is what we encounter prior to reflection without relying on classification or conceptualization. According to Valle et al. (1989) phenomenology focuses on how a person experiences the world. Phenomenology asks individuals to unpack the meanings as they occur in everyday life to determine what is the experience like. The starting point of building knowledge of reality is conscious awareness and knowledge of reality is the intersection of experiencing a phenomenon (Laverty, 2003). Phenomenology focuses on a phenomenon as it appears through consciousness (Husserl, 1970).

Chapter Three provides insights on the research method and design of the study, which includes the study's' population, intended participants and the process for collecting, analyzing, and coding data. Additionally, Chapter Three includes the methods to check for accuracy, including the validity and reliability of the data. Chapter Three concludes with a discussion on human subjects' considerations for research participants.

Phenomenological studies describe common themes of a group of individuals' lived experiences with a single phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenologists aim to provide a description of the shared experiences of participants when they encounter a phenomenon. Phenomenological inquiry is not necessarily formalized as a question and answer

exercise (Morse & Richards, 2013). Simplification of the problem may occur when posing the

questions directly, therefore oftentimes the actual research questions may be more implicit (van

Manen, 1990). Implicit and open-ended questions allow participants flexibility in responding in

their own words. Phenomenological researchers are interested in conversations with no

presuppositions. The inquiry and data collection take the form of a dialogue as opposed to an

interview.

A central research question guided the study: How does tokenism affect the leadership

style of Black executives? The central research question was further explored through six sub-

questions. The sub-questions were used to help contextualize the phenomenon of tokenism to

uncover deeper insights, challenges, and opportunities from the experiences of research

participants. The sub-questions are:

- How do Black executives define leadership?

- What leadership style do Black executives believe they utilize in their corporate role?

- How do Black executives define tokenism, and do they believe they are a token?

- What are the experiences, if any, of tokenism among Black executives in their
  leadership development?

- What are the experiences of Black executives with the majority group at the senior
  levels of the organization?

- What are the positive vs. negative impacts of tokenism on the leadership development
  of Black executives?

The sub-questions were designed to be broad and general, allowing for a conversational

approach to collecting data. Phenomenologists attempt to understand how people attend to the

essence of their world (Morse & Richards, 2013). The generality of the sub-questions allowed

more organic responses regarding participants' perceptions and interpretations to be captured without leading participants to a specific answer.

Research Design and Rationale

The specific approach used to collect data was transcendental phenomenology. Developed by Husserl, the goal of transcendental phenomenology is to ignore all preconceived ideas to understand the essence of lived experience. In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher investigates and describes participants' experiences with the phenomenon (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Transcendental phenomenology does not include presuppositions and is based on intentionality and edict reduction (Morse & Richards, 2013).

The researcher used phenomenological inquiry via in-person conversations to collect data on the lived experiences of Black executives working at global corporate organizations. Phenomenological research projects involve eight steps (Creswell & Poth, 2018):

1. Analyze the problem and make a decision if the phenomenology is appropriate method to investigate the problem.

    - Following the selection of the research topic, the researcher determined that a phenomenological approach was an appropriate methodology because the researcher was attempting to understand common experiences of one phenomenon from specific set of participants to understand the effects of the single phenomenon.

2. Select and describe the phenomenon to be studied.

    - The researcher's phenomenon was tokenism, which represents a social construct under investigation. The researcher specifically investigating what it means to be an executive token with a corporate environment.

3. The philosophical assumptions must be specified and distinguished.

- The broad assumption that was used was that tokenism is a negative social construct and creates a negative experience for the individuals experiencing the phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher bracketed out his experience to create a more pure and unbiased experience in investigating tokenism.

4. Conduct interviews on the phenomenon from individuals who have experienced it to collect data.

- The researcher developed specific criteria to identify the participants that have experienced tokenism within a global corporate environment. The researcher used his personal network and snowball sampling to recruit study participants. Data was collected from interviews that allowed for broad thematic conversations that focused on the experiences related to tokenism and the effects of tokenism.

5. From the analysis of the statements of significance generate themes.

- Data was coded into NVivo and analyzed the transcripts for significant phrases and words to build the thematic narrative and cluster of meanings for the study, which provided an understanding of how the participants experienced tokenism.

6. Create descriptions that are structural and textural.

- Significant statements help create an explanation of participants experiences (textural explanation) including the setting, which influenced how the participants experiences the tokenism.

7. From a composite description the essence of the phenomenon should be recorded.

- Textural and structural descriptions were written for the common experiences of the participants, which is a composite description that presented the essence of the lived experiences, which served as the researcher's essential invariant structure.

8. The experience from the essence of the phenomenon needs to be in written form.

- The essence of the finding of the phenomenon is presented in Chapter Four, which includes a summary of the phenomenon, research rationale for using phenomenology, details regarding the collection and analysis of data and, an explanation of the phenomenon's essence and how it was experienced.

Before beginning the study, the researcher conducted a bracketing exercise to identify biases, assumptions, and personal experiences that may bias the collection of data, coding, and interpretation of the data. Bracketing aims to identify prior knowledge about the topic in hopes of entering the conversations with study participants with no presuppositions (Morse & Richards, 2013). Husserl (1970) asserted that suspending judgment and bracketing beliefs about the phenomenon allow the researcher to see it clearly. Jones (1975) extended the understanding of bracketing not only a suspension of belief but to a state of doubt to assist researchers in opening themselves to the work at hand. The researcher used the process of reflexive journaling and conversations with dissertation committee members to engage in bracketing. In addition to identifying bias, bracketing protected the integrity of collecting and analyzing data.

A combination of semi-structured and emergent designs was used for the study. Using a combination design created flexible and organic structure for questioning and collecting data. The goal was to learn how tokenism affects the leadership style of Black leaders in global corporate environments. The structure design helps create the common foundation of terms used

within the study and tests participants' knowledge of terms used in the study. The emergent design allows open-ended questions to initiate conversations with participants to recount their experiences in their own words. The approach is to set the premise for participants and then let them tell their stories with the researcher asking probing and follow-up questions to dig deeper and increase awareness and understanding of experiences to identify the essence of each participant's story. The phenomenological approach was selected because it provides the ideal methodology to identify lived experiences and the effects of tokenism on Black executives.

Sources of Data

The sample group for this investigation encompassed Black male and Black female executives at global corporate organizations. For purposes of the study, executives included the titles of vice president, senior vice president, executive vice president, managing director or any role within the C-suite of an organization. The aim of phenomenological research is to recognize the individuals who have undergone the phenomenon under scrutiny (Englander, 2012). The study's participants were chosen through purposeful sampling, a technique employed when attributes are necessary for the research (Morse & Richards, 2013). It is necessary for all individuals involved in phenomenological research to have personally encountered the phenomenon being explored. To identify and select information-rich cases researchers must use limited resources effectively, purposeful sampling is a widely implemented technique to select participants (Patton, 2002). It is noted that results of research studies that use purposeful sampling to select research participants may be affected by the participant's readiness to share their experiences and opinions openly and honestly in an expressive, reflective, and articulate manner.

The phenomenon under investigation was tokenism. The researcher utilized Kanter's definition of tokenism as one criterion for selecting study participants. Kanter defines a token as an individual or group of individuals who make up 15% or less of a specified group. For this study, the researcher has designated the group as the executive level. The second criterion is demographic; the participants must be Black.

A homogenous sample pool is necessary for selecting participants to comprehend the composition of the subject (Alase, 2017). The essence of phenomenology is to collect rich, and specific descriptions of the experiences from research participants (Geertz, 1973). In selecting participants, it is not the quantity but the quality of participants and given the complexity of human nature, phenomenological inquiries benefit from the focus of a small number of participants (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In traditional phenomenological research, the number of participants can be between two and 25 (Alase, 2017). The literature offers different recommendations to determine the population size for phenomenological studies. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the ideal number of participants in a phenomenological study is three to 10. Morse (1994) recommended at minimum six participants and Kuzel (1992) recommended six to eight participants for a homogenous sample.

The critical issue in determining the sample size is the point at which the researcher reaches saturation with the data. Data saturation as the point at which no additional data is uncovered and the researcher sees similar examples repeatedly (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Guest et al. (2006) relied on a broader definition, which is the point at which the codebook is not changing and there is no new information that is significant. In an empirical study, Guest et al. investigated how many interviews are needed to reach thematic variability and exhaustion while collecting data. Guest et al. wanted to determine if six interviews would render similar

information as 12, 18, 24 or 30 interviews. Based on Guest et al.'s analysis, data saturation occurs at 12 interviews. After 12 interviews, approximately 92% of a research study's thematic codes were identified. However, Guest et al. acknowledged that it is difficult to determine how generalizable their finding might be. Romey et al. (1986) believe that a sample of four individuals will produce extremely accurate information of high confidence. Similar participants in a sample in relation to the research domain should expedite reaching data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). If the researcher is interested in high-level, overarching themes, Guest et al.'s (2006) findings suggest that a sample size of six should suffice to develop meaningful themes. Based on the literature, the researcher selected a total of 10 participants for the study (five males and five females). However, the researcher is confident that a minimum sample size of eight (four males and four females) will also yield meaningful themes.

The researcher selected participants using criterion sampling, an accepted purposeful sampling technique. Criterion sampling involves identifying participants that meet specific criteria and possess intimate knowledge of the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants were chosen based on the following standards: (a) classified at the executive level within a corporation, (b) a numerical minority token at the executive level, (c) works for a company is headquartered in the United States, and (d) Black. The researcher leveraged his professional network from his work at Fortune 100 and 200 organizations to identify individuals who met the study criteria.

Studies that have been conducted with small sample sizes are said to have limited generalizability (Lam, 2015). The researcher acknowledges that participant data and findings provide a limited scope of knowledge on the participants' experiences. The findings are intended for generalizations to larger populations. However, the insights from the small sample size

allowed for a more extensive quantitative study to which may confirm the findings gained from this qualitative study.

Participants in the study were from corporations with global operations. However, the participants all reside in and work in the United States. The researcher understands the culture of corporate organizations and the challenges people of color encounter within corporate environments. The researcher decided to focus on global organizations because it aligns with his Ph.D. focus on global leadership and change management. Finally, as corporate organizations continue to implement diversity strategies, the elevation of Black people to the highest levels of leadership creates opportunities to understand the relationship between an organization and Black executives.

The participants selected met the phenomenon criteria. Additionally, the participants met and satisfied all requirements to participate in the study, All requirements for participation in the study, as outlined by Moustakas (1994), were met and satisfied by the participants. First, participants must be representative of the target study population. Secondly, participants had to participate in the study interview openly and freely; they had to acknowledge that the interview was recorded and the data from the interview would be published at some time in the future. Finally, the researcher shared his bias with study participants before the interview to explain the process of suspending bias to let the conversations with participants develop organically and create a discussion instead of an interview.

Professionally, the researcher is a professional communicator working extensively with the media and preparing individuals for public speaking and media interviews. Based on his professional experience, the researcher is confident in his ability to conduct the interviews, build

rapport, and create a comfortable environment that allows study participants to authentically share the experiences of the tokenism related to their leadership style.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Morse and Richards (2013), collecting good data requires the best possible appropriate collaboration with research participants, not only for ethical reasons but also because it helps establish trust with participants and increases their willingness to help the researcher. When collecting data for qualitative research several methods are acceptable. Research using a qualitative method typically involves the use of interviews as a means of gathering information. The interviewer's job is to guide the interviews without "leading" the participants, which allows participants the space to present their perspectives and context without the influence of the researcher. Phenomenological studies focus on a participant's contextualization of a phenomenon. For this study, the researcher focused on creating an environment that allowed for authentic and rich discussions of participants experiences.

Data was collected via one-on-one interviews with study participants via zoom. According to Alase (2017), qualitative interviews are conversations with a purpose. J. A. Smith et al. (2009) describe interviewing as an opportunity for researchers and participants to dialogue in organic conversation whereby questions are modified based on participants' responses. Alase stated that there should be only one interview per participant; however, if clarification is needed regarding interview responses a second interview is appropriate to ensure that responses are accurately captured. Alase suggested that interviews should be approximately 60-90 minutes in duration. Based on the literature, the researcher allotted a maximum of 90-minutes per interview session with each participant. No follow-up interviews were needed with study participants. The researcher reminded participants that the session is recorded and obtained consent before

recording the session. The researcher prepared a "grand tour" question to initiate the interview. According to Spradley (1979a), the grand tour question helps focus the participant on the topic of discussion.

The interviews involved asking open-ended questions of a broad nature. The grand tour and open-ended questions serve as guideposts and are not intended to be prescriptive, limiting, or influence the participant in their responses. The researcher used a semi-structured, informal, conversational approach to engage in a discussion and dialogue with research participants instead of conducting a traditional question-and-answer interview. According to Morse and Richards (2013), a semi-structured approach is appropriate when the interviewer knows enough about the study topic to frame needed discussions in advance if framing does not limit the research discoveries.

According to Seidman (2006), qualitative interviews require three sections during an interview. First focus on the life history, to provide context. Second, aim at reconstructing the experience with its relationships and structures; third allow the participant to reflect on the what is the meaning of their experience. Given limited resources, the researcher did not conduct three interviews with participants. The researcher used the following approach during the interviews: the first 20 minutes of the interview focused on participants' life experiences, followed by 30 minutes of reconstructing the experience. After the first two sections, the researcher took a 10-minute break, after which the last 30 minutes of the session focused on the participants' reflections on the experience. Seidman's methodology helps the researcher maintain structure around the data collection process. A structured process aligns with phenomenological principles and maintains practicality around the data collection process.

The phenomenological interview method developed by Dr. Mark T. Bevan was used for data collection. Bevan's (2014) process is a three-step approach to understand a phenomenon: contextualizing it through the natural attitude and lifeworld, apprehending it by exploring its modes of appearing and natural attitude, and clarifying it by examining its imaginative variations and meaning. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

Table 2

Phenomenological Interview Structure

Phenomenological Attitude	Researcher Approach	Interview Structure	Method	Example Question
	Acceptance of Natural Attitude of Participants	Contextualization (Eliciting the Lifeworld in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive/Narrative Context Questions	"Tell me about becoming ill," or Tell me how you came to be at the satellite unit."
Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché)	Reflective Critical Dialogue with Self	Apprehending the Phenomenon (Modes of Appearing in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive and Structural Questions of Modes of Appearing	"Tell me about your typical at the satellite unit," or "Tell me what you do to get ready for dialysis."
	Active Listening	Clarifying the Phenomenon (Meaning through Imaginative Variation)	Imaginative Variation: Varying of Structure Questions	"Describe how the unit experience would change if a doctor was present at all times."

Contextualization

The context in which the experience is situated is the first part of the interview (Seidman, 2006). Reconstructing the experience in a narrative form full of significant information is contextualizing the questioning (Bevan, 2014).

Apprehending the Phenomenon

There are different aspects of experiences, and a single question is not adequate uncover the full experience, which requires the researcher to be prepared to follow up with descriptive questions (Bevan, 2014). Follow up questions assist in apprehending the phenomenon.

Descriptive and structural questions add depth as well as complement each other, which adds depth and quality to the data collected (Spradley, 1979b).

Clarifying the Phenomenon

When conducting research, imaginative variation can be useful to better understand a particular experience. This involves taking a particular aspect of that experience and altering it in different ways to identify unchanging components that can clarify its structure (Husserl, 1960). Each participant's experience is in its own fullness but may not be complete. Therefore, according to Husserl (1967), examining a phenomenon actively and imaginatively is essential, a dynamic interview can be achieved by exploring different aspects of experience.

Using Bevan's (2014) interview methodology enabled consistency, dependability, credibility, and trustworthiness, all which represent elements of quality research. The selection of Bevan's methodology provided validity in data collection to enable appropriate thematic coding to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research data analysis involves arranging and preparing the data, followed by considering and categorizing it through a coding process to identify themes, and finally presenting the data through figures, tables or discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis methodology, which consists of the following steps:

1. Manage and organize the data and create and organize data files.

2. Making notes on emergent ideas and creating initial codes based on notes taken.

3. Categorizing and classifying codes into themes, recounting personal experiences through epoché and elucidating the fundamental nature of the phenomenon.

4. Develop and assess interpretations, develop significant statements, and group statements into meaningful units.

5. Developing a textural description involves presenting a narrative of the events that occurred. Developing structural description involves analyzing and describing the experience of the phenomenon. Finally, developing a composite description involves synthesizing the textural and structural descriptions to capture the essence of the phenomenon.

To protect the integrity of the data and limit researcher bias in organizing and coding the data, a transcription service was used to transcribe the interviews and a professional coder to assist in identifying themes and code the data. Cypress (2017) asserted that the use of a professional transcriber confers additional scrutiny that can minimize researcher bias in the categorization and ordering of the data. After organizing and coding the data it was analyzed and interpreted to develop the contextualization of the phenomenon.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

In phenomenological research no consensus exists related to the issues of validity and reliability (Beck, 1994). The analysis and explanation of non-numeric data is the basis of qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on making sense of and recognizing patterns among the data to create a meaningful picture without devaluing its richness. Validity in qualitative research, according to Leung (2015), refers to the suitability of the tools, procedures, and information utilized. The desired outcome should be considered while formulating the research question. The chosen methodology should be able to effectively answer the research question. The research design must be suitable for the chosen methodology. The sampling and

data analysis techniques must be appropriate for the chosen methodology. The sample and context must be considered while drawing valid results and conclusions.

The literature reflects that validity is not a single issue. Rigor is also part of the discussion related to phenomenological inquiry data collection. Rigor in qualitative research aligns to the concepts of reliability and validity, which are all required components of quality (Cypress, 2017) Being exact, careful, and adhering to strict precision and focusing on thoroughness and accuracy constitutes rigor. Qualitative studies inherently have the potential to be subjective, which is why qualitative studies must be conducted with extreme rigor.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have specified four standards that are employed to assess the rigor of qualitative studies. These standards include: (a) instilling confidence in the accuracy of the findings of a particular investigation for the participants; (b) determining the extent to which the findings of a particular investigation can be applied in other situations or with other participants; (c) determining whether the findings of an investigation would be reproducible if the investigation were repeated with the same or similar participants; and (d) measuring the degree to which the findings of an investigation are influenced by participants and inquiry conditions are not biased towards the perspectives of the researcher. Morse et al. (2002) suggested that to achieve reliability and validity in qualitative research, rigorous methods must be incorporated into the research process from beginning to end, rather than simply being announced at the conclusion of the study.

Beyond the challenges of validity and the work of scholars to develop a process to align quantitative validity to a qualitative perspective, there continues considerable debate of the appropriateness of validity in qualitative studies. The ultimate issue with data collected in qualitative studies is trustworthiness from the perspective of credibility, transferability,

dependability, and neutrality. According to the literature, there is always an element of subjective interpretation when analyzing data. Researchers are inevitably situated within social circumstances such as beliefs, practices, and standpoints that are shaped by their ways of living and understanding the world and cannot escape them (Rouse, 1987). There is acknowledgement in the academic realm of the difficulty of demonstrating credibility of interpretations (Schwandt, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have established a framework that allows scholars to incorporate criteria of trustworthiness, which corresponds to the scientific concepts of internal validity (*credibility*), external validity (*transferability*), reliability (*dependability*), and objectivity (*neutrality*).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide actionable steps that help address the questions of trustworthiness in qualitative study. Credibility serves as analog to internal validity and involves some of the following: *prolonged engagement* – intensive and extensive contact with the phenomenon to assess distortions and identify saliences in the situation; *triangulation* using different resources to cross-check data; *negative case analysis* – actively searching for instances that are negative regarding the development of insights; *member checks* – continuously test information informally by asking participants for their reactions to the reconstructed version of what they were told, transferability, which is similar external validity, is also included *thick descriptive data* – based on the contextual narrative that has been developed others who intend to use some or all of the findings elsewhere can make judgments about the degree of fit or similarity. Dependability analogous to reliability and requires the development of an audit trail that is conducted by an external independent auditor. The audit analyzes the results to determine dependability and neutrality. Despite the attempts to address the question of rigor, Lincoln and

Guba recognize that this approach only addresses the method and ignores the context and its influence and that there is no such thing as complete information.

Three of the most used widely used phenomenological methods were developed by Paul F. Colaizzi, Amedeo Giorgi, and Adrian VanKaam, all of whom utilized different methods for validity. Colaizzi indicates that for final validation to be achieved researchers must return to participants and clarify if the responses were recorded correctly. VanKaam requires that expert judges and investigators develop an intersubjective agreement, and for Giorgi, validation relies solely on the researcher adherence to accepted research protocols (as cited in Beck, 1994). The researcher focused on Giorgi's approach for the reliability and validity of this study.

The primary validation point for Giorgi (1989) is researcher bias, there is a risks error if past knowledge is imposed upon the phenomenon, which may risk uncovering new aspects of the phenomenon. Giorgi considers the use of reduction to achieve validation, which brackets or renders non-influential the information one knows about the phenomenon under investigation so that the information is presented to it freshly. According to Giorgi, reduction is essential to help avoid the possibility of error. Creswell and Poth (2018) offered nine strategies to validate qualitative research. The strategies are adopted through three perspectives: the researcher, the participant, and the reader or reviewers. Creswell and Poth's strategies included the following:

- Researcher Lens – Exploring a scenario where the outcome is unfavorable, providing additional context to mitigate any preconceived notions, and soliciting input from those involved in the study.
- Participant Lens – Engaging for long periods of time, working together with participants, and allowing for external audits.

- Reader/Reviewer Lens – Creating a detailed and comprehensive explanation, receiving feedback from colleagues, analyzing the data and research procedure, and verifying evidence through multiple sources.

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that qualitative researchers involve themselves in at least two validation strategies. For this study, the researcher used the following to develop trustworthiness and rigor in the data collected:

- Clarifying researcher bias and engaging in reflexivity.
- Seeking participant feedback to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the account.

The researcher's capability to explain their data collection choices, maintain long-term involvement and consistent observation, produce exact transcriptions, and attain data saturation are all measures for determining the validity and rigor of data generation (Sandelowski, 1993). If participants speak openly using their own structures and perceptions the understanding of the phenomenon is valid; therefore, unstructured interviews with open-ended questions with strategically selected participants should achieve validity (Morse, 1991). Validity of the research results can be established if the interpretations are supported by and audit trail with evidence, the researcher's point of view is recognized, and detailed explanations are given (Cypress, 2017).

Human Subjects Considerations

Authorization to conduct the study was obtained via the informed consent of research participants. The data collection protocol for human subjects was approved by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix C). Before the interview started, the researcher communicated the purpose of the study to the participants, including the confidentiality of the information collected and an acknowledgment that confidentiality is different from anonymity. Confidentiality assures that the collected data is confidential and only shared with the researcher or research team.

Anonymity relates to the participants' identity. The researcher only knew the identity of the participants. Participants were given a number and only the researcher has access to the assigned number for each participant. Participants were also informed of potential researcher bias and the suspension of bias in collecting data.

Individuals in the study were made aware that they had the option to be interviewed voluntarily, and that the interviews would be recorded. They were also told that the collected data would be kept confidential and would only be held for a period of 3 years, after which it will be destroyed. Participants were informed that there was minimal risk as participants in the research. However, any digital communication had the potential to be breached. Information collected was general; all participants were assigned aliases for the study, which did not include names or any identifiable personal information. After reviewing the consent information, participants agreed verbally, which constituted the participant's acknowledgement to participate in the study.

The benefits of participating the study included contributing to understanding tokenism's impact on Black executives' leadership style and developing strategies that enable corporate organizations to enhance their ability to advance diversity and inclusion efforts at the executive level. There was no remuneration for participation in the research.

Summary

Chapter Three presented the study's proposed qualitative research method and the rationale for selecting a phenomenological approach. The chapter included the design rationale, strategies to reduce researcher bias, participant criteria and selection, data collection and analysis protocols, and data validation strategies. Additionally, there is a review of human subjects' considerations to protect the participants participating in the research project.

This study describes the phenomenon of tokenism and its effect on the leadership style of Black executives in corporate organizations. The methodology was designed to identify and contextualize the experiences of the participants to understand how tokenism influences the leadership style of Black executives not in the majority group. The research design and methodology align with accepted phenomenological research study principles.

Chapter Four: Findings

The objective of this investigation was to depict the personal encounters of executive

Black males and females to find out whether and how tokenism influences their leadership

approach. The study captured the participants' insights, descriptions, perceptions, and

interpretations as a Black leader in a global corporate organization. The researcher used

phenomenology inquiry to gather information, enabling them to capture the direct experiences of

the study participants regarding the phenomenon of tokenism.

Findings

The experiences of 10 Black leaders in global corporate organizations were explored and

documented by the researcher. The participant pool included five males and five females. The

literature on data collection described in the methodology section allows for a small sample size

when the goal is to investigate situations in which the participants possess similar characteristics.

The number of study participants aligns with research on sample size by Guest et al. (2006),

which states that the more similar the participants in a sample the sooner a researcher should

expect to reach data saturation. Guest et al. found that if the researcher is interested in high-level

themes a sample size as small as six should suffice to develop meaningful themes.

To ensure that the interview questions accurately captured the lived experiences of the

study participants, the researcher conducted two pilot interviews. These interviews helped the

researcher to determine if the questions were appropriate and aligned with the research questions

of the study. The pilot study participants were Senior Directors, and the study participants were

Vice Presidents or above in their organizations' hierarchal structure. The companies were global

corporations headquartered in the United States. Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics

of each of the study participants.

Table 3

Demographic Summary of Study Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Position	Industry
Pilot 1 Participant	Male	Gen X	Masters	Sr. Director	Consumer Packaged Goods
Pilot 2 Participant	Female	Gen X	Masters	Sr. Director	Petrochemical
Participant 1	Male	Gen X	Bachelors	Vice President	Fashion/Retail
Participant 2	Male	Gen X	Bachelors	Senior Vice President	Technology
Participant 3	Male	Gen X	Masters	Managing Director	Financial
Participant 4	Male	Gen X	Masters	Corporate Lead	Pharmaceutical
Participant 5	Female	Gen X	Masters	Vice President	Consumer Technology
Participant 6	Female	Gen X	Masters	Vice President	Chemical
Participant 7	Female	Gen X	Juris Doctorate	General Counsel	Oil and Gas
Participant 8	Female	Gen X	Masters	Sr. Vice President	Energy

Study participants represented a broad range of industries, allowing for the researcher to better investigate if similar experiences were observed by survey participants regardless of their industry. The researcher chose a broad range of industries to mitigate the effects of potential industry specific experiences to focus on general corporate environment experiences. The investigator aimed to examine the overall encounters from a business standpoint, rather than focusing on particular industry, which is why the researcher purposefully selected a broad range of industries. The study participants represented the following industries: consumer packaged goods, fashion retail, financial, petrochemical, oil and gas, consumer technology, energy, and pharmaceutical. Eight percent of the study participants had master's degrees or higher. All study participants were Black and from Generation X (individuals born between 1961 and 1981). The researcher included the generational category of study participants because the literature indicates that generational differences affect values, needs, preferences, and behaviors (Sandeen,

2008). Given that generational differences affect an individual's thoughts, the generational

category was salient in analyzing the participants responses. The researcher observed that

despite different experiences the study participants generally exhibited a similar thought process

and analysis during the recollection of their experiences. As a result, the researchers included a

discussion in the future research section regarding potential additional research that may provide

insights related to tokenism and other generations, which may have different values and

experiences than Generation X.

Thematic Analysis Findings

The interview transcripts revealed a total of 15 codes, which were then categorized into

five different thematic categories for the purpose of data analysis. All participants provided data

to each code explaining their experiences with the phenomenon of tokenism. Four codes were

associated with leadership. Four codes were associated with tokenism. One code was associated

with intersectionality. Three codes were associated with diversity, and three codes were

associated with emotional reactions. All identified codes appeared in all the participant's

transcripts, which provided the researcher with a rich data set to analyze participant responses in

relation to the study's research questions. Some more frequent codes were used by all study

participants across thematic categories.

The participants commonly used transformational and authentic leadership codes to

describe their leadership style. They also used these codes to compare their style with the

executive levels of their organization. As far as leadership goes, these were the most frequently

utilized codes. The theme of tokenism provided the most uniform response of the study codes.

Participants consistently defined tokenism from the perspective of special treatment or special

characteristics related to opportunities within the corporate setting. The impact of group

dynamics and the feelings of isolation and assimilation were frequently used by participants in describing their experiences as executives in global corporate organizations. All study participants mentioned gender regarding leadership; however, despite the acknowledgment by participants that there is a difference in how men and women lead, intersectionality of these two themes was not a prevalent discussion topic among study participants.

Emotional reaction codes and how participants assessed the diversity strategies of their organization provided insights into how study participants evaluated the efforts of their organization to develop a more diverse and culturally inclusive workforce. The common codes associated with diversity were corporate culture and systemic racism. Not as prevalent, but equal opportunity was a frequently mentioned code by survey participants. The final codes identified participants' emotional reactions to their experiences. The common code among study participants was frustration and challenges associated with support mechanisms in navigating the corporate culture as a Black executive.

Thematic Codes

The following central research question guided the study: How does tokenism affect the leadership development style of Black executives? Six sub-questions were used to provide a deeper understanding, insights, and perspectives from the participants regarding their experiences as Black executives. Based on the research questions, a set of 12 interview questions (Appendix C) were formulated, which helped participants describe their lived experiences through the identification of 15 codes that supported five key themes. The research sub-questions were:

- How do Black executives define leadership?

- What type of leadership style do Black executives believe they utilize in their corporate role?

- How do Black executives define tokenism, and do they believe they are tokens?

- What are the experiences, if any, of tokenism among Black executives in their leadership development?

- What are the experiences of Black executives with the majority group at the senior levels of the organization?

- What are the positive vs. negative impacts of tokenism on the leadership development of Black executives?

The findings revealed that participants do not feel as if they are tokens and, therefore, do not feel that tokenism affects the development of their leadership style. Most participants indicated they view themselves as transformational leaders who earned executive positions due to their work and experience. However, participants did indicate that they felt they had to work harder, have more experience, and education than non-Black executives before being elevated to an executive position. Additionally, the findings indicated that participants, because they did not feel they were tokens, did not experience any more stress in their executive positions, as is predicted in Kanter's tokenism theory. However, they did reveal that they are judged differently before getting their executive position and differently in terms of their performance.

The thematic categories addressed the sub-questions of capturing the participants' lived experiences as executives in a global corporate organization. The themes captured insights into how participants view leadership, diversity, and support mechanisms within their organizations. These provided specificity and detailed accounts of the participants' overall experience of diversity, intersectionality, and emotional state as Black executives.

Thematic Categories

Based on data collected from the in-depth interviews, 15 codes were identified and allocated across five overarching thematic categories. The codes and themes provided insights not only into how participants experienced the phenomenon of tokenism but also provided data on participants' experiences related to leadership style, the role of intersectionality, corporate culture and diversity, and the emotional impacts of their experiences. Figure 8 outlines the five themes, 15 codes, and descriptions utilized by the researcher to guide discussion and help participants recount their experiences.

The descriptions in the coding are written as statements. During data collection the descriptions were part of the questions used to obtain the recollection of study participants experiences.

Table 4

Thematic Codes

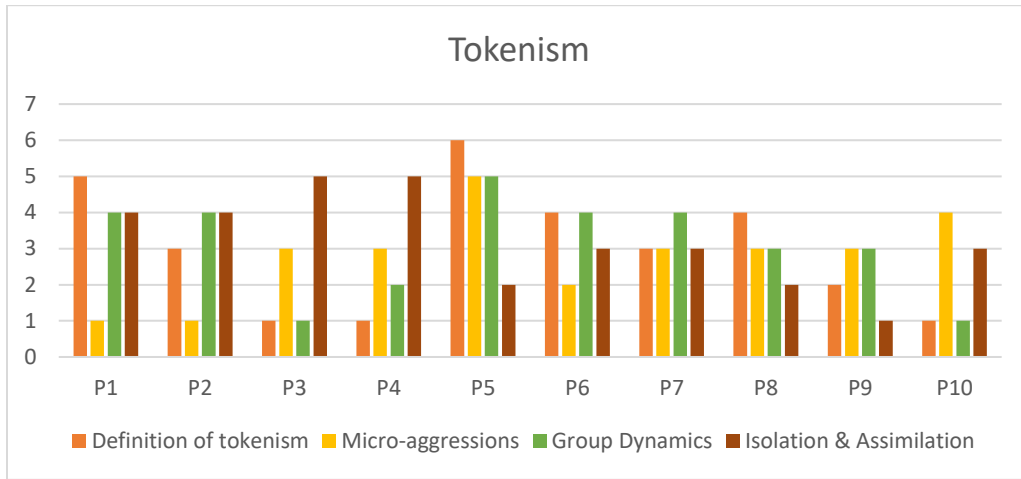| Thematic Categories	Codes	Descriptions
Leadership	Definition of Leadership	• How do participants define leadership. • Participant's leadership style.
	Authentic Leadership	• Leader's actions are genuine and real – trustworthy, honest, and good character.
	Transactional Leadership	• Leaders monitor deviations from agreed-upon standards; exchange is purely transactional.
	Transformational Leadership	• Raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower.
Tokenism	Definition & Interpretations	• How do participants define tokenism- visibility, contrast, assimilation? • Seen as representative of an entire group as opposed to an individual. • Do participants feel they are a token.
	Micro-Aggressions	• Subtle use of words, imagery, or interactions that have an undertone of prejudice, racism, or sexism

Thematic Categories	Codes	Descriptions
	Group Dynamics	• Does the majority group hinder or support the success of tokens
	Isolation/Assimilation	• Is there isolation, or do tokens assimilate to the group to fit in and feel accepted.
Intersectionality	Men vs. Women	• Differences in how men and women lead. • Do Black men get a pass for being a man. • Who is treated worse, Black men or Black women.
Diversity	Corporate Culture	• What is the culture of the organization, open, transparent, or closed and transactional.
	Systemic Racism	• The power structures and corporate culture support systems that inhibit the success and advancement of Black people.
	Equal Opportunity	• Is there real genuine equality for Black people in the corporate structure, or are Blacks judged differently.
Emotional Reactions	Satisfaction	• The overall feeling regarding current and future as an employee in the organization.
	Frustration/Challenges	• What are the current challenges and the outlook for continued advancement.
	Support Mechanisms	• How can organizations support the success of Black leaders.

Theme One Codes: Tokenism

The thematic category of tokenism included the following codes:

definition/interpretation, micro-aggressions, group dynamics, and isolation and assimilation.

Figure Six and Figure Seven graphically represent the responses that triggered a Tokenism code

during data collection among all 10 participants. Figure Six provides the coding frequency of

participants in relation to the codes. Figure Seven displays the total number of mentions per

code.
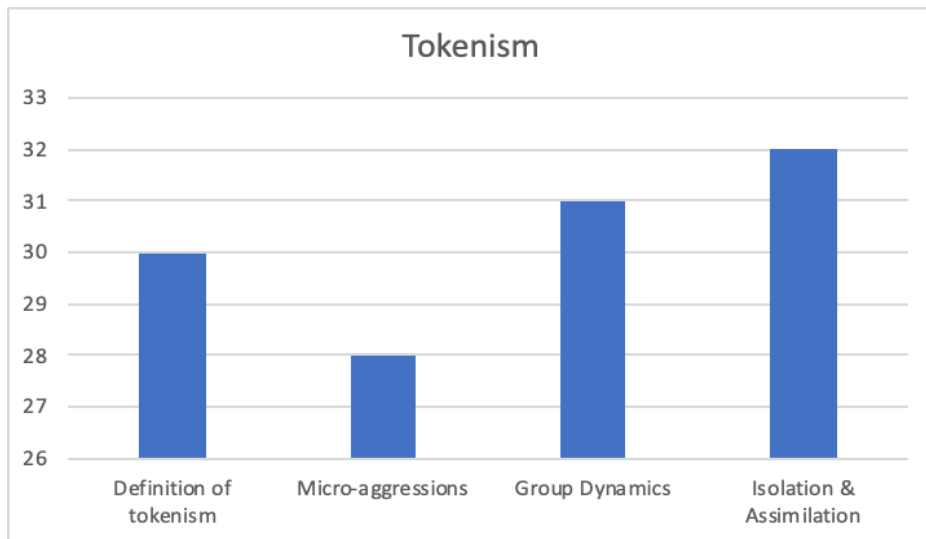
Figure 6

Tokenism Coding Frequencies by Participant

Figure 7

Tokensim Coding Frequencies by Code

Definitions and Interpretations

Most participants provided their definition of tokenism. Across the participant

population, each participant similarly defined the term tokenism.

- Participant 2 – Tokenism, for me, is when you are chosen to do something specifically for your attribute, whether it's the color or gender, and it is outside the norm, and it is done on purpose.

- Participant 3 – From my perspective, it's the organization making a perfunctory or symbolic effort to create leadership positions for specific classes of people.

- Participant 4 – From my perspective, tokenism is the inclusion of an employee for a position or role in which they represent an underrepresented group, and they are there to fulfill a requirement, be it quantitative for a quota or hit a certain percentage number of underrepresented groups, or from an optics standpoint that person is put in place to make the perception of diversity in an organization be that gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation

- Participant 5 – With corporate America's history with diversity, tokenism was an attempt at diversity at having somebody at the table that fit some description, like a person of color or a woman, or like any historically marginalized underrepresented group.

- Participant 6 – I would say putting someone in a position just as a figurehead with no authority or just to have a particular face in the position.

- Participant 7 – Tokenism is when you take a specific person representing something with a false pretense; there's an intention that is being used to send positivity, but it's actually a negative because the person is being leveraged to use in a particular environment.

- Participant 8 – Progressives use it to describe affirmative action that they see has failed their expectation.

- Participant 9 – A practice of only making a minimal or symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups, you know, especially in recruiting, hiring, and career advancement.

- Participant 10 – Tokenism, to me, is where someone is appointed to a job or given a job because of an identifiable characteristic, whether their gender, race, or skin color.

Ninety percent of the participants defined tokens in terms of social context. The common theme among survey participants was that tokenism is a symbolic gesture that provides the appearance of diversity to the external environment. One participant indicated that tokenism represents the variables above the iceberg and does not encompass the variables below the iceberg that drive real commitment to diversity. Above the iceberg represents the things that are observable, a minority may be given a seat at the executive table which is visible to the external environment; however, behind closed doors the minority executive does not have any power to enact change which is invisible to the external environment. The lack of congruency between what is shown and what is reality is part of the challenge for organizations claiming to champion diversity. The study participants indicated that organizations need to move beyond symbolism to action.

Micro-Aggressions

Findings related to micro-aggressions were a mixture of results; most of the participants indicated that they had not experienced direct micro-aggressions like derogatory comments or intentional acts; however, they indicated that if they experienced a micro-aggression, it was more subtle and in the realm of unconscious basis as opposed to a racist situation.

- Participant 1 – Microaggressions come in the form of buzzwords and situational frameworks that start framing behaviors as that term is used.

- Participant 3 – I would not say racism, certainly not overt racism. I think there is a lack of sensitivity. I don't think I have ever just run into something that was overtly racist. As an example, there is a meeting on the calendar for 7:00 a.m. on June 19, which you know is the Juneteenth holiday and is a federal holiday, so it's just contextual in terms of a lack of awareness.

- Participant 5 – Microaggressions are a fact of our lives, and even the most well-intentioned people participate in it. For example, our CEO, a White man, didn't always understand or see even how he participated in, you know, the microaggressions.

- Participant 7 – I was in an environment that was not very conducive for African Americans based on the demographic of people that were there. In terms of micro-aggressions, they would have conversations, and I wasn't intentionally invited to those conversations. Or they would make comments that with underlying stereotypes.

- Participant 9 – I would not say micro-aggressions, but probably more bias, which, as you know, is a form of discrimination. I have had instances where my point of view has either not been heard, diminished, or just dismissed because others in the room may not have or share my perspective or be exposed to certain aspects of my culture.

The overt experiences of micro-aggressions among participants skewed toward a less direct encounter with micro-aggressions; however, the data confirms there is a lack of cultural awareness related to interactions with Black people and other minorities from White people within corporate cultures. Based on the findings, the issues related to participants' experiences are more subtle than direct. Additionally, participants indicated that part of the challenge is that the levels of hierarchy become more homogenous as one looks higher up in an organization.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics, particularly in the majority group, can hinder or support an individual's success. Group dynamics may be a causal factor that leads individuals in the minority group to either isolate or assimilate. Group dynamics are part of the culture of an organization, as discussed in the literature review regarding tight and loose cultures, it is within the culture that individuals experience the norms of an organization. Analyzing the norms of an organization may provide insights on how individuals react to the group dynamics of an organization. According to Kanter's theory, the actions of the majority significantly influence group dynamics and many times determine the experiences of individuals in the minority group.

- Participant 1 – Most people are prioritizing self-preservation and will suppress their authenticity to ensure they are able to preserve their careers.

- Participant 2 – I am the representative for Black people, and I wear that badge of honor.

- Participant 4 – I believe as an African-American, I am able to listen for coded language that transcends race, then I am able to reframe themes and things from just a view of being underrepresented, and I believe for the many reasonable people in the organization, it helps redirect them and helps them guard against their own biases that may not even recognize that they have.

- Participant 5 – I feel like I am the truth-teller if I am responsible for the culture. I am not saying that I don't have to deal with things; you must pick your battles. There are lots of things where you have to call it out. You have to have conversations.

- Participant 5 – Juneteenth became a federal holiday, and so I was the one who had to

  decide what Black people thought about what to do about Juneteenth, but I don't

  speak for all Black people. We are not all the same.

Participants did not provide evidence that a group dynamic hinders or supports success

for Black people. The data shows that in terms of group dynamics, the focus is that the majority

group identifies the Black person as the spokesperson for all Black people. Sixty percent of the

study participants specifically mentioned that felt like they represented Black culture and owed it

to the younger generation to open more opportunities for Black people. However, all participants

to some degree felt that they are a spokesperson for Black people.

An example provided by a participant of how the majority group looks to them as a

spokesperson for Black people centered around the Juneteenth holiday celebrating slaves in

Texas receiving the news that they were free. The participants' responses identified that the

majority group looked to them on how to celebrate and what is appropriate to say regarding

Juneteenth. Participants felt they were deemed the single voice and expert on how Black people

feel about the celebration of Juneteenth.

Isolation and Assimilation

Kanter's (1977b) tokenism theory states that tokens, because of their token status, will

feel isolated from the majority group or act in ways that will assimilate them into the majority of

the group. Participants did not feel that they assimilated to be more accepted amongst fellow

executives in their current roles as executives. Additionally, no survey participant specifically

mentioned feeling isolated within the executive group However, participants did believe that

earlier in their careers, they assimilated to a certain degree, which helped them advance in the

organization; however, once in their executive roles, they were more comfortable being

themselves. The data supports that this comfort was not driven by title but by being older and more mature in who they were as individuals.

- Participant 2 – I think earlier on, I was trying to fit in and then realized it is what it is. I need to be who I am because that's the only way that I can be effective. The right corporation, the right senior leadership team, and the right CEO will recognize the value I bring.

- Participant 3 – Earlier in my career, I was going to do whatever I needed to do to fit in and assimilate. I felt when I walked through the front door, I had to become someone different. I am older now and just don't care. We will see how it plays out, but so far, it hasn't caused any issues for me.

- Participant 4 – I would say I have assimilated in certain ways at certain times, and I think that it's changed over time the more I became comfortable in the organization and comfortable with myself. But there are certainly norms that I have assimilated to as a leader, the way I dress, and the words and acronyms I use.

- Participant 5 – There is no way you can completely live up to and fulfill your responsibilities to a company or position when you don't fully walk in who you are and who you're supposed to be.

- Participant 6 – Where I am now, I am more of an individual, but I do think years ago, as I was climbing the ladder, I may have somewhat assimilated.

- Participant 9 – I think for minority groups, assimilation is a survival mechanism; it is almost necessary. We suppress our individuality to conform, you know, the majority.

The data on participants' experiences with isolation and assimilation reveal that isolation was not a prevalent discussion point. However, assimilation received responses from all

participants. Most participants did not feel in the current position that they assimilate to conform to the majority group. Participants indicated that before becoming an executive, they all felt that, in some way, they did assimilate, and that assimilation was necessary to climb the corporate ladder. Participants did provide how they assimilated but indicated that they primarily had to conform to the majority to access higher opportunities in the organization. Participant 9 was the only participant to explicitly explain the sentiment of assimilation, a survival mechanism for people of color and minorities in corporate cultures.

Theme Two Codes: Leadership

The thematic category of leadership included the following codes: definition, authentic leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. Leadership was a dependent variable in the study. The researcher investigated if the participants' experience with tokenism influenced their leadership style. Given that participants did not feel they were tokens, the data indicates that their leadership style is not dependent or influenced by tokenism.

Most participants indicated that their leadership is what they deemed as servant leadership. The description of their leadership style aligned with transformational leadership. Participants felt that their role as a leader was to enable their followers' success and to provide guidance on how employees can optimize work within the organization. Figure Eight and Figure Nine graphically represent the responses that triggered leadership codes during data collection among all 10 participants. Figure Eight provides the coding frequency of participants in relation to the codes. Figure Nine displays the total number of mentions per code.

Figure 8

Leadership Coding Frequencies by Participant
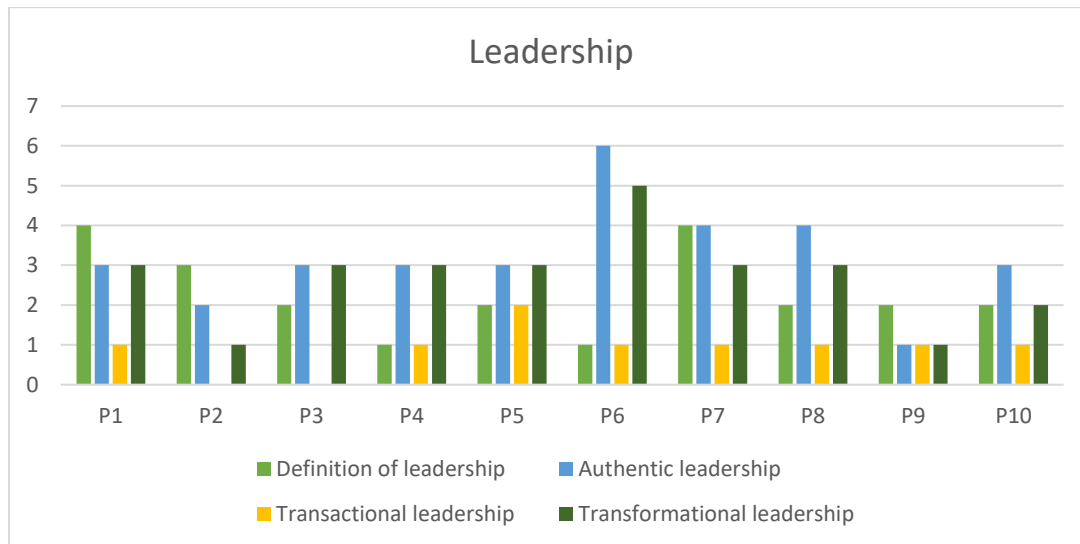
Figure 9

Leadership Coding Frequencies by Code

Definition of Leadership

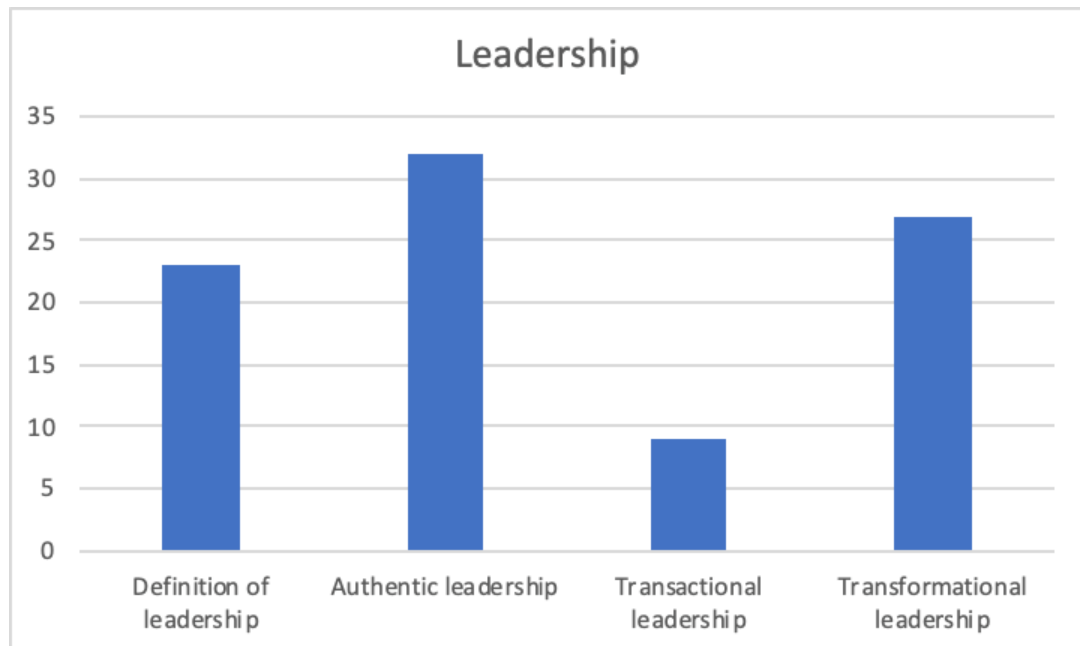All participants provided their definition of leadership. The data indicated some common threads in defining leadership among the participants, including accountability, providing direction, coaching, empowerment, supportive, agile, operating under the golden rule (treating others as you want to be treated), and creating development opportunities.

- Participant 1 – I am hyper-accountable. For me to hold people accountable, I need to also be accountable for my actions and for my body of work.

- Participant 2 – I spend approximately 50% of my time mentoring and developing the team; I call it bringing the team along on the journey; I provide the direction.

- Participant 5 – I believe in empowering my teams and making sure they have what they need to be successful. I try to figure out how they grow. Authenticity is in my leadership style; it is how I approach problem-solving, and I create an environment where me and my employees solve problems together.

- Participant 6 – I try to do my best to help them grow as individuals and impart what I have learned throughout my career, and I try to treat them how I would have wanted to be treated.

- Participant 9 – I operate by the golden rule; I think it is important to treat others just like how you would like to be treated. I operate from servant leadership.

- Participant 10 – I am transparent, open, and always focused on making sure that employees have opportunities to develop.

Most participants focused on ensuring employees were given the tools and resources to be successful and opportunities to grow. Additionally, all participants indicated that it was critical to hold followers accountable. It could be inferred that participants' struggles to ascend to

executive leaders provide insights on how to pave the way for Blacks just starting their careers to help them elevate to executive levels. Given the history of systemic issues of unequal opportunities for Black workers, the researcher sensed that many participants felt it was a duty in their leadership role to help open future executive opportunities for Black workers. Participants also frequently mentioned self-accountability when leading teams. Participants indicated they hold themselves accountable, which then helps reinforce accountability across their teams in the organization.

Authentic, Transformational, and Transactional Leadership

The definitions of authentic, transformational, and transactional leadership provided by the researcher were minimal. The researcher's goal was to set a similar foundation for participant responses without influencing, leading, or directing participants' responses. The researcher stated that authentic leadership focuses on being who one is as a person, and transformational leadership was defined as elevating followers. Transactional leadership was defined as using a reward and punishment style of interaction with followers. The researcher identified that many participants were unfamiliar with the terms authentic, transformational, and transactional from an academic perspective; however, their responses and recollections of their experiences align with the formal definitions of authentic and transformational leadership.

- Participant 1 – Transformational leadership is essentially building, developing, and fostering a culture of belonging and the kind of culture I want to be part of, and I want everybody else to feel a part of, and that's an inclusive one.

- Participant 1 – Right now, I'm seeing insecurity, self-preservation, and personal agendas and a lot of inauthentic leaders, a lot of transactional leaders, but at some point, substance is going to come back in style.

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- Participant 3 – You're seeing a dynamic shift where these transactional leaders don't align with our new CEO, who I would guess is 99% authentic…to make it in our current organization, you need to reside somewhere on the authentic transformational scale.

- Participant 4 – I would say that there are less leaders who are transactional in my organization.

- Participant 5 – Transactional leadership is definitely a thing because, for years, that's how executives were trained to lead, and since you have a lot of the old guard, it's a challenge. That is why older generations have more challenges with younger generations; it is because of the transactional nature of the relationship. It doesn't work today because that's not how you build teams.

- Participant 6 – I would like to say that I am a little bit of both. I do like to lead by example, but I want to make sure that I am supportive to help elevate my team as well.

- Participant 7 – If I were to look at whom I would describe as a good or great leader within my organization, there is a mix of all three because I think you have to be agile and flexible in leadership, depending on the situation, depending on the environment, because they each require a thing that you have to bring to the table to lead effectively.

- Participant 9 – I think a lot of leaders and corporations have moved away from transactional leadership. I just don't think we are relying on rewards and punishments to achieve optimal job performance, especially in a post-COVID world where your

employees have more options where work-life balance is truly promoted and rewarded.

- Participant 10 – I would say I have seen a shift towards more authentic leadership. A lot of corporations' values are focused on protecting and championing people. At my previous company, they did a whole series on authentic leadership. I have seen the shift from transactional to authentic leadership due to corporations changing their values and raising the expectations of their leaders.

Most participants identify with authentic leadership and transformational leadership. Participants stated that helping their followers improve and displaying the actions they want to instill in them are the primary tenets of their leadership style. However, the data did not indicate that tokenism influences their leadership style development. Participants indicated that although there are instances of transactional leadership at the executive levels of organizations, there continues to be a shift from transactional leadership to transformational authentic leadership. The data indicates this shift could partially be a result of the COVID pandemic in that employees now have options and have become more empowered in their demands from their employers.

The data also indicated that transactional leadership occurs in what one participant termed the "old guard," meaning older White males that are not as progressive, partly due to how they were trained. According to one participant, the traditional leader-follower relationship model was built on transactional leadership, and the participant observed the struggle for some leaders to move beyond transactional leadership. However, most participants believe that transformational and authentic leadership will become the dominant leadership model in corporate environments as organizations begin championing their people. One participant stated,

"Business has changed and is more about relationships, and to survive, corporations must evolve, and transformational and authentic leadership is the future."

Theme Three Code: Intersectionality

Intersectionality analyzed the difference between men and women in relationship to leadership style. The researcher investigated if there is a difference in how men and women perceive leadership. Additionally, the researcher investigated if Black women feel that Black men are given a pass in the corporate environment because of their male status. Some literature suggests that Black women feel as if Black men do not get treated as badly as Black women because they are male. Figures 10 and 11 graphically represent the responses associated with the code of intersectionality among all 10 participants. Figure 10 provides the coding frequency of participants in relation to the intersectionality code. Figure 11 displays the total number of mentions for intersectionality code.

Figure 10

Intersectionality Coding Frequencies by Participant

Men vs. Women Leadership
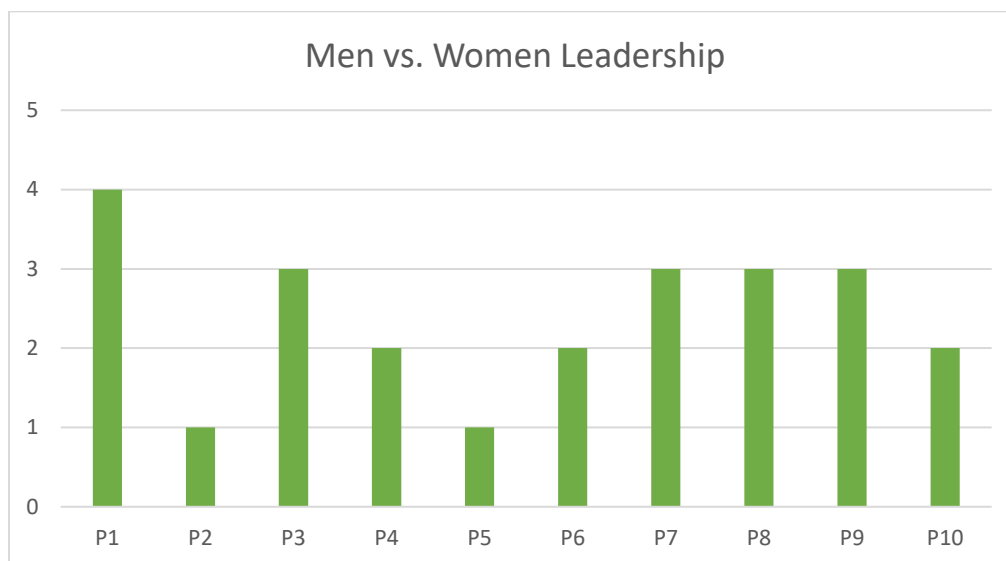
Figure 11

Intersectionality Coding Frequencies by Code
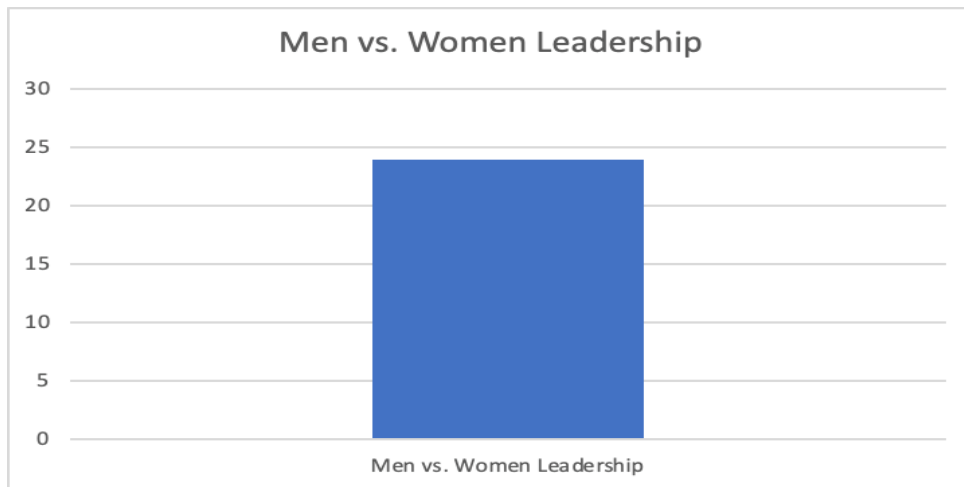
The findings reveal that women and men have different views of leadership and that Black women do not necessarily agree that Black men get a pass. It was the opposite; the female participants in the study believed that Black men have the most challenges in corporate environments. The addition of intersectionality provides an opportunity to analyze the experiences of Black men and Black women, which can provide insights on developing support mechanisms and training specifically targeting the needs based on the male or female demographic.

- Participant 1 – One of our Human Resources Business Partners, a Black woman, told me I would never be able to stand on my principles and values and say No, the way that you can...I think about my journey being a Black male, and obviously, it is less about being male and it's about being Black is how I feel people experience me as a first filter versus being a man.

- Participant 3 – I don't think men and women lead differently; I think we are perceived differently. I think people receive leadership differently based on whether

they're male or female. I do think women have the capability to be more mothering and more sensitive about their perspective about what is going on. I think there is a difference in leadership breakdown between male and female and not necessarily race.

- Participant 4 – I have seen women hold people accountable just like men. However, the good women managers I have had, I would say, had more natural empathy.

- Participant 5 – The best managers, bosses, and leaders I have ever had have not been women, and that is absolutely troubling to me. The most trouble I have ever had in the workplace, by the way, my boss was a Black woman. So, there's this queen bee thing among women, not just Black women, but among women executives.

- Participant 5 – In society, I feel Black men have a heavier burden, and it starts early in their lives and is much more difficult than anybody else, including Black women. I think when a Black man gets to a certain level in corporate America, I feel like they absolutely earned it. What it looks like for them and how they sit in those spaces is very different for Black women; I will own that. I don't think it is easier for Black men at all; I think their burden is even heavier.

- Participant 6 – I have seen women lead very strongly, but sometimes we have a softer way of leading. I try to put in the human component, and sometimes, I don't see men doing that. I think sometimes men are much more over the top business, and women sometimes bring a little more empathy to the office.

- Participant 7 – I absolutely think there's a difference in how men and women lead. I think there is a lot more pressure on women to be perfectly balanced in leadership. If

you show compassion, you are too soft; if you are hard, you are trying to be like a man. In general, I think men get a pass regardless of color.

- Participant 9 – I hate to generalize, but men tend to lead more rationally, and women lead, I would say, with emotion. I would say that it is harder for Black men because if you are outspoken and command a physical presence, you know there is unspoken fear or intimidation; if I even sneeze loudly, then I am threatening.

- Participant 10 – I think they both have just as many struggles; I just think they are different struggles. For women, it's dealing with the angry Black woman; for African American men, there is this over-sexualized Black male who can't be aggressive because they are a Black man working with a White woman.

The primary difference between men and women in leadership is the approach. Men were characterized as less empathetic than women in their leadership. However, participants recognized these are broad generalizations and that leadership is contextual and situational. The female participants felt that women are constantly battling perfect leadership in that if they are empathetic, they are too soft, and if they are too hard, they are trying to be like men. Female participants indicated that men are given more of a pass on their actions as leaders than women.

Regarding men being given a pass, the researcher explored the idea that Black men, because they are male, do not have the same struggles as Black women. In the literature, some studies suggested that Black men have less of a struggle than do Black women. The data and responses from female participants did not support these findings. Many female participants felt that, in general, being a Black man is innately difficult, and the societal pressures of being a Black man from a young age create a heavier burden. From a male perspective, the cognitive admission of Black man intimidation is real. It is something that Black men must constantly be

mindful of during their encounters within a corporate environment. The responses support that from an overall perspective, women and men lead differently, and Black men and Black women both struggle within a corporate environment. However, the data did not conclusively determine that one struggle is more difficult than the other or that differences in leadership style are significantly observable at the executive levels of an organization.

Theme Four Codes: Diversity

Theme four codes for diversity included corporate culture, systemic racism, and equal opportunities. The world continues to become more diverse, and the literature discusses the changing face of the workforce to a more diverse workforce. Corporations are beginning to elevate Black leaders as part of their diversity strategy, and the researcher investigated how Black leaders see diversity in their organizations to better understand challenges and opportunities to advance diversity within corporate organizations. The literature review discussed corporate culture's role in creating diversity but also highlighted the challenges encountered by systemic racism and lack of equal opportunity, many of which are rooted in the social and historical context of the treatment of Black people in the United States. Study participants provided real-world experiences related to diversity and a contemporary context of the current situation in many corporate organizations. Figures 12 and 13 graphically represent the responses that triggered diversity codes during data collection among all 10 participants. Figure 12 provides the coding frequency of participants in relation to the codes. Figure 13 displays the total number of mentions per code.

Figure 12

Coding Frequencies by Participant
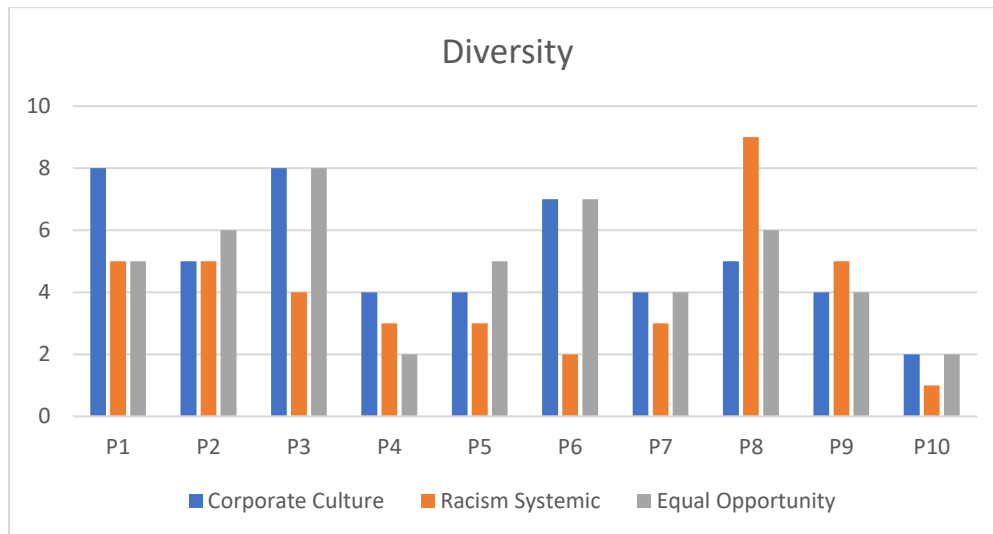
Figure 13

Diversity Coding Frequencies by Code
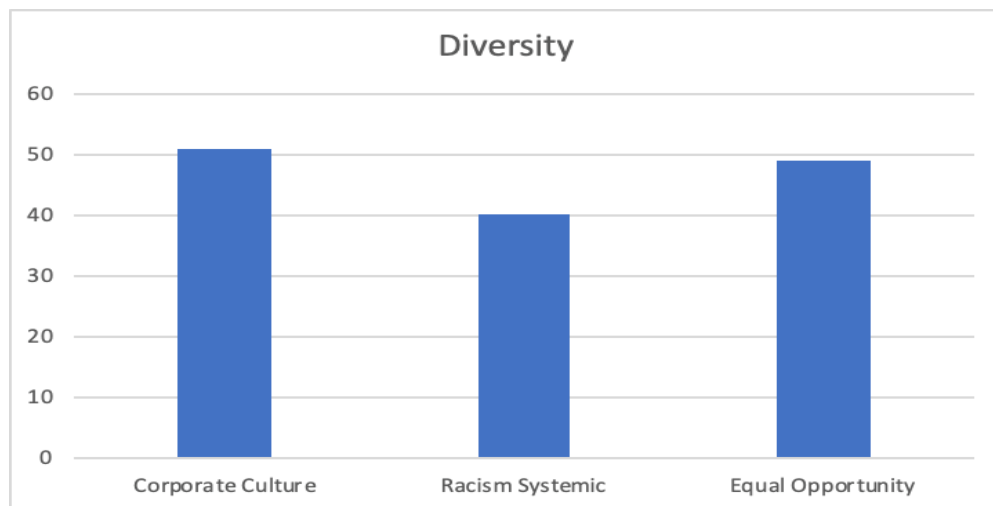
The progress towards diversity is slightly visible according to the responses of study participants. However, the highest levels of the organization still face the challenge of non-existence of progress. Participants provide candid responses regarding the challenges organizations face in advancing diversity. Participants did not formally use certain words to

recollect their experiences regarding diversity. However, the descriptions of the participants' experiences align with the terms used by the researcher to code the data.

- Participant 2 –There are things you can do, but it's about what your company will let you do. You have to be intentional and drive it down through the organization one level at a time and hold them accountable with KPIs. I'm not saying hire all Black or hire because of color, but I do require a 50% diverse pool of candidates. Companies have to carve more from the operating expenses if you really want to make progress.

- Participant 3 – I think we are falling short, but I think it has more to do with the location of the office. I think the company would welcome more minority talent. At my level, we have been talking about opening offices in other cities to achieve our DEI goals.

- Participant 3 – I think the intent is good at most companies, but you can't just wake up one day and say I want Black executives. First, you need Black interns, then you get Black employees, then you have to train and mentor them and follow their careers, and then you eventually get Black executives. Everyone wants DEI today, but it's a long-term process. You have to focus on the talent pipeline, and then, in 10 years, you will be diversified. You can't just start putting minorities in positions, especially if they are not qualified or ready. I think that is more dangerous because you put someone in a position they are not ready to handle. Companies have to be committed to the complete process of developing minority talent to ascend to leadership.

- Participant 4 – In my organization, I would say that we are quasi-aggressive on diversity; we have intentional goals we publicly disclose, and we also disclose our progress.

- Participant 5 – The numbers at the mid-manager level are much greater because they focus their efforts here because there are more opportunities for people. But when you get to those higher echelon positions, there is always an excuse why there are not more Black people, Latinos, or women, things like not enough experience, you haven't done this, or we can't find anyone. That's ridiculous and false. Also, it doesn't matter if you have people seated at the table if they have no authority or power.

- Participant 6 – We don't have a head of diversity because our CEO believes it is the responsibility of everyone, not just one person. Not sure I agree with that, but for it to work, everyone must have a commitment to diversity.

- Participant 7 – If you look at global business, Fortune 100, and Fortune 500 companies, it is textbook. When you look at the bottom levels, there is a bit more progress being made. As you move up the chain, the air gets thin, and you start to diminish minority numbers. There is a lot more work to do at the senior manager level and above. The question is how to really start to pipeline people through the organization. I don't think it is from a lack of awareness or not trying. I just feel like some organizations don't know how to do it. Companies must be willing to challenge themselves to look differently, take bold steps, and make bold statements.

- Participant 8 – It's definitely not at the higher levels. I looked around the room, and I was the only one; we just had a senior leader meeting with hundreds of people, and it

was only three Black people in the room. When they do bring in minorities, they tend

to bring them in at the lowest level of the organization.

- Participant 9 – I would say that most organizations are pretty good in their hiring

    practices around diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially in the lower levels. The

    disparity is when you get to the VP level and above, then there is no diversity; there is

    a tendency to align themselves and promote folks to whom they can relate. As much

    as we think we have moved the needle on DEI, we still have this glass ceiling.

The data indicates that participants universally feel that some progress regarding diversity

in their organizations is being made. Participants indicated that the intent to advance diversity

usually exists, but many organizations don't understand how to effectively implement diversity

programs. Despite recognizing some improvements in diversity, the findings show that this is

typically in the organization's lower-level jobs and management positions. Positions classified as

VP and above continue to be held predominantly by older White men.

These findings support that systemic racism is still prevalent within corporate

organizations. Participants did not use the term systemic racism specifically. However, in their

response, they discuss how, within upper executives, they tend to promote individuals they think

they can get along with and continue to not develop a pipeline or pathway for Black employees

to rise to executive levels. Participants indicated that companies must make bold moves to

address the organization's executive-level inequities. Given that the most prevalent level of

diversity exists at the lowest levels of many organizations, it supports that there is an imbalance

of equal opportunity for Blacks to gain the necessary access and exposure to help them move

into executive positions. Most participants are long-time employees of their organization and

hold the belief that they had to put in more effort and possess greater qualifications as compared to their White colleagues to secure their executive roles.

Another finding from the diversity theme reveals that organizations with a Chief Diversity Officer have them positioned in the HR Department instead of sitting in the business unit or at the executive. One participant stated that you can't make any changes if you have no power or authority. Participants expressed that if organizations commit to diversity, it needs to come from the top down, and diversity needs to reside within the executive levels of the organization or the organization's business units. Based on the interviews, the researchers sensed that participants felt that diversity was making some gains. However, until a proper pipeline is implemented, challenges will continue for Black employees to reach the C-suite.

Theme Five Codes: Emotional Reactions

Kanter's tokenism theory posits that because of tokens' visibility, they face more stress and negative situations from the majority group. The codes from Theme 5 were identified to help the researcher investigate the overall experience of the survey, which included questions about the potential positives of tokenism and ideas of how corporations can elevate their support of Black executives to help them succeed as leaders in global corporations. The codes for emotional reaction themes include satisfaction, frustrations and challenges, and support mechanisms. Figures 14 and 15 graphically represent the responses that triggered emotional reaction codes during data collection among all 10 participants. Figure 4 provides the coding frequency of participants in relation to the codes. Figure 15 displays the total number of mentions per code.

Figure 14

Emotional Reaction Coding Frequencies by Participant
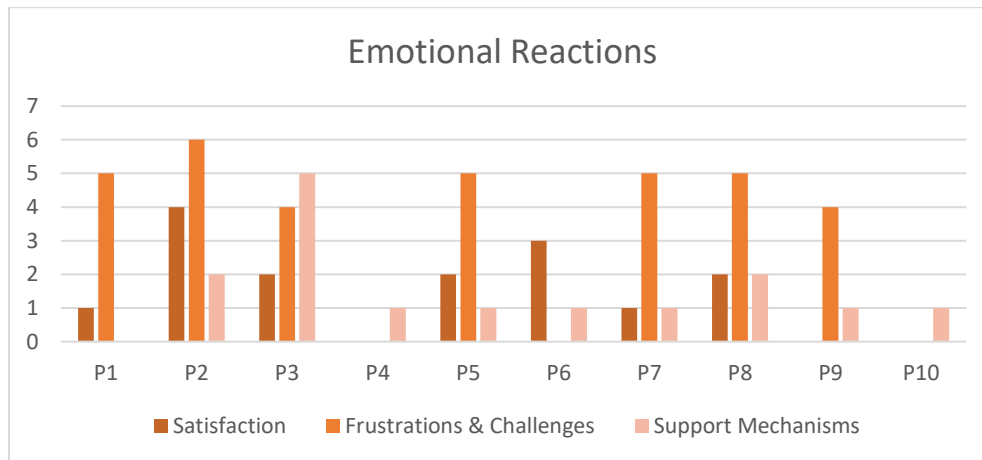
Figure 15

Emotional Reaction Coding Frequencies by Code
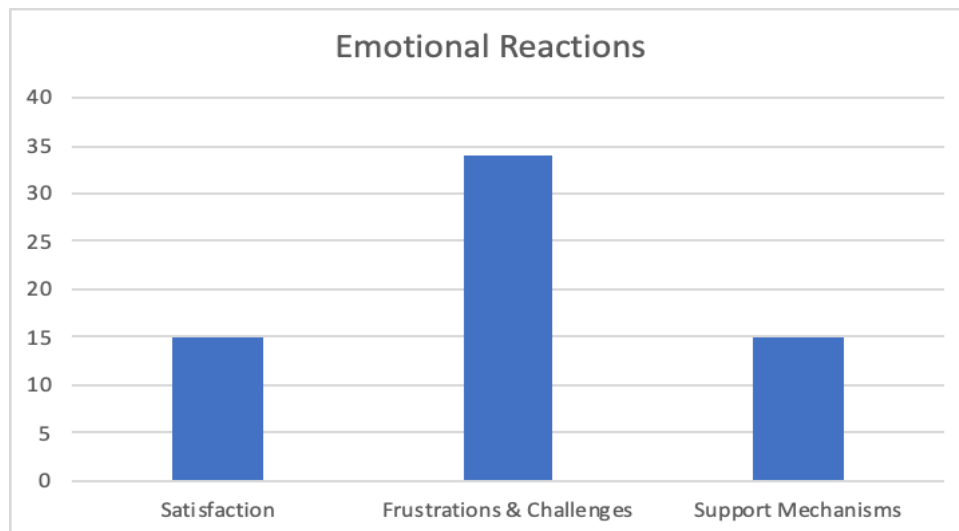
The emotional reactions to participant's experiences indicate that participants are frustrated with the lack of support resources for Black executives.

- Participant 4 – Every leader that gets to the executive level should have an executive coach and an internal mentor, and if they are new to the organization, they should have a cultural coach, maybe someone newly retired, to help them understand the

culture and They should also have a therapist to help them with the psychological game of how to be successful in the job.

- Participant 5 – Many minorities and women are resigned to the fact the glass ceiling is real and then make excuses like I have a good life-work balance, or I make a good living. Which just means it will take more from us to get to the C-suite.

- Participant 5 - Diversity must be intentional and give us the tools; it cannot be about what looks right. I will be interested to see where all these corporations that developed initiatives around George Floyd are in a few more years. First, we need to get rid of leaders who don't believe in diversity; those leaders can't build the kinds of cultures you need for real inclusion and equity. Secondly, support needs champions and sponsors. If we don't prepare people who are rising through these companies, then we set them up to fail. The people in the majority have champions, sponsors, and mentors. You must be allowed to build and select your support system.

- Participant 6 – Even if there is no official mentor-mentee program, there must be a support system. You need someone to whom you can go and ask questions, just talk normal advice. If you want to diversify your company, you need to go invest in HBCUs, but also determine how to get those students in your company. But you've got to get people resources and the support system when they do get to your company.

- Participant 7 – I think just giving support, giving tools like executive coaching or people that you can bounce things off of to help you navigate this world of executive leadership, which is not easy, it can help you be successful.

- Participant 8 – I think companies need to be consistent with people in these executive roles, the majority group tend to have mentors and the company needs to make sure that minority executives have the same access to mentors.

- Participant 9 – We have to have an advocate in the room when talking about talent and who gets promoted. We need those advocates, personal coaches, and mentors to help us navigate the organization, especially at the highest levels.

- Participant 10 – You have to provide support, it's about sponsorship, a lot of my White counterparts have internal networking that Blacks do not have. It's about intentional connections and intentional networking, ensuring that you are bringing Blacks along, asking them to happy hours, including them in your team-building activities, and creating an environment where they don't feel like an outsider.

The findings reveal that participants overwhelmingly focused on support resources, mentorship, and coaching for emotional reactions. Participants did not provide significant insights on daily frustrations or challenges and appeared to be coping with the challenges of being a Black executive. The opportunities aligned with the support mechanisms within the organization for Black executives. White executives are provided with a suite of support mechanisms to help them not only deal with the pressures of being an executive but also help them thrive and succeed. Study participants indicated they were not given the same support mechanisms once elevated to executive roles. The gap in support between White and Black executives was the primary finding when investigating the emotional reaction to being a Black executive within a global corporation.

Summary

The participants in this study described their experiences as Black executives at global corporate organizations and how it influenced their leadership development style, along with how they navigated their environment as Black executives. Participants shared their experiences about being the minority; many times, they were the only Black person in the room at the executive level. They discussed the pressures associated with being a Black executive, which included not just the pressure of being successful but also the pressures of holding the mantle for Black people and working to open doors for other Black people to ascend to executive roles.

All study participants indicated they were not a token, felt they earned their positions, and were not selected because they were Black. Additionally, study participants indicated that the majority group did not heavily influence them in influencing their leadership style. Participants indicated they stand as individuals and do not assimilate just to fit in with the majority group. However, they did feel that more work needs to be done to help them feel more connected to the majority group. All participants indicated the lack of networking opportunities, mentoring, and coaching as support resources that they, as Black executives, do not have access to like their Whiter counterparts.

Participants indicated that they are a proof point that diversity is making slow progress but acknowledged that much more work is needed to elevate Blacks to executive levels. The recollection of the participants' experiences with tokenism, leadership development, and navigating the corporate culture provided the researcher with data and information to advance the literature to understand the corporate environment for Black employees and Black executives.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Five discusses the insights and knowledge obtained from interviews with five Black males and five Black female leaders regarding their experiences with tokenism and their leadership style. The preceding four chapters discussed the overview of the research, the literature review used to analyze, support, and validate findings, methods utilized to collect data, and interpretation of findings to answer the research question(s). This final chapter provides conclusions, application of research, and future recommendations for research to expand the study's findings.

This phenomenological inquiry aimed to investigate the lived experiences of Black men and Black women in executive-level positions at global corporate organizations. The focus was on tokenism from and being a numerical minority within the senior and executive leadership levels at corporate organizations. Based on Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology discusses an individual's experience and incorporates what they experienced and how they experienced it. Phenomenology was the appropriate approach to obtain insights, perspectives, and experiences of Black male and Black female leaders to capture themes and challenge the existing literature on the effects of tokenism in corporate organizations.

Summary of Findings

The findings answered the primary research question, "*How does tokenism affect the leadership t style of Black executives*?" The findings do not align with Kanter's assertion that tokenism affects the experience of individuals in the minority group, in this case, Black executives. The researcher acknowledges that this conclusion is nuanced given that study participants did not feel as if they were tokens. If participants are not tokens from their perspective, then Kanter's prediction regarding tokens experiences could not be fully tested,

including Kanter's prediction that tokens face more stress and challenges in corporate environments. The findings align more with Yoder (1991), who asserts that numerical representation is too simple to analyze tokenism because it is a much more complex issue. Yoder found that sociological factors create challenges for tokens. It is the low social status of minorities that determines the experiences of tokens. The degree to which an individual is part of an under-represented group by 15% or less fails to include the effects of societal discrimination as part of a token's experiences. Kanter's work does not include the social context.

From the researcher's analysis and the study's findings, being a White male numerical minority is not the same as being a Black male or Black female numerical minority, primarily based on the racial history of the United States. The racial history and the privileged status of White men in American society and corporate environments created institutionalized challenges for people of color but especially for Black people. Therefore, the context and environment as prescribed by Yoder must be considered when analyzing the experience of minorities in a group dynamic. The findings indicate that age, gender, industry, and corporate culture are key elements of how perceived tokens experience their environment. The findings support that tokenism is viewed as a social construct, not a numerical definition. Participants indicated that they view tokenism as related to a physical characteristic such as race or gender. However, participants did not view themselves as tokens and felt they earned their executive roles due to their work performance.

The researcher believes that the findings of the study related to Kanter's definition of tokenism may be the result of the changing social environment in the United States, because there is an increased focus on addressing years of inequalities experienced by Black people. The opportunities for Black people in America continue to increase. For example, the opportunities

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for Black people to gain higher education could be a causal factor that supports why study participants do not feel that they are tokens. Study participants discussed that they now have more access to networks and that society is demanding corporations to become more diverse and equitable which may have created an environment for Black people to have different experiences within corporate organizations, which participants indicated was more positive. The researcher's conclusion on why study participants experiences do not align with Kanter's theory of more stress and isolation is two-fold: (a) participants did not believe they were tokens and if they are not tokens they cannot experience tokenism, and (b) Kanter's research and theory was developed during a period when corporations were almost 100% run by White men at the executive level and diversity was not part of the business strategy or advocated for during the 1970's.

In further analyzing beyond tokenism the researcher hypothesized that the reason Black executives did not experience negative effects of being in the minority is that once a Black person is promoted to an executive position, the executive position negates the race of an individual and the individual integrates into a circle of elites where money and status define majority group where a Black executive is no longer defined by race but by their executive status. The researcher uses the term *Hierarchal Corporate Threshold Race Theory* which states that money and power negate an individual's race as a defining characteristic and is replaced with executive titles and executive compensation as the primary defining characteristics thus race becomes irrelevant and a non-factor in terms of a racial minority experiences at the executive levels of corporate organizations.

The findings also addressed the independent variable of leadership style. Given that participants did not view themselves as tokens, they did not see any influence as being in the minority group as an influence on their leadership development style. Most participants indicated

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they are authentic and transformational leaders. They stated that they see an overall shift from transactional leadership to more authentic and transformational leadership at the executive level. Findings indicate and support executives, regardless of race or gender, must recognize the importance of connecting with followers on a more humanistic level if they are going to influence behaviors and shape corporate culture.

Participants provided valuable insights on how their experiences provide potential future strategies for corporate organizations to better support Black executives and help them to succeed at the executive level. The findings indicate that support mechanisms are fundamental to success. Findings show that White executives are provided an entire support system, whereas Black executives are barely provided any support resources once they are elevated to an executive-level position. Specifically, participants indicated the lack of access to executive coaches, mentors, and executive networks as resources needed to help Black executives be successful leaders.

Overall, study participants expressed positive experiences as Black executives. The researcher believes that two primary factors contribute to a more positive experience for Black executives. First, participants indicated they noticed a shift in leadership styles at the executive levels of organizations. Executives are becoming less transactional and more authentic and transformational, the foundation of authentic and transformational leadership is to create an environment that supports the success of the individuals in the organization.

Secondly, the shift to authentic and transformational leadership aligns with the studies of Gelfand (as cited in Nussbaum, 2019) on women and minorities in tight and loose cultures. Gelfand posits that loose cultures are more open to creative ideas, less ethnocentric and open to change. The switch to authentic and transformational leadership supports the creation of a loose

corporate culture that focuses on a supportive environment for employees. The change in executive leadership styles and the shift to loose corporate cultures may explain confirm Black executives' positive experiences within corporate organizations.

Participants did acknowledge that there are challenges and issues they must deal with associated with a system that was not designed for them to succeed. However, overall, participants felt that there is progress within corporate structures to advance more opportunities for Black people, but participants stated that progress must continue, and if corporations are serious about diversity and elevating Black executives, they must be intentional and take bold actions if they are going to enact real change at the executive levels of the organization.

Study Conclusions

The Black executive leaders in this study represent many of whom are first in terms of Black executive leadership within their respective organizations. The researcher identified four main conclusions from this study:

1. Black executives do not see themselves as tokens, however this conclusion related to Research Question 1 could be considered inclusive because even though study participants met Kanter's definition of tokenism, participants did not identify as tokens which could be argued that their response were not from the perspective of a token,

2. Black executives identify as authentic and transformational leaders,

3. Black executives are judged differently before they are elevated to an executive and during their time as an executive, and

4. there is a lack of support resources for Black executives.

Study participants did not see themselves as tokens; uniformly, they stated they were not tokens. The researcher hypothesized that the reason participants did not see themselves as tokens was due to their social contextualization of tokenism. Tokenism from the participants' perspective was related to being only selected because of some demographic characteristic primarily race or gender. Given that all the participants possessed the experience, knowledge and education required for their executive roles, participants felt that they earned their position and were not given their position.

The researcher believes it is important to recognize that tokenism cannot be uniformly defined by one term. From the literature review there are two primary interpretations of tokenism. Kanter defined tokenism from a numerical perspective, Webster's dictionary defined tokenism from the perspective of only making a perfunctory gesture. For this study the researcher utilized Kanter's definition of tokenism but acknowledges there is a spectrum for defining tokenism. It could be numerical; it could be a symbolic gesture however these definitions do not consider the human social context, which should be part of defining tokenism. Tokenism for example could be related to nepotism; an individual is selected for a job because a relative with influence works in the organization, if this example involves all White individuals, you could argue that this is tokenism in that the individual was only selected for the role because of a connection to a relative. This example helps move beyond just a racial demographic component, which is the common lens of tokenism.

The researcher believes that tokenism should involve the experiences of individuals and their interpretations to define tokenism. If an individual feels like they are a token and if their experiences create a feeling of tokenism, then tokenism may be an accurate description, which then supports the plausibility of a spectrum of definitions for tokenism.

The belief of participants that their education, experience, and work delivery helped them earn their executive role is the basis for the researcher's hypothesis of why study participants do not believe that they were tokens. The researcher's hypothesis is supported by the data in which Black executives expressed that they are not in their executive role because of some perfunctory gesture related to race but instead because of their work performance, industry knowledge, and skills. The Black executives in the study, despite being a numerical minority among the executive group, believe that their presence at the executive level is tied more to their ability to lead the organization and deliver results than meeting a quota. Black executives felt that they were executives who happened to be Black, and that ethnicity was more symbolic than causal in reaching the executive levels of their organization.

From the literature review of authentic leadership encompasses authenticity with genuine actions. Transformational leadership creates a connection to engage with followers in a manner that raises the motivation and morality of both the leader and the follower. Black executives from this study identified as both authentic and transformational. This conclusion is based on the explanation of leadership by participants in their own words. There was no direct link in the data to indicate why Black executives believed their leadership was authentic and transformational. One potential explanation could be that given the struggle of each participant's journey to the executive level, it created a desire to help others along the way, which would align with authentic and transformational leadership styles. Participants felt a sense of responsibility to younger employees, especially Black younger employees, to help them successfully navigate the corporate environment.

Black executives did not express instances of overt racism. However, participants indicated that they were judged differently prior to becoming an executive and continue to be

judged differently as an executive. Black executives felt that they had to have more experience and education than their White counterparts before they were elevated into their executive roles. Additionally, many participants said they are held to higher job delivery and performance standards. Expectations for Black employees was not overt. However, participants observed subtle nuances in how White counterparts are given more opportunities to fail than Black executives. The study participants belief that they are judged differently aligns with The Center for Talent Innovation's (CTI's) 2019 study *Being Black in Corporate America*, which indicated that about two-thirds of Black professionals feel that they have to put in more effort than their White colleagues in order to progress in their careers. CTI collected data via online and phone surveys that included 3736 participants. Participants included Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian professional men, and women; the goal was to identify and better understand the systemic issues Black professionals encounter in a corporate environment.

The last conclusion provides insights on the critical part of the experience of Black executives: the lack of resources and support. Black executives highlighted that the lack of support resources represents an essential requirement for the success of Black executives. Black executives felt that it was not a lack of talent, skill, and knowledge in their roles but a lack of institutional support. From the participant's perspective, most White executives have some type of executive coach, psychologist, and peer network to deal with the pressures of their roles. Black executives highlighted that they were not afforded a support network or team once they were elevated to the executive levels of their organization. Participants identified the lack of resources for Black executives and employees as the highest priority for corporate organizations in the future if they are committed to supporting Black executives' success in a corporate environment.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study's conclusions is important for the literature on the experience of Black executives and their experiences in corporate organizations related to leadership and diversity. The findings represent a starting point to further investigate the experience of Black executives at corporate organizations. The findings and conclusions in this study reveal insights into how Black executives view their leadership style and how corporate culture influences their ability to serve in an executive position. Given that the executive levels of most corporations are comprised of White males, this study provides insights on how to expand executive leadership opportunities in corporate organizations for Black employees. Leadership style is an essential element of developing good followers and corporate culture; this study provides valuable insights into how Black executives operate in challenging environments because of their minority status and lack of mentors and networks within the executive levels of their organization.

This study provides a contemporary view of Kanter's tokenism theory, which was developed in a different social environment. Kanter's theory was developed when Blacks faced social challenges stemming from the racial history of the United States; this study, even though social struggles still exist for Black people, analyzes Kanter's tokenism theory in present-day society. The literature review shows that workforce diversity continues to increase and that more Black people are being elevated to executive positions. It can be argued that the slow but continual removal of systemic racial barriers may be part of the context that creates a dissimilar experience for Black executives in present-day corporate environments.

The researcher hypothesizes that the reason for the different experiences is the cumulative effect of past actions of government entities to remove systemic barriers to address

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racial inequities. For example, the 13th (made slavery illegal), 14th (citizenship and equal rights), and 15th (guaranteed the right to vote) amendments to the Constitution, Brown v. Board of Education, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the War on Poverty, are examples that America continues to try and mitigate some of the negative obstacles in which Black people have endured (Calloway-Thomas & Hill, 2020). These types of regulatory and legislative actions serve as the foundation that continue to help address the devastating treatment of Blacks in America. Progress is oftentimes slow, and change may not be instantly observable, and despite what is reported within the media the information collected from participants serve as proof that change is happening related to the experiences of Black people not just in society but also in corporate environments and that systemic racial systems albeit slowly are being dismantled.

This study creates a platform to increase discussions about opening the door for more Black employees to become executives and helps understand and develop strategies focused on supporting Black executives' development as effective leaders.

Contributions to Literature and Scholarship

Much of the research related to tokenism and Black people in corporate cultures analyzes the situation from the lens of the majority group and their actions in shaping corporate culture. Additionally, most research focuses on the negative experiences of tokens and Black people. The previous research highlights tokenism's negative aspects and how it negatively impacts Black people. Those negative impacts include elevated stress, micro-aggressions, effects of systemic inequalities, and isolation and lack of support within the corporate structure.

In-depth interviews were conducted to allow Black male and female leaders to tell their stories and experiences of being Black leaders in a global corporate organization. Open-ended

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questions provided optimal flexibility for participants to tell their stories around tokenism and leadership style. Additionally, the researcher did not define terms for participants, which helped keep participants' answers in a pure form in relation to them recounting their experiences. The interview results helped fill the literature gap concerning the token's perspective on how it affects their leadership development style.

In addition to expanding the literature on the experiences of Black executives in corporate organizations, the researcher identified an extension of Samuel Stouffer's Relative Deprivation Theory. Stouffer's theory holds that when comparing themselves to others, individuals may experience a sense of deprivation or entitlement to something. Essentially, it is the feeling that they have less than some comparative standard (Liddell & Teasley, 2021). Stouffer developed his theory based on the attitudes of American soldiers during World War II. The theory aimed to understand the satisfaction level of soldiers with their treatment. Stouffer posits that satisfaction is relative to the available comparisons we have (Pettigrew, 2015). Based on the researcher's analysis of the study participants' experiences, responses, and ideas, Relative Deprivation Theory provides a possible theoretical explanation of their recollection of their experiences.

An individual or a group experiencing a sense of disadvantage in comparison to a relevant reference group, leading to perceptions of resentment, anger, and entitlement, is known as Relative Deprivation. Individuals who experience relative deprivation undergo three psychological processes. Initially, they begin to draw cognitive comparisons. Then, they evaluate cognitively whether they or their ingroup have been placed in a disadvantageous situation. Lastly, they consider these disadvantages as unfair, and it makes them feel angry and resentful (Pettigrew, 2015). Relative Deprivation cannot operate if any of these three requirements are not

met (H. Smith et al., 2012). In reviewing the data, the investigator noticed that all participants satisfied the conditions of relative Deprivation related to support resources as a Black executive. However, participants did not exhibit angry resentment, but they did exhibit resentment that support resources were different between White and Black executives.

Corporate Resource Deprivation Theory

The researcher concluded that Relative Deprivation Theory is part of Black executive's experience at corporate organizations. As a result, the researcher uses the term Corporate Resource Deprivation Theory to explain the experiences of Black executives at corporate organizations. Corporate Resource Deprivation Theory posits that Black executives feel that the lack of support resources impacts their ability to be successful and resent the fact that they do not get the same suite of support resources as White executives. Given that the conditions of Stouffer's Relative Deprivation theory are met, it provides, at minimum, an inferential validity of Corporate Resource Deprivation Theory. The researcher recognizes and acknowledges that additional empirical evidence through additional studies is required to validate their theory. However, the researcher's extension of the Relative Deprivation theory does initiate the conversation on explaining the experiences of Black executives' experiences at corporate organizations.

Corporate Resource Deprivation Theory provides an explanatory context of the experiences of Black executives. Understanding the context of Black executives experiences creates opportunities to address their issues at global corporate organizations. Suppose the researcher's assumption on expanding relative Deprivation into a new theory specifically for the corporate environment is accurate. In that case, it provides a social context in which corporate organizations can not only better understand the daily experiences of Black executives but

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develop tangible actions to help alleviate the effects of *Corporate Resources Deprivation Theory*.

Hierarchal Corporate Threshold Race Theory

All study participants mentioned systemic racism as an issue in corporate organizations, however only one participant mentioned an incident of direct racism within in the executive level. Participants indicated that if they experienced racism as a member of the executive leadership group it was more subtle or more attributed to a lack of sensitivity as opposed to overt racism. Given that all the participant responses were similar regarding their experiences related to racism the researcher believes there is a potential explanation why study participants did not experience racism within the executive levels of their organization. The researcher uses the term Hierarchal Corporate Threshold Race Theory (HCTRT) to explain why Black executives do not experience racism at the executive level.

HCTRT posits that once a racial or ethnic minority becomes a member of the executive group at a corporation, they are no longer viewed from the perspective of their minority status because of their executive title and compensation that then negates the effects of being a minority. The researcher believes that it could be that once individuals become part of the power class of an organization, they are no longer viewed from the lens of race but from the lens of power and it is the power position that shields them from racism from the majority group members.

Further research is needed to investigate if the experiences of Black executives are attributed to HCTRT. The researcher believes that understanding why Black executives did not experience racism at the executive level is an important future study opportunity to expand the knowledge on the social dynamics at the executive level at corporate organizations. To test

HCTRT the study should focus on the majority group and their beliefs and attitudes toward the minorities within the executive group.

Implications for Black Executive Leaders

This study provides several implications for Black executives in the corporate environment. The study provides insights on (a) navigating the corporate environment, (b) the value of authentic and transformational leadership, and (c) the importance of individuality within the executive levels of corporate organizations.

The academic literature is vast regarding the experiences of minorities and Black employees within the corporate environment; however, this study provides tools for current and future Black executives to navigate the corporate environment as a Black executive. The experiences, stories, and suggestions from study participants' real-world experiences provide valuable information for Black employees entering an organization's executive level. For example, participants noted a transition from transactional leadership to authentic and transformational leadership at the executive level. This shift is significant because the literature highlighted that many executives were trained to focus on transactional leadership. Recognizing this shift should allow Black executives to better adapt their leadership to the corporate environment and help them align with the future expected leadership qualities at the executive level. Working on the skills attributed to authentic and transformational leadership may help Black leaders become more effective in their leadership positions.

Leadership is a consistent topic not only in the academic environment but also in the corporate environment. Given that the corporate environment is moving toward authentic and transformational leadership, the value of these leadership styles will likely continue to grow in the corporate environment. Authentic and transformational leadership embody relationship

building. The relationship between the leader and follower is the foundation of being authentic and transformational. Black leaders must develop relationship-building skills and emotional intelligence to connect with their teams and lead them at a human level. Based on the participants' experience, part of their success is due to the ability to connect with individuals who may not look like them. This ability to connect beyond race and gender will be critical for the future success of Black executives.

According to the study, individuality is important at the executive level. Although participants indicated that at some level, particularly in the early stages of their careers, there may have been some assimilation to the corporate environment; however, the assimilation was part of the game and necessary to elevate to the executive level. Participants indicated that once they were in an executive role, it was important to be authentic to themselves to be an effective leader. Based on the study, Black executives must be authentic to be successful. This finding implies that authenticity is the foundation of success. Regardless of the environment, individuals cannot lead an organization if they are not true to themselves. The ability to be authentic based on the experience of the study participants was a dominant and recurring theme in reliving their experiences as a Black executive in the corporate environment.

Implications for Corporations

This study is important for corporate organizations for three key reasons. First, it highlights Black executives' everyday experiences in their own words with their raw emotions. Second, the findings provide tangible strategies to help Black executives be successful in their leadership roles. Third, it identifies systemic gaps in the corporate culture that hinder the advancement of diversity.

This study looked at the daily environment of Black executives at global corporate organizations. Many participants revealed that the work is fulfilling overall, and their pressures are primarily from their executive role, not because of race or gender. However, that does not mean no issues are associated with being a minority at the executive level. Participants indicated that they still must deal with microaggressions and situations inherent in systems that were not developed for their advancement. It may be worthwhile for corporations to allow honest feedback from executives on their experiences to help shape the organization's culture. As one participant indicated, you can sit at the table, but you can't enact real change if you have no power. Being a Black executive in a corporation must also equate to real power within the system, for the Black executive addresses some innate systemic issues within the organization's culture.

Dr. Stephanie Creary is a distinguished scholar on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Wharton School of Business. She holds the position of an assistant professor of management and serves as a faculty fellow of the Coalition for Equity & Opportunity.   Over the past 14 years her research through interviews with Black professionals confirms the need to improve engagement with Black employees. Dr. Creary (2020) found that employees of Black ethnicity, regardless of their level, have expressed feelings of being unheard, misunderstood, and not given equal opportunities compared to their White colleagues. From her research she developed a tool to help people from different backgrounds build stronger relationships. The tool was designed to create more honest discussions within corporate organizations. Dr. Creary's framework is called "LEAP" and is designed to help people managers become better allies to Black employees.

The LEAP framework (Creary, 2020) is comprised of four parts: (L) – Listen and learn from you Black colleagues' experiences; do not suppress or penalize Black people for openly

discussing discrimination or unfair treatment at work, (E) – Engage with Black colleagues in racially diverse and more casual settings; gaining insights into Black employee experiences may be more feasible in non-evaluative settings where other Black employees are present, (A) – Ask Black employees about their work and their goals; inquiry is a powerful tool when done correctly, ask Black colleagues about their actual work, including what they are hoping to accomplish, (P) – Provide your Black colleagues with opportunities, suggestions, encouragement, and general support; recommend Black employees for highly visible opportunities, introduce them to influential colleagues and openly acknowledge their accomplishments. Dr. Creary's framework supports this study's findings that intentionally is essential to change structures that create inequalities in corporate environments. It can be inferred that intentionality is aligned with actions of authentic leadership, Dr. Creary's framework provides a roadmap for leaders to practice authentic leadership during engagements with Black employees.

The findings in the study identify that corporations must go beyond elevating Black employees to executive roles. The number one issue for Black executives is the level of support they receive once they become executives. The lack of holistic support for Black executives is an opportunity in which corporations can help advance the success of Black executives. Corporations must look across the board at all executive levels and ensure that the support provided is equal to every executive. The lack of access to executive coaches, psychologists, and network support puts Black executives at a disadvantage when dealing with the pressures of leading global organizations. A network support system is not a sign of weakness but a necessary part of supplying the appropriate resources to help Black executives deliver results with the same playing field as their White counterparts.

Study participants indicated that despite some progress on diversity, much work still needs to be done. Study participants indicated that the organizations are doing a decent job at the entry and middle management levels. However, bold actions are needed to help translate the entry level to the executive level. According to the study participants, many lower-level employees feel there are no growth opportunities and settle for a good job and steady paycheck. Corporations need more proactive and bold action to advance diversity throughout the organization. Findings perhaps point to the need for corporations to invest more in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Corporations need to develop a pipeline program with incentives for new Black employees. A plan should be developed from the start of their career that entails a roadmap to the executive level. Once the roadmap is developed, the individuals are provided the opportunity to advance and support resources that create a network to help them prepare for future leadership roles within the organization. Finally, the findings reveal that most diversity leads are in Human Resources. However, many participants felt that diversity needs to be in the business and the responsibility of the business executive. For diversity to advance, it must not only be championed by a business executive. It must be the responsibility of an executive that has the power to enact change to achieve a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable business culture.

Changing the approach to diversity at corporate organizations goes beyond developing a plan or strategy. A cultural shift is required for meaningful change. The work of Jenny Walker and Michelle Gelfen discussed in the literature review provide a theoretical context of how to enact cultural change in corporate organizations. Walker's work identified the importance of including social learning (mentoring) and humanist learning (relationships) to global leadership and not just focusing on cognitive and experiential learning. Mentoring and individual

experiences expands a global leaders skillset to engage with different cultures and ethnicities. Adding the additional global leadership learnings may create a more well-rounded authentic leader, which may enhance interactions within a corporate organization.

Michelle Gelfen's work discusses how culture is important in driving change. Gelfen identifies tight and loose cultures, tight cultures are closed and individuals in the majority are threatened by change and the rise of minority groups to power; conversely a loose culture is more open, leaders are not afraid of change and beholden to old systematic ways of working that inhibit inclusivity within an organization. Gelfen's work on loose cultures aligns with tenants of authentic leadership which then makes authentic leadership salient in driving a loose culture which my help better mitigate Black employee inequalities within a corporate culture.

Implications for Global Leadership

Statistical data indicates that workforce demographics are changing and that the future workforce will be more diverse, which may present management challenges for more diverse teams. Tanneau and McLoughlin (2021) wrote in the Harvard Business Review about the integration of social consciousness regarding ethnicity, social justice, and belonging into the workplace. As a result, leaders will need to adjust their approach to become more genuine and inclusive. Leaders will need to have cultural competence, which means they must be able to work in cross-cultural settings while valuing diversity and being aware of their own and others' cultural identities. Leaders must make a conscious effort to develop cultural fluency and understand how cultural background can impact team dynamics, as stated by Tanneau and McLoughlin.

This study provided insights on the experiences of Black executives, which includes responses on the importance of understanding the Black experience. Despite the small sample

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size, the study provides insights on how the majority can engage with individuals from a minority group. Understanding how to engage with diverse cultures is part of building cultural competency, which was identified by Tanneau and McLoughlin as a critical skill for global leadership. Global leaders interact with diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions and genders, the ability to authentically connect with these diverse groups should help global leaders build trust with individuals that do not look like them. Two participants in the study recalled their encounters with the difficulty of their peers discussing or being culturally sensitive to Juneteenth, which celebrates the day slaves in Texas, received the news that they were free. There is research that indicates that these communication struggles may be attributed to leaders struggling under the pressure of political correctness.

Tanneau and McLoughlin argue that in the workplace political correctness inhibits cross-cultural interactions. This study provided a point of view from the Black experience on how cultural ignorance impacts the experiences of minority individuals. This study does not present a concrete solution to developing cultural competency, but it does confirm the importance of cultural dynamics and its influence on how individuals from minority groups experience work-place situations. The findings from this study may provide insights and tools to help global leaders understand the importance of including cultural competency in the development of their global leadership skillset.

Study Limitations

As with all research studies, this research had the following limitations:

1. The population of the study – a small sample size and all participants were Black and purposefully sampled, therefore the findings only reflect the experiences of Black individuals at a specific moment in time, to further validate the findings a larger

sample of Black executives would be required to determine if the experiences of a larger study population yield the same findings,

2. The subjectivity of the data – the data collected is not based on quantitative or scientific methodologies, the researcher worked to maintain rigorous protocols based on good qualitative principals in data collection and data analysis, however the researcher acknowledges their potential subjectivity in the study that may be unconsciously part of the study's findings and interpretations,

3. Cumulative effects of systemic inequities – the researcher collected data at a moment in time, therefore the researcher was unable to account for additional social influences such as media stories around racial inequities that may have influenced the study participants responses, it is possible that during participant interviews that situations related to race and the treatment of Black people may have been present during participants recollection of their experiences, and

4. Researcher-induced bias – the researcher acknowledges that oftentimes they are the only Black in the room at corporate meetings and worked to minimize bias during the study, including the use of third party coders to help develop the interview questions and thematic categories, however, the final analysis and findings were through the researchers lens and there is the possibility of researcher bias in the study's findings and conclusions.

Study participants represented a broad range of industry, and the researcher did not compare inter-industry responses because there were no duplicate industry participants in the sample study population. However, given the similar responses of study participants the researcher believes that the participant sample is representative of the experiences of Black

executives in corporate organizations. The researcher did not include Black executives from non-profit organizations or academic institutions. The findings in this study are only representative of Black executive experiences in corporate organizations, which is a homogenous participant pool. Additional insights may be revealed if the researcher would have expanded the participant pool beyond corporate organizations. However, the researcher is confident that the data is representative for corporate organization because participants were from 10 different industries and recalled similar experiences within a corporate environment.

The findings in the study provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of tokenism from the point of view of Black males and Black females cross-sectionally. The population for the study was racially homogenous Generation X individuals (individuals born between 1965 and 1981) and narrowly focused on how tokenism affects leadership development style from a controlled participant pool with pre-defined participant requirements. The study was not intended to serve as representation of minority executives. Rather, the study was designed as a foundation and starting point for future research on ethnic minority leaders in global corporations. The researcher acknowledges the limitations of the participant pool and that findings are not transferable beyond the study's participants.

The research questions and data collected are subjective. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) research outlines the challenges associated with data trustworthiness in qualitative studies and the search for rigor in collecting data and interpreting findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected, findings, and analysis, the researcher focused on the following: prolonged engagement by allocating adequate time to engage with participants related to their experiences of the phenomenon, triangulation (cross-checking), utilized data collected about the literature of the subject to compare findings of previous studies related to the phenomenon negative case

analysis, by actively searching for opposite instances as found in previous literature that may contradict the experiences found in previous studies involving ethnic minorities. The researcher's goal was to use these strategies to help reduce the subjectivity of the study.

Given the inability of the research to control the social environment concerning the timing of interviews and documented accounts of systemic inequalities within corporate organizations, the researcher acknowledges that research questions may not have adequately captured any latent cumulative effects of systemic racism on study participants given the narrow scope on the focus of tokenism and leadership. Given the cross-sectional data collection methodology, the research captured the experience in relation to the other unknown potential influences during the interview. The cross-sectional data collection approach to the study's findings will not specifically establish a cause-and-effect of tokenism nor serve as the establishment of long-term trends related to tokenism in global corporate environments.

The researcher based on Kanter's definition of tokenism has been a token for most of his professional career and acknowledges his experiences with the phenomenon of tokenism. However, for the present research, the researcher suspended experiences and worked with an external coding team to bracket his experiences and help ensure the researcher's experiences did not influence the methodology, questions, and coding. The researcher acknowledges that despite strategies to minimize researcher bias, there may have been some unconscious influencing with the study regarding analysis and of the data. However, the researcher believes that researcher bias was minimal. If researcher bias was seen, it was not a factor in the overall trustworthiness of the data collection, data analysis, and conclusions of the study because the following factors, (a) the researcher confirmed answers with study participants after each interview question to ensure

participant responses were actually captured, and (b) the data transcription and coding was

performed by an independent coder without interaction with the researcher

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative research investigated the experiences of Black male and Black female

executives with tokenism and leadership development. The research develops a foundation for

investigating how tokenism affects minority executives in a corporate environment where

diversity creates opportunities for people of color to serve at the highest executive levels within

corporate organizations. Future research concerning tokenism and leadership development could

include the following.

Additional Ethnic Groups

Extending the research to other ethnicities, such as Latino, Asian, or Native American,

may provide additional insights on determining if tokenism affects all ethnic tokens similarly.

Kanter's work, is the foundation of this study's research question, purported that tokens,

regardless of demographic characteristics like race and ethnicity, would face similar effects

related to tokenism. Some academics hold the belief that ethnicity is a nonexistent concept and

that ethnic classifications are inadequate in describing social phenomena (Modood & Khattab,

2016). Scholars who contest the existence of ethnicity acknowledge that there is a certain level of

lived experience that leads to the emergence of ethnicity (Brubaker, 2013). Acknowledging such

a phenomenon means that ethnicity, much like gender, can provide an explanation for behaviors

and outcomes that may not be adequately explained otherwise (Modood & Khattab, 2016).

According to Brubaker (2013), the concept to the objection of ethnicity, as also to the

concept of 'race,' is that no set of biological or quasi-biological attributes can be found which

distinguish one ethnic group from another, and so ethnic groups are not a natural phenomenon

but of thinking, social constructions, imagined affiliation or simply political artifices. Additional research on different ethnicities provides an opportunity to investigate if Kanter's theory still holds that ethnicity is not salient to being a token. If this is true, the concept that ethnicity does not exist, at least in terms of a social construct, may be valid.

Race and ethnicity, regardless of whether they are included in social circles or corporate organizations, will more than likely continue to be part of diversity and inclusion discussions. However, suppose future research uncovers that race and ethnicity are not the issues in addressing diversity and corporate culture. In that case, it creates opportunities for further in-depth research to identify a broader set of causations about how people of color experience and adapt to their environment beyond simply attempting to address racism and colorism as the only issues of importance to address diversity within a corporate organization.

According to Modood and Khattab (2016), our concept of ethnicity assumes it is from inter-subjectivity consisting of norms and behaviors shaped by socioeconomic structures and the treatment of others, particularly from dominant (ethnic) groups. This rationale implies that behaviors vary by ethnic group, which means that race/ethnicity is a differential variable on the outcome of social constructs like leadership style. Expanding the research methodology of this study to other ethnicities will help support Kanter's theory of tokenism or provide evidence to the contrary and expand the literature on ethnic executive leadership development at global corporate organizations.

Different Generations

Generational differences continue to be a topic of interest among academic scholars. Research on generational differences often examines the dissimilarities in values, needs, preferences, and actions among members of different generations (Sandeen, 2008). The

participants in this study were from Generation X, defined as individuals born 1961-1981. Generational groups potentially provide an age variable to further investigate the dynamics of tokenism in a corporate environment. According to Strauss and Howe (1991), "As a social category, a generation probably offers a safer basis for personality generalizations than such other social categories as sex, race, religion, or age" (p. 63) Given the importance of generational characteristics, expanding the study to Baby Boomers and Millennials may provide valuable insights related to leadership development. Expanding may help determine which variable influences the development of a leadership style, race, or generational categorization.

A generation's worldview or *peer personality* is typically attributed to the social context that existed during the youth phase of the generation (Sandeen, 2008). Baby boomers are competitive and value visibility and recognition (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, boomers value face-to-face interactions and are known in the workplace for preferring meetings as a mode of communication (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Generation X were known as *latchkey kids* and stayed at home by themselves after school until their parents returned from work. Generation X were the resilient survivors, who, though somewhat cynical, pessimistic, and suspicious, found a way to successfully negotiate their challenging social environment (Sandeen, 2008). The social context has shifted back to being child-centered, as represented by the millennials. Unlike the individualistic mindset of the baby boomers and the pessimistic mindset of Generation X, millennials are team-oriented, confident, and optimistic. Millennials are used to being the center of attention and receiving praise for almost everything, regardless of how trivial recognition is (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials have a strong sense of purpose and typically appreciate organizations that are mission driven.

Given these generational characteristics differences, a quantitative study looking at the dependent variables of generational personality and race on leadership style development may provide insights into corporate leadership training. If the research reveals that generation characteristics are more influential than racial characteristics, it may help develop how leadership is developed within an organization. This study focused solely on Generation X, and based on the limited data set, the survivor mentality equated with Generation X was supported based on the analysis of the data collected.

Quantitative Studies for Emergent Minority Leaders

This study focused on Black males and females in global corporations' senior and executive leadership roles. However, conducting a study on emergent Black or ethnic leaders may provide helpful data to understand the mentality of middle managers concerning their leadership development and future opportunities at the executive levels of an organization.

According to an article by Abraham Zaleznik (2004) published in the *Harvard Business Review*, the distinction between managers and leaders is based on their underlying beliefs about order and chaos. Managers are inclined towards following processes, achieving stability, and exercising control. They have an innate desire to solve problems quickly, sometimes without fully comprehending the significance of the issue at hand. On the other hand, leaders are more accepting of chaos and disorder and are comfortable with ambiguity and lack of structure. They prefer to take their time and postpone making decisions in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the problem. Given the differences between managers and leaders, would this also translate to different views on tokenism and leadership development, particularly since managers are operational and leaders are more visionary?

Managers often are next in line for leadership positions. A better understanding of how managers view leadership may provide insights on how to best develop programs to prepare managers to be leaders and move from tactical to inspirational in professional development. The study focused on individuals in leadership positions to understand their understanding and experiences with tokenism and how it affects their leadership development. None of the participants were in management positions. To better analyze an organizational understanding of tokenism and leadership, the voices of middle managers could be critical in that managers sit between the workers and the executive levels and interact with both levels of the organization.

Conclusion

This study advanced the discussion on the experiences of Black executives in global corporate organizations and their leadership styles. Previous research and studies on tokenism and the experience of Black employees at corporate organizations have focused primarily on the experience of being Black and the racial component of being Black at predominantly White organizations. During the literature review, the researcher located studies on tokenism and the experiences of Black employees in corporate organizations, which were discussed in Chapter Two of this study. The goal of this study was not only exploring being Black from a social context but also how the experiences of being Black influence the leadership style of Black executives in corporate organizations.

This study was an extension of the research on the experiences of Black executives; it went beyond the social and racial context associated with tokenism and included the dimension of the leadership style of Black male and Black female executives in global corporate organizations. This phenomenological study provided insights, descriptions, and accounts of Black men and women in the role of executive at global corporate organizations; the insights

gained from the recollection of their experiences contribute to academic knowledge of corporate culture systems, corporate diversity, and support strategies for Black executives.

The insights gained from this study were derived from a small participant group. The findings are not transferable to a larger population. However, the insights provide accurate accounts of the participants' experiences, which help frame the current experiences within corporate organizations for Black executives. The pool of Black executives is limited at global corporations; however, the researcher believes that the sample population's responses represent an adequate portrait of the experiences of Black executives at global corporations.

Often, tokenism is seen from a negative lens. However, the researcher discovered some positives that resulted from tokenism based on the responses of survey participants:

1. The lack of Black executives created the need and opportunity for a Black to elevate to an executive role. How and why the Black executive got their role was not as important as the fact that they got it. It could have been quota-driven, just perfunctory, or even a response to social pressures; regardless, it is a positive that Black people are starting to elevate to executive roles.

2. It creates an opportunity for a typically homogenous executive group to experience someone different, which creates the opportunity for the White majority group to learn and become more educated on Black life and what it means and feels like to be Black in a country that continues to challenge their opportunities to live and work.

3. It provides hope for younger Black people to make it to the highest levels of global corporate organizations because they now see people who look like them in positions of power.

The study participants' experiences indicate progress regarding how the minority group interacts with the majority group in corporate environments. As noted in Chapter Five, many of the participants indicated that among their peers at the executive level, they do not experience high levels of racism. The participants believed they are treated as equals with their White counterparts at the executive level. The researcher did not investigate further, but believes that part of the explanation for Black executives not experiencing negative or racial incidents could be the fact that hierarchy in an organization negates race, as discussed in Chapter Five. The job level and compensation level may insulate minorities at the executive level from negative experiences. The researcher believes that additional investigation on the hierarchy variable would offer an opportunity to expand the literature on the experiences of minority and Black executives in corporate organizations.

This study indicated that additional work is needed to elevate more Black people to executive roles, including increased support resources for Black executives at the same level as their White counterparts. Despite continued systemic internal corporate culture issues, the study supports the finding there is some progress regarding the executive level becoming more diverse. Identifying the Corporate Resources Deprivation Theory and CHTRT presents an opportunity to significantly advance the literature and discussion on the experiences of Black executives in corporate organizations.

Race continues to be a dominant issue, particularly in America; in addition to the fact that America is becoming a minority-majority, social issues continue to challenge society's thinking and how people interact. This study provided an analysis and potential roadmap for a future in which the executive level in the corporate environment mirrors the diversity of the larger population. This study and its insights highlight how opportunity combined with support

resources help Black people thrive in a corporate organization. The study's findings supported the idea that authentic and transformational leadership is the primary leadership style of Black executives, which the data indicates is essential to leading an organization successfully.

This study provided data in support of the trend that the U.S. is becoming a majority-minority, and that the future workforce will be more diverse. These two variables support the need to continue investigating how to expand opportunities for Black professionals at executive levels and help them develop global leadership capabilities to lead global organizations successfully. The turbulent global business market and the increased demand for social justice necessitate that organizations expand their efforts on diversity on not just the employee level but also the executive level. The researcher believes that continuing to expand the research and literature on the experiences of Black executives at global corporations is essential to help organizations build inclusive and successful organizational cultures.

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APPENDIX A

Black Male Privileges Checklist

The Black Male Privileges Checklist is a tool that can be used by any individual, group, organization, family, or community that is interested in Black males having greater insight into their individual lives and the collective lives of Black women and girls. It is also a living tool that will grow and be amended as more discussion and dialogue occurs. This is the first edition of the Black Male Privileges Checklist and will be updated regularly. This checklist was created with Black men in mind and does not necessarily capture the experiences and cultural references of other ethnic males. I would welcome dialogue with others who are concerned about these constituencies as well.

The Black Male Privileges Checklist

Leadership & Politics
1. I don't have to choose my race over my sex in political matters.
2. When I read African American History textbooks, I will learn mainly about Black men.
3. When I learn about the Civil Rights Movement & the Black Power Movements, most of the leaders that I will learn about will be Black men.
4. I can rely on the fact that in the near 100-year history of national civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League, virtually all of the executive directors have been male.
5. I will be taken more seriously as a political leader than Black women.
6. Despite the substantial role that Black women played in the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement, currently there is no Black female that is considered a "race leader".
7. I can live my life without ever having read Black feminist authors, or knowing about Black women's history, or Black women's issues.
8. I can be a part of a Black liberation organization like the Black Panther Party where an "out" rapist Eldridge Cleaver can assume leadership position.
9. I will make more money than Black women at equal levels of education and occupation.
10. Most of the national "opinion framers" in Black America including talk show hosts and politicians are men.

Beauty
11. I have the ability to define Black women's beauty by European standards in terms of skin tone, hair, and body size. In comparison, Black women rarely define me by European standards of beauty in terms of skin tone, hair, or body size.
12. I do not have to worry about the daily hassles of having my hair conforming to any standard image of beauty the way Black women do.
13. I do not have to worry about the daily hassles of being terrorized by the fear of gaining weight. In fact, in many instances bigger is better for my sex.
14. My looks will not be the central standard by which my worth is valued by members of the opposite sex.

Sex & Sexuality

15. I can purchase pornography that typically shows men defile women by the common practice of the "money shot."
16. I can believe that causing pain during sex is connected with a woman's pleasure without ever asking her.
17. I have the privilege of not wanting to be a virgin, but preferring that my wife or significant other be a virgin.
18. When it comes to sex if I say "No", chances are that it will not be mistaken for "Yes".
19. If I am raped, no one will assume that "I should have known better" or suggest that my being raped had something to do with how I was dressed.
20. I can use sexist language like bonin', laying the pipe, hittin-it, and banging that convey images of sexual acts based on dominance and performance.
21. I can live in a world where polygamy is still an option for men in the United States as well as around the world.
22. In general, I prefer being involved with younger women socially and sexually
23. In general, the more sexual partners that I have the more stature I receive among my peers.
24. I have easy access to pornography that involves virtually any category of sex where men degrade women, often young women.
25. I have the privilege of being a part of a sex where "purity balls" apply to girls but not to boys.
26. When I consume pornography, I can gain pleasure from images and sounds of men causing women pain.

Popular Culture
27. I come from a tradition of humor that is based largely on insulting and disrespecting women; especially mothers.
28. I have the privilege of not having Black women, dress up and play funny characters- often overweight- that are supposed to look like me for the entire nation to laugh.
29. When I go to the movies, I know that most of the leads in Black films are men. I also know that all of the action heroes in Black film are men.
30. I can easily imagine that most of the artists in Hip Hop are members of my sex.
31. I can easily imagine that most of the women that appear in Hip Hop videos are there solely to please men.
32. Most of lyrics I listen to in hip-hop perpetuate the ideas of males dominating women, sexually and socially.
33. I have the privilege of consuming and popularizing the word pimp, which is based on the exploitation of women with virtually no opposition from other men.
34. I can hear and use language bitches and hoes that demean women, with virtually no opposition from men.
35. I can wear a shirt that others and I commonly refer to as a "wife beater" and never have the language challenged.
36. Many of my favorite movies include images of strength that do not include members of the opposite sex and often are based on violence.
37. Many of my favorite genres of films, such as martial arts, are based on violence.
38. I have the privilege of popularizing or consuming the idea of a thug, which is based on the violence and victimization of others with virtually no opposition from other men.

Attitudes/Ideology
39. I have the privilege to define Black women as having "an attitude" without referencing the range of attitudes that Black women have.
40. I have the privilege of defining Black women's attitudes without defining my attitudes as a Black man.
41. I can believe that the success of the Black family is dependent on returning men to their historical place within the family, rather than in promoting policies that strengthen Black women's independence, or that provide social benefits to Black children.
42. I have the privilege of believing that a woman cannot raise a son to be a man.
43. I have the privilege of believing that a woman must submit to her man.
44. I have the privilege of believing that before slavery gender relationships between Black men and women were perfect.
45. I have the privilege of believing that feminism is anti-Black.
46. I have the privilege of believing that the failure of the Black family is due to the Black matriarchy.
47. I have the privilege of believing that household responsibilities are women's roles.
48. I have the privilege of believing that Black women are different sexually than other women and judging them negatively based on this belief.

Sports
49. I will make significantly more money as a professional athlete than members of the opposite sex will.
50. In school, girls are cheerleaders for male athletes, but there is no such role for males to cheerlead for women athletes.
51. My financial success or popularity as a professional athlete will not be associated with my looks.
52. I can talk about sports or spend large portions of the day playing video games while women are most likely involved with household or childcare duties.
53. I can spend endless hours watching sports TV and have it considered natural.
54. I can touch, hug, or be emotionally expressive with other men while watching sports without observers perceiving this behavior as sexual.
55. I know that most sports analysts are male.
56. If I am a coach, I can motivate, punish, or embarrass a player by saying that the player plays like a girl.
57. Most sports talk show hosts that are members of my race are men.
58. I can rest assured that most of the coaches -even in predominately-female sports within my race are male.
59. I am able to play sports outside without my shirt on and it not be considered a problem.
60. I am essentially able to do anything inside or outside without my shirt on, whereas women are always required to cover up.

Diaspora/Global
61. I have the privilege of being a part of a sex where the mutilation and disfigurement of a girl's genitalia is used to
deny her sexual sensations or to protect her virginity for males.

62. I have the privilege of not having rape be used as a primary tactic or tool to terrorize my sex during war and times of conflict.
63. I have the privilege of not being able to name one female leader in Africa or Asia, past or present, that I pay homage to the way I do male leaders in Africa and/or Asia.
64. I have the ability to travel around the world and have access to women in developing countries both sexually and socially.
65. I have the privilege of being a part of the sex that starts wars and that wields control of almost all the existing weapons of war and mass destruction.

College
66. In college, I will have the opportunity to date outside of the race at a much higher rate than Black women will.
67. I have the privilege of having the phrase "sewing my wild oats" apply to my sex as if it were natural.
68. I know that the further I go in education the more success I will have with women.
69. In college, Black male professors will be involved in interracial marriages at much higher rates than members of the opposite sex will.
70. By the time I enter college, and even through college, I have the privilege of not having to worry whether I will be able to marry a Black woman.
71. In college, I will experience a level of status and prestige that is not offered to Black women even though Black women may outnumber me and out perform me academically.
72. If I go to an HBCU, I will have incredible opportunities to exploit Black women

Communication/Language
73. What is defined as "News" in Black America is defined by men.
74. I can choose to be emotionally withdrawn and not communicate in a relationships and it be considered unfortunate but normal.
75. I can dismissively refer to another persons grievances as ^*ing.
76. I have the privilege of not knowing what words and concepts like patriarchy, phallocentric, complicity, colluding, and obfuscation mean.

Relationships
77. I have the privilege of marrying outside of the race at a much higher rate than Black women marry.
78. My "strength" as a man is never connected with the failure of the Black family, whereas the strength of Black women is routinely associated with the failure of the Black family.
79. If I am considering a divorce, I know that I have substantially more marriage, and cohabitation options than my spouse.
80. Chances are I will be defined as a "good man" by things I do not do as much as what I do. If I don't beat, cheat, or lie, then I am a considered a "good man". In comparison, women are rarely defined as "good women" based on what they do not do.
81. I have the privilege of not having to assume most of the household or child-care responsibilities.
82. I have the privilege of having not been raised with domestic responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and washing that takes up disproportionately more time as adults.

Church & Religious Traditions
83. In the Black Church, the majority of the pastoral leadership is male.
84. In the Black Church Tradition, most of the theology has a male point of view. For example, most will assume that the man is the head of household.

Physical Safety
85. I do not have to worry about being considered a traitor to my race if I call the police on a member of the opposite sex.
86. I have the privilege of knowing men who are physically or sexually abusive to women and yet I still call them friends.
87. I can video tape women in public- often without their consent - with male complicity.
88. I can be courteous to a person of the opposite sex that I do not know and say "Hello" or "Hi" and not fear that it will be taken as a come-on or fear being stalked because of it.
89. I can use physical violence or the threat of physical violence to get what I want when other tactics fail in a relationship.
90. If I get into a physical altercation with a person of the opposite sex, I will most likely be able to impose my will physically on that person
91. I can go to parades or other public events and not worry about being physically and sexually molested by persons of the opposite sex.
92. I can touch and physically grope women's bodies in public- often without their consent- with male complicity.
93. In general, I have the freedom to travel in the night without fear.
94. I am able to be out in public without fear of being sexually harassed by individuals or groups of the opposite sex.

APPENDIX B

Research Study Interview Questions

1. How long have you been in your position and how long have you been working for the
   organization?

2. Are you over 40 and under 60?

3. What is the highest level of education you completed?

4. What is your definition or understanding of the term tokenism? Please describe if you
   have ever felt like you were a token.

5. Please describe if you have ever experienced micro-aggressions or racism amongst the
   other members of the senior and executive-level group (intentional or unintentional)

6. Please explain if you feel like you have assimilated to feel like part of the majority within
   the executive level group.

7. How would you describe your leadership style?

8. Please describe your understanding of the following terms: Authentic Leadership,
   Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership.

9. Explain how the corporate culture of the organization and your experiences at the
   executive level impact your leadership style.

10. How would you describe the differences in diversity efforts at employee level and the
    executive level?

11. How would you describe your experiences at the organization and your experiences and
    relationships with the other executives?

12. Describe how your peers at the executive level can better support your success as a leader and explain how you think organizations can increase opportunities for more Black executives?

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: May 25, 2023

Protocol Investigator Name: Alan Caldwell

Protocol #: 23-02-2104

Project Title: A Phenomenological Study of Tokenism and Leadership Development of Black Executives in Corporate Organizations

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Alan Caldwell:

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