

THE ESSENCE OF THE CORPORATE EXIT: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY ON
BLACK WOMEN

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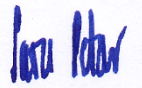
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Dedication

*I dedicate this work to the Lord God, Protector and Guard, Ruler of both Heaven and
Earth*

Acknowledgements

*Many thanks to mom and dad for making a way by moving out of the way, clearing a path
for me to reach my pinnacle.*

ABSTRACT

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This research study has been purposed with the objective of determining the myriad causes of the black woman's exit from corporate America into entrepreneurial endeavors. Conducted utilizing interpretative archival research (IAR) and framed by intersectionality and critical race theory, gendered and racialized theoretical frameworks, this qualitative, exploratory research study, interpreting participants' lived experiences, will outline the themes and sub-themes that emerge through a semi-structured review of literature and archival research data from the following databases: Department of Labor, Google Scholar, the National Archives, The Pew Research Center, ResearchGate, Wiley Online publishing, Scopus, EBSCO, SAGE, Emerald, and NIH. This research study will examine a multitude of components including intersectionality, microaggressions, systemic barriers, allyship, mentorship, compensation, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and recent government dismantling of departmental policies that impact the corporate experience of this demographic, leading to departures and thoughts of entrepreneurship.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research study has been purposed with the objective of examining and interpreting the black woman's departure from the corporate setting in route to entrepreneurial grounds and the myriad implications and motivating factors that are contributing to this phenomenon. It is well researched that black women have experienced immense challenges within workplace environments that have contributed to lesser experiences than their counterparts. As detailed by "Lean In" (2025), some of the experiences are related to sponsorship gaps wherein this demographic lacks the support necessary to further their career pathway. Racial bias and stereotypes within these corporate settings are also described as problematic for black women, leading to a lessened confidence in competence and a lack of visibility, resulting in a lowered probability of promotion and leadership advancement.

In the past decade, corporate America has incurred an influx of exits as it concerns black women whom are vacating their coveted positions to pursue interests outside of the traditional workplace setting. Due to these premature exits, retainment of women in the workplace has been prioritized in recent years with the incorporation of strategies including the creation of inclusive and supportive environments that ensure that the use of disparaging and discriminatory language is properly addressed for the purpose of encouraging more equitable environments. Additional retainment approaches include

the implementation of visibility tracking to reduce turnover and retention efforts, allowing for the voices of marginalized demographics to be increasingly audible. Communication, as well as progress tracking, are additional efforts that are proven to provide benefits to women and other underrepresented groups, building trust and reinforcing one's engagement with organizational practices. As black women currently hold only 7% of senior management and c-suite roles, the necessity of retainment is dire ('Lean In,' 2024).

Due to this recent trend of early departures, as described, attributable to workplace instances and hindrances related to systemic barriers, compensation, microaggressions (as reported by 35% of women of color), stereotypes, and one's intersectional identity, black women are seeking greater autonomy, flexibility, and growth potential through the lure of self-employment ('Lean In,' 2024).

Given the systemic barriers as aforementioned, including bias as it relates to recognition and promotion in addition to the lack of managerial support along one's career pathway, contributing to a lack of advancement, this phenomenon of early departures has grown to be increasingly significant to women of color whom are incurring this outcome. It has been documented that when faced with this level of adversity within workplace settings, addressing barriers to a career trajectory has a significant influence on a woman's decision to remain in one's current role or to begin one's advancement toward entrepreneurial endeavors, potentially achieving greater control and inclusivity ('Lean In', 2024). These aforesaid departmental practices, highly

influential in the decision to exit one's role, are a catalyst surrounding the phenomenon of self-employment concerning black women.

This acceleration in exits from long-held corporate positions is also said to be a result of post-pandemic economic downturn in addition to a highly publicized diminishing of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies and practices that were once seen as imperative to the furtherance, development, and retainment of marginalized demographics. Potentially effectual outcomes of the aforesaid diminished policies may include lessened opportunities for advancement or sponsorship in addition to the hindering of departmental policies that promote equity ('EO 14151,' 2025).

In addition to policy change and economic recession, other internal factors contributing to the "great resignation", a phenomenon detailing the vast and sudden exit of a plethora of the labor force, attributable to misgivings such as unfair wages, stringent work schedules, and lessened autonomy, include the 'glass ceiling' effect in addition to the 'broken rung', descriptors detailing the encountering of barriers, as experienced by women, whom climb towards more senior roles. Also, black women in corporate America have incurred even greater hardships, experiencing what is referred to as the "black ceiling" or the "concrete ceiling", terms devised to describe barricades to c-suite positions constructed or imagined, hindering the black woman's corporate trajectory as well as tenure.

Black women have historically incurred negativity concerning workplace experiences, including racism and sexism that have led to early departures. In tandem with the removal of affirmative action in addition to the onset of restrictive diversity,

equity, and inclusion-related policies, the vulnerability of black women is now amplified leaving this marginalized group increasingly susceptible to racist and discriminatory workplace behavior. As the number of black women in the workplace continues to diminish, self-employment amongst this demographic is well-documented as being on the consistent rise (Atkins, 2023).

This research study is significant and relevant due to aforesaid attacks on DEI policies, long held and adhered to by a plethora of institutions, enabling the rights and liberties of marginalized groups to be protected and shielded from discriminatory practices and procedures, now under attack or eliminated altogether as ordered by governmental institutions. A lessening of corporate guidelines concerning certain demographics can gravely impact longevity and attainment concerning the black woman's ability surrounding tenure and climb, respectively.

Economic instability and widespread layoffs, as recently experienced in a variety of sectors, including governmental agencies, attributable to the aforesaid recession and post-pandemic implications, are also motivating factors with 300,000 black women exiting the workforce in the first half of 2025 according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2025). The resulting impact of such a significant number of black women departing the workforce has the potential to be gravely effectual to the economy, leading to decreases in income, lessening equality, calling for broad policy reform to support retention and engagement of this demographic.

In terms of the usefulness to the industry of practice, analyzing and examining workplace practices, including discriminatory behavior and treatment toward

marginalized demographics is imperative to the identification of remedial solutions that diminish discriminatory practices and procedures, simultaneously increasing retainment of those with intersectional identities, most notably black women. Additionally, the implementation of theories and frameworks can be of assistance, guiding institutions in the improvement of workplace conditions, increasing retainment and upward mobility, reducing departures.

1.2 Research Problem

This research study will examine the motivating factors that contribute to the departure of professional black women from corporate America, leading to entrepreneurship, with the objective of interpreting the myriad causes that are encouraging these early exits from highly sought after positions. This study will also explore and analyze departmental experiences as contended by black women with diverse departmental narratives, interpreting the various elements moving this demographic out of corporate roles while simultaneously luring them toward entrepreneurial endeavors.

Through personal observation, it is evident that marginalized demographics in workplace settings have long been on the receiving end of disparaging and discriminatory behavior as rendered by more dominant groups. Black women, specifically, experience a “double jeopardy” due to their intersectional identity, being both black and female, hindering career growth and trajectory, making for a lesser experience than one’s counterpart. As a result of this unequal treatment in departmental settings black women are experiencing a lesser probability of promotion in addition to increases in instances of microaggressions and stereotypical commentary related to gender and racial bias. Black

women are also encountering systemic barriers, including the “broken rung”, “glass ceiling”, and the “black ceiling”, terms referring to blockades to promotion concerning those from diverse backgrounds, including those with intersectional identities.

The recent dismantling of DEI policies, as outlined by ‘EO 14151’ (2025) and ‘EO 14398’ (2026), said to terminate discriminatory diversity, equity, and inclusionary departmental programs, subsequently impacting black women, has led to increases in job insecurity and consequential ramifications on the furtherance of black women in corporate America. This is all according to the ‘U.S. Department of Labor’ (2025) commenting on the recent reports displaying troubling trends surrounding a fragile economy with black women on the receiving end.

Entrepreneurship has presented itself as a lucrative and flexible alternative to corporate America with the promise of increased autonomy and equity. As entrepreneurship concerning working women is seen as a mechanism of furtherance, as it relates to economic uplift, there is an argument to increase development of startups.

Despite this temptation of self-employment, there have been growing calls for improved practices, policies, and procedures for marginalized demographics in workplace settings, enhancing the overall experience of protected groups whom rely upon sound legislative doctrine to advance and sustain their corporate tenure. Highlighting influential experiences prompting black women to seek opportunities outside of the corporate setting and identifying theoretical frameworks that provide remedial solutions to current challenges present within these environments is the primary purpose. Other objectives include providing data that will assist in enhancing diversity, equity, and

inclusion initiatives within departmental institutions with goals of developing guidelines and frameworks by which departmental officials can utilize, providing for more equitable circumstances concerning marginalized demographics seeking an upward trajectory.

The development of tailormade frameworks for organizations to abide by will allow for improved policies and practices, cultivated to elevate departmental experiences related to marginalized groups such as black women, purposed to implement effective procedures. This will prove beneficial in enabling a greater understanding of the experiences of marginalized groups and will bolster the development of policy and frameworks that consider the grievances of those most impacted by discrimination.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of Research

The primary purpose of this research study is to determine the myriad implications of the black woman's premature departure from corporate America with the objective of exploring outside interests surrounding entrepreneurial endeavors. This will be achieved by analyzing and interpreting the varied experiences as lived out by those whom have incurred discriminatory treatment as it relates to one's race and gender through varied departmental interactions.

Intersectionality, immensely impactful to the black woman's corporate tenure, has proven to be greatly influential in the trajectory of marginalized groups whom navigate the corporate ladder. It is also commented that intersectionality strongly advocates for multifaceted and systemic approaches, addressing myriad departmental inequities, having the potential to lead to reform concerning departmental policies and practices. Given the vast influence overlapping identities has on individual experiences, it is strongly

encouraged to address and redress intersectional discrimination to facilitate more inclusive workplace settings. Although there have been efforts to confront and mitigate instances of discrimination, as rendered by various departmental institutions, the lack of a focus on multiple identities perpetuates the compounded barriers for women of color, sustaining systemic blockades (Hwang, 2024).

Examining how the intersection of both race and gender effects the behaviors of more dominant groups toward underrepresented demographics is impactful given the subsequent effects on the overall corporate experience (Hwang, 2024). Neglecting to address the necessity of the intersectional experience has a high probability of leading to lesser departmental experiences and thoughts of self-employment.

The following goals are set to be achieved throughout this research study:

- 1) This study sets to explore the impact intersectionality has on the corporate experience, including the trajectory, of the black woman, as observed, and how this marginalized demographic navigates their way through departmental interactions due to the ‘double jeopardy’ incurred given one’s identifiers as being both black and female and to determine how dominant groups can allow for a more inclusive workplace setting.
- 2) This research is also purposed to assess the affect microaggressions and all other forms of discriminatory language have on black women in corporate environments, identifying racial and gender bias and stereotypical and inciteful rhetoric used daily while interfacing with departmental officials and investigate

solutions to alleviate the widespread usage of threatening language, allowing for the advancement of black women.

- 3) Through analysis this interpretative probe seeks to examine the benefits of allyship and mentorship programs as rendered in corporate environments, determining availability to varied demographics, ascertaining the necessity of such programs and advocating for the inclusion of the aforesaid, assisting in the corporate climb of marginalized groups.
- 4) This examination of lived experiences will additionally analyze the implications of black women exiting the corporate environment, identifying outcomes and remedial solutions concerning diversity in workplace settings, including gender and racial equity in addition to economic implications resulting from deviations in the labor pool.
- 5) This detailed inquiry will also evaluate methods and guidelines corporate America can utilize to provide for a more sustainable environment for black women, deterring early departmental departures, with the suggestion of workplace theories and frameworks to adapt and implement in conjunction with policy development to achieve advancement for marginalized demographics.

The results of this study will prove significant and valuable to practitioners and policymakers whom look toward the development of effective departmental policies and legislation that will support and guide departmental institutions and dominant groups in providing pathways of continuity concerning marginalized demographics.

1.4 Research Questions

Research questions to be addressed:

- 1) How does intersectionality impact corporate departure?
- 2) How do microaggressions affect departmental experiences?
- 3) How and why do allyship and mentorship prove impactful to the career trajectory of black women?
- 4) What are the implications of black women exiting corporate America?
- 5) How can corporate America go about deterring departures and retaining more black women?

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework incorporated into this research study was intersectionality theory in addition to critical race theory with the objective of defining and structuring the initiatives as outlined in the aforesaid research questions. These two frameworks encompass racialized and gendered experiences as they relate to singular and overlapping occurrences of discrimination, bias, policy/law, barriers, departmental culture, microaggressions, and underrepresentation within institutions, all components that supported and led to the emergence of the forthcoming themes of this research study.

To properly and appropriately support research related to racial and gender balance in addition to policy reformation in the context of organizational institutions surrounding practices and procedures, theoretical intersectionality will be implored, rendering depth and breadth to the lived experiences of black women whom have incurred mistreatment described as discriminatory, disparaging, and dismissive.

Critical race theory, additionally, will be incorporated and interwoven to examine and interpret how varied racial instances, as experienced by marginalized demographics, are impactful to the advancement of minority populations and how analyzing the legalities of these experiences can assist in the development and advancement of amended legislation. Critical race theory as a framework was generated by scholars of color in the legal field whom sought to alleviate the racial subjugation present within societal confines. This framework primarily emphasizes the great significance of viewing policy making in the appropriate context for the purpose of properly addressing the historical context of various

racialized instances (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). An in-depth look into policy making concerning marginalized groups is of assistance in constructing a framework by which one can build upon to properly determine and address called upon amendments necessary for increasingly balanced and equitable workplace environments. Given the systematic barriers currently present to include meritocrat structures and ‘black ceilings’ that disadvantage marginalized groups such as black women, critical race theorists posit that the adaptation and implementation of counter stories in the form of archival research, including documented testimony to facilitate the exposure of untold stories based on the challenges of interfacing with more dominant groups (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Incorporating the framing of race in tandem with systemic inequities, experienced by oppressed demographics, which emerge from legal, economic, and societal structures, the critical race theory framework provides an immeasurable tool concerning the understanding of the racial disparities that currently exist within departmental confines. A key principle of this framework is intersectionality, which studies the intersection of multiple identifiers, in this case race and gender, of individuals and how these factors contribute to individual experiences related to discrimination and marginalization (Kalemis, 2024). By structuring this research study with the theoretical critical race framework, the individualized experiences of black women can be thoroughly examined and interpreted with the objective of uncovering the legalities present within departmental institutions and how policy creation and reform may assist in remedying the subtle and overt behaviors that plague the marginalized.

Theoretical intersectionality was developed to provide insight into how and why racialized and gendered identities interact and how these impactful experiences shape the

perceptive lens concerning women of color in corporate spaces. Hwang (2024) details this framework as being purposed with the objective of analyzing complex workplace discrimination patterns to create and implement remedial interventions and insights, urging institutions as well as policymakers to develop solutions that dismantle complex structures of oppression. A deviation from the single-axis approach, this theory delves into and analyzes multiple identities, including race, gender, and class and how these identifiers guide varied experiences related to discrimination such as stereotypes and microaggressions in departmental settings (Ruggs et al., 2023). It is further commented by Harris & Davis (2023) that the lived experiences concerning varied individuals related to stereotypes and microaggressions, in addition to biased perceptions and unwritten societal standards of professionalism, are greatly influenced by one's intersectional identity, exacerbating discrimination, building barriers that culminate to mass departures of black women from the workplace.

The phenomenon of women departing their coveted corporate roles due to factors surrounding autonomy and flexibility in addition to discriminatory encounters, as incurred, attributable to intersectional identifiers has led to an increased overview and examination of marginalized groups in addition to retention strategies within corporate settings. The recurring theme of intersectionality surrounding the experiences of varied demographics is said to contribute to the onset of systemic stressful working conditions, creating barriers and barricades toward upward mobility. Black women in particular face compounded challenges related to their race and gender that have increasingly influenced their thoughts toward departure and entrepreneurship. Intersectionality thereby illustrates the context by which black women whom hold corporate roles and seek career transitions are influenced greatly by

their personal experiences within institutions related to one's intersecting identifying factors in addition to systemic inequalities in great need of policy reform.

Intersectionality, as a framework, as it relates to the aforesaid policy reform, has the potential to be informative in its principles, rendering the necessary structure to assist in the creation of amended workplace policies with the objective of alleviating systemic stressors that hinder marginalized demographics (Hussin et al., 2025). The address and redress of these layered challenges with intersectional approaches to policy and departmental reform are probable to contribute to the rebuilding of more inclusive and supportive workplace settings, highlighting the importance of customized interventions. Alternatively, in lieu of reformative workplace conditions concerning departmental practices and procedures, the lure of entrepreneurship can present pathways toward greater autonomy and flexibility, eliminating impending threats of demotion, degradation, and discrimination.

2.2 Entrepreneurship

Literature surrounding entrepreneurship, as it concerns black women, contends that there has been a measurable dwindling of this demographic in workplace settings due to increases in discriminatory behavior in addition to a desire for personal autonomy. Autonomy is often described as unattainable for black women in the workplace due to stringent working environments that stifle and hinder self-expression and progression. These stringent environments, according to "Lean In" (2023), are said to encompass high stress settings with increased scrutiny, leading to burnout, which is said to be a result of a lack of flexibility and work-life balance, elements that are key to departmental success, says the research. Also, Hing et al. (2023) adds that burnout, as experienced by black

women, contributes to lower job engagement in addition to increases in workplace conflict, leading to earlier than expected departures as it concerns this demographic.

This accelerated loss in human capital, which encompasses the knowledge, skills, and experience as acquired by black women concerning corporate institutions, says Quinto et al. (2025), is said to be a valuable asset concerning the development and initiation of a successful business, allowing for increased confidence to venture into self-employment. An accumulation of human capital, as commented by authors, might additionally be a catalyst for initial dissatisfaction with one's corporate role with desires for increased flexibility and autonomy.

This reality is what draws this demographic toward entrepreneurship with promises of equitability and access, alleviating the historical barriers that block advancement, allowing black women the ability to respond, react, and navigate their individual workplace terms, providing a sense of ownership (Atkins, 2023). This increased desire for flexibility has led to what has been referred to as 'the great resignation', a term describing the rapid rate of workplace departures in the United States, reaching highs unforeseen since the commencement of the U.S. Bureau of Labor polling of openings and turnover rates, which began in the year of 2000 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). This aforesaid phenomenon is said to have resulted in the creation of start-up ventures amongst black women (Atkins, 2023).

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor (2025) has reported sharp increases in black women whom have exited the workforce in 2025. Details divulge that in August 2024 approximately 22.045 million black women were participants in the workforce a

figure that makes up 62.9% of this demographic. Reporting details as of July 2025 display a participation rate of 61.6%, a significant decrease over less than a year's time. The data is demonstrable of patterns concerning lesser participation is speculated to be attributable to outside commitments such as caregiving of health-related concerns in addition to an overall disinterest altogether, contributing to the rapid exit of this demographic. This gradual exit can be quite impactful to economic growth in addition to equitability given the marginalization that is already present within this group.

This data from the department of labor suggests that black women, as of late, are experiencing challenges within workplace settings having incurred the aforesaid decreases in participation and changes in the rate of employment. This is due in part to changes in economic conditions as well as governmental policy and preference, changes that can have implications concerning interest in entrepreneurship. This increase in entrepreneurship, although a boost to the economy, details a mounting problem within corporate settings that is leaving disparaged groups seeking alternatives to the lack of equitability found in certain workplace environments.

This migration from corporate America into self-employment has been described as transitional entrepreneurship, a phenomenon by which marginalized demographics seek external opportunities, seeking to achieve positional advancement not otherwise available in one's current role (Raimi et al., 2023). Transitional entrepreneurship also manifests due to social (racial and gender differences) and institutional adversities (challenges present due to inconsistent policies and discriminatory practices) as often experienced by ethnic minorities and women.

Raimi et al. (2023) further comments that black women whom make the transition to self-employment often encounter additional layers of adversities as compared to their counterparts, not unlike corporate settings, with racial discrimination and systemic barriers as ever-present hindrances to a seamless trajectory. As contended by ‘Lean In’ (2023), black women continue to see their gender and race as barriers to advancement in corporate America, leading to thoughts of entrepreneurship, which is viewed as an avenue that allows for greater flexibility, autonomy, and expression.

This phenomenon is seen as a necessity due to lesser experiences. as endured by black women, throughout one’s corporate tenure related to inequity. Inequity has amounted to great challenges within workplace settings due in part to long-held beliefs concerning marginalized groups such as black women, leading to calls for a restructuring of the systemic meritocracy present within departmental institutions (Klanot, 2024). This lack of equity, if not reformed, has the potential to lead to mass exiting of the workforce culminating in entrepreneurship of opportunity or necessity. Giannella et al. (2024) contend that entrepreneurship of opportunity is conceptually contrasted with that of entrepreneurship of necessity with key differentials being that the former involves one being forced to start a business as an alternative to enduring adverse instances in the workplace related to interest or opportunity, where the latter details the launching of a startup due to discrimination or inequity.

Also concerning entrepreneurship of opportunity, societal norms tend to underscore the contributions of women whom work within corporate settings, leading to a lack of recognition and support for those with forward-thinking ideas resulting in

external searches for entrepreneurial endeavors (Lingappa & Rodrigues, 2023).

Stereotypes and biased behavior, Lingappa & Rodrigues (2023) add, are also widely mentioned as challenges, limiting or lessening participation in institutions in addition to access to opportunities, respectively, serving as both barriers and motivators. Authors additionally mention policy reform as a remedial solution to encourage change and advancement, enabling women a greater potential to succeed.

Also, concerning entrepreneurial necessity, Lingappa & Rodrigues (2023) posit that dissatisfaction surrounding departmental climate, gender bias, and other discriminatory behaviors, including stigmatization and stereotyping, are highly viewed as motivating factors for women when considering the launching of individual businesses. The inequality present in institutional settings, directed towards women, has been significant concerning the furtherance of black women as it hinders trajectory, leading to lesser experiences.

Additionally, Hussin et al. (2025) have asserted that the phenomenon of women leaving corporate positions to begin new businesses is being spotlighted as there is an increased desire for autonomy and flexibility in addition to a dire need to avoid workplace stressors, significant contributors to this shift in preferences, of assistance in identifying the black woman's departure from corporate America and subsequent interest in entrepreneurship making this phenomenon an occurrence of great interest, worth examining with the purpose of determining remedial solutions concerning retention.

2.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a theory that describes how multiple factors, including race and gender, provide a critical framework, highlighting how individuals whom belong to marginalized groups endure, confront, and remedy discriminatory behavior not previously understood through frameworks examining a single axis in which the sole focus is either race or gender, spotlighting the individualized experiences of black women as compared to their counterparts.

The corporate sector provides an imperative setting to examine intersectional discrimination given the implications of myriad racial and gendered backgrounds it encompasses (Hwang, 2024). As one's intersectional identity plays an insurmountable role in corporate experiences, black women have incurred the brunt of discriminatory attacks given their double minority status, often referred to as 'double jeopardy', as commented by Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), wherein one incurs the burden of having to cope with blended characteristics of both race and gender, leading to blockades concerning upward mobility. Also noteworthy is the concept of 'triple jeopardy', a notion that has come about due to added characteristics of discrimination to include but not limited to class and sexuality.

Thelma & Ngulube (2024) add that this framework is said to be insurmountable in shaping the experiences of women in leadership with intersecting demographics, significantly influential in the furtherance or hindrance of black women in corporate America. Research surrounding intersectionality contends that the compounding effects of both gender and race can have grave implications concerning the progression of black women seeking an upward trajectory throughout corporate America.

Branch & Kasztelnik (2023) agree that the theory of intersectionality, as it concerns race and gender, centralizes inequalities as faced by marginalized demographics, most notably black women, identifying and also addressing the relationship between two institutions and how they intersect and influence one another, which can be of assistance in identifying strategical solutions to workplace problems.

Literature also suggests that the racial and gender biases, as experienced by black women, are said to be impactful in terms of double discrimination incurred amounting to greater than the sum of its parts ('Lean In: State of Black Women,' 2020). Personal observation details that these instances are monumental in shaping the experiences of marginalized groups, culminating in lesser outcomes than counterparts from more dominant groups.

Lesser outcomes include that of intersectional invisibility, a term used to describe the reinforcement of one's marginalized status due to one's oppressive identity, contributing to difficulties in visibility in organizational settings, hindering progression (Bhattacharyya et al., 2024). Invisibility, as it concerns black women, is defined by the treatment incurred due to one's perceived lower status, often resulting in dismissive behavior purposed with the objective of devaluing the marginalized.

The intersectional invisibility model, according to Hing et al. (2023), details that those with multiple marginalized identities, such as black women, will be categorized and thereby stereotyped based upon how prototypical these marginalized individuals are viewed, which can result in favorable or unfavorable and oppressive outcomes. Systemic oppression, as posited by Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), is effectual to black women when

it comes to equal access and participation in corporate environments, which contributes to and results in their invisibility within institutions due to the victimization incurred surrounding systemic racism and sexism.

Visibility concerning black women is a growing problem in workplace settings, contributing to this demographic being overlooked and a subsequent lack of progress. Hing et al. (2023) also posit that additional hindrances concerning intersectional identities include stereotypical commentary in addition to sexual harassment of marginalized groups, leading to changes in power dynamics that can delay or block upward mobility. Sexist treatment, says Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), toward this demographic further contributes to a sense of hypervisibility wherein their individual person is put forth on display as it concerns the black woman's body, often labeled and racially stereotyped due to societal and social structures that exist within departmental institutions, allowing for disparaging behaviors and treatments that create obstacles concerning a corporate climb, perpetuating systemic oppression.

According to "Lean In" 2024, the aforesaid hypervisibility experienced by black women is largely attributable to this demographic encompassing an "only" identity wherein this protected group routinely finds oneself as the only departmental member of a particular race or gender with key figures displaying that 1 in 5 are "only's" for their gender while 2 in 5 are "only's" for one's racial group, amounting to increased encounters concerning microaggressions, elevating scrutiny within workplace settings. Also related is the "double-only" experience when one encompasses two identifying characteristics from protected minority groups, making for a cumulative impactful

experience concerning discriminatory behavior and treatment within departmental settings dependent upon a particular institution's policies and practices.

Concerning law and policy, it is posited that when two identities are present, as it relates to intersectionality and black women, legislation is only designed to address one identity or the other, neglecting to consider how to remedy the compounding needs of both traits (Ferguson & King, 2023). Past legislation exemplified by affirmative action (AA) and employment equity (EE) related policies were created to address workplace conduct with a single-axis approach. As the needs of multiple-axis demographics persist in addition to a diminishing of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies within institutions, calls to amend and improve the corporate environment through tailored updates have gradually increased, culminating with protests and demands for enhanced gender and racial equity-related policies for vulnerable and protected groups.

Ruggs et al. (2023) further comments that moving away from a single-axis approach will assist in the moving forth of a more in-depth analysis of multiple identities, which can assist in the informing of one's lived experiences, providing a commencement by which solutions may be formed, catering to the needs of diverse groups and the creation of the aforesaid amended policies.

Hwang et al. (2024) adds that anti-discrimination laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were purposed to address the ongoing degradation of minority populations within workplace settings but neglected to fully account for the compounded challenges present for black women, failing to adopt a multi-axis approach in policy reform. This failure to properly remedy blockades as present for the aforesaid

demographic contributes to limited opportunities concerning trajectories toward senior leadership positions, decreasing the potential for full representation of women of color in corporate settings. This is a significant cause for concern as marginalized groups require an additional barrier of protection more so than their lesser disparaged counterparts to achieve successful outcomes.

Through the lens of intersectionality and phenomenology, as researched by Davis and Harris (2023), one can interpret and examine the lived experiences impacting the daily lives of black women in workplace environments and how they intertwine to influence career outcomes and trajectory, which can be of assistance in detailing remedial solutions.

2.4 Microaggressions

Literature surrounding the impact of microaggressions on marginalized demographics confirms the negative effects this behavior has on those on the receiving end, contributing to probable toxic and hostile work environments, intensifying mistrust and reducing motivation (Salari et al., 2024 & Quinto et al., 2025). Beagan et al. (2024) assert that overt instances of hostility, perpetuated through everyday use of microaggressions, stigmatize one's identity. Minorities are said to experience higher turnover rates than their counterparts due to microaggressions in tandem with the stress of an immensely demanding workload (Miller et al., 2024). Kalemis (2024) details these instances are further exacerbated by the compounding and overlapping effects of the multiple marginalized identities held by black women. Research shows that microaggressions are most often experienced by black women as compared to their white

counterparts, a significant burden and blockade to advancement (Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023).

As commented by ‘Lean In: State of Black Women’ (2020), microaggressions are described as subtle slights be it comments or actions rendered to demean, degrade, or dismiss a particular person or group based upon one’s gender, race, or any other identifier, a common experience for black women whose marginalized identity often results in verbal discriminatory conduct that may hinder career trajectory, making this demographic three times as likely to consider exiting one’s position.

There are said to be four types of microaggressions, as defined by Newman et al. (2024), that include micro assaults, which are racialized derogations that encompass verbal and nonverbal attacks and other discriminatory behaviors as rendered. Microinsults involve verbal remarks of an insensitive nature related to one’s racial identity, whereas microinvalidations are defined as subtle communications that invalidate or rescind verbiage of a particular individual from a marginalized group. Additionally, environmental microaggressions are categorized as slights that manifest from a systematic level, emerging from varied levels of an organization, resulting in lesser experiences than one’s demarginalized counterparts. All four subcategories of microaggressions are subtle in their nature and include behaviors such as selective incivility, insensitivity, and racialized rhetoric purposed to demean the intended receiver.

Authors also comment on the altered behavior of those whom endure microaggressions in the workplace with 78% of women self-shielding, leading to lesser self-expression and a lower probability of proposing new ideas, resulting in negative

outcomes. ('Lean In,' 2023 & 2024). Newman et al. (2025) add that these negative outcomes are said to include lowered productivity and lessened departmental commitment.

These lowered workplace outcomes are said to make it increasingly difficult to benefit from the meritocratic structure present within institutions due to lesser chances to showcase one's skillsets, hindering advancement (Klanot, 2024). Meritocracy within organizations is increasingly a source of debate given that it goes against the principles and practices of affirmative action and employment equity. Merit is viewed as a core value within organizations, the foundation by which their practices originate.

Beagan et al. (2024) commented that affirmative action is depicted as a threat to equity within workplace environments, as commented by dominant groups. Marginalized demographics whom are on the receiving end of microaggressions, including discriminatory and debased commentary, view merit programs as potential blockades to one's advancement given the obstacles less dominant groups such as black women encounter due to treatment that is deemed a hindrance, building barricades to forwardness. These oppressive conditions, as experienced by black women, are significant contributors to hostile working environments wherein microaggressions are a constant and ever-present occurrence.

It is also added, says Salari et al. (2023), that implicit bias tends to underly these behavioral patterns, which is indicative that the aggressors, as experienced, are insensible to the harm they inflict. These harmful behaviors, as recalled by marginalized groups, can be disproportionately effectual to those victimized. Despite sometimes being

unintentional, these behaviors are considered offensive and also derogatory by ethnic minorities, failing to adhere to standards of acceptability concerning societal conduct, breaking ethical normality (Newman et al. 2024).

It is debatable whether individuals whom perpetrate these types of behaviors are misunderstood in their approach concerning their overall intentions, possibly being misconstrued. Be that as it may, the outcome of these slights is effectual, detrimental no matter what the intended goal. These behaviors, adds Salari et al. (2023), are not only impactful to those on the receiving end but also the institution, often leading to added stressors to the departmental environment with increased disorganization in addition to lessened departmental productivity and performance, resulting in financial leakages.

Microaggressions, including stereotypes and biased sentiments, as added by Harris & Davis (2023), and additional forms of discrimination also create barriers that decrease workplace satisfaction, leading to potential economic losses given the widespread occurrence of this type of discriminatory behavior, resulting in early exits of this demographic from the workplace. These early departures, attributable to the interpersonal effect that daily verbal and non-verbal insults have on the receiver, are a product of hostile work environments and immensely destructive to marginalized groups whose withdrawals can adversely impact one's career trajectory. Concerning interpersonal interactions and racial discrimination, this behavior is said to emerge from the institutional level with the onset and reoccurrence of policies, regulations, and practices that are viewed as beneficial to more dominant groups, leading to calls of policy reform to remedy adverse treatment of marginalized populations (Salari et al., 2023).

Suggested remedial solutions, as explained by Gutterman (2023), to address the persistence of microaggressions within workplace settings include creating and building upon an increasingly inclusive organizational environment, encouraging openness, confronting behaviors that go against established norms, breeding a respectful and welcoming workplace setting. Other potential resolutions, as recommended by McKinsey & Company, include increasing the capacity of managers with the objective of identifying and confronting the occurrence of microaggressions, creating no-tolerance departmental policies and practices to alleviate workplace stressors, eliminating the prevalence of discriminatory conduct as experienced by black women.

These varied facets of racial and gender discrimination, if not alleviated or eliminated, are said to be impactful to black women's multiplicative identities. There is consensus amongst literature, as commented by Atkins (2023), finding that black women in racialized and gendered organizations are constrained concerning their ability to respond to discriminatory commentary without the intervention of departmental policy reform, turning to entrepreneurship to allow for greater autonomy and self-expression in the workplace.

2.5 Allyship and Mentorship

Authors define an ally as an individual whom takes on the role of supporting another group in which they do not belong for the purpose of promoting acceptance or inclusion of this particular group of individuals. Allyship, says Kossek et al. (2024), is said to occur when individuals champion for a protected demographic group whom may or may not be viewed as disempowered or marginalized concerning one's identity in an effort to promote a sense of

solidarity not otherwise present devoid of the intervention of the aforesaid more dominant group.

Concerning allyship within institutions, Kossek et al. (2024) contend that the presence of this form of workplace association is imperative, critical to bringing about a more inclusive workplace environment wherein the principles and policies related to diversity, equity, and inclusion are highlighted and implemented effectively. Literature concerning the presence of allyship and mentorship programs within organizations has uncovered significant reductions in discrimination and inequality in addition to improvements in intergroup dynamics (Kossek et al., 2024).

The concept of allyship is described as advantageous concerning the advancement of departmental change, bridging the gap between more dominant groups and less dominant, marginalized demographics. Allyship is described as a phenomenon by which one can utilize to incorporate the participation of institutional stakeholders for the purpose of advocating for increased departmental equitability, advancing women of color whom rely upon diversity-related policies for the protection of their marginalized status.

Mentorship, on the other hand, is defined as cultivating the advancement and furtherance concerning the career pathway of an individual for the purpose of honing one's skillset in an effort to groom the aforesaid for upward advancement, enabling an eventual trajectory toward more senior roles within an organization.

Authors also contend that women stand to benefit the most from mentorship programs yet have increased difficulty concerning access to these programs of necessity ('Lean In,' 2024). Sanni (2025) adds that the underrepresentation of women in leadership

roles is due to this lack of access, delaying professional growth. These types of programs enable black women to enter and remain in the promotion pipeline, citing the lack of an influential mentor as a barrier toward upward mobility ('Lean In: State of Black Women,' 2020). These barriers, as aforesaid, are increasingly alleviated with the presence of mentorship-related programs, addressing the current blockades that exist for women of color.

Despite the research that proves the effectiveness of these particular programs, authors describe a recent palpable decline in career development services that are geared toward women. Additionally, outcome tracking has lessened as has overall recruiting and internship program availability previously allocated for women. The lack of outcome tracking, in terms of metrics, is said to be a step backwards in the prioritization of the advancement of black women. Also mentioned by authors was the great importance of sharing the results of metrics-related reporting outcomes, allowing employees and all other stakeholders the visibility necessary to view and ascertain the performance results of a particular institution concerning diversity goals, ensuring accountability while simultaneously advancing marginalized groups such as black women.

Authors add that this is an action that has been moderate in terms of implementation being only utilized in less than half of organizations. The significance, as comments 'Lean In: State of Black Women' (2020) of setting clear goals and progress tracking concerning the hiring and promotional outcomes of women of color is tantamount in ensuring and assuring equal opportunities for advancement. There is also said to be a decrease in budgetary dollars concerning the investment of programs

designed for women of color, which is said to be quite impactful due to the state of this marginalized demographic whom benefit greatly from the advent of these resources.

In tandem, allyship and mentorship, defined as positive relationships between marginalized groups and their more dominant counterparts to assist in knowledge building and career trajectory, are described as critical to advancement within departmental institutions, supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, deterring oppressive practices and policies from hindering career growth (Bhattacharyya et al., 2024).

Reports indicate that both mentorship and allyship are viewed as highly influential as well as beneficial in the trajectory of a woman's career ('Lean In,' 2024). Details also report declines in career developmental programs purposed toward cultivating the careers of women of color whom would benefit the most from the receipt of this level of guidance, leaving this marginalized group with a lessened access to these resources of necessity, hindering one's corporate climb.

Research goes on to add the effectiveness of allyship concerning black women, attributable to their strong commitment to the dismantling of systems of oppression due in part to this marginalized groups' exemplification of organization. This detail is significant due to the black woman's ability to navigate the identity of both beneficiaries of allyship programs in addition to being an effective ally, playing the part of a more dominant departmental member. Bhattacharyya et al. (2024) suggests this is due in part to the intersectional identity of the black woman, encompassing a diverse background with the ability and valor to challenge departmental hierarchies.

Managerial support was also mentioned as playing a key role, providing tangible support and upliftment, increasing the possibility and probability of promotion and also retention, which is seen as an imperative as women increasingly exit the workforce. Additional detail reports the importance of allyship programs within institutions, explaining the imperativeness of building these relationships, which are said to accelerate one's progression, creating more equitable opportunities for workplace advancement.

Also, concerning equitable opportunities, 'Lean In' (2024) also confirms that women may receive greater benefits from working on-site, receiving more of the mentorship resources necessary to succeed and achieve in one's role, making an argument for on-site working environments as opposed to newly available flexible alternatives, allowing for a higher probability of advancement. For those whom choose a career pathway that leads to increased off-site working conditions as aforesaid, this can have greater implications concerning a possible probe into entrepreneurship given the autonomy and flexibility available through self-employment, privileges and perks increasingly called upon by diverse groups whom neglect to receive the proper support necessary for advancement and achievement within corporate spaces.

2.6 Systemic Barriers

One primary barrier encountered throughout the black woman's corporate tenure, says the literature, includes the 'broken rung', a term used to describe an obstacle preventing women from ascending into management and c-suite positions. Branch & Kasztelnik (2023) posit that the 'broken rung' is a significant barrier faced by this marginalized group, making an upward trajectory difficult, delaying promotion. The

“broken rung” is described as a missing step in the “corporate ladder”, preventing women whom work in corporate positions from being promoted toward senior management or c-suite positions. Authors comment on the difficulty of women advancing to managerial roles due to this systemic barrier.

A review of literature also found, says Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), that black women implemented perseverance strategies due in part to an underrepresentation of their identity concerning both race and gender. Black women encompass additional barriers that prevent or block ascension into coveted roles, more so than their non marginalized counterparts due to a historical presence of discriminatory and oppressive treatment toward this demographic.

Systemic oppression, a structural internalized form of racism, posits Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), is described as an underlying presence within the lives of black women, encompassing identifying factors of being both black as well as a woman this demographic has incurred a historical systemic devaluation, attributable to the consequences of racism, leading to structural disadvantages for black women that hinder progress toward goal attainment. Additional detail concerning systemic oppression finds that black women are often seen through a stereotypical lens, which has resulted in an unequal access to varied opportunities, lessening participation of this demographic concerning the workforce. Certain forms of systemic oppression have manifested in the form of a sexist oppression concerning workplace gender roles, a lack of promotion within institutions, in addition to systemic invisibility and problematic visibility wherein one’s presence within departmental settings leads to degradation or disregard,

respectively, often resulting in hostile conditions regretful to offenders of these illegalities.

Authors go on to posit that accountability in terms of the acknowledgement of the presence of systemic oppression is lacking, leading to lessened progress concerning the development of strategical directives purposed to eliminate and eradicate discriminatory actions. Strategical directives are an imperative when confronted with certain oppressive outcomes that are a result of the intersectional identity of black women, often disrespected, misunderstood, and silenced to the detriment of perpetrators.

Authors also suggest that implicit bias, as experienced by this demographic, has grown to be a pervasive phenomenon, significantly impactful to the furtherance of black women, contributing to a lack of inclusivity amongst organizations, a significant barrier to advancement (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024). Deshpande et al. (2023) also comment that such implicit bias related to gender is hindering institutions from achieving equitable and supportive work environments to assist in the reaching of goals, preventing access to opportunities, resulting in the ‘glass ceiling’ effect, limiting progression. The “glass ceiling”, a term popularized to describe the invisible barrier often encountered by women as they seek advancement in corporate spaces, attempting to climb the hierarchy toward senior roles, continues to persist and is increasingly apparent for black women whom experience a “double jeopardy” due to their intersectional identities, being both black and female (Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023).

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, as described by Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), details three levels of barriers encountered by minorities and women, blocking

advancement, including societal barriers, internal structural barriers, in addition to governmental barriers, all of which can be eradicated with a greater understanding and analysis of the overt and subtle challenges as faced by black women, enabling a strategical approach toward forwardness. This approach is immensely necessary to assist in the dismantling of oppression structures that hinder the advancement of marginalized groups. Remedial solutions detail increasing the accuracy of reporting and overall information sharing concerning marginalized identities in an effort to overcome departmental obstacles.

Other barriers include both the ‘concrete ceiling’ as well as the ‘black ceiling’ effect, as previously referenced, explaining blockades to senior positions created to disallow the inclusion of marginalized demographics from advancing. The aforesaid barriers as it concerns black women are additional and significant challenges that have a greater difficulty of overcoming more so than the “glass ceiling”, as commented by authors. Literature also contends that the presence of a “glass ceiling” or “black ceiling” is doubly impactful to compensation, increasing pay inequities, contributing to thoughts of self-employment, accelerating departures (‘Institute for Women’s Policy,’ 2025).

2.7 Compensation

A review of literature concerning compensation of black women in corporate America divulges that a significant pay gap exists amongst this marginalized group, contributing to disparities in compensation that can culminate to approximately a million dollars in losses over one’s lifetime, earning just 64 cents on the dollar as compared to their white male counterparts whom are said to put in a fraction of the effort to achieve

this feat ('Institute for Women's Policy Research,' 2023 & Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023). These pay disparities, says Hwang (2024), are said to exist despite an equivalency in education and experience.

Also, concerning pay disparities, Thelma & Ngulube (2024) comment that inequality in compensation remains a significant barrier that hinders the advancement and trajectory of women whom aspire toward leadership positions. The pay inequities currently present concerning women and minorities reflect systemic biases and discriminatory practices that persist, undervaluing the contributions of marginalized groups, continually perpetuating gender and racial stereotypes. Literature also purports that the wage gap present is impactful to the financial security of women, lessening opportunities, limited their ability to accumulate wealth and invest in one's future. It is also divulged that pay inequities contribute to a broader cycle of gender inequality, leading to a lack of promotional opportunities, resulting in an underrepresentation concerning executive and boardroom roles (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024).

For women whom reach the executive level research shows that compensation for these roles is generally lower and the tenure is shorter, reducing one's potential to accumulate earnings (Hing et al., 2023). Data also contends, according to Harris & Davis (2023), that one's intersectional identity has a tremendous impact on compensation received due to bias and stereotypes endured, leading to lowered confidence in the performance ability of black women. The aforesaid intersectional wage gaps that persist are immensely significant in highlighting the compounding effects of both gender and

racial discrimination within corporate settings, critically impacting all aspects of the workplace experience (Hwang, 2024).

It is further posited that addressing the systemic pay inequities present for marginalized groups necessitates a multifaceted approach involving the organization in addition to governmental intervention for the purpose of policy reform. Advocacy of policy reform, as commented by Thelma & Ngulube (2024), as it relates to pay transparency and accountability has the potential and probability to boost and bolster women toward the negotiation of increasingly balanced compensation, challenging the discriminatory practices as endured by marginalized demographics. Amendments to policy, as aforesaid, are a necessity to marginalized groups such as black women whom have been impacted by recent changes to diversity, equity, and inclusion legislation.

Authors also agree that equal pay for equal work is a concept not yet realized, a distant objective to be enacted legislatively, far off from execution and implementation in corporate environments (Gutterman, 2023). Atkins (2023) asserts that black women most often claim dissatisfaction with their personal compensation and note this reality as a significant contributor to their departure, strategically planning to exit one's current position against the financial constraints faced from unequal pay, with a probable eye on entrepreneurship.

2.8 DEI Policies & Procedures

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies have been instrumental in advancing racial and gender equity within institutions of practice, making great strides, increasing the representation of women and minorities. Despite the many successes achieved, addressing

the lingering effects of systemic racism, says authors, has amounted to challenges given the covert discrimination present within legislative documentation (‘Center for New Economy & Society,’ 2023). As workplace demographics concerning racialized individuals and women saw greater numbers, organizational awareness of diversity-related causes was seen as increasingly pertinent. As of late, there has been a high level of disagreement concerning the directives related to DEI workplace initiatives, policies, and practices.

A literature review surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, as it pertains to departmental practices, has uncovered grave implications for currently installed diversity programs due to widespread governmental plans, says Executive Order 14151 (2025), to dismantle long-held protections for marginalized groups, reversing previously adopted procedures as it concerns equitability in the workplace. This is a reversal of Executive Order 13985 ‘Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government’ wherein federal agencies and entities were required to submit action plans concerning equitability that detail the processes by which DEI was initiated and implemented within organizational constructs.

The new order, Executive Order 14151 (2025), calls for the termination of all DEI offices and positions to the maximum extent of the law in addition to equity action plans, initiatives, programs, grants, contracts, and also DEI performance requirements for all relevant workers in an effort to dismantle policy unaligned with current leadership plans.

Minkin (2023) of Pew Research posits that DEI in workplace settings is positively viewed by most workers (~60%), citing the promotion and implementation of fair and equitable practices as impactful and highly influential as it relates to the overall opinion

of a departmental institution. Authors contend that black women are incurring the professional brunt of the eradication of DEI protective policies having experienced approximately 300,000 positions lost in the first six months of 2025 (Helfand-Rogers, 2025).

This according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2025) whom add that the severity of the recent federal workforce cuts, including the Department of Education, have gravely impacted the unemployment numbers of black women, doubling the national average at 7.5%. The loss of DEI protections that have led to these losses in both the private and public sectors has resulted in a lessened participation of black women in the economy in addition to a decrease in leadership positions available to marginalized groups, impacting fortune 500 leadership roles.

It is suggested, and Atkins (2023) concurs, that policies addressing anti-discriminatory action and inequities that are leading to this mass exodus of black women be implemented for the purpose of deterring and mitigating these seismic departures. It is said that previous diversity policies served as symbolic gestures, neglecting to amount to any modification concerning the racial distribution of a particular departmental structure, concluding that the adoption of such policies, says Atkins (2023), amount to mere attempts at achieving legitimacy for the purpose of legal alignment, lacking the formal enforcement necessary to implement amended policy.

The resulting impact of these numbers, says Gutterman (2023), has increased the call for remedial policies and procedures to be enacted that expand the power and voice of marginalized demographics such as black women for the purpose of achieving

increased equitable outcomes. It was additionally commented that to achieve the aforesaid outcomes, the implementation of DEI initiatives requires a commitment to leadership principles in addition to inclusive practices while simultaneously holding the institution accountable for its actions, ensuring equal opportunities are made available for marginalized demographics, reducing inequalities thereby eliminating discriminatory laws and policies.

Measurement of the progress, says Gutterman (2023), of DEI initiatives by way of a metrics system, was also recommended for the purpose of guiding and supporting the reporting process with the adaptation of quantitative and qualitative measuring tools that assist in the assessment of an organization's progress concerning meaningful amendments to departmental procedures. DEI metrics are a sought after mechanism for the achievement of alignment with departmental goals and objectives with the inclusion of workforce demographics, says Gutterman (2023), for diversity in hiring practices, equity in representation concerning race and gender, retention strategies, advancement opportunities, in addition to employment engagement and overall job satisfaction, enabling the assessment of the current state of an institution, analyzing and tracking departmental progress, addressing and deterring potential thoughts of early workplace exits through remedial measures.

Additionally, Adkins (2023) adds, and the literature confirms, that neglecting to address this growing crisis has the potential to amount to significant losses in talent whom are more probable to look externally for alleviation, autonomy, and equitability with an eye toward entrepreneurial endeavors, breaking away from racialized and

gendered organizations to join one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial groups in the US.

2.9 Literature Review Summary

In summary, there are various components that contribute to black women's adverse experiences in workplace environments, leading to lesser outcomes than their counterparts due to discriminatory policies and treatment, culminating to stagnation and possible resignation with thoughts toward entrepreneurial endeavors.

By incorporating and structuring this research study with the theoretical framework of intersectionality in addition to critical race theory, the lived experiences of black women can be interpreted and further analyzed with the purpose of creating remedial solutions that can assist in the prevention of early workplace departures in addition to lessening the impact and occurrence of discriminatory behavior towards marginalized groups. By interweaving and examining various facets of intersectional experiences in workplace environments, including entrepreneurship, microaggressions, allyship/mentorship, systemic barriers, compensation, DEI policy and procedures, one can create and build upon programs geared toward the advancement of marginalized groups while simultaneously alleviating disparities as experienced by diverse groups.

The framework of intersectionality is said to be immensely impactful in capturing and examining the multifaceted double discrimination that transpires when both race and gender are considered given this theories ability to dissect and divulge the varied experiences black women undergo in racialized and gendered institutions. Analyzing the

subtle and overt behaviors and characteristics, namely being both black and a woman, can give excellent insight concerning departmental directives and policy reform.

In tandem with critical race theory, the legalities of discriminatory treatment against marginalized demographics can be examined and put to use to further the progress of black women in corporate America whom seek to advance themselves, navigating the politics and legalities of departmental dynamics, enabling institutional leadership in addition to all stakeholders a greater understanding concerning the retainment and promotion of black women.

Key Takeaways

Entrepreneurship amongst black women has seen significant growth over the last decade as governmental institutions make efforts to dismantle DEI policies, leaving once protected groups vulnerable and searching outwardly for equitability. Intersectionality plays a critical role in the lived experiences of black women working in corporate America given the impact both race and gender can have on individual outcomes, contributing to a ‘double jeopardy’.

Allyship and mentorship programs remain inaccessible to certain demographics, hindering one’s ability to acquire skills and training needed for advancement. Microaggressions and systemic barriers as endured in workplace settings are viewed as significant blockades concerning the corporate climb of black women, greatly impacting performance in addition to compensation. Remedial solutions to deter departures and retain talent to bolster diversity and innovative practices, driving forth departmental

institutions, are imperative to the continuance of marginalized demographics in workplace settings.

Concerning the aforesaid, potential impact and outcomes related to research may include the weaving and interconnectedness of certain variables related to intersectionality, microaggressions, allyship, mentorship, systemic barriers, compensation, DEI initiatives and how each component plays a separate but significant role in one's overall experience until the point of exit and separation from one's workplace and move toward entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Operationalization of Theoretical Construct

The theoretical framework interwoven into this research study was interpretative archival research (IAR), purposed to properly examine and interpret the lived experiences of black women through a gendered and racialized lens. This interpretive archival research study did not incorporate a dependent nor an independent variable as it was an exploratory, qualitative research study of a phenomenon, leveraging existing data to uncover patterns and relationships in data sets.

The methodology and objective of IAR was not conducive to the variable-based framework of quantitative research, replacing the aforesaid with rich, descriptive, and interpretive analysis of lived experiences operationalized through the implementation of an inductive approach, which utilized large, preexisting data samples for a contextual understanding, exploring the phenomenon of interest, whilst evoking the participants' perspective (Das et al., 2018).

Often used in knowledge management and business history studies, this methodology incorporated the utilization of triangulation to produce rich and substantive granularity, contributing to the robustness and contextuality of research studies concerning businesses and institutions. Viewed as a viable and sophisticated tool for research purposes, this particular methodology is described as effectual in singular and mixed method studies and well-suited for research questions. Not easily manipulated,

Das et al. (2018) contend archival research data is highly effectual in the replication of research conclusions thereby enhancing generalizability.

In addition to its longitudinal nature, which has increasingly been incorporated into organizational studies, the archival database search process was utilized to add depth to the aforesaid research endeavors by way of generating new data and enabling the verification of existing data from other sources, which is significant due to the necessity of validity concerning data reporting source materials, contributing to its credibility. Das et al. (2018) also adds the importance of evolving and changing data patterns and the building upon of additional theoretical models to frame research studies that incorporate this method.

In terms of theoretical orientation, interpretive archival data research is fundamentally constructed to draw upon phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Phenomenology, as described by Noon & Hallam (2018), concerns the study of human experience and overall conscious perception for the purpose of uncovering the meanings of lived experiences, presenting an interpretive account of past occurrences.

Concerning interpretive approaches, hermeneutics, the practice or art of interpretation involved the analysis and examination of particular events and the process of understanding and ascertaining the meaning behind the aforesaid occurrences. It is commented by authors that final interpretations depend upon one's capacity to articulate an experience in conjunction with the researcher's ability to analyze complex data sets. Additionally, adds Noon & Hallam (2018), the practice of idiography was incorporated into the theoretical construct for the purpose of analyzing subjective phenomena with in-

depth examinations showing a concern for the individuality of the dataset, allowing for an increased understanding of data relayed concerning thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors of individualized experiences, leading to constructive insights.

Producing actionable insights, this methodology provided an in-depth, nuanced understanding of lived experiences, detailing subjective instances, which highlighted perceptions and vantage points concerning the responses of participants, as asserted by Noon & Hallam (2018), informing policy change, practical interventions as well as recommendations, assisting in the identification of areas where practices may be improved and implemented, attempting to meet the needs of myriad organizations with the suggestion of tailored strategical approaches and directives.

The data from this research study can be purposed with the objective of assisting in the creation of new departmental policy and procedures that better consider the individual lived experiences of marginalized demographics within organizations, ensuring elevated outcomes concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The collection and analysis of secondary data sets, including but not limited to scholarly articles, organizational archival reports, historical accounts, and prior research studies in addition to subsequent policy writing have great potential to deter and significantly alleviate or eliminate the presence of discriminatory behavior, including microaggressions, by way of thorough analysis and interpretation of detailed accounts of departmental experiences, allowing for a greater understanding of the necessary corrective actions to be taken. These corrective actions that are to be carried out can be

of usefulness for departmental heads, including senior managers, chief executives, and board of directors for the purpose of furtherance and advancement of marginalized demographics.

As the validity and reliability of archival data sets incorporated had a direct influence on the trustworthiness and interpretation of research findings it is pertinent to note that there are significant advantages concerning the utilization of this methodology given the preexisting large and longitudinal datasets. This, of course, depended upon the accuracy and consistency of data, which encompasses the credibility of sources drawn from in addition to the consideration of the data collection and preservation processes of databases. In terms of other qualitative methods, interpretive archival research is viewed as advantageous in that it allowed for a deeper understanding of departmental and social phenomenon embedded in documents, enabling greater access to meanings and contexts found within archival databases.

In terms of the contributions of this methodology to policy writing, Das et al. (2018) contend that archival data, including organizational reports and historical datasets, is and was useful in identifying trends and patterns that revealed the impact of past departmental and governmental policies, which can be of assistance in equipping policymakers with knowledge concerning the effectiveness of past practices, enabling the creation of informed policy that can be increasingly tailored to individual requirements of a particular organizational construct.

It is further commented that archival data can be most effectively translated into policy through critical analysis of quality and relevance in addition to interpretive

qualitative insights. The production of the aforesaid qualitative insights depended upon the identification and interpretation of patterns and themes and the ability to assess the validity of the datasets, which ensured proper triangulation and credibility of database documentation.

3.2 Research questions and hypotheses

1. How does intersectionality impact corporate departure?
2. How do microaggressions affect departmental experiences?
3. How and why do allyship and mentorship prove impactful to the career trajectory of black women?
4. What are the implications of black women exiting corporate America?
5. How can corporate America go about deterring departures and retaining more black women?

As this was an IAR study, a traditional hypothesis was not necessary due to the nature of this qualitative methodology, which excluded the testing of a predetermined theory. In lieu of a traditional hypothesis, the IAR research questions utilized were broad and open-ended for the purpose of uncovering how individuals made sense of a phenomenon. It is not uncommon in qualitative research studies for no hypothesis to be formulated in lieu of general ideas and expectations concerning the results of database searches, which can direct the research path.

Additionally, insights arising from interpretive archival research findings were also used in place of a traditional hypothesis. Interpretive research, in general, is purposed with producing the aforesaid insights, striving for a rich understanding of

naturally occurring events, in this case organizational practices and policies as it concerns marginalized demographics. Putnam & Banghart (2017) comment that interpretations that lead to insightful detail often bring awareness to the organizational construct concerning the departmental experiences of marginalized groups. These newly developed insights can assist in the formulation of new concepts for organizational members, offering practical divulgements concerning the avoidance of problematic occurrences within organizations, concepts and solutions that were identified throughout the research question database search.

Open-ended research questions, as aforementioned, were a reference to the strategy of the archival database search process, which was found to be flexible and adaptable to the phenomenon in question, enabling various lived experiences to be communicated. These questions were defined as exploratory in nature and explained as suitable for the aforesaid qualitative inquiries concerning the examination of a phenomenon. The interpretive archival research hypothesis was incorporated as a tentative starting point, as identified by the researcher, in which a general idea or conclusion was formulated, assisting in the positing of a specific meaning or hidden narrative within historical archival documentation.

The focus of this particular methodology was on an in-depth, idiographic analysis that was purposed to ascertain individual perspectives, achieving and developing rich, nuanced insights, replacing the confirmation or refutation of a traditional hypothesis. As opposed to qualitative research studies that test for a traditional hypothesis, this particular

method used the aforesaid archival material to understand and ascertain the subjective meanings, context, and processes as it related to archival source documentation.

Concerning subjectivity, the interpretive archival research process focused on the individual and the associated interpretation at that particular time. The process of interpretation involved a hermeneutic circle in which a non-traditional hypothesis was developed by in-depth research of archival documentation to understand the broader context with the objective of reaching a theoretical saturation wherein the interpretation was refined in addition to the development and identification of patterns and themes.

Patterns within archival research databases were described as recurring ideas and behaviors identified within documentation that displayed commonalities concerning shared experiences within departmental settings. Themes identified throughout the research process showcased the significance of the aforesaid patterns identified, assigning meanings to the pinpointed patterns that represented overall concepts and main ideas related to the research questions and non-traditional hypothesis. Following the identification of patterns and themes was the development of theory concerning the phenomenon in question surrounding black women's experiences in corporate America and the causes and implications of early departure.

The formulation of the aforesaid research problem, or non-traditional hypothesis, was guided by questions concerning knowledge of the phenomenon, the significance of increased understanding of the topic in addition to influential research theories that framed previous research findings such as intersectionality and critical race theory, most often framing studies surrounding marginalized groups in gendered and racialized

situations and departmental institutions with the objective of increasing awareness and developing remedial solutions in addition to policy reform.

3.3 Research Design

The research design of this study inherited an interpretive archival research approach, an exploratory qualitative methodology purposed with the objective of defining, analyzing, and interpreting lived experiences with the application of double hermeneutics wherein the process of making sense of the participants' personal experiences through an intersectional lens was attempted and analyzed.

Archival designs can be categorized into several groups including database archives, which hold large amounts of investigative organizational records, which assisted in textual analysis of documentation as a qualitative approach. The implementation of archival data was incorporated with the intention to extend the range of data availability by way of the inclusion of large, nationally representative samples of research and case studies, enhancing generalizability (Vogt et al. (2012).

Archives, as described by Kikon (2021), are institutions where various collections of informative documentation are located and preserved, including physical records, electronic records, scholarly journals, departmental files, newspapers, letters, governmental records, and other published or unpublished documentation. This material was then used to find and interpret primary sources. Archives also included materials related to modern business practices in addition to organizational theory, containing data concerning class conflicts and control within workplace settings. The archival data acted

as historical points of research, analyzing organizational change over time, detailing significant institutional processes and policies for interpretation.

The interpretive approach, says Putnam & Banghart (2017), was purposed to find meaning and understanding of organizational practices by examining and analyzing the perspectives of departmental members, giving voice to individualized interpretations of an event. Meanings refer to the sense that individuals made of an experience within an organization, which were subjective. Analysis of meaning also involved the alignment of individual accounts to determine whether there are collective or shared thoughts, experiences, or patterns concerning divulged interpretations. The primary purpose of determining and defining meaning was to uncover the diverse intersubjective significance of a particular experience and how it aligned with the departmental construct.

Interpretations, as aforesaid, referenced the forming of inferences concerning the organizational phenomenon in question related to black women's corporate experiences surrounding marginalization and discrimination and organizational departures. Ascertaining of a phenomenon arose from the comparing and contrasting of experiences of individuals whom shared their diverse narratives. The narratives, as divulged, were then transformed into text where interrelationships of the individual stories were analyzed with the purpose of identifying patterns, subsequently developing meaning behind the aforesaid experiences.

Additionally, concerning the interpretive approach, Putnam & Banghart (2017) describe this methodology as a significant paradigm, particularly involving ontology, which studies the essence of the phenomenon in occurrence, attaching meanings through

interactions, making dual assumptions concerning an experience whether subjective or objective. Epistemology, the process involved in coming to an understanding of a phenomenon, focused on the origin of conceptualization, development of research questions, and the conducting of a thorough examination of data. Thirdly, axiology concerned the values in the production of knowledge that guided the research process as formulated, which increased insight and rationale as it relates to the phenomenon (Putnam & Banghart, 2017).

Interpretive analysis encompassed a variety of theoretical orientations, including hermeneutics, phenomenology, and ethnomethodology. The primary focus of hermeneutics, as commented by Putnam & Banghart (2017), was to analyze the meaning of texts through archival research. The interpretation of the aforesaid text then entailed a double hermeneutic approach wherein those whom have experienced a phenomenon begin to make sense of their personal experiences. Phenomenology involved the study and examination of the phenomenon in question, interpreting the narrative of those whom voiced their lived experiences as divulged. Ethnomethodology placed a broad focus on the everyday interactions that occurred within organizations and subsequently attached meaning to these events.

The research process concerning interpretive approaches and analysis involved the incorporation and utilization of archival database source documentation. This qualitative research approach captured the role that textual analysis played in the interpretation process through data collection and examination. The primary goal of analyzing archival data was to come to an understanding of naturally occurring

organizational events through the research of documentation detailing lived experiences of departmental members. The collection of archival data, examining various forms of reports and documentation, depended and relied upon validity of data in addition to the ability to comprehend, interpret, and analyze database source material.

Comprehensiveness in archival database research referred to the adequacy and validity concerning the understanding of texts while comparing and contrasting narratives located in documentation (Putnam & Banghart, 2017). The robustness and availability of an appropriate amount of data within various database sources was also a consideration and greatly impactful in the data collection and analysis process for the purpose of drawing interpretations from the aforesaid data while maintaining the hermeneutic cycle of analysis, focusing on meaning and actions within departmental constructs while deciphering how these actions and interactions enabled and also constrained organizational members.

Vogt et al. (2012) comment that while in the process of searching for institutional archival data in relation to research questions that frame this particular study, archival database searches were of assistance, as mentioned, with textual analysis studying three broad subjects, including the phenomenon the text refers to, the text itself in addition to the context of all research-related questions as the aforesaid related to the main issues of the research study that were being searched for and analyzed

As commented by Hallam & Noon (2018), this design supported evidence-based management practices, detailing in-depth lived experiences within departmental settings,

assisting managers in the development of practices, detailing the experiences of departmental staff while informing tailored policy and management decisions.

3.4 Population and Sample

The population of this research study consisted of the full spectrum of archival research documentation encompassing relevant details concerning the phenomenon in question. These documents included but were not limited to organizational materials related to departmental policy consisting of reports, scholarly journals, policy drafts, governmental and legal documentation in addition to databases with historical records. Thereby, the population concerning this research study was defined not by human participation but by the universe of documentation, potentially containing evidence of the phenomenon being examined given the large, nationally representative samples found within archival databases.

Population samples located within archival data documentation enhanced the scope and validity of research findings given that the integrity of data was protected and prioritized through the incorporation of verification checks. Benefits of archival data, says Delios et al. (2022), included the accessibility of diverse populations and varied geographics, revealing patterns due to the vastness of datasets, which broadened detail availability concerning the search for information related to marginalized groups. Also, archival data supported generalizability due to the replication of findings across populations and time periods.

Concerning archival data sampling techniques and strategies, purposive sampling is often incorporated into the database search strategy as opposed to randomization,

sampling select documentation that encompasses rich and robust detail with direct relevancy to the phenomenon on interest (Palinkas et al, (2015). Sampling for meaning involved the drawing from data already collected, identifying specific themes, patterns, and varied voices of lived experiences, leading to insightful interpretations surrounding the research subject. Also, data saturation was then performed wherein the reduction of the collection in its entirety of archival materials was placed categorically for examination and analysis wherein the development of codes and themes to define the overall meaning of the collective documentation was performed. Saturation of a sampling dataset was then met when new information and insights neglected to emerge within the archival data.

Concerning contextual analysis, archival database search results across a variety of demographics informed the universality of research findings, examining the effects of a wide range of populations, which was of assistance when researching gendered and racialized groups (Delios et al., 2022). Authors also exclaim the great importance of well-documented archival databases, enabling researchers with the ability to analyze and interpret datasets for quality and content, strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring consistency and proper saturation of results. Also mentioned is the importance of the selection of database archives that aligned with the specific goals of one's research objectives, which considered the research questions as outlined and availability of data within the aforesaid databases.

Demographics of populations being studied were an additional consideration while searching various databases due in part to database subject matter, context of

institution, geographical location, in addition to the public or private designation of a particular database, which impacted data availability, which can be consequential concerning the search and interpretation of information related to marginalized groups (Vogt et al., 2012). Concerning the aforesaid groups, the archival information encompassed an extended range of data, as it relates to population searches, which increased the probability of increased accessibility of online sources allowing for a broader gateway, concerning the research process, to a vast timeline of data spanning back decades in addition to containing newly emerging phenomenological movements.

The emphasis in IAR was on acquiring an in-depth understanding of a broad range of research study participants for the purpose of generalizability often found in a larger population. The sample size was initially flexible and not predetermined, being led by the emergence of patterns and themes with a focus on rich and robust data sources relevant to the research questions. Saturation was reached when insights and patterns neglected to emerge from research documentation given the redundancy or unproductive nature of information that appeared toward the end of the sampling process. Saturation was based upon the judgement and insight of the researcher in addition to the quality of analytical output. This process was labeled as ‘theoretical completeness’ where sampling ceased and informative accounts concerning the process by which saturation was reached as detailed.

Final samples collected included a full list of archival research materials, compiled by author, title, publication, database, document type, and date, detailing sources incorporated for the purpose of this research study. IAR studies are best suited to

a data collection approach that will invite participants to offer rich, detailed, first-person accounts of their experiences (Hallam & Noon, 2018). IAR studies often require a very detailed and time-consuming analysis of each case with the creation of themes, sub-themes, and super ordinant themes developed from transcribed data of lived participant experiences as divulged. All themes developed for the purpose of this research study were examined and analyzed for similarities and divergences, assisting in the interpretive process.

3.5 Instrumentation

The tool utilized for this interpretative archival research study was qualitative data analysis as well as a semi-structured interpretative literature review of archival data sources. These tools were purposed with the objective of compiling data from documentation, interpreting the research subjects' interpretation of their lived experiences as outlined in double hermeneutics wherein collective patterns and themes were developed from the detailed accounts as divulged.

Delios et al. (2022) purport that instrumentation in archival database research involves the incorporation of an array of components, including variables and quality of data. The measurement and recording of the aforesaid components, as initiated, was greatly impactful to the overall quality of the output. Quality was immensely imperative due to it being effectual concerning reliability and validity of the interpretation and analytical process.

The researcher as an instrument was also emphasized as was the archive as a construct. The researcher is described as the primary tool utilizing subjectivity, individual

interpretation, and textual analysis throughout the archival database collection and examination process. Archival data systems vary concerning availability and accessibility, individually and independently structured, which can lead to deviations in the resulting analysis, depending upon the process inherited.

Bias in research findings and resulting analysis, adds Vogt. et al. (2012), were additional considerations as were concerns of the process of instrumentation within archival research. As the information related to datasets can be limited, incomplete, or omitted, this can be effectual to the overall interpretation process, leading to influence of research opinion given a possible manipulation of data ahead of a thorough instrumentation process resulting in varied interpretation and subjectivity.

Subjectivity was a key component in the analysis of archival data given that the values were extracted, organized, and analyzed. Assessing the robustness of datasets was highly advisable and initiated for the purpose of consistency as it relates to conclusive results. Determining credibility, says Delios et al. (2022), of research findings was an additional element of the instrumentation process that involves enhancing the credibility of information within databases through the broadening of accessibility, allowing for the verification of datasets, which was of assistance during the interpretation of large data sources where generalizability was called upon, elevating the clarity and confidence of results.

The aforementioned aspects of instrumentation concerning interpretative archival research involved a triangulator process that encompassed data collection, coding, and textual analysis involving the facilitation of robust interfacing with texts. The

triangulation process, says Delios et al. (2022), within research involved the examination and incorporation of various perspectives concerning each research question, ensuring thoroughness and effectiveness in assuring that the questions framing the study were put through a sound process for the purpose of accuracy of the assessment.

The implementation of multiple sources and methodologies were thereby put forth to analyze and corroborate findings, enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of database source material by cross-validating insights in addition to research patterns, themes, and other conclusive findings, proving a more thorough understanding of departmental discourses and practices (Putnam & Banghart, 2017). These processes of instrumentation in tandem with sound methodological transparency increased the probability of producing clear and conclusive results.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures were guided by the research questions as outlined:

1. How does intersectionality impact corporate departure?
2. How do microaggressions affect departmental experiences?
3. How and why do allyship and mentorship prove impactful to the career trajectory of black women?
4. What are the implications of black women exiting corporate America?
5. How can corporate America go about deterring departures and retaining more black women?

Research questions, as divulged, in tandem with literature review subject matter allyship, mentorship, compensation, as well as DEI policies and procedures additionally

assisted in the research direction as it concerns archival database research processes and procedures.

Repositories extracted from for the purposes of data collection and interpretation included the Department of Labor, Google Scholar, the National Archives, The Pew Research Center, ResearchGate, Wiley Online publishing, Scopus, EBSCO, SAGE, Emerald, and the NIH. The aforesaid databases were utilized to collect from and interpret a wide range of datasets for examination and analysis. Documentation types for the analysis of datasets included scholarly journal articles, research briefs/papers, original articles, review papers, organizational records, case studies, insight reports, governmental reports, prior research studies, historical accounts, white papers, policy drafts, and legal documentation, detailing all documentation incorporated by author, title, publication, database, document type, and date.

The selection, collection, and interpretation of secondary database documentation, in accordance with ‘Emerald Publishing’ (2025), involved the deliberate collection of preexisting data stored and organized into an archival database. Data located within the archival database was categorized as both raw and interpreted. The former aforesaid contained data in its original form, devoid of analysis or manipulation, while the latter encompassed previously analyzed and interpreted datasets, reinterpreted for subjective examination. The selection of secondary materials for this study concerning black women was incorporated due to the availability of data, the historical nature, in addition to its longitudinal methodology.

The incorporation of published data sets, including prior research studies, census data, survey results, interpreted data, as specified, in addition to database structured data, and all other governmental data sources was implemented in the research study for analysis and interpretation. Selection of sources depended upon the thoroughness by which a particular source answered and built upon the contents of each research question set forth for this study, in consideration of relevance, reliability, and value of data presented.

The subjective evaluation of all material documentation extracted from databases was then conducted to assess reliability and authenticity with the objective of sorting and filtering through sources for inclusion or exclusion concerning research study datasets. Thereafter, the analysis of the aforesaid data was carried out with final documentation enclosures. The output concerning archival database research, in accordance with Vogt et al. (2012), focused on three variables, including how clearly and concisely the materials represented the phenomenon in question, the context by which the data was created, in addition to the data as a topic of study in it of itself, determining significance and relevance to the overall topic and also the research study as a whole.

Recording data related to archival findings involved the documenting of initial subjective thoughts and interpretations given the information outlined in addition to the highlighting of subject matter as it related to the research questions. General notetaking and coding commenced to facilitate the research and analytical processes and procedures concerning this phenomenological research study.

As this was an IAR study that is exploratory, preliminary in its approach, and qualitative, analyzing experiences and insights, dependent and independent variables were replaced with an examination and interpretation of a phenomenon, detailing the lived experiences of each participant with the purpose of collecting sufficient data to inform remedial solutions.

The data collected was then fully transcribed for the purpose of analysis and subsequently uploaded to a qualitative data interpretive platform for narrative grouping and creation of themes and subthemes.

3.7 Data Analysis

Analysis of data involved the use of data transcribed into a qualitative data analysis tool, summarizing, bracketing, and coding data received, creating themes and sub-themes for interpretation. This analytical process was initiated by the incorporation of both manual and computer-assisted processes in terms of overall analysis, comparing and contrasting research findings in addition to subjective interpretation.

Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) was integrated into the interpretive archival research strategical direction, as aforesaid, analyzing large volumes of qualitative data originating from a plethora of textual documentation. This type of qualitative software (Atlas.ti) was of assistance throughout the process of analysis through the organization and management of archival data incorporated, achieving increased systematic and efficient results, enabling a replicable process (Vogt et al. 2012). Textual and contextual analysis, as commented by Putnam & Banghart (2017), were outcomes and processes resulting from the utilization of CAQDAS with a focus on

deciphering meanings of texts through double hermeneutic examination, creating themes as it pertained to workplace patterns and experiences amongst black women.

Atlas.ti, the qualitative software tool called upon, was implemented and utilized for the textual analysis of archival research database source materials, assisting in the coding, annotating, and retrieval of all documented narrative, supporting the organization of plenteous textual documentation, expediting the coding and content analysis process to enable effectual and efficient theme and sub-theme creation as it related to the lived experiences of a phenomenon.

The creation and visualization of archival text to effectively display analytical results additionally facilitated the display of relationships as it concerned the themes and codes revealed through the examination and interpretation of textual documentation, providing mind-maps and models to display analytical outcomes. The aforesaid were immensely imperative concerning the transparency and rigor of the qualitative data analysis process, well-positioned to handle the analytical demands related to interpretive archival research.

Concerning CAQDAS and interpretation, this process was initiated through the ascertaining of symbolic meanings through contextual analysis embedded within archival documentation, enabled by software data analysis, which supported the iterative process involved in interpretive analysis, assisting in the development of categories thereby constructing the aforesaid interpretations, accelerating the double hermeneutic analysis.

Exploring phenomenology and CAQDAS in tandem was also introduced to assist in the descriptive management of narrative related to lived experiences as foretold,

pulling from immense volumes of qualitative documentation. The essence of phenomenological experiences was captured and supported by the detailed tracking of evolving and revolving themes and codes, which resulted in an effectual exploration of archival data, unveiling relevant phenomenological detail related to black women.

Qualitative data analysis software was then implemented to support data management, querying, and systematic coding, assigning codes to segments of data, allowing for multiple codes per segment and developing hierarchical coding schemes to organize archival research findings for the purpose of theme creation and interpretation (Putnam & Banghart, 2017). Coding comparison theories and parallel analysis were added tools of archival research software systems, examining consistency of data, allowing for multiple perspectives and conclusions to be drawn, ultimately determining patterns that were developed into categorical themes.

Concerning triangulation in data analysis software, this methodological approach was incorporated throughout the interpretation of archival data, enhancing the robustness and credibility of the aforesaid data sources, allowing for a cross-verification of research findings, including conclusive patterns and themes as laid out through the process of analysis. This cross-verification of multiple data sources, included scholarly articles, legal documents, organizational reports, correspondence, government legislation, and departmental policy, was of assistance in confirming the validity of the interpretations, ensuring findings were based upon a thorough examination of a range of documentation, thereby reducing bias throughout the research process (Putnam & Banghart, 2017).

The reduction of bias throughout the interpretive archival research process was of the utmost importance, maintaining the integrity of research findings, ensuring subjective interpretations resulting from the CAQDAS analysis were based upon a thorough examination of all relevant documentation related to the aforesaid phenomenon.

3.8 Research Design Limitations

Limitations of this IAR research study included but were not limited to data quality concerns related to completeness that may or may not encompass errors in documentation in addition to missing information. Questionable data quality may come in the form of self-reported data wherein individual parties provided inaccurate narrative, neglecting to reflect factual occurrences. Subjectivity was an additional limitation due to the influence individual perspectives tend to have on research outcomes given the qualitative nature, presenting a challenge of bias in interpretation. Bias and representativeness in archival research studies can present concerns due to the original purpose by which one initially collected data, impacting secondary study results. Complexity of data analysis can also be a difficult hurdle to overcome when examining large volumes of data.

Access as well as confidentiality of data sourced can be a challenge presented due to privacy concerns of departmental institutions resulting in limited data availability, leading to omissions that could be impactful to analysis. Delios et al. (2022) contend that potential measurement inconsistencies within datasets are additional limitations that can be rectified by testing the credibility and validity of a particular database.

As internal validity of individual organizational databases may present challenges due to factors uncontrollable by the researcher, certain exploratory research designs such as interpretive archival research may encompass uncontrollable extraneous variables, elevating the difficulty of establishing patterned data trends. This is a result of the secondary nature of archival qualitative database documentation, having originated from a third party. Concerning the aforesaid variables and concerns of controllability, Vogt et al. (2012) agrees on the lack of manipulation being a restricting factor that may limit testing ability concerning causality as a result of the nature of archive textual documentation.

Research limitations, as it relates to CAQDAS (Atlas.ti) included a potential disengagement with data due to a possibility of fragmented textual data, resulting in a lessened context and deviation from the holistic, interpretive meaning. Also, overreliance on software can lead to reduced rigor, amounting to methodological errors. CAQDAS systems, additionally, may encompass performance issues or inconsistencies in coding, lacking depth concerning interpretation. There were also concerns of limited transparency in the internal coding of software processes and procedures, lessening clarity in how results originated, challenging verification. The inclusion of sound manual processes in tandem with qualitative software analysis was recommended and implemented throughout the interpretive and analytical process.

Additional concerns and limitations surrounded time periods of certain documentation in terms of date generated and the ability of historical documentation to correspond or encompass relevance to the current phenomenon in question, which related

back to quality of data sources, researcher subjectivity, and validity practices. Ethics and confidentiality, in alignment with Vogt et al. (2012), were additional concerns in archival research due to the individual privacy policies inherent concerning departmental database access and restrictive protocol and procedures, which did vary per departmental database. Also, research questions that required specifics concerning time periods may encounter restraints due to variations in collection periods which may or may not align with research parameters.

The aforesaid limitations were acceptable and within guidelines of doctoral research as IAR is used for a myriad of research studies, having grown in prevalence as its usefulness and value is increasingly argued given the accessibility concerning the multitude of databases in addition to the large datasets that encompass archives.

Addressing the aforesaid research limitations to produce an adept and adequate qualitative research study, mitigating impact, involved thorough evaluation checks, critically assessing archival databases. The utilization and incorporation of an array of databases and source materials was also enhanced by the credibility of the research study. The sharing of datasets was additionally recommended as was staying informed of evolving standards in terms of transparency, privacy, and validity.

Archival research was viewed as holding a greater significance concerning the increased understanding of management trends, allowing for longitudinal analysis with maximized effectiveness when complemented by sound methodologies and repeated replication of previous analysis, affirming data quality. Addressing the limitations of this study aided in the elevation of credibility, increasing comprehension of the research

process, which was of great importance when striving for results that provided remedial solutions based upon the data collected. Credibility of source material was tantamount and of great benefit concerning the prioritization of a thorough research process. Any improvements in validity and reliability surrounding this IAR study were implemented through thorough questioning, sound interpretation, and database query.

3.9 Trustworthiness and Credibility of Findings

Credibility

To increase the credibility of findings, a triangulator process was performed for the purpose of elevating the validation and verification of database research materials. The aforesaid triangulator process for the purposes of verification, validation, and credibility facilitated the initiation of a cross-source comparison of archival database materials, which incorporated research articles, research briefs, original research reports, review articles, editorial special issues, literature reviews, research reports, case study analysis in addition to original articles and insight reports.

The aforementioned source documentation were then examined thoroughly for commonalities in subject matter, which encompassed convergent patterns for themes 1 through 4 entailing recurring narrative surrounding the phenomenon of women's accelerated move toward entrepreneurship, the prevalence of microaggressions, sexism, and racism within corporate environments, the overhaul of departmental and governmental DEI initiatives, and underrepresentation in leadership as it concerns intersectional identities.

Dependability

Concerning dependability throughout this research study, an audit trail was maintained through a qualitative software tool (Atlas.ti), which stored the code groups by theme in addition to all associated identifying coded phrases and quotations as sourced from archival database documentation materials. Steps of the research process were documented in the methodology, detailing the research, coding, theme emergence, interpretation and analysis process.

Data collection was carried out by the utilization of archival databases, encompassing large sets of qualitative and quantitative data wherein relevant search criteria was applied resulting in source material that was then filtered by relevancy to purposeful subject matter prior to inclusion into the research study. Triangulation was initiated through the performance of cross-source comparison of database documentation to cross-verify patterns within datasets for confirmation of relevancy and consensus amongst subject matter and author sentiment.

CAQDAS (Atlas.ti)

Code groups were assigned, encompassing coding associated with the emergent themes of the research study, which included corporate departures and entrepreneurship, double discrimination and bias, departmental policy/law, and underrepresentation in leadership as it concerns intersectional identities. Archival database source materials were examined and analyzed for relevant sentiment, assigning codes to quotations.

Figure 1: Atlas.ti Code Groups (Themes 1-4):

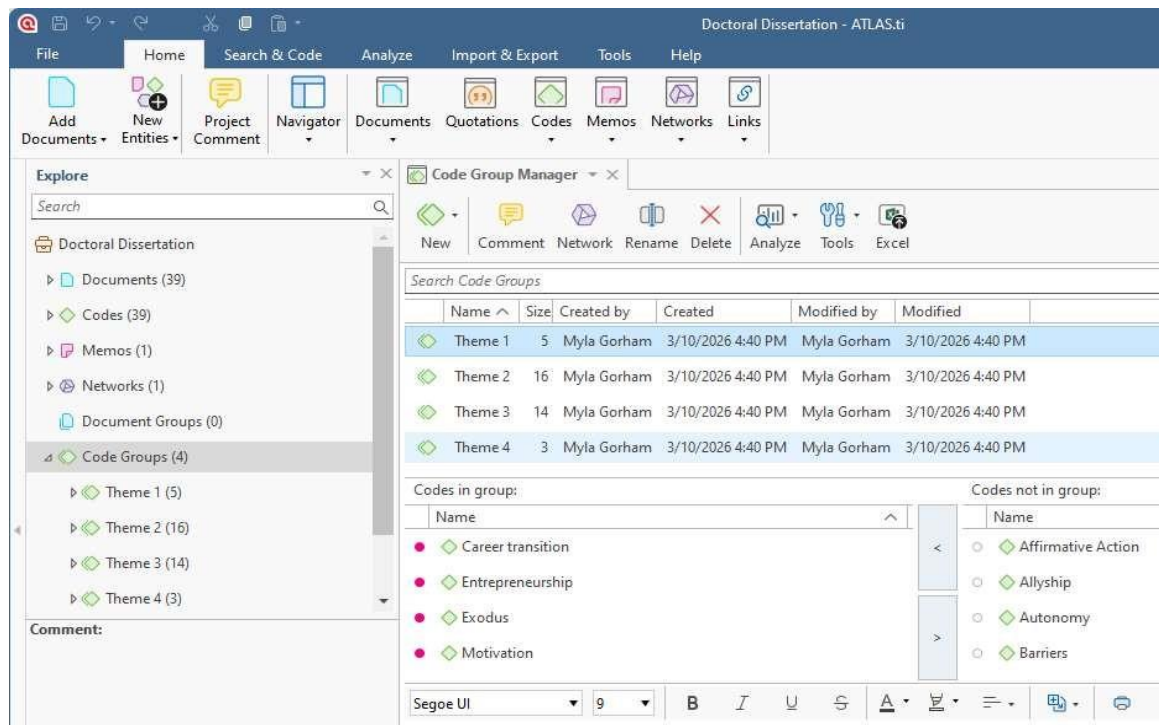
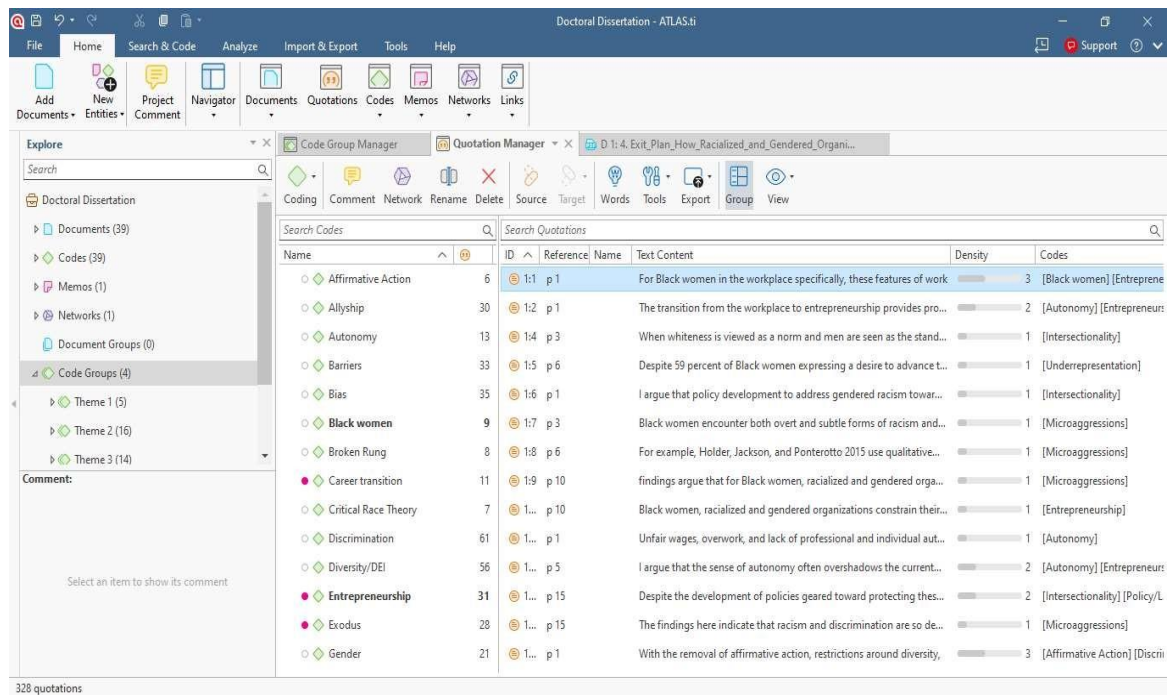


Figure 2: Atlas.ti quotations associated with coding:



Coding Logs, theme development, source materials

Table 1: Atlas.ti Coding log:

Codes	Related Quotations	Code Groups
○ Career transition	11	Theme 1
○ Entrepreneurship	31	Theme 1
○ Exodus	28	Theme 1
○ Motivation	7	Theme 1
○ Phenomenon	7	Theme 1
○ Bias	35	Theme 2
○ Black women	9	Theme 2
○ Critical Race Theory	7	Theme 2
○ Discrimination	61	Theme 2
○ Gender	21	Theme 2
○ Intersectionality	70	Theme 2
○ Lived experience	4	Theme 2
○ Marginalization	27	Theme 2
○ Microaggressions	49	Theme 2
○ Minorities	12	Theme 2
○ Prevalence	6	Theme 2
○ Sexism	8	Theme 2
○ Stress	10	Theme 2
○ Woman	1	Theme 2
○ Women of color	22	Theme 2
○ Affirmative Action	6	Theme 3
○ Allyship	30	Theme 3
○ Autonomy	13	Theme 3
○ Barriers	33	Theme 3
○ Broken Rung	8	Theme 3
○ Diversity/DEI	56	Theme 3
○ Inclusivity	15	Theme 3
○ Mentorship	30	Theme 3
○ Meritocracy	9	Theme 3
○ Oppression	10	Theme 3
○ Organizational Culture	36	Theme 3
○ Policy/Law	54	Theme 3
○ Retainment	9	Theme 3
○ Retention	13	Theme 3
○ Workplace/Workforce	8	Theme 3
○ Leadership	38	Theme 4
○ Power dynamics	18	Theme 4
○ Underrepresentation	29	Theme 4

Table 2: Thematic Codebook:

Theme	Codes	Code Definitions	Inclusion/Exclusion Crit.	Sample Quote
Corporate Departures & Entrepreneurship	Career transition, entrepreneurship, exodus, motivation, phenomenon	Codes surrounding the departure from corporate America, as it concerns black women, toward self-employment endeavors and the motivating factors surrounding this phenomenological examination.	Include source material surrounding the experiences of intersectional identities from the last five years. Exclude single-axis interpretive data outside of timeframe.	"As data continues to show Black women exiting the workplace—1.32 percent decrease from 2019 to 2022—while also maintaining their ranking as the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs, we must view their transition to entrepreneurship as a strategy rather than a coincidence."
Double Discrimination & Bias	Bias, Black women, critical race theory, discrimination, gender, intersectionality, lived experience, microaggression, marginalization, minorities, oppression, participant, prevalence, sexism, stress, woman, women of color	Codes concerning the adverse racialized and gendered experiences of black women within workplace settings due to their intersectional identity and the prevalence of discriminatory treatment.	Include sources examining discriminatory encounters concerning race and gender. Exclude sources discussing other physical traits outside of the aforesaid primarily.	"Black women experience a wider range of microaggressions. Microaggressions—comments and actions that subtly demean or dismiss someone based on their gender, race, or other aspects of their identity—are a common experience for women at work. And since Black women face both racism and sexism, they experience a wider range of microaggressions than women overall."
Departmental Policy/Law	Affirmative action, allyship, autonomy, barriers, broken rung, diversity/DEI, inclusivity, mentorship, meritocracy, organizational culture, policy/law, retainment, retention, workplace/workforce	Departmental policy and governmental law as it relates to marginalized identities working within in institutional settings and resource availability.	Include DEI departmental policy and governmental law and changes from the last five years. Exclude gendered data examining those other than women as primary subject matter.	"Policy Efficacy: While corporate diversity initiatives are well-documented, few studies critically evaluate their effectiveness in addressing intersectional discrimination."
Underrepresentation in Leadership	Leadership, power dynamics, underrepresentation	The dwindling representation in leadership, as it concerns intersectional identities and visibility strategies.	Include archival database sources that contain information from the last five years concerning visibility and intersectional identities. Exclude document materials outside of that timeframe.	"Leadership diversity initiatives often failed to incorporate an intersectional lens, focusing on increasing representation by gender or race but neglecting their intersection (Ely and Thomas, 2020). As a result, the unique barriers faced by women of color remained largely unaddressed, limiting the effectiveness of these programs in fostering genuine inclusivity."

Figure 3: Network Flowchart (Atlas.ti) – Thematic Development:

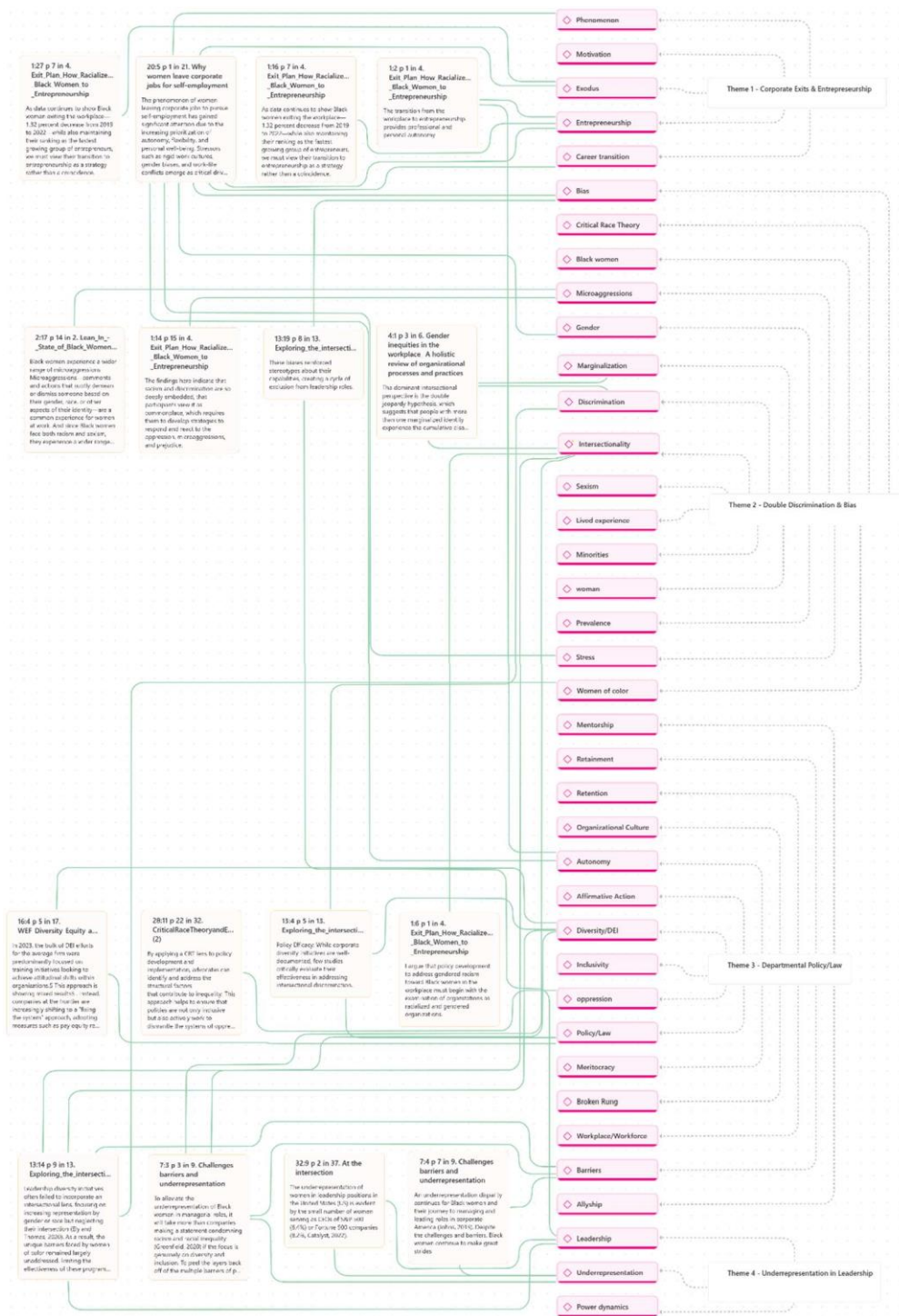


Table 3: Archival database source materials:

	Authors	Title	Publication	Database	Docume	Date
1	Branch, E. &	The	Journal of	ResearchGate	Qualitativ	Jul-23
2	Lean In: State of	The State of	LeanIn.Org and	kplace.com	Original	Oct-20
3	Lean In 2023	Women in the	LeanIn.Org and	kplace.com	Original	Oct-24
4	Adkins, A.	Exit Plan: How	Urban Institute	Urban Institute	Research	Dec-23
5	Bhattacharyya, B,	Not all allies are	Organizational	ScienceDirect	Original	Apr-24
6	Hing, L., Sakr, N.,	Gender	Human Resource	ScienceDirect	Original	Apr-23
7	Ferguson, S.A. &	Black Women's	Journal of Black	Denison Digital	Original	Dec-23
8	Sanni, B.	Global Case	Ladoke Akintola U	ResearchGate	Case	Jan-25
9	Branch, E. &	Challenges,	Business Ethics	ResearchGate	Research	Jun-23
10	Salari, N., Fattah, A.,	Prevalence of	Safety and	ScienceDirect	Review	May-24
11	Kossek, E. Ladage, J.,	Introduction to	Organizational	ScienceDirect	Editorial /	Jun-24
12	Executive Order	Ending Radical	Federal Register	Archives	Executive	Jan-25
13	Hwang, J.	Exploring the	International	ResearchGate	Research	Dec-24
14	Newman, A.,	Hidden Bias,	Journal of	Web of Science	Review	Jan-25
15	Beagan, B., Goree, T.	Affirmative action	Canadian Review	Library	Original	Aug-24
16	Minkis, R.	Diversity, Equity	Pew Research	Center	Survey	May-23
17	Center for the New	Diversity, Equity	World Economic	Economic	Insight	Jan-25
18	Raimi, L., Panait, M.,	Thematic Review	Journal of Risk	Science,	Literature	Jan-23
19	Giannella, V.A.,	Women	Journal of	Scopus	Literature	Aug-25
20	Lingappa, A., &	Synthesis of	SAGE Open	Scopus	Original	Jan-23
21	Hussin, S.A, Yusop,	Why Women	Information	ProQuest, and	Systemati	Jun-25
22	Deshpande, A., Kaul,	Breaking	The Open	Scopus	Systemati	Oct-23
23	Quinto, S.R.,	The Rise of the	Journal of	CARI Journals	Research	Mar-25
24	Vogt, P. & Haeffele,	When to Use	Gilford	Library,	Book	Aug-12
25	Thelma, C.C. &	Women in	Asian Journal of	ResearchGate	Original	May-24
26	Lean In 2024	Women in the	LeanIn.Org and	kplace.com	Original	Sep-24
27	Institute for Women's	Fact Sheet:	Institute for	iwpr.org	Fact	Jul-25
28	Center for the New	Prioritizing	World Economic	World	White	Jan-23
29	Executive Order	Addressing DEI	Federal Register	Archives	Executive	Mar-26
30	U.S. Department of	Employment	Economic News	Statistics	Househol	Sep-25
31	Howard-Hamilton, M.	Theoretical	New Directions	Periodicals	Research	Jan-03
32	Kalemis, K.	Critical Race	ResearchGate	ResearchGate	Research	Sep-24
33	Klanot, P.	The Fallacy of	ResearchGate	ResearchGate	Research	Jun-24
34	Harris, C. & Davis, D.	Wear Your	Journal of	Academia	Original	Jul-23
35	Gutterman, A.	Embedding	Business Law	ResearchGate	Research	Dec-23
36	Emerald Publishing	How to use	Emerald	Emerald Insight	Original	Jan-26
37	Ruggs, E., Bilotta, I.,	At the	Group &	EBSCO	Original	Apr-23
38	Miller, R., Davis, S.B.,	An Examination	Journal of	EBSCO	Original	Apr-24
39	Das, R., Jain, K., &	Archival	Benchmarking:	Emerald Insight	Literature	Mar-18
40	Noon, E. & Hallam, S.	Interpretive	Journal of	ResearchGate	Methodol	Apr-18
41	Putnam, L. &	Interpretive	The International	Wiley Online	Book	Mar-17
42	Delios, E.G.,	Examining the	PNAS	Framework	Research	Jun-22
43	Kikon, P.	Archival	Journal of	Research	Original	Aug-21
44	Ammed et al.	Using Thematic	Journal of	ScienceDirect	Qualitativ	Apr-25
45	Erskine, S.,	Afro-Diasporic	Business	ScienceDirect	Research	Jan-21
46	Helfand-Rogers, C.	Experts say	The Story	Exchange	Original	Aug-25
47	Palinkas et al.	Purposeful	Admin Policy	Access	Research	Sep-15
48	Lean In 2025	Women in the	LeanIn.Org and	kplace.com	Original	Oct-25

Cross-Source Comparison:

	Theme	Source ID #'s	Source Types Compared	Convergent Pattern
Theme 1	Corporate Exits & Entrepreneurship	6, 10, 17, 18	Literature review, original article, review article, insight report	The phenomenon of corporate women and their subsequent move toward entrepreneurship
Theme 2	Double-Discrimination & Bias	4, 10, 13, 14	Review paper, research brief, research article, review article	The prevalence of microaggressions, sexism, and racism in corporate environments
Theme 3	Departmental Policy/Law	2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 35	Research article, original research report, editorial special issue, research report, original article	Advocacy and overhaul of departmental DEI initiatives surrounding mentorship, sponsorship, and equity
Theme 4	Underrepresentation in leadership	2, 9, 15, 21, 25, 26	Original research, original article, research report, research paper original research article, systematic literature review	Equity and leadership underrepresentation of intersectional identities

Transferability

Transferability was achieved throughout this research study through the detailing of rich descriptive accounts of lived experiences as divulged by subjects whose experiences were documented through archival data concerning the phenomenon under investigation. Subject matter for this research study includes black women encompassing a demographic whom are currently or have previously worked within corporate settings.

The encounters of this group were documented through the coding of quotations, as foretold by subjects, wherein these details were examined, analyzed, and interpreted. Patterns within archival data were then identified, thereby leading to the emergence and creation of four themes, developed by the aforesaid convergent patterns.

Boundaries of Generalization

The boundaries of this research study encompass professional black women whom work within corporate settings in the United States with data primarily being pulled from archival sources over the last five years as it relates to timeframe constraints.

Archival database source document materials utilized and implemented for the purpose of research, examination, analysis, and interpretation include case study analytical reports, insight reports, systematic literature reviews, original research, original articles, review papers, research briefs, editorials, and data tables located within voluminous databases, encompassing large datasets, both qualitative and quantitative.

3.10 Conclusion

To conclude, this IAR study concerning black women and their lived experiences in corporate America related to and framed, in part, by intersectionality, a gendered and racialized theoretical underpinning, sought to determine and examine the myriad causes of early exits from workplace settings and the subsequent entrance into entrepreneurial grounds.

As aforesaid, the operationalization of the theoretical construct of intersectionality and critical race theory, both gendered and racialized theoretical structures, to properly capture the lived experiences of black women whom work within corporate settings, was thoroughly researched and appropriate for the framing of studies in which phenomenology was identified, examined, and interpreted. Particularly in the research of marginalized demographics whom require a focused lens upon individual occurrences, analyzing experiences and ascertaining commonalities concerning discriminatory conduct

within workplace environments, the objective of formulating remedial solutions was of utmost importance. The longitudinal nature of this study was well equipped to build upon initial interpretations with researcher subjectivity to draw upon new insights.

The research questions, as aforementioned, concerning discriminatory treatment, policy reform, and departures toward entrepreneurship were guided by preliminary research into the subject matter to ensure the fulfillment of future research needs in addition to cultivating a thorough examination surrounding the phenomenon in question. Building upon a non-traditional hypothesis, given the absence of variables with no pre-determined theory, this qualitative methodological study was exploratory with objectives of determining research findings that supported and guided the interpretation of subject matter as it related to the research questions.

Also concerning the research design of interpretive archival research, the studies' incorporation of double hermeneutics was a component and strategy of analyzing, contrasting, and categorizing divulged lived experiences was implemented and of assistance in assuring that all occurrences were accounted for and patterns identified to properly determine commonalities and themes as presented.

As mentioned, the population and sample consisted of the full spectrum of archival database documentation, given the large volumes of data these systems encompass. Attributable to the diverse data availability concerning marginalized groups and time periods, allowing for an increased access to robust datasets, an enhanced scope and validity was anticipated, allowing for proper testing of samples of qualitative data.

Saturation was met when data was exhausted and testing concluded wherein detailed contextual analysis continued, leading to theme creation and subtheme development.

In terms of instrumentation, qualitative data analysis was initiated and conducted utilizing processes of validity and reliability in order to affirm the quality of datasets as drawn from as it concerned individual database systems. These triangulator processes implemented into the interpretation of data ensured credibility of source material, leading to soundness in analytical outcomes.

Concerning individual databases, the utilization of large systems of qualitative data, including Department of Labor, Google Scholar, the National Archives, The Pew Research Center, ResearchGate, Wiley Online publishing, Scopus, EBSCO, SAGE, Emerald, and NIH, was sourced for varied document types including research studies, governmental policy, census data, and organizational reports, providing for a rich and robust collection of datasets that encompassed an array of lived experiences and occurrences for thorough interpretation and evaluation of results.

By incorporating both a manual and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis process with the implementation of a CAQDAS system, coding and theming of datasets, as it pertained to the treatment of black women in workplace settings, assisted in the enhancement of the interpretative process, leading to insights uncovering a phenomenon.

Although there were limitations, as it related to interpretive, exploratory research studies wherein researcher subjectivity was relied upon, triangulator processes ensured quality and legitimacy of database documentation, leading to effectual remedial suggestions. Through an analysis of varied departmental instances, as recounted through

individualized lived experiences, this research study sought to utilize a methodological approach in interpretation, developing emerging themes, allowing for the creation of solutions, unearthing phenomenon, further sustaining this demographic in corporate environments.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

4.1 Research Question One

How does intersectionality impact corporate departure?

This qualitative exploration of the aforesaid phenomenon of black women departing from corporate America toward probable entrepreneurial endeavors has unveiled explanatory reasoning concerning intersectional identities and an accelerated exodus of this demographic. Through the research and examination of various databases with an interpretive archival research methodology, this longitudinal study produced a variety of effectual causes as it relates to recent corporate departures all surrounding individual identifiers related to intersectionality, namely race and gender.

As aforesaid, for the purposes of verification, validation, and credibility, a triangulator process was performed through cross-source comparison of a range of archival database documentation, including review papers, research briefs, research articles, and review articles with a convergent pattern detailing the prevalence of microaggressions, sexism, and racism within corporate environments, leading to the emergence of Theme 2: Double-Discrimination and Bias. The same triangulator process was performed, assisting in the emergence of Theme 4: Underrepresentation of Leadership, developed through a cross-source comparison of original research, original articles, research reports, research papers, original research articles, and systematic literature reviews, which detailed a collective convergent pattern of equity and leadership underrepresentation as it concerns intersectional identities (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Cross-Source Comparison

	Theme	Source ID #'s	Source Types Compared	Convergent Pattern
Theme 1	Corporate Exits & Entrepreneurship	8, 19, 37, 39	Literature review, original article, review article, insight report	The phenomenon of corporate women and their subsequent move toward entrepreneurship
Theme 2	Double-Discrimination & Bias	4, 23, 34, 39	Review paper, research brief, research article, review article	The prevalence of microaggressions, sexism, and racism in corporate environments
Theme 3	Departmental Policy/Law	17, 19, 23, 28, 29, 31, 40	Research article, original research report, editorial special issue, research report, original article	Advocacy and overhaul of departmental DEI initiatives surrounding mentorship, sponsorship, and equity
Theme 4	Underrepresentation in leadership	3, 5, 9, 22, 30, 31	Original research, original article, research report, research paper original research article, systematic literature review	Equity and leadership underrepresentation of intersectional identities

Participant study details concerning intersectionality leading to conclusive findings include a 10-participant study on black women managers explaining how their progression was impacted and hindered by gender and racial bias and a Lean In & McKinsey & Co. study of 590 companies encompassing 22 million individuals discussing race and gender, managerial advocacy, senior leader interaction, and promotion and advancement opportunities. A research study surrounding bias was also considered noting systematic exclusion of women of color, ineffective diversity initiatives and a lack of accountability. Additionally, study results from a 10-participant study on intersectional phenomenology surrounding discrimination, intersectional identifiers and prejudice and challenges encounters, was drawn from.

This research question is categorized under Theme 2: ‘Double Discrimination and Bias,’ exploring the effects and impact of the double-jeopardy hypothesis by which two or more identifying characteristics, in this case gender and race, intersect and culminate, contributing to compounding outcomes due to one’s marginalized and intersectional identity in departmental settings.

Lived experiences surrounding the aforesaid concepts and occurrences within workplace settings detailed patterns of double discrimination as foretold through narrative related to black women explaining personal experiences of this demographic citing that “They face a double glass ceiling one that is racial, and one that is gendered” (Newman et al, 2025) and also that “Black women are discriminated against both because they are women and because they are Black. The combined effects of this double discrimination can be greater than the sum of its parts” (‘Lean In: State of Black Women’ 2020).

Additionally, it was commented that “The dominant intersectional perspective is the double jeopardy hypothesis, which suggests that people with more than one marginalized identity experience the cumulative disadvantage of stigmatization (Atkins, 2023). It was further detailed that “Women of color are subjected to multiple forms of oppression at work because of their multiple marginalization. They experience compounded and magnified forms of discrimination, referred to as double jeopardy, illustrating the effects of overlapping systems of oppression”. (Salari et al., 2025).

Moreover, concerning identified patterns of double discrimination, it was added that “Women of color, for example, are more likely to face "double jeopardy,"

experiencing both sexism and racism in the workplace. They are often excluded from diversity initiatives that focus on either women or racial minorities in isolation. This exclusion perpetuates their marginalization and reinforces systemic inequalities within corporate environments” (Hwang, 2024).

Concerning bias, patterns emerged by way of narrative of lived experiences, detailing that “Research suggests that Black women experience a more significant burden of unconscious biases and racial microaggressions than their white counterparts” (Branch & Kalzelnik, 2023). Additional patterns identified surrounding bias divulged that “Contemporary forms of discrimination are often subtler, manifesting through implicit biases, microaggressions, and institutional barriers” with further comment citing that “Conversely, cultures that tolerate microaggressions, bias, or exclusionary practices perpetuate discrimination” (Hwang, 2024) with added evidence of bias detailing that “Microaggressions that undermine women’s abilities are rooted in performance bias” (‘Lean In’, 2024).

Theme 4: ‘Underrepresentation of Women’ also emerged from database research related to this study inquiry surrounding intersectionality, examining the resulting implications of continued discrimination, leading to dwindling numbers concerning the presence of this demographic. Lived experiences concerning the theme of underrepresentation of women in workplace settings assisted in the unfolding of patterns, as observed through divulged narrative, detailing personal departmental occurrences.

Recurring narrative leading to patterns surrounding underrepresentation concerning lived experiences foretold include remedial commentary such as “To alleviate

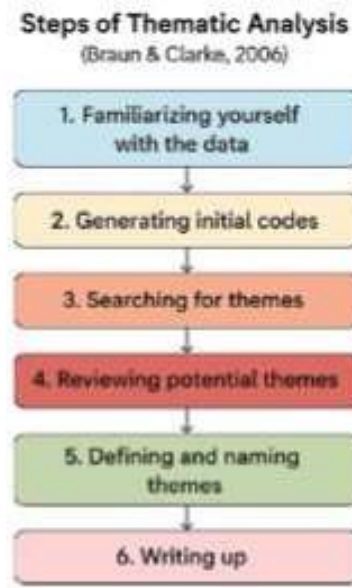
the underrepresentation of Black women in managerial roles, it will take more than companies making a statement condemning racism and racial inequality if the focus is genuinely on diversity and inclusion” (Ferguson & King, 2023). Added sentiments included “In corporate America, Black women remain the highest demographics that are underrepresented in management roles. Persistent management underrepresentation is due to gender and racial bias, not education, experience, or skillset. Despite the underrepresentation and gender and racial biases, Black women continuously pursue management roles in the workplace” (Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023).

Additional patterned observances detailed recurring narrative related to underrepresentation of black women entailed the following “One large scale study found that minority women were more likely to quit their jobs than were White women or visible minority and White men. The gender composition of an organization is also a significant predictor of women choosing to leave, with a lower representation of women related to lower feelings of fit and higher turnover among women” (Hing et al., 2023) with additional recurring patterns surrounding underrepresentation and race detailing that “Racial discrimination impacts an employer’s capability to recruit, retain, or promote top talent and negatively impacts job satisfaction and overall organizational success. The lack of inclusive employee representation in demographics, including the representation of Black women in mid to senior-level leadership positions is a problem” (‘U.S. Department of Labor,’2025).

The emergence of theme 2 and theme 4 unfolded through thematic analysis, as detailed by Ahmed et al. (2025) whom incorporated the Virginia Braun and Victoria

Clarke 6-phase framework (2006), detailing the steps by which thematic development is initiated and completed, as illustrated in figure 4 (below):

Figure 4: Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's 6-phase framework



Familiarization of datasets related to double-discrimination, intersectionality, bias, and underrepresentation were examined, generating initial codes, providing the foundation to begin the search and review of potential themes wherein codes were grouped and subsequently defined to demonstrate patterned occurrences. Initial codes for theme 2 included bias, black women, critical race theory, discrimination, gender, intersectionality, lived experience, marginalization, microaggressions, minorities, participant, sexism, woman, and woman of color. Theme 4 initial codes encompassed leadership, power dynamics, and underrepresentation, as illustrated in figure 5 and 6, respectively, through Atlas.ti, as displayed below:

.

Figure 5: Theme 2 Initial codes (Atlas.ti)

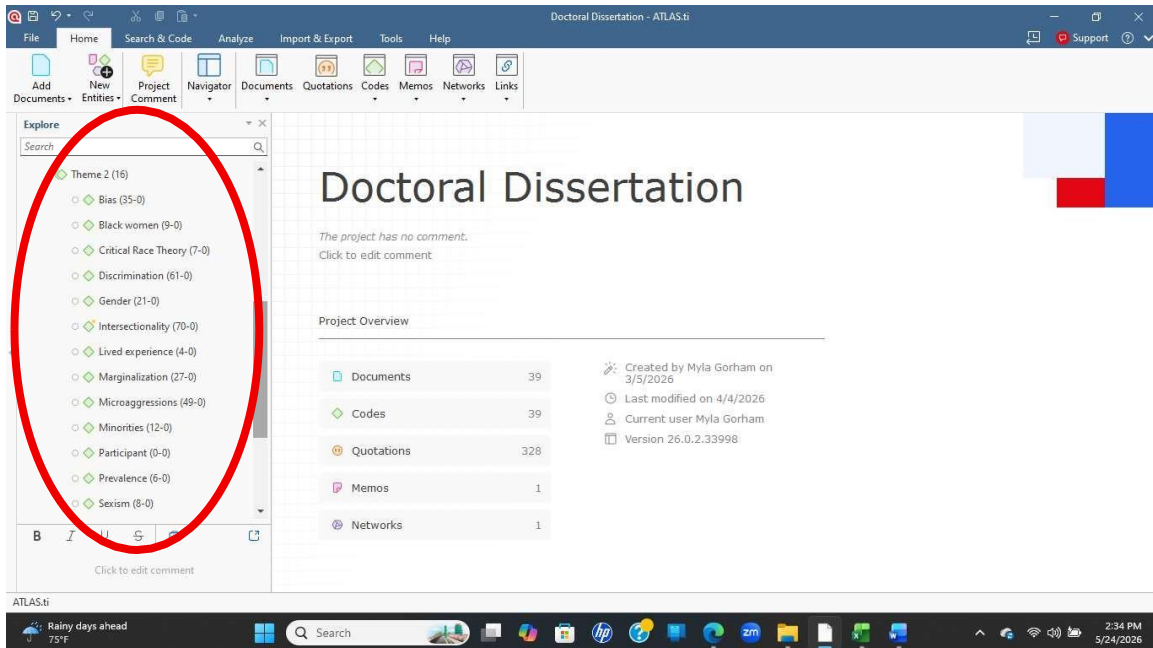
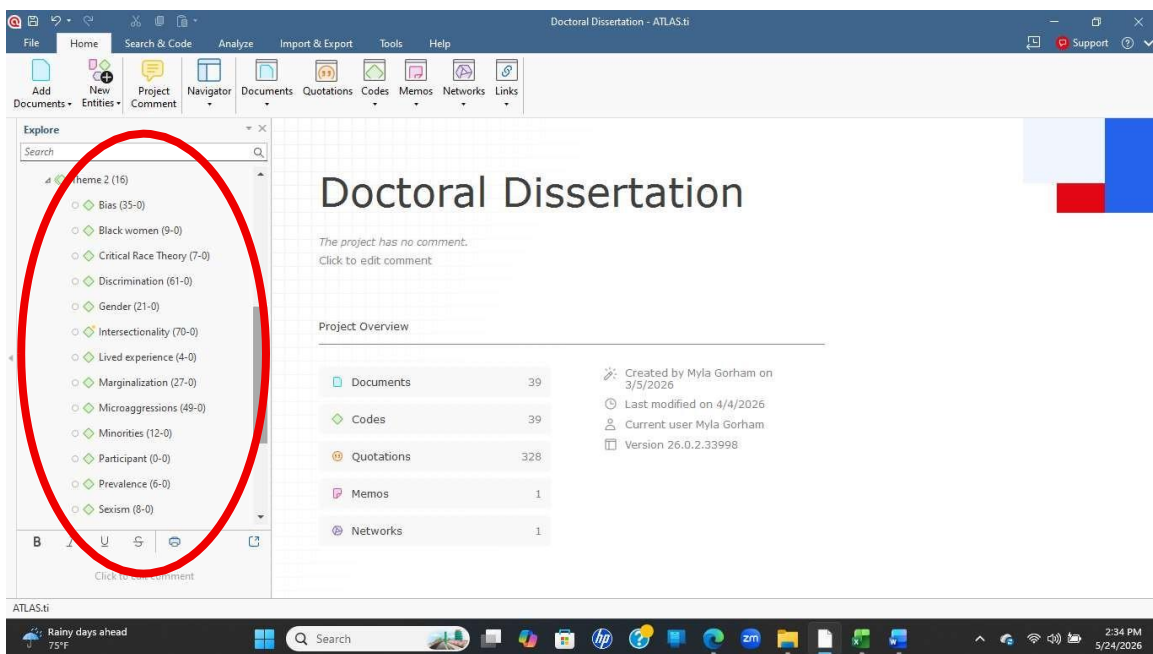


Figure 6: Theme 4 Initial codes (Atlas.ti)



Recurring patterned occurrences included repeated mentions of adverse intersectional experiences, discrimination, the “only” experience within departmental settings, the “black ceiling”, stereotypical encounters, and microaggressions, leading to the forthcoming research findings surrounding governmental and departmental policy, double-discrimination, barriers, implicit bias, underrepresentation, intersectional invisibility, autonomy and flexibility, hostile environments, in addition to a lessening of sponsorship of this marginalized group.

Policy

Research documentation originating from archival databases surrounding intersectionality and its impact on corporate departures discloses governmental and departmental policies as significantly effectual concerning workplace departures. As commented, the development of varied policies that were purposed to protect black women from discriminatory treatment based upon identifying factors is said to, in many cases, neglected to be properly implemented, inadequately addressing the primary challenges of race and gender, leaving black women vulnerable in workplace setting due to their marginalized status (Atkins, 2023). Database documentation reveals that law and policy are traditionally designed to identify and address only one intersectional characteristic, neglecting to consider multiple intersecting identities, impacting the tenure of black women.

Double discrimination

Double-discrimination or ‘double jeopardy’ was also found to be a significant cause and effect as experienced by black women within corporate environments thereby

contributing to early exits. The ‘intersectional exit’, the double-glass ceiling was found to be a significant barrier as it concerns the career pathway of those whom behold intersectional identities, encompassing a marginalized race and gender as do black women.

Barriers

Systemic barriers were additionally found to highly contributory to workplace departures, impeding the advancement of black women toward management positions due to the ‘broken rung’ effect, impeding the upward mobility of those seeking senior-level positions (Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023). The ‘double glass ceiling’, also effectual impacts black women immensely adding addition hardship and challenges to women whom continue to experience blockades as they navigate corporate spaces. A lack of career advancement programs catered to women of color additional is said to create barriers to progress and promotion, leading to frustration and thought of self-employment.

Implicit Bias

Archival database research has revealed the persistent challenge of bias as it concerns black women and their workplace experiences with findings detailing efforts of corporate America implementing DEI initiatives that address job placement and training program bias that neglect to be effectual to the intended target demographic, as commented by Hwang et al. (2024), leading to stalled attempts to dismantle structural inequities that are blocking this marginalized group from higher achievement. Thelma & Ngulube (2024) also find that black women whom have already ascended into leadership

positions are experiencing implicit bias attributable to their intersectional identity while simultaneously incurring this treatment from those whom hold similar senior position calling for proactive efforts to raise awareness of this discriminatory treatment for the purpose of retainment of this demographic

Underrepresentation

Underrepresentation, says authors, is an additional significant cause for workplace departures concerning black women due to visibility concerns as it relates to marginalized groups. Hwang et al. (2024) cites ineffective policy as the reasoning for decreases in representation arguing that privilege groups are inadvertently receiving the benefits of these programs with a lessened presence of black women in visual roles.

Intersectional Invisibility

Hing et al. (2024) adds that intersectional invisibility is greatly influential in the corporate experience concerning black women. The intersectional invisibility model explains that those individuals with multiple marginalized identities be categorized and stereotyped based upon how prototypical they are to their group often result in oppression for black women, intensifying group stereotypes, which can lead to workplace tension and departmental upheaval wherein the environment is rendered nonconductive to longevity and sustainability.

Autonomy & Flexibility

The literature researched strongly suggests the dire need for autonomy and flexibility within one's work schedule given personal responsibilities and individual life's goals as contended by black women seeking a greater desire for ownership of their

processes or a move toward self-employment endeavors. Hussin et al. contends the prioritization of the aforesaid has grown significantly due to increases in organizational culture and gender bias as inhabited by those with intersection identities whom cite system workplace stressors as reasoning for exploring the phenomenon of self-employment.

Lack of Sponsorship

An inability to secure sponsorship, training, and development from departmental staff was found to be immensely impactful to the black woman's tenure, inspiring early exits due to inaccessibility to senior leaders and visibility concerns.

Hostile Environments

Unwelcome or hostile working environments were found to be prevalent and contributory concerning the corporate experience of marginalized demographics. Thelma & Ngulube (2024) explain the presence of discriminatory behavior as experienced by women in leadership positions, contributing to feelings of alienation and imposter syndrome, challenging and often inhibiting advancement. Stereotypes incurred by women in leadership roles were said to undermine confidence, influencing perceptions and expectations of this demographic, creating an inopportune workplace atmosphere. The use of dismissive gestures and subtleties was said to lessen opportunities for advancement resulting in an acceleration in departures.

Given the current climate concerning the diminishing of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within departmental settings as a result of reduced efforts to fund and support diverse workforces, departures of those whom behold intersectional identities

have dramatically increased according to the ‘U.S. Department of Labor’ (2025) whom reported an approximate 300,000-count workforce exit of black women in 2025 within a three-month period. Corresponding headlines as it concerns the aforesaid departures include ‘Trump-era federal layoffs hit black women the hardest’, ‘The American job market is broken and black women are paying the price’ in addition to ‘Laid off or pushed out: The impact of more than 300,000 black women leaving the workforce’, demonstrating the gravity of diminished support of diversity within corporate settings.

This following the current administration’s advancing of ‘Executive Order 14151’ in January of that same year, purposed with the objective of ending wasteful governmental DEI programs and initiatives, directly impacting marginalized demographics, including black women whom rely upon these installed programs to further their corporate trajectories whom incurred the brunt of the impact of this enacted legislation (‘Executive Order 14151,’ 2025).

As DEI within departmental settings is threatened concerning continuance, as displayed in news reports citing ‘DEI under siege’, ‘Trump Executive Orders take aim at DEI’, and also ‘The war on DEI’, the current administration is showing no signs of slowing down with newly enacted legislation, as of March of 2026, targeting federal contractors and DEI adherence policies and procedures (Executive order 14398), leading to increased difficulty in the solidification of government contracts for institutions whom have strong DEI policies and procedures in place to retain those with diverse backgrounds, including black women.

Due to the double-discrimination and bias faced by black women whom encompass two identities, contributing to their minority status, the lessened support, as carried out by policy changes, has led to decreases in sponsorship, diminishing leadership and advancement opportunities, culminating to lay-offs and voluntary departures, attributable to adverse workplace encounters and experiences with departmental and governmental law leading the cause.

An interpretive review of archival data in addition to current developments surrounding intersectional identities within departmental settings, as it concerns black women, has unveiled the potential of grave long-term effects, impactful to the sustainability and longevity of the black woman's corporate career path, influencing daily departmental experiences in addition to a shortening of overall tenure.

The recent dismantling for DEI initiatives by way of newly enacted executive orders has barraged those with intersectional identities, removing long-held protections that once ensured elevated equity in corporate environments, producing an increasingly level setting as it relates to opportunity and advancement in one's career, especially for minorities. Black women, as foretold through recurring narratives, detailing their lived experiences, are bearing the brunt of the impact of these policy changes, which act to reduce this demographic's presence at an accelerated rate.

The long-term effects of ongoing losses in support relating to one's intersectional existence, subjectively speaking, are probable to lead to disproportionate numbers surrounding retention and an absence of this demographic from corporate environments

with probable increases in individual businesses as black women are highly educated and their decreased presence from corporate spaces is illogical.

4.2 Research Question Two

How do microaggressions affect departmental experiences?

Archival database research of microaggressions, as experienced by black women in corporate environments, was conducted with the purpose of determining and ascertaining the varied effectual outcomes of prolonged and prevalent discriminatory treatment within departmental settings.

This research question is categorized under Theme 2: ‘Double Discrimination and Bias’, exploring the effects and impact of the double-jeopardy hypothesis by which two or more identifying characteristics, in this case gender and race, intersect and culminate, contributing to compounding outcomes as it relates to the aftereffects of prolonged microaggressions. Theme 4: ‘Underrepresentation in leadership’ also emerged from database research related to this study inquiry surrounding microaggressions, as experienced in departmental settings, examining the resulting implications of continued discriminatory behavior, leading to dwindling numbers concerning the presence of this demographic in workplace settings.

As aforesaid, for the purposes of verification, validation, and credibility, a triangulator process was performed by way of a cross-source comparison of a range of archival database documentation, including review papers, research briefs, research articles, and review articles with a convergent pattern detailing the prevalence of microaggressions, sexism, and racism within corporate environments, leading to the

emergence of Theme 2: Double-Discrimination and Bias. The same triangulator process was performed, assisting in the emergence of Theme 4: Underrepresentation in Leadership, developed through a cross-source comparison of original research, original articles, research reports, research papers, original research articles, and systematic literature reviews, which detailed a collective convergent pattern of equity and leadership underrepresentation as it concerns intersectional identities.

A detailed textual search of qualitative source material was carried out with findings ranging from halted career progression, including barriers and burnout increasingly reported in addition to ineffective and shifting organizational cultural practices and procedures given the structural denial and non-response concerning reported infractions of discriminatory conduct. Diversity, equity, and inclusion was additionally cited as impactful as it relates to departmental experiences attributable to inequities, inclusivity, sexism, and ‘othering’. Employee satisfaction, commitment, productivity, efficiency, and retention are additional outcomes of microaggressions within corporate environments as were the development of coping strategies to endure disparaging and discriminatory treatment.

Participant studies utilized and incorporated into this qualitative report surrounding experiences and prevalence of microaggressions include studies related to infantilization and racialized microinvalidations, a 2,998-participant study reporting racial discrimination and microaggressions in the workplace, and a 10-participant study on discrimination as incurred by black women whom hold leadership positions in corporate America. Additional studies implemented and considered to conclude findings

include a 281 company, 15,000 employee study on women in the workplace, a 140-participant study on experiences surrounding affirmative action, equal employment, and meritocracy as well as an intersectional discriminatory research study performed on women of color, examining the pervasiveness of microaggressions and reporting frequency.

Moreover, a 33-participant study concerning black women and obstacles endured in addition to racism and sexism incurred and motivating factors on the pathway toward entrepreneurship was drawn from.

Career Progression

Obstacles on the pathway toward career progression was also cited, through research materials, as a significant result of prolonged microaggressions as reported and incurred by marginalized demographics such as black women. Microaggressions are said to lead to detrimental outcomes due to the impact these subtle daily slights have on one's daily routine, affecting one's wellness and impeding one's progress concerning upward movement toward senior roles.

It is also commented that ongoing exposure to discriminatory treatment has resulted in negative views of one's position, building walls and blockades that stall growth and attainment of career goals (Newman et al., 2025). Through an evidenced research study, these elements all prove contributory to early departures concerning one's profession.

Departmental Culture & Practices

Database research into archival documentation has concluded that the presence of a proficient organizational culture and practices is immensely impactful concerning departmental experiences of black women in corporate America. Also, Atkins (2023) exclaims, concerning microaggressions, findings argue that the existence of black women within racialized and gendered organizations are observing constraint in the organizations ability to respond and react to reports of discriminatory instances, allowing for a culture of debasement and degradation to those on the receiving end. Although, there were said to be attempts at remedying behavioral concerns within departmental settings, little or no resolution came to fruition in a palpable way. This structural denial and non-response to calls for alleviation from the marginalized is a primary cause of disinterest in one's professional role, prompting early departures (Newman et al., 2025).

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Authors have unveiled findings derived from participant studies and organizational research documentation, concluding that diminishing efforts toward remedial policies and practices surrounding marginalized demographics is decreasing progression while simultaneously increasing the acceleration of departmental exits.

Entrants from non-traditional backgrounds, such as black women, may be admitted to environments where dominant groups are the generality, but research shows that these marginalized groups encounter challenges and difficulties in accruing equity concerning social and cultural capital as compared to their counterparts, attributable in

part to ongoing racism and sexism, building systemic inequities surrounding promotion through everyday microaggressions (Beagan et al. 2024).

Database research has also uncovered a lack of inclusivity within corporate settings, as it concerns black women, playing a critical role in the employee's perceptions of corporate culture, perceiving the decreased prioritization of DEI initiatives contributory to negative sentiments as it relates to departmental experiences.

Additionally, the practice of “othering”, a microaggression subcategory that typifies marginalized demographics, leading to demeaning interactions, is said to erode one's sense of belonging, as commented by ‘Lean In’ (2024), resulting in outsider syndrome, which often builds thoughts of exiting and self-employment.

Employee experience/perception

Overall job satisfaction was found to be quite impactful, studies show, concerning the experiences of black employees whom express lower levels of positive departmental feelings given treatment incurred related to criminality and invisibility. Authors also revealed linkages between racial microaggressions and retention efforts, citing higher turnover due to a lessened organizational commitment, attributable to increases in discriminatory conduct in departmental settings (Newman et al., 2025).

Qualitative research, as conducted by Salari et al. (2024), surrounding employee productivity and efficiency, has also identified the negative impact microaggressions are having on the performance of departmental members, a result that is consequential to both the employee and organization, effectual to career progressions as well as business growth and reporting projections.

Coping Strategies

Concerning black women and coping strategies as practiced in departmental settings, qualitative methods, as highlighted by Atkins (2023), have uncovered reactionary techniques developed by this demographic as a response to microaggressions endured in workplace settings. Author findings conclude that black women, whom are marginalized and minimized in identity, are perceived as hypervisible, leading to targeted attacks, including stereotyping and bias sentiments. Black women, in response to these microaggressive attacks, utilize mentors, social media, religion, and self-validation, and “shifting”, the altering of one’s identity in public spaces to conform to societal norms, all contributory to probable thoughts of a corporate exodus.

Concerning the current state of discriminatory conduct within departmental settings, the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) has experienced an upsurge in complaints from black women and other marginalized demographics, citing losses and mishandlings related to imbalances surrounding advancement opportunities and compensation practices. The current administration is also under significant scrutiny for the lessening of protections as it relates to DEI policies within institutions, which has trickled down to the EEOC with various headlines reporting ‘Trump administration will ignore civil rights violations in the workplace’ and also ‘Trump wants to stop tracking job data by race and sex’, in addition to news that includes ‘EEOC moves to end EEO-1 reporting on race and gender’.

The implications of elevations in complaints concerning microaggressions and other forms of discrimination within workplace settings is vast especially given the

impending plans of the current administration whom are in consensus with the EEOC's move to cease the reporting of race and gender, consequential to black women whom encompass intersectional identities whom may not be given the same priority nor attention as it relates to complaints of workplace improprieties, leaving this demographic with lessened support, lesser advancement opportunities, possible hostile working conditions with thoughts of an early departure from corporate settings.

Interpretive review of discriminatory conduct within departmental settings as reporting by archival database sources in addition to new and developing occurrences has indicated that black women endure vast forms of discriminatory behavior, most notably microaggressions in workplace environments that are gravely influential as it relates to daily interactions in addition to being significantly impactful to one's visibility, furtherance, and trajectory. The gravity of the toll that the aforesaid microaggressions can have on career progression, efficiency, job satisfaction, and overall culture is immense, often leading to decreases in corporate productivity, lessening departmental expectations surrounding performance and results.

Given the recent upsurge in complaints of discriminatory conduct, as reported by the EEOC, surrounding adverse workplace experiences, as foretold by protected groups, including black women in conjunction with the EEOC's pending plans to end the reporting of both race and sex, a move which has a significant potential to diminish the importance of those with intersectional identities, there is increased probability, subjectively speaking, of this groups grievances being deprioritized given the absence of individualized demographical data.

As foretold through recurring narrative of lived experiences surrounding departmental microaggressions, black women stand to incur a series of setbacks in the event of unchecked imbalances related to discriminatory treatment in workplace settings and if the pending changes, as carried out by the current administration, are any indication, the lessened protections and prioritization of this demographic is probable to lead to early corporate exits given the impracticality of prolonged attacks devoid of resolution.

4.3 Research Question Three

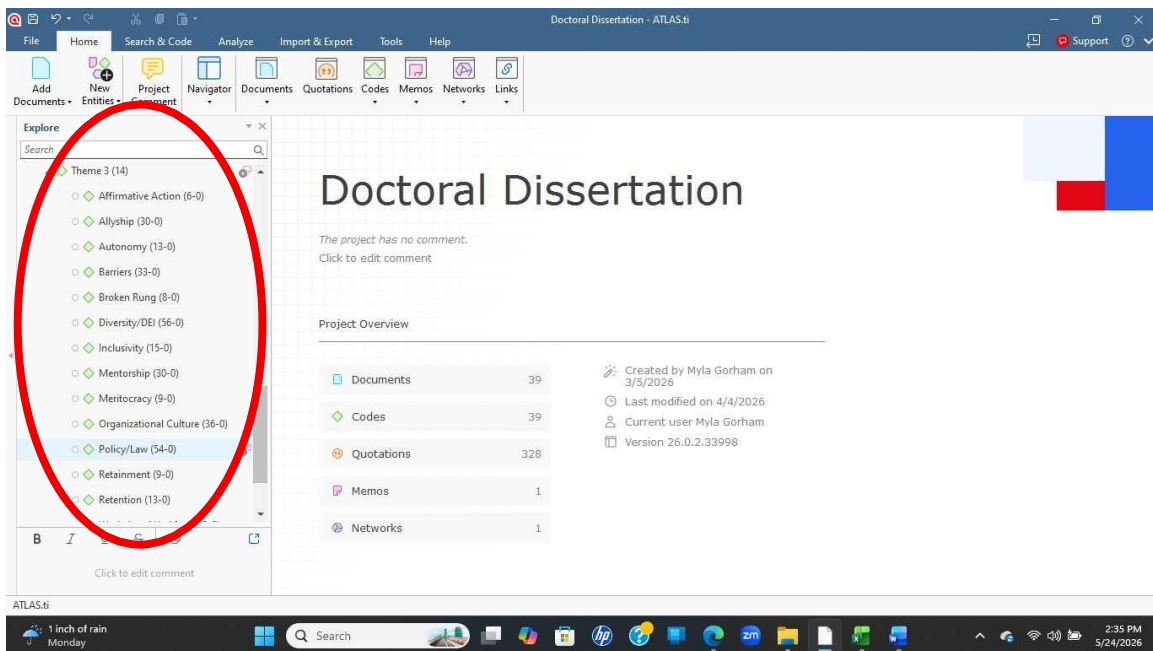
How and why do allyship and mentorship prove impactful to the career trajectory of black women?

In-depth qualitative archival research into the effects of allyship and mentorship, as rendered by departmental leadership, has concluded the immense impact the availability of such resources have on the aforesaid demographic due to the increased need for advocacy of this talented and skilled group. Textual analysis of scholarly journal articles, organizational reports, and research study materials has revealed the rationale behind increasing the availability of these departmental resources to marginalized groups whom benefit greatly from the sponsorship and interpersonal workplace championing from senior members.

This research query is categorized under Theme 3: Corporate Policy/Law, involving and detailing departmental procedural processes by which organizational members follow and abide by, acting as a guide to the daily operations of diverse functionalities. Recurring patterns that assisted in the development of theme 3 emerged

through coding and narrative of lived experiences related to corporate policy/law. Initial codes generated for theme 3 include affirmative action, allyship, autonomy, barriers, broken rung, diversity/DEI, inclusivity, mentorship, meritocracy, organizational culture, policy/law, retainment, retention, and workplace/workforce, as illustrated in figure 7 through Atlas.ti.

Figure 7: Theme 3 Initial codes (Atlas.ti)



A triangulator process for the purposes of verification, validation, and credibility was performed for the cross-source comparison of archival database materials, which incorporated research articles, original research reports, editorial special issues, and research reports in addition to original articles, encompassing a convergent pattern of the advocacy and overhaul of departmental DEI initiatives surrounding mentorship, sponsorship, and equity for the aforesaid Theme 3: Corporate Policy/Law.

Narrative concerning patterned behaviors and recurring subject matter related to lived experiences within departmental institutions surrounding corporate policy/law and remediation divulged that “Recommendations include integrating intersectionality into corporate policies, promoting transparent recruitment and promotion practices, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures”. Added patterned commentary concerning organizational policy included “Women of color, for instance, are underrepresented in leadership roles and are more likely to experience wage penalties compared to their white male counterparts. Corporate cultures, which often reflect broader societal inequities, can either perpetuate or challenge these disparities” and also that “Women of color may experience both gender and racial biases, making their experiences distinct from those of white women or men of color. Research has demonstrated that these compounded biases result in disparities in hiring, promotion, and pay, as well as unique challenges such as isolation and exclusion from informal networks” (Hwang, 2024).

Surrounding law, recurring sentiments include “Law or policy is designed to see either one identity or the other, rather than the distinct needs produced at the intersection of both, such laws and policies fail to consider and serve identities representing such intersections” (Bhattacharyya et al., 2024) with additional content divulging that “The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of personal identity, such as race, color...Black women were denied jobs, terminated, threatened with disciplinary action, and passed over for career advancement opportunities” (‘U.S. Department of Labor,’ 2025) demonstrating

the dire need for improved and elevated departmental policy and law to more effectively address the needs of a diverse populous.

The impact of allyship and mentorship on the experiences of black women, leading to or hindering one's corporate trajectory is proven to be influential. The advocacy of organizational policy reform as it concerns diverse groups is of the utmost importance for the purpose of sustaining intersectional identities. Concerning corporate trajectory, the impact of allyship and mentorship, as it relates to black women, was found to be quite effectual, says authors, whom cite factors such as demographical representation, job satisfaction, and career advancement as significant components in terms of the benefits of the availability of human capital to boost and bolster one's career pathway. Accessibility to leadership, a substantiated advantage, in addition to a strengthened organizational culture, inhabiting of coveted roles, thereby advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are all contributory and attributable to the availability of sponsorship.

Additionally, challenging of bias and racist practices, known to reduce discrimination, are also impactful concerning the departmental experiences of black women whom are encouraged and rallied behind as is general advocacy of one's talents and skillsets, removing barricades and barriers to leadership for those whom hold intersecting identities.

Participant studies evoked for the purpose of deriving conclusive findings include a 276 company, 27,000-participant study concerning women in the workplace, a 60-participant study researching women of color and their allied counterparts, in addition to a

445-participant study related to success methods and drivers influencing employees, advancing support and flexible work cultures, retainment of talent, and the presence of mentorship programs and supportive networks.

Underrepresentation

As commented by Sanni (2025), mentorship is increasingly emerging as a critical component in the the advancement of women in leadership, providing guidance and support concerning professional growth and development in a landscape where women and also minorities remain underrepresented in senior roles. Increased representation, says Branch & Kasztelnik (2023), is well-documented to build upon racial equity in workplace settings with black women projected to see a greater success with the incorporation of this departmental resource as the exclusion of women of color from these informal networks was named as a critical component concerning the perpetuation of workplace inequities, contributing to systemic marginalization (Hwang, 2024).

Job Satisfaction

It has also been unveiled through participant study that the establishment of mentorship programs, as rendered by businesses, and offered to black employees can provide a guidance and support that increases the probability of a lengthened tenure at one's organization (Guttermann, 2023), critical to the ongoing success of these types of program offerings.

Career Advancement

Women of color have seen career advancement as a result of corporate sponsorship programs and networks, allowing this demographic access to influential decision-makers

whom can vouch for their skills and attributes, enabling entrance in terms of senior leadership (Hwang, 2024). This increased investment in intersectional workplace populations, says ‘Lean In’ (2023), will allow for the identification and remediation of the “black ceiling” effect, by which women of color encountered halted progression due to their minority status.

Organizational Culture

Archival research has also revealed the benefits that mentorship provides to the culture of an organization, building interpersonal relationships that create and strengthen departmental practices and procedures. These allied personelle are said to provide a psychosocial report that is greatly needed for those whom are at the early stages of navigating the corporate ladder, acting as a role model to those whom seek advisement and support concerning career directives, allowing for a culture of cohesiveness and sponsorship. It is also added that allyship promotes meaningful progress toward the empowerment of teams, enhancing innovation and productivity (Kossek et al., 2024).

Leadership

The literature confirms and concludes that the lack of company sponsorship, namely allyship and mentorship, is immensely influential concerning inclusion surrounding priorities and strategic conversations related to organizational performance and direction, interactions that increase visibility and lead to promotion and leadership opportunities, citing that black women are often left with fewer chances to be noticed (‘Lean In: State of Black Women,’ 2020).

Black women in leadership, says Ferguson & King (2023), are themselves described as role models concerning anti-racism, in addition to allyship and mentorship, and are viewed as figure heads whom can provide the same level of advocacy as more dominant groups, establishing departmental visibility for diverse subordinates as well as leadership persons on equal levels of inhabitance. Also advocated for, as researched by Sanni (2025), is the development of mentorship models that hone and advance women in leadership, increasing competencies and contributing to innovative leadership, assisting in the closure of gender gaps, says global case studies, identifying mentorship as a critical component in the success of this gender.

Discrimination

Research conducted by ‘Lean In: State of Black Women’ (2020) has revealed tangible ways by which allyship can be practiced effectively within organizations, citing assertive behaviors, including challenging and opposing discriminatory language and treatment as observed against marginalized groups such as black women, allowing for increased inclusivity and protection of this demographic whom benefit the most from allied partnerships.

Kossek et al. (2024) also add that allyship is advantageous in that it improves intergroup dynamics, social cohesion, in addition to departmental effectiveness, all mechanisms of social justice, assisting in increasingly equitable workplace environments. Deterring and speaking out against discriminatory conduct in an effort to advance effective allyship can also dismantle barriers brought about as a result of biased behavior incurred from less visible groups (‘Lean In’ 2023).

DEI Initiatives

As gender inequities persist with the attainment of leadership positions within corporate America, women are held to a higher standard and often lack the opportunity to fill these vacancies. Advocating for improve policies and practices, says Hing et al. (2023), to build upon equity, creating networks and mentorship programs, is strongly encouraged to achieve an acceleration of women in these senior roles.

Inclusivity in workplace settings, adds Gutterman (2023), was found to bolster company culture, valuing diversity, which can greatly impact black employees in terms of furtherance, allowing for a welcoming departmental setting with programs geared toward this demographic and employee resource groups. Anti-bias training, inclusive leadership, and pay equity has the potential and ability to assist black women in increasing their representation, bringing about change and allowing for growth within one's organization for the purposes of sustainability, equitability, in addition to continued and lengthened tenure in corporate America (Miller et al., 2024).

New developments concerning black women in corporate America, diminished DEI, and the subsequent impact on mentorship, sponsorship, and allyship have produced corresponding headlines related to the resulting impact of the current administrations executive orders (Executive Orders 14151 & 14398), citing that “Mentorship and strategy help black women navigate workplace barriers and build leadership paths”, commenting on the vast importance of these resources within departmental institutions and their necessity in guiding an upward trajectory. Additional sentiment surrounding black women and dwindling workplace partnerships include “The Great Exodus: Why black

women are leaving the workforce” in addition to “Traditional mentorship is dead. Here’s what’s replacing it”, exploring remedial practices and solutions to lessened resources for once prioritized and protected demographics.

An interpretive review of archival data in addition to new developments surrounding the imperativeness of sponsorship, as it concerns the trajectory of black women in corporate America, indicates that visibility and leadership cultivation are of vast significance concerning the longevity of one’s career path, an imperative in building pathways toward senior leadership. Devoid of these partnerships, the probability of a lengthened tenure dissipates, leading to increases in departures.

The underrepresentation that currently exists, as it concerns this demographic, is a growing concern as it hinders and lessens the plausibility of those whom encompass intersectional identities from embodying these roles due to the invisibility of diverse subsets of persons, decreasing advancement opportunities as it relates to this highly degreed demographic, making it nonsensical, subjectively speaking, to scale back on the investment of this group.

4.4 Research Question Four

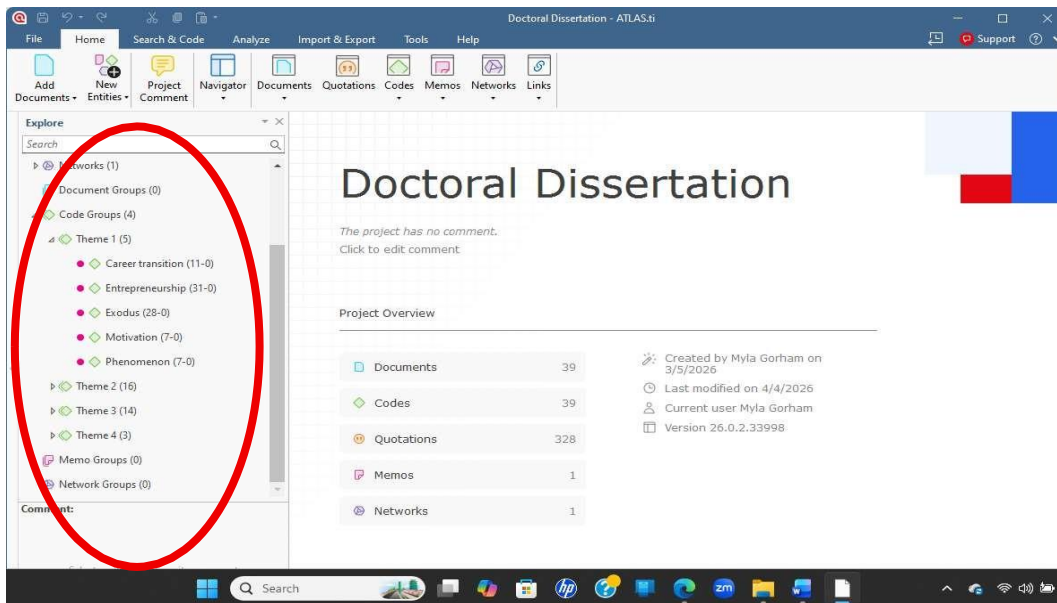
What are the implications of black women exiting corporate America?

Interpretive archival database research into the implications of the black woman’s departure from corporate America has derived conclusive findings concerning the causes and affects of this mass exodus into probable entrepreneurial endeavors. A detailed qualitative search and textual analysis of scholarly journals and organizational research materials has confirmed that this demographic is exiting their corporate roles at an

accelerated rate due to a myriad of reasons surrounding departmental experiences and individualized aspirations.

This particular research question assisted in the emergence of Theme 1: ‘Corporate Exits & Entrepreneurship’ in which the lived experiences of black women are explored, interpreted, and analyzed with the purpose of making sense of impactful departmental occurrences throughout one’s corporate lifecycle. As aforesaid, the Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke 6-phase framework was followed with the objective of properly capturing patterned narrative as detailed through lived experiences. These steps included familiarization with datasets, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, review of potential themes, defining and renaming these themes wherein analysis and interpretation commences. Initial codes generated to assist in the formulation of Theme 1 included career transition, entrepreneurship, exodus, motivation, and phenomenon, as illustrated in figure 8 through Atlas.ti.

Figure 8: Theme 1 Initial codes (Atlas.ti)



A triangulator process was performed for the purposes of verification, validation, and credibility, incorporating and examining archival database materials, which involved a cross-source comparison of documentation, including literature reviews, original articles, review articles, and insight reports, leading to the emergence of a convergent pattern under Theme 1: Corporate Exits & Entrepreneurship, detailing the phenomenon of corporate women and their subsequent move toward entrepreneurship.

Patterns concerning departures from corporate America to entrepreneurship, as it relates to black women, encompassed detailed narrative such as “The phenomenon of women leaving corporate jobs to pursue self-employment has gained significant attention due to the increasing prioritization of autonomy, flexibility, and personal wellbeing. Stressors such as rigid work cultures, gender biases, and work-life conflicts emerge as critical drivers of this career shift” (Lingappa & Rodriquez, 2023), displaying motivational factors leading to early exits. Also detail concerning this growing entrepreneurial demographic adds that “As data continues to show Black women exiting the workplace—1.32 percent decrease from 2019 to 2022—while also maintaining their ranking as the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs, we must view their transition to entrepreneurship as a strategy rather than a coincidence” (Branch & Kaszstelnik, 2023), demonstrating strategic reasoning.

Additionally, “Findings argue that for Black women, racialized and gendered organizations constrain their ability to respond and react in the face of discrimination, microaggressions, prejudice, and overt racism; and this emotional labor leads the

participants to exit the workplace and turn to entrepreneurship” (Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023), which shows an increased need for policy reform to deter the adverse work experiences that lead to consideration of self-employment. It is also detailed through research that “Entrepreneurship can be a means of emancipation from workforce discrimination, as evidenced in studies conducted in emerging economies” (Raimi et al., 2023), displaying persistent discriminatory treatment in departmental settings as a deterrent concerning retainment of this dwindling demographic within corporate settings.

“If stress-induced career shifts are understood and addressed effectively, organizations and individuals alike can benefit from improved career satisfaction and professional outcomes” (Lingappa & Rodriquez, 2023), this exclaiming the immense necessity of policy reform to maintain diverse workplace environments. Recurring narrative surrounding the black woman’s departure from corporate America also included “Experiences with racism and discrimination drive many Black workers to business ownership. Black entrepreneurs' experiences with racism and racial discrimination often acts as a catalyst to business ownership” with patterns emerging concerning entrepreneurship, detailing that “The transition to business ownership provides Black women with freedom—specifically, freedom from the constraints of racialized and gendered organizations” (Branch & Kasztelnik, 2023), displaying a steady migration toward self-employment for this demographic whom are the fastest growing group of new business owners in the United States.

Participant studies evoked for the purpose of interpretation and examination of this phenomenon include a 33-participant study concerning black women whom have

exited their corporate roles, a 445-participant research study on success factors as it relates to career transitions, in addition to a 60-participant study on women of color and their allied partnerships. Systemic literature reviews of scholarly articles were additionally drawn from.

The rationale, as explained by research scholars, into this marginalized demographic seeking an exit from their corporate roles toward self-employment and the subsequent implications are demonstrably ranging from an increased desire for business ownership stemming from negative departmental experiences, opening up a desire for autonomy and flexibility. The underrepresentation of this demographic within workplaces is predicted to dwindle as this group seeks exterior opportunities. For those whom have made no plans for self-employment, career shutdown is a looming threat as is economic instability with job losses on the rise for black women. Decreases in company engagement, retention, and loss of talent, from the organizational standpoint, are significant implications as is the loss of the stability and structure beheld of large organizations from the vantage point of black women whom shift toward less secure endeavors.

Additionally, a loss of equitability and sustainability, higher turnover, a lessened availability of training and development programs, involuntary job loss, and less attention toward systemic reform are proven outcomes to this phenomenon as are improvements in work-life balance, some headway in policy reform, the creation of more inclusive work environments, and the dismantling of oppressive structures.

Black women-owned businesses on the rise

Research shows an acceleration of departures as it concerns black women from corporate environments. Simultaneously, black women have maintained their rank as the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs. This notable exit from traditional workplace settings is attributable to the black womans desire for increased autonomy and flexibility within one's role that is difficult to obtain in more constrained environments.

Autonomy and flexibility are prioritized benefits, says Hussin et al. (2025), due to rigid work schedules, gender and racial bias, and work-life conflicts. Constraints, as aforesaid, including adherence to corporate protocol, stifled creativity, and a lack of control over one's processes and procedures are significant motivators to these increased departures (Quinto et al., 2025).

Demographical Underrepresentation

The underrepresentation of black women in the workplace is a significant implication of the ongoing exit of this demographic, which can lead to grave consequences if these departures are involuntary. The potential of a career shutdown as a result of adverse work experiences related to discrimination, debasement, and degradation can potentially lead to loss of future opportunities due to the deceleration of one's work trajectory and a lessened chance of exposure to opportunities once the exit from one's departmental setting has been executed.

Whether a departmental exit is involuntary, as a result of turnover such as a dismissal or layoff, as opposed to voluntary such as quitting or retirement, these exits, says Hing et al. (2023), contribute greatly to gender inequities because attrition is a means by which homophily is produced through organizations. This thereby brings about

an issue of retainment for women, leading to lowered investment and lessened advancement in furtherance concerning workplace gender balance.

Economic instability is an additional implication of black women exiting the workforce at growing numbers. As is reported and researched by Hing et al. (2023), recessions disproportionate impact women, which is effectual to gender equity in workplaces. A lessened or lack of gender balance within workplace settings is said to decrease opportunities for training and development for marginalized groups within organizations, making it increasingly difficult for those whom remain in departmental environments following these aforesaid exits.

The availability of training and development is linked, says Hing et al. (2023) to lower turnover intentions for women. When corporate investment into women is lessened due to a decreased presence of this demographic, retainment is increasingly urgent in terms of significance as is company engagement to lessen departures.

Dismantling of oppressives structures

Additional implications of these prior and impending departures, on a positive note, as commented by researchers, includes the dismantling of oppressive structures that hinder and also inhibit certain demographics from advancement in workplace settings. The move to anti-oppressive systems of practice that assist in the dismantling of marginalized groups is said to be a probable resulting outcome, achieving equitability (Bhattacharyya et al., 2024). Increasingly inclusive working environments, in tandem with inclusive policies and practices, can address ongoing occurrences related to the marginalized whether in a traitional setting or seeking a career transition. Systemic

reform is a probable outcome of these accelerated exits, highlighting the significance of advancement in the achievement of women in the workplace.

The current state of black women as it concerns their voluntary and involuntary migration toward entrepreneurship, as a result of adverse work experiences in addition to the current administration's move to diminish DEI initiatives, includes headlines encompassing "Done with corporate life, black women are starting businesses in droves" and "Why black women are turning job loss into a new era of entrepreneurship" in addition to "Black women are the fastest group of entrepreneurs, report shows", demonstrating the resulting impact of mass job losses as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor following DEI rollbacks put in place January of 2025 (Executive Order 14151) and March of 2026 (Executive Order 14398).

Additional trends and patterns surrounding losses in protections, as carried out by the current administration, immensely effectual to marginalized groups, especially black women, entail "The Great Rollback: Are DEI cuts driving black women to entrepreneurship?" and also "Trump's anti-DEI policies are hurting college educated black women" and moreover "5 Ways the Trump administration is eroding the economic stability of black women and the pathways used by black workers to move into the middle class", detailing and examining the economic impact of this demographic's diminishing presence from corporate America and the impending trickling down effect on the domestic market, effectual to additional demographics.

An interpretive review of archival data in addition to new developments surrounding black women and the implications of this once protected group exiting

corporate America are a vast underrepresentation of this demographic in corporate settings given the aforementioned and pending attacks on institutional DEI initiatives, partially attributable to a loss in funding for this group, leading to a mass exodus, which is set to have varied economic implications.

Given the current climate exhibiting an influx of new businesses, as initiated by black women, whom are the fastest growing entrepreneurial demographic seeking and launching individual startups, it is clear there are demonstrable economic implications of a dwindling demographic from the traditional workplace. As the U.S. Department of Labor continues to report on the rate at which black women are entering and exiting corporate positions due to desires of autonomy and flexibility in addition to other adverse reasonings, it is certain that administrative remedial action will be demanded by the public due to the trickling down effect mass job loss has on one demographic to another as demonstrated through correlative reporting on both gender and race. There is demonstrable evidence that without governmental intervention, as it relates to DEI legislation, departmental institutions will continue to support a defunding of a diverse populous, leading to a dissipation of this protected group and subsequently threatening the furtherance of added demographics.

4.5 Research Question Five

How can corporate America go about deterring departures and retain more black women?

In-depth qualitative research into various database source materials has gathered and concluded a plethora of remedial approaches to deter the accelerated exodus of black

women from corporate roles to possible forages into entrepreneurship. The phenomenon of this demographic seeking an exit from traditional workplace roles toward exterior opportunities has contributed to immense implications concerning discrimination, corporate procedures, diversity initiatives, and gender equality.

This particular research inquiry aided in the emergence on Theme 1: ‘Corporate Exits & Entrepreneurship’ in which lived experiences of black women are explored, interpreted, and analyzed with the purpose of making sense of impactful departmental experiences, identifying solutions to assist in the retainment of black women.

As aforesaid, a triangulator process was performed for the purposes of verification, validation, and credibility, incorporating and examining archival database materials, which involved a cross-source comparison of documentation, including literature reviews, original articles, review articles, and insight reports, leading to the emergence of a convergent pattern under Theme 1: Corporate Exits & Entrepreneurship, detailing the phenomenon of corporate women and their subsequent move toward entrepreneurship.

Research and participant study detail incorporated into this interpretative phenomenological archival study include a 10-participant study on black women in corporate America concerning discrimination in leadership, a 61-participant study on barriers to advancement as encountered by women in senior roles, a 2,998-participant study reporting racial discrimination in workplaces, in addition to a 281, 15,000-employee research study on women in the workplace.

Authors contend, through archival source documentation and research study, the primary strategical approaches corporations must incorporate and implement for the purpose of retainment of this dwindling and talented demographic to ensure diversity in organizational culture, equitability amongst counterparts in addition to financial and economic stability for corporate America.

It is advised and confirmed that increased initiatives concerning research of policy reform, as carried out by academic circles surrounding departmental processes and procedures, be called upon to bring about awareness to workplace grievances related to discrimination of marginalized groups, providing solutions to complex workplace dynamics. Understanding the factors that influence discrimination is additionally advisable for the purpose of more tailored solutions, preparedness, and renewed and amended policy. Documented quality metrics are also recommended actions to maintain account of workplace processes as well as progress of marginalized demographics such as black women to ensure effectiveness of departmental practices.

Additionally, the diversification of current leadership is requested and insisted upon for increased visibility of underrepresented groups as is increased partnerships between organizations to aid in recruitment and retainment efforts.

Increased research initiatives

For remedial purposes, as commented by Raimi et al. (2023), increased research initiatives have been recommended as it concerns departmental interfacing, policies, practices, and diversity. This particular approach is primarily driven by the desire for organizations to allow for increased transparency and accessibility of organizational wide

data as it pertains to departmental and employee performance and grievances, bringing about improved processes as researched, interpreted, and analyzed by academic theorists. The primary objective is to move toward increased equitability within workplace settings, reforming longheld policy.

Understanding factors that influence discrimination

Due to the effectual impact racial discrimination has on the employers ability to recruit, retain, and promote talent, there is an increased negative outcome concerning diversity practices and procedures impacting job satisfaction as well as overall organizational success. This lessened inclusivity, says Harris & Davis (2023), as it relates to employee representation in demographics, specifically black women, in mid to senior level leadership positions is problematic.

In order to deter to effects of ineffective policy concerning discriminatory conduct, it is advisable that organizations go through the process of understanding and ascertaining the factors that influence this type of treatmental and behavior in departmental settings, assisting in the prevention and alleviation of this financially draining and arduous culture of degradation and debasement amongst departmental leaders, thereby increasing productivity and competence in corporate environments.

Policy Reform

Policy reform is of the utmost importance as discriminatory behavior persists with interpersonal interactions manifesting at the institutional level embedded deep within corporate policy, regulations, and practices (Salari et al., 2023). Front and center are policy related practices concerning mentorship, leadership and development, bias-free

promotion, work-life balance, and increased flexibility and autonomy. Reform has amounted to a complete necessity to retain top talent as it concerns marginalized persons.

Quality Metrics

The implementation and utilization of quality metrics is also advisable, measuring key performance indicators to maintain and track departmental processes and procedures, assessing milestones on agreed upon intervals in tandem with the initiation of scorecards. The initiation of this remedial practice, collecting data and feedback, is proven to expedite the resolution of departmental disfunction as it relates to intersectional persons and oppressive or discriminatory treatment while simultaneously building pipelines to promotion, reducing gender bias, providing access to sponsorship to accelerate career trajectory for the purposes of increased job satisfaction and lengthening of corporate tenure (‘WEF,’ 2025).

Diversification of current leadership

Changes within departmental leadership is additionally recommended to build upon the knowledge acquired concerning quality metrics, leadership attainment, and performance, actively working toward diversification of current leadership teams, intentionally recruiting women from varied racial backgrounds for the purpose of increased visibility of underrepresented groups, building a model of an increasingly diverse workplace populous, moving away from the gendered and racialized prototypical models of the past, encouraging the increased presence of intersectional identities (Ruggs et al., 2023).

Increased partnerships between organizations

Additional remedial practices recommended to deter the departure of black women, ensuring retainment of this demographic include the bridging and building of partnerships between organizations to assist in the recruiting and retainment of underrepresented groups, shining a spotlight on this talented subset, highlighting diversity amongst gender and race.

Subject matter concerning retention strategies for black women amid the current administration's sharp and succinct diminishing of DEI within corporate settings has produced headlines, including "DEI's collapse and the cost to black women", "Trump ravaged DEI: What's next?" in addition to "The workforce is resetting in 2026. Here's what that means for black women". "How HR can navigate today's uncertain legal DEI landscape", detailing commentary and narrative related to the strategical retention of black women whom are baring the brunt of scaled-down DEI policies and practices within departmental institutions in addition to sentiment concerning "How to build an intersectional approach to talent management" amid the administrations executive orders, suggesting detail as it relates to retention strategies and intersectional identities in the context of present departmental policy, assessing the potential of varied legal frameworks are added subject matter experts that examine the imperativeness of elevated DEI practices.

An interpretive review of archival data in addition to new developments surrounding suggested retention efforts, as called upon by diverse groups to deter the acceleration in departures of once protected demographics, indicates that an intervention

and overhaul of departmental policy and procedure that addresses intersectional identities in addition to ongoing and persistent discriminatory conduct. This would facilitate the retaining, reskilling, and advancing this group, preventing undue losses and degradation.

The recurring narrative of DEI policy and procedures, as enacted and administered decades ago, being outdated, imbalanced, and misaligned with the current state of departmental institutions neglects to take into account the growing presence of diverse populations whom inhabit corporate spaces, leaving black women vulnerable to adverse and inequitable treatment, in violation of human rights clauses.

4.6 Summary of Findings

In summary, the phenomenon of black women exiting corporate America with endeavors toward entrepreneurship is substantiated and documented throughout a plethora of databases to have myriad causes, affects, and implications.

Key Takeaways:

Research questions addressed:

- 1) How does intersectionality impact corporate departure?
- 2) How do microaggressions affect departmental experiences?
- 3) How and why do allyship and mentorship prove impactful to the career trajectory of black women?
- 4) What are the implications of black women exiting corporate America?
- 5) How can corporate America go about deterring departures and retaining more black women?

Emergent Themes:

Concerning theme emergence, four significant themes materialized throughout the in-depth research and examination of the aforesaid research questions originating from archival database documentation. Through thematic analysis and examination, systematically interpreting qualitative datasets, the concerns surrounding intersectional personalities, discriminatory behavior and treatment, corporate sponsorship, and individualized workplace experiences, leading to early departures toward probable entrepreneurship were explored, manifesting in the identification of the following themes.

These four themes include:

Theme 1: Corporate Exits and Entrepreneurship

Theme 2: Double-discrimination and Bias

Theme 3: Corporate Policy/Law

Theme 4: Underrepresentation of Women

Research studies:

Systematic literature reviews in addition to small- and large-scale participant research studies were evoked for the purpose of quantifying and interpreting qualitative datasets, enabling in-depth exploration of phenomena in addition to textual analysis of the lived experiences of intersectional demographics.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, intersectionality has been found to be greatly impactful to one's corporate journey given the myriad experiences incurred due to encompassing marginalized identities, quite often creating environments of hostility having experienced

debasement, disparagement, and discriminatory treatment, including microaggressions. These adverse departmental experiences, as explored and retold by participants significantly impact interpersonal interactions, productivity, job satisfaction, growth opportunities, and tenure, leading to early exits.

Corporate sponsorship was additionally found to be effectual to the longevity and sustainability of corporate careers with allyship and mentorship proving to be an imperative to one's corporate trajectory and visibility within an organization. The impact of departmental sponsorship is vast, advancing and elevating beneficiaries of this long-held corporate offering. Concerning the black woman's departure from corporate America and associated significance, diminishing diversity initiatives, economic instability, lessened representation, and loss of a talented demographic are documented effects of this accelerated exodus, leading to increased calls surrounding policy reform and accountability as it concerns all stakeholders.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of Results

The in-depth research and examination of the phenomenon of black women exiting corporate America toward probable entrepreneurial endeavors has produced a variety of subject matter, including four primary emergent themes. By analyzing and interpreting meaningful sets of data through archival database research practices and procedures, the generation of codes and identification of patterns amongst related codes were developed and grouped into relevant and significant themes, contributing to the production of coherent and compelling narrative related to the lived experiences of black women whom journey through corporate America.

These four themes include:

Theme 1: Corporate Exits and Entrepreneurship

Theme 2: Double-discrimination and Bias

Theme 3: Corporate Policy/Law

Theme 4: Underrepresentation in Leadership

Theme 1: ‘Corporate Exits and Entrepreneurship’ was developed through the exploration of the narrative related to the myriad experiences black women encounter as it concerns departmental policies, practices, and procedures that lead to lesser workplace experiences, resulting in departures. A set of codes were grouped together to produce the aforesaid theme, including exodus, entrepreneurship, retention, phenomenon, career transitions, autonomy, microaggressions, and DEI. As reflected upon through database

research and exploration of documentation, “...the findings argue that for black women, racialized and gendered organizations constrain their ability to respond and react in the face of discrimination, microaggressions, and prejudice, and overt racism; and this emotional labor leads the participants to exit the workplace and turn to entrepreneurship” (Atkins, 2023). This persistent prevalence of discriminatory conduct, as remarked by research study participants, has contributed to the creation of inequitable and hostile working conditions, leaving some participants with little choice but to look outwardly.

Theme 2: ‘Double-discrimination and bias’ details the aforesaid experiences, as recounted by black women, that lead to these early exits from corporate positions. By clustering codes of similarity, subsequently identifying relationships between these code groupings in addition to created thematic maps, iterative refinement was achieved, resulting in the creation of Theme 2. Codes enacted for the purpose of the cultivation of the aforesaid theme include intersectionality, discrimination, microaggressions, prevalence, bias, marginalization, minorities, and gender. As described by Salari et al. (2024) “In the review of seven studies with a sample size of 2,998 people, the overall prevalence of microaggression and racial discrimination in the workplace was...73.6% and 18.8%, respectively”, detailing the trend of escalations in microaggressions against black women, experiencing a wider range of microaggression than a majority of demographics. In terms of specifics “These microaggression included degrading remarks about accents and clothes (microinsults), stereotyping remarks e.g., black women as aggressive (microinvalidations), but also about the ‘subtle ways’ they are held from career progression, in other words, they face a double glass ceiling one that is racial, and one

that is gendered”, says Newman et al. (2025), describing the impact and implications of intersectional identities.

Theme 3: ‘Corporate Policy/Law’ was spawned from occurrences related to workplace practices and procedures surrounding diversity initiatives, meritocracy, and the role of dominant groups in terms of effectual impact on black women’s departmental experiences and associated policies and governmental laws that contribute to these less than opportune working environments. To ensure cohesion and cohesiveness concerning the creation and development of this theme, codes including policy/law, organizational culture, Diversity/DEI, power dynamics, affirmative action, inclusivity, and discrimination were adapted and implemented, forming the basis for this subject matter. As commented by Atkins (2023), “Despite the development of policies geared toward protecting these workers, many organizations are not implementing the policies and many of the policies do not adequately address the issues at an intersection of race, gender, and age, and other characteristics of their identity. This leaves black women vulnerable at all stages of the occupational process, from application and interview to salary negotiation and exit”, detailing and explaining the great need for policy reform within departments for the purpose of properly addressing and remediating ineffective practices as long-held by archaic departmental heads.

Theme 4: ‘Underrepresentation in Leadership’ emerged through the research of departmental leadership practices amongst marginalized groups such as black women and dwindling representation as it concerns both gender and race in senior positions, contributing to a lack of organizational visibility of this demographic. Through the

revisiting of data extracts, refining boundaries, and selecting supportive narrative to align with research objectives, Theme 4 was created and refined. Code assignments for this subject matter include underrepresentation, retention, gender, Diversity/DEI, and sexism. Concerning underrepresentation, Hing et al. (2023) contributes that “The gender composition of an organization is also a significant predictor of women choosing to leave, with a lower representation of women related to lower feelings of fit and higher turnover among women”, demonstrating the dire need for women to inhabit leadership roles, encouraging this gender to remain in their roles, leading to greater retention within organizational settings due to the visibility and exposure allowed for concerning women in senior positions.

Patterns observed throughout the examination of the aforesaid research questions include the “broken rung” in which blockades exist at the first step toward management positions due to gender and racial imbalances, hindering promotional opportunities (Atkins, 2023). Other patterns noted by way of database query include sponsorship and interactions gaps entailing the lack of interaction between black women and senior leaders, says ‘Lean In: State of Black Women’ (2020), correlating to a lessened chance of sponsorship and opportunity for advancement. Insufficient management support is an additional pattern detected amongst black women who inhabit corporate positions, linking strongly with lessened sponsorship opportunities, slowing and often halting ascent.

Concerning trends accounted for through archival database research, the “only” phenomenon was mentioned, detailing the black woman's experience of being the “only”

individual in her department whom is of the same race, contributing to increased scrutiny and hypervisibility, says 'Lean In: State of Black Women,' (2020), whom also detailed escalated microaggressions and a neglect of intersectionality as some of the recent trends encountered within workplace settings.

Frameworks surrounding and guiding this research study include intersectionality theory in addition to critical race theory. Intersectionality, a study of how compounding affects of multiple identities, including race and gender, intersect and impact one's life's experiences, was incorporated and interwoven to assist in guiding the narrative as retold by black women. Critical race theory, a study of race, policy, and law and its effectual level of competence in dealing with myriad racialized encounters as lived out by minority populations, was combined with the aforesaid theory to frame policy reform as it relates to black women whom experience discriminatory injustices within workplace settings.

Triangulation for validation, verification, and credibility was achieved through both manual and computer assisted processes and procedures. Data triangulation was initiated manually through the incorporation of multiple data sources, including scholarly journal articles, governmental reports, organizational and individual research studies, white papers, policy drafts, and legal documentation for the purposes of comparing and contrasting the research findings across a myriad of organizations and participants.

An additional manual process conducted was methodological triangulation by which two methods, both qualitative and quantitative, were combined to properly examine and interpret the phenomenon in question. Qualitative data was assessed with the objective of analyzing the narrative of participants whom recalled lived experiences,

while quantitative data was implemented from the results of individual and organizational research studies conducted.

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis enabled the automated triangulation process, for purposes of credibility, by maintaining an audit trail of all codes and themes entered into the software system (Atlas.ti) in addition to the utilization of coding mechanisms to strengthen the validity of the conclusive research findings. Validation was achieved through the use of networks, interconnecting data sets for consistency, and through the application of code document and co-currence tables to cross verify findings. Verification was accomplished through the organization of codes and quotes, ensuring proper theme alignment and through the adaptation of visualization tools and cohesiveness with data.

Trustworthiness of data sources was measured and attained through the gauging of reputation and notability in addition to transferability of data in terms of alignment with similar research findings, terminology, and conclusive results. Dependability and confirmability were additional measurements carried out through manual checks of an objective and subjective nature.

This study fulfills a research gap related to the mass exodus of black women from corporate America and their subsequent move toward entrepreneurial endeavors as a result of a decreased commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as initiated by governmental legislative changes, leading to a lessening of employment protections for marginalized groups whom rely upon affirmative action programs to maintain tenure within corporate spaces.

5.2 Discussion of Research Question One

How does intersectionality impact corporate departure?

As commented by Atkins (2023) as it relates to research resultant findings “Despite the development of policies geared toward protecting these workers, many organizations are not implementing the policies and many of the policies do not adequately address the issues at an intersection of race, gender, age, and other characteristics of their identity. This leaves Black women vulnerable at all stages of the occupational process, from application and interview to salary negotiation and exit”.

These instances, as encountered by black women, are increasingly prevalent in their frequency of occurrence, contributing to the development of patterns and trends as it concerns intersectional departmental identities and experiences. One pattern detected throughout the archival research process, as it concerns intersectionality and its impact on corporate exits, is underrepresentation of marginalized demographics, including women and minorities.

“The representation of Black women dwindles at every subsequent level of the corporate hierarchy. They remain severely underrepresented in senior leadership compared to their share of the U.S. population” (‘Lean In: State of Black Women,’ 2020). This trend is apparent and visible throughout leadership, displaying a significant void of diversity in key senior roles, having a greater impact on the furtherance, ascent, and tenure of black women. One trend identified and associated with underrepresentation of women in leadership is the “only” phenomenon. The “only” trend, in this case, details

inhabiting the identity of being both the only woman and/or the only black individual within one's department.

As commented by 'Lean In: State of Black Women' (2020) "A major trend is that 54% of Black women are often the only person of their race in the room at work. This "only" experience creates a consistent pattern of increased scrutiny, where Black women feel they must represent their entire race and are under higher pressure to perform". These feelings, as detailed, often lead to stressful working conditions and burnout, highly contributory to early exits.

The topic of intersectionality and early workplace exits assisted in the emergence of Theme 2: 'Double Discrimination and Bias' wherein black women incur twice the impact of discriminatory treatment due to their double-minority status, which encompasses higher levels of stereotypical language and bias assumptions, significant obstacles to overcome. As detailed by the 'Institute for Women's Policy Research' (2025), "Black women face intersectional discrimination based on the unique compounding inequities of racism and sexism in the labor force, resulting in unequal treatment, workplace bias, systemic hiring biases, and limited advancement mobility". Theme 2 contributes meaningfully to the narrative of black women's adverse departmental experiences and departures due to how effectual and impactful discriminatory treatment is considering the interpersonal requirements and responsibilities of work completion.

Black women face these intersectional challenges as part of their daily workplace process due to regular interface with dominant groups, leaving it nearly impossible to

avoid adverse experiences related to one's identity. As commented by Atkins (2023) "US organizations commit to race and gender-neutral policies then conceal the fact that such policies are inadequate for protecting vulnerable populations, while simultaneously leaving these workers open to racist and discriminatory encounters." These encounters have been found to put a strain on one's workload, impacting productivity, efficiency, job satisfaction, and advancement opportunities. According to 'Lean In: State of Black Women' (2020) "49% of Black women feel that their race or ethnicity will make it harder for them to get a raise, promotion, or chance to get ahead."

As detailed by the aforesaid theme of 'Double Discrimination and Bias' in which black women are incurring a dual form of discrimination, "The dominant intersectional perspective is the double jeopardy hypothesis, which suggests that people with more than one marginalized identity experience the cumulative disadvantage of stigmatization." Because black women do not fit the prototypical norm in terms of what corporate America defines as the standard in appearance, profile, and background, this marginalized demographic is often treated atypically due to a lack of desire or effort toward accommodating diverse groups in attempts to maintain meritocrat values.

This lessened desire to stray from normalized policies and practices has left black women vulnerable to heightened levels of discrimination that may be difficult and challenging to overcome. The enactment of past legislation has little or no impact on today's landscape of elevated discriminatory attacks, as it concerns intersectional identities, with Hwang (2024) commenting that "Despite the establishment of anti-discrimination laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) in the U.S...biases

based on gender and race continue to pervade corporate workplaces. These legal frameworks often focus on addressing discrimination through a single-axis approach, failing to capture the compounded challenges faced by individuals at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities.” This once protected demographic is enduring a gradual acceleration in mistreatment that is demonstrable through the filing of discrimination lawsuits, as observed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), an organization responsible for the enforcement of federal laws, making it illegal to discriminate against individuals based upon personal identifying characteristics. As a means to maintain positioning in a corporate system that is decreasingly accommodable to their racialized and gendered selves, black women are seeking to reclaim their power.

The theory of intersectionality, the primary framework for this research study, argues that power is maintained through relational processes, says Salari et al. (2024), which infers the necessity of enhanced departmental policy as it relates to interpersonal interfacing with marginalized groups through increased visibility, managerial support, and sponsorship in an effort to reengage this demographic, elevating their presence and acknowledging the need for diverse voices within workplace settings.

Concerning power and policy, critical race theory (CRT), the secondary framework of this research inquiry posits the pertinence of understanding the intersection of race, law, and power dynamics within societal constraints, furthering efforts to end inequities, as experienced by women and minorities, whom often fall victim to racial hierarchies, leading to obstacles concerning social and economic outcomes, says Kalemis (2024), whom adds that “Individuals do not experience discrimination in isolation but

rather through overlapping systems of inequality. The incorporation of an intersectional framework along with CRT provides a more comprehensive understanding of varied forms of oppression, challenging the single-axis approach to social justice”, a strategy necessary to properly address the inequalities present within departmental constructs.

Concerning prior studies surrounding black women, intersectionality, and workplace dynamics, significant findings, in terms of research outcomes, are comparable as it relates to topics surrounding racialized and gendered organizations. The consensus with studies, including ‘Exit Plan’, ‘Why women leave corporate jobs’, ‘Exploring the intersectionality of gender and race’, and ‘Lean In: State of Black Women’, for example, is that the systemic meritocratic structure of corporate America is more favorable and accommodable toward dominant groups and that built in policies and practices are lessening opportunities for marginalized groups due to changing priorities and administrations.

These studies also detail the compounded barriers and bias faced by black women as compared to their counterparts due to a dual discrimination experienced on account of one’s individual identity markers. As commented by Hwang (2024) ‘Women of color...reported disproportionately higher rates of being overlooked for roles they were well-qualified for. These findings point to a confluence of implicit and structural biases that systematically disadvantage individuals with intersecting marginalized identities,” pointing to structural barriers in policies as significant barricades to inclusive and level workplace environments, neglecting to address the specific challenges of underrepresented groups, perpetuating inequities.

This lessening of protections for intersectional demographics is taking a significant toll on black women whom are seeing decreases in support and opportunity for advancement, leading to earlier than expected exits from traditional workplace settings. The implications of an intersectional identity are vast and effectual with findings stating the dire need for improved policy. These aforesaid findings are significant due to the impact a mass exodus of diverse groups of individuals can have on the economy, community, as well as corporations whom lose funding in addition to talent.

5.3 Discussion of Research Question Two

How do microaggressions affect departmental experiences?

As detailed through conclusive results surrounding microaggressions within departmental settings, findings contend the effectual implications of this categorical discriminatory conduct ranging from halted career progression, including barriers and burnout, to shifts in organizational cultural practices resulting from structural denial and non-response concerning reported infractions of discriminatory conduct. Inequities amongst marginalized groups, lack of inclusivity, sexism, and “othering” were additional identifiable components impactful concerning departmental experiences as was employee satisfaction, commitment, productivity, efficiency, and retention.

Concerning retention, authors uncovered “A strong positive link between racial microaggressions and turnover intentions and established that diversity climate partially explained the negative links between racial microaggressions and departmental commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors, and the positive link between racial microaggressions and turnover intentions” (Newman et al. 2025).

Retention of this demographic is a growing trend in the corporate sector and is significantly linked to discriminatory experiences, including microaggressions incurred in workplace settings. It is contended that women whom experience this adverse form of discriminatory treatment are three times as likely to consider exiting one's position. These debased occurrences, as experienced by black women, are highly contributory to the "mass exodus" of this demographic from the workplace toward self-employment.

As aforesaid, certain patterns detected through database research related to microaggressions in workplace settings, include the "only" phenomenon, repeatedly recounted through lived experiences of black women whom feel a sense of hypervisibility that contributes to an increased scrutiny of one's appearance, character, and adeptness concerning one's role. 'Lean In: State of Black Women' (2020) authors comment that "Fifty-four percent of black women say they are often "onlys," in that they are the only black person or one of the only black people in the room at work." This lack of diversity within departmental settings has been found to result in increases in stereotypes and biased behaviors and treatment towards black women due to the elevated visibility that coincides with being a member of a minority group amongst more dominant members.

Lived experiences, as it relates to the phenomenon of black women exiting corporate positions, highly attributable to adverse workplace experiences such as microaggressions, contributed to the emergence of Theme 2: Double Discrimination and Bias, which details the aforesaid experiences, as recounted by black women, leading to these well-documented early exits from corporate positions. As recounted "These microaggressions included degrading remarks about accents and clothes (microinsults),

stereotyping remarks e.g., black women as aggressive (microinvalidations), but also about the ‘subtle ways’ they are held from career progression, in other words, they face a double glass ceiling one that is racial, and one that is gendered”, says Newman et al. (2025), describing the impact and implications of intersectional identities.

Microaggressions, as detailed by black women in departmental settings, have a direct impact on the departmental climate as aforesaid with Hwang (2024) adding that “Corporate culture plays a critical role in shaping employee perceptions of inclusivity and equality. Cultures that prioritize diversity and inclusion are more likely to foster positive experiences for employees from marginalized groups. Conversely, cultures that tolerate microaggressions, bias, or exclusionary practices perpetuate discrimination”. This impact on company culture is proven to be costly to organizations whom have incurred financial losses due to lessened progress concerning departmental goals and objectives attributable to lowered employee morale, commitment, and job satisfaction, all outcomes of and resulting factors of increases in discriminatory conduct.

Salari et al. (2024) comments that “In recent years, the rise of workplace racial discrimination and microaggressions has decreased the efficiency and productivity of organizations and institutions.” These elements are all highly contributory to departmental losses that threaten the furtherance and sustainability of organizations, making microaggressions a cause that is worth highlighting, mitigating, and alleviating for purposes of longevity and performance. In terms of prevalence, Salari et al. also contends that “In the review of seven studies with a sample size of 2,998 people, the

overall prevalence of microaggression and racial discrimination in the workplace was found to be 73.6% and 18.8%, respectively” (Salari et al., 2024).

These growing numbers are indicative and evidential of the ongoing occurrence of discriminatory conduct, neglecting to properly address the systemic racism and sexism present within organizations, perpetuating and prolonging disparaging and debased behaviors, diminishing progress made concerning legislative achievements surrounding protected groups. These findings are significant due to the great impact discriminatory treatment has on marginalized groups such as black women whom rely on departmental and governmental diversity, equity, and inclusion policy to further their corporate trajectories, removing systemic blockades and obstacles that hinder the climb of minorities and women whom seek security, advancement, and promotion.

Comparable qualitative research studies surrounding black women in corporate America, in addition to a variety of workplace settings revealed similar findings, detailing burnout, the “only” experience, halted career trajectories, and stereotypes, as significant implications of microaggressions, resulting in departures.

Concerning microaggressions as it relates to intersectionality, Newman et al. (2025) details an investigative approach commenting that “Researchers have begun to adopt an intersectional lens to explore how gender influences racial/ethnic minorities experiences of racial microaggressions at work,” citing experiences of microinsults and microinvalidations as it relates to their racial and gendered identity, leading and contributing to barricades and obstacles that block career progression, facing a “double glass ceiling one that is racial and one that is gendered.” These findings are significant

due to recent accelerations in microaggressions within workplace settings, highly attributable to decreases in DEI protections of marginalized groups, necessitating a change in policy to account for and address the growing needs of those whom behold intersectional identities.

In terms of impact on departures, evidence suggests that the prevalence and continuance of microaggressions within corporate environments is gravely influential concerning decisions surrounding furtherance in organizations, leading toward thoughts of exiting and self-employment endeavors with authors citing through research that “Exposure to microaggressions leads targets to hold negative views of their profession and consider leaving their profession.” (Newman et al., 2025). The consequences of prolonged discriminatory conduct, resulting in departures, are a loss in company culture, lessened job satisfaction, and decreased adherence to policies and procedures set forth in departmental settings, leading to potentially costly outcomes.

“Microaggressions take a heavy toll: women who experience them are more likely to feel burned out and consider leaving their company, and less likely to view their workplace as equitable. By leaving microaggressions unchecked, companies miss out on everything women have to offer and risk losing talented employees” as contended by ‘Lean In’ (2024). These research findings are significant to the field of study due to the retention crisis that is currently underway, linking microaggressions as a primary attributable factor in retaining this demographic whom experience this form of discriminatory behavior, amounting to this group being three times more likely to exit one’s position. Diminished productively, as aforesaid, is an additional implication of

prolonged and unaddressed microaggressions in the workplace finding that the intended targets of this treatment express feelings of decreased value within one's organization, often leading to the limiting of one's scope concerning individual roles and responsibilities.

Experiences of microaggressions are linked with and strongly attributable to the black woman's intersectional identity. Intersectionality theory, the framework by which this research study is structured, serves as a lens concerning the interpretation and nature of the impact of microaggressions within organizational settings. Black women whom encompass intersecting identities, being both black and a woman, experience microaggressions at a significantly higher rate than their counterparts, enduring myriad stereotypes, debasement, and scrutiny due to their marginalized identity, unable to fit the corporate prototype as compared to traditionally acceptable demographics. Also, as it relates to marginalization, critical race theory, the secondary framework of this study, explains how corporate America's organizational structure normalizes the diminishing of protected groups, encouraging an environment in favor of dominant groups, adhering to and maintain customary practices and procedures.

Concerning conventionality, traditional diversity, equity, and inclusionary practices and policies, as long-held by a plethora of departmental institutions, neglect to account for multiple identities, addressing protected groups by way of a single-axis approach, often leaving black women with significant obstacles and barricades to overcome, systemically blocking advancement, leaning them toward entrepreneurship.

5.4 Discussion of Research Question Three

How and why do allyship and mentorship prove impactful to the career trajectory of black women?

As aforesaid concerning the resultant impact of allyship and mentorship on black women's career trajectory, research conducted has produced conclusive detail surrounding the effectual outcome of these associations, leading to increases in demographical representation, job satisfaction, and career advancement, greatly beneficial to underrepresented groups, boosting and bolstering one's career pathway.

Accessibility to leadership, a substantiated advantage, in addition to a strengthened departmental culture, contributing to the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, are all attributable to the availability of sponsorship. The frequency and prevalence of behaviors that challenge bias and racist practices, known to reduce discrimination within institutions, are also impactful concerning the departmental experiences of black women whom are in receipt of these partnerships.

It is argued by Kossek et al. (2024) that "allyship is a mechanism for centering social justice, reducing discrimination and inequality, and improving intergroup dynamics, inclusion, social cohesion, prosperity, and organizational effectiveness." It is also contended that allyship is mutually advantageous for the allied partner as well as the beneficiary with Branch & Kasztelnik (2024) positing that "Women of color emerge as the most effective allies in our study, highlighting that marginalized individuals can not only be allies, but that they play a crucial role in their own liberation."

Concerning mentorship, it is added that “Access to informal networks remains a barrier for Black women when attempting to advance in the workplace. The lack of access to informal networks perpetuates the underrepresentation of Black women in management positions, maintaining inequality in the workplace,” detailing its significance in furthering and advancing the corporate tenure of underrepresented demographics.

Trends detected as it relates to mentorship amongst black women in corporate settings includes limited access to senior leadership as detailed through research documentation wherein interactions between this demographic and dominant members are lessened or nonexistent, decreasing opportunities for visibility within departmental settings and hindering one’s ability to be called upon for high-profile projects. This growing trend is closely associated with the sponsorship gap by which the work of black women neglects to be showcased or advocated for as compared to their counterparts.

In terms of allyship, patterns identified include the increased prevalence of microaggressions and the failure of allies to amplify their voices to speak out against these daily slights, leading to blockades in advancement for this demographic. The aforesaid barriers, obstructing the trajectory of black women, are significant and harmful concerning one’s tenure and are known to cause a trickling down affect concerning gender in the workplace.

Departmental experiences related to allyship and mentorship assisted in the emergence of Theme 3: Corporate Policy/Law, which details the procedural practices departmental members follow and abide by, acting as a guide to the daily performance

and operation of an institution. The impact of allyship and mentorship on the experiences of black women is highly effectual given their intersectional identities. As asserted by Bhattacharyya et al. (2024) “Intersectionality theory argues that power is maintained through relational processes and invites us to consider allyship as relational and examine ‘beneficiaries’ and ‘allies’ relative locations in power systems.”

Intersectional barriers are most often contributory to the insufficiency of traditional mentorship programs but when properly applied to allyship and mentorship, as commented by authors, intersectionality shifts the general focus from a more standardized model to one that is increasingly aware concerning the power beheld of beneficiaries whom are black women.

Concerning the black woman’s desire to exit one’s corporate position due to the aforesaid insufficiencies surrounding the availability of departmental resources, Gutterman (2023) posits that “If promising African American managers are leaving the company, an assessment needs to be made as to whether they were provided with sufficient mentoring and clear and fair feedback on how they could further their professional development.” This assertion is the consensus of black women whom are in a lessened receipt of the resources that drive their careers forward. Devoid of this level of departmental support is highly effectual in one’s decision to look externally for advancement opportunities.

Additionally, decreases in departmental budgets, previously allocated to diversity initiatives, are immensely impactful to the continuance of allyship and mentorship programs. These budgetary changes are due in part to a reprioritization of funds related to

the recent dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusionary policies, amended legislation that has historically protected marginalized groups, including women and minorities.

As contended by ‘Lean In’ (2024) and Bhattacharyya et al (2024), allyship and mentorship are critical to the advancement of inclusion within organizations with continued investment in diversity programs identified as highly effective concerning corporate strategy. Hussin et al. (2025) adds that “societal biases and institutional limitations, such as restricted access to funding and mentorship, continue to impede women's success”. With new budgetary restrictions limiting the access of these programs to underrepresented groups, the outcome has proven to be impactful to intersectional identities whom are in dire need of increased visibility to advance and prolong one’s career, preventing a mass exodus.

5.5 Discussion of Research Question Four

What are the implications of black women exiting corporate America?

In-depth research into the multitude of implications concerning the black woman’s exit from corporate America has revealed a plethora of outcomes resulting from this increased acceleration of workplace departures, including the underrepresentation of this demographic within departmental settings and more importantly senior and leadership roles, contributing to an increased invisibility of this already marginalized group whose presence is predicted to dwindle as black women seek exterior opportunities. Hwang et al. (2024) comments that “The lack of representation in such spaces not only limited their professional growth but also reinforced a sense of systemic

marginalization,” which is highly contributory to this demographics desire to look toward the aforesaid external roles.

Additional implications include career shutdown attributable to economic instability with job losses on this rise for black women in addition to decreases in company engagement and retention. The loss of talent as it concerns this demographic is a significant implication as is the loss of the stability and structure beheld of large departmental institutions from the standpoint of black women whom shift toward less secure opportunities as it relates to entrepreneurial endeavors

Additionally, a loss of equity and sustainability, higher turnover, a lessened availability of training and developmental programs, involuntary job loss, and less attention toward systemic reform are proven outcomes to this phenomenon. Sanni (2025) contends that “women are less likely to leave an organization when more women are employed at their job level” and also adds that “greater training and developmental opportunities are associated with lower turnover intentions among women,” proving the necessity of retaining this group, remedying underrepresentation. Other notable implications include improvements in work-life balance and policy reform in addition to the creation of inclusive work environments, dismantling oppressive structures.

Patterns identified related to the aforesaid mass exodus of black women from corporate America include the persistent prevalence of a “black ceiling”, an invisible barrier blocking African-Americans from leadership and senior roles, hindering one’s corporate trajectory. As commented by Erskine et al. (2021), “The black ceiling comprises complex attitudinal and organizational barriers that constrain Afro-Diasporic

women from rising to senior leadership” and also adds that “Black women are at a disadvantage in trying to bridge the familiarity gap with white men in positions of power because...they are ‘double outsiders’...they’re often shut out from the informal networks that help other people find jobs, mentors, and sponsors.” This can have grave implications due to the increased invisibility resulting from the blockades present, attributable to systemic barriers hindering the corporate trajectory of marginalized groups.

The implications of the black woman’s exit from corporate America contributed to the emergence of Theme 1: ‘Corporate exits and departures’ in which aspects of data were abstracted to interweave compelling narrative concerning the lived experiences of black women, exploring, interpreting, and analyzing detail with the purpose of making sense of impactful departmental occurrences throughout one’s corporate lifecycle and the myriad of contributory elements that lead to departure from workplace settings.

Inadequate protections are an additional trend identified with authors citing the veiling of insufficient policies as it concerns the safeguarding of black women, an attempt to conceal a lessened and ineffective departmental commitment to race and gender neutral policies, leading to decreases in protection as it relates to diverse populations. “Lean In” (2023) adds that “Companies should make sure their career development programs address the distinct biases and barriers that women of color experience. Yet only a fraction of companies tailor career program content for women of color. And given that women of color tend to get less career advice and have less access to senior leaders, formal mentorship and sponsorship programs can be particularly impactful. It’s

also important that companies track the outcomes of their career development programs with an intersectional lens to ensure they are having the intended impact and not inadvertently perpetuating inequitable outcomes.” Ensuring that institutions address the disconnect concerning departmental policies as it relates to the needs of black women is an imperative in responding and being attentive to discriminatory treatment and behaviors that are impactful to the corporate trajectory of this group.

The underrepresentation of this demographic in senior and c-suite positions has continued to be a growing concern and given the recent dismantling of long-held protections, as instilled and implemented by diversity, equity, and inclusionary policies, black women are incurring the brunt of the impact, leading to lessor experiences, opportunities, and reductions in tenure within corporate settings.

The aforesaid reduction in tenure, as it concerns black women, a significant implication of the mass exodus of this demographic, is contributory to the loss of talent experienced by institutions. The diminishing of this highly skilled and trained group is a significant loss to departmental institutions due to the time and money invested into their growth and development, immensely impactful to the representation of this already marginalized demographic. Harris & Davis (2023) comment that “Racial discrimination impacts an employer’s capability to recruit, retain, or promote top talent and negatively impacts job satisfaction and overall organizational success. The lack of inclusive employee representation in demographics, including the representation of Black women in mid to senior level leadership positions is a problem.” As a result of this loss of human capital, the investment into black women is wasted, for all intents and purposes, due to

losses in human capital, attributable to adverse workplace experiences encompassing discriminatory treatment and behavior, highly effectual to the corporate experience.

Gender in the workplace has been persistent in its continuance as a significant challenge to overcome despite the onset of policies and procedures put in place to alleviate existent inequalities. The prevalence of inequities within departmental settings has presented insurmountable difficulties for women with black women incurring a double burden due to their non-traditional intersectional identities, leading to ongoing retention concerns.

Hing et al. (2023) contends that “Women are more likely than men to frequently enter and leave the workplace, resulting in more disrupted career trajectories. One large scale study found that minority women were more likely to quit their jobs...The gender composition of an organization is also a significant predictor of women choosing to leave, with a lower representation of women related to lower feelings of fit and higher turnover among women.” The implications of black women exiting corporate America can be felt from the institutional level down to the entrepreneurial pipeline wherein start-ups led by black women are the highest growing demographic, displaying a growth rate of 18.1% over the past decade, says Atkins (2023), placing them above all businesses owned by women and minorities.

5.6 Discussion of Research Question Five

How can corporate America go about deterring departures and retain more black women?

As remarked through results concerning retainment strategies of black women, research has confirmed the dire need for diversity within departmental settings in addition to equity amongst counterparts. Prioritizing the stability and security of financial and economic markets, coinciding with the onboarding of diverse groups, is an added strategical direction for corporate America whom seek to deter the exodus of this demographic.

Increased initiatives concerning research of policy reform to bring about awareness to workplace greivances related to discrimination of marginalized groups is an added method of retainment as is the documenting of quality metrics, he maintaining and recording of workplace processes as well as progress of marginalized demographics such as black women, ensuring effectiveness of departmental practices. Additionally, the diversification of departmental leadership is requested and insisted upon for the purpose of elevating the visibility of underrepresented groups as is the increase of partnerships between institutions, bolstering recruitment and retainment efforts.

Retention strategies concerning black women in corporate settings also contributed to the emergence of Theme 1: ‘Corporate exits and departures’ in which the lived experiences of black women were explored, examining the varied strategical directions organizational institutes can take to alleviate the systemic discriminatory

treatment as incurred by both minorities and women whom seek advancement toward senior and leadership roles.

Patterns related to retention strategies as it concerns black women in corporate America include barricades and blockades, including the “broken rung”, an obstacle that obstructs the trajectory of this demographic from progressing toward management roles, leading to underrepresentation. This pattern is significant as it has seen its greatest drop in representation with black women’s visibility compromised and rates of promotional opportunities regressing to 2020 levels. Gutterman (2023) comments that “Black women face a “double broken rung” with higher attrition and lower promotion rates than white women or men of color.” These patterns displayed, as a result of overlapping and intersecting identities, are cause for concern due to the discriminatory climate faced by myriad minority groups, most notably black women, contributing to an environment where furtherance and tenure are lessened and visibility diminished.

Additional trends identified surrounding this demographic in terms of retention include the great necessity of systemic change. Departmental officials are recognizing the increased call for training and development programs to assist in eliminating bias and stereotypes from performance reviews and onboarding processes with the objective of implementing and integrating diversity, equity, and inclusionary processes and procedures that meet the needs of diverse groups whom are in dire need of protective legislation and departmental policy to support and bolster their presence within workplace settings.

It is extensively researched that systemic bias has grown to be a prolonged barrier and challenge within institutions with Hwang (2024) contending that “Women of color, for example, are more likely to face "double jeopardy," experiencing both sexism and racism in the workplace. They are often excluded from diversity initiatives that focus on either women or racial minorities in isolation. This exclusion perpetuates their marginalization and reinforces systemic inequalities within corporate environments.”

These persistent systemic inequalities are leading to the departure of talented individuals whom contribute greatly to the performance of organizations. Davis et al. (2024) adds that “Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives are how companies are beginning to combat these problems. Many companies are going above and beyond with their DEIB initiatives to improve their recruitment and retention rates”. That being said, the rectification of systemic injustices is a called upon action that both departmental officials as well as the marginalized can agree needs to be remedied for the continuance of a diverse workforce, sustaining and boosting the economy.

CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

In summary, the implications of black women exiting corporate America are vast and of great concern for individual institutions and the economy as a whole. Due to the black woman's intersectional identity, incurring the impact of being both black and a woman within corporate environments, there is "double discrimination" as well as bias treatment concerning behavior as endured by both counterparts in addition to departmental leadership, oftentimes detrimental to the furtherance and sustainability of the black woman's tenure, hindering advancement.

Additionally, microaggressions, a form of discriminatory behavior that involves regular occurrences of subtle, but harmful, slights that undermine one's skills, identity, and integrity, as experienced by black women in departmental settings, were found to be gravely challenging to overcome given the obstacles and barricades that prolonged, persistent, disparaging, and debased conduct and language can have on one's overall workplace experiences in addition to one's general opinion surrounding their institution of placement as it concerns satisfaction.

Moreover, allyship and mentorship, diminishing resources as it concerns black women within departmental settings, attributable to changes surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives related to legislative amendments, were found to be immensely imperative to the aforesaid demographic due to the bolstering and boosting

these departmental resources provide, enhancing visibility of this group, allowing for continuance and longevity of one's corporate tenure.

Concerning the “mass exodus” and “great resignation” of this demographic, owing to adverse workplace experiences, the resulting impact was found to be effectual in terms of corporate policy reform, leading to calls for changes to institutional procedures and practices that consider the individual needs of both women and minorities, influencing greater resource allocation and development of diverse demographics whom seek to contribute and sustain one's place of professional tenancy.

6.2 Implications

Concerning implications, to summarize and reiterate the multitude of contributory causes effectual to the mass exodus of black women from corporate America, underrepresentation was found to be greatly impactful to this demographic, leading to a lessened visibility in senior and leadership roles. Also, career shutdown was found to be highly attributable to unplanned early exits from traditional workplace environments, contributing to individual and economic instability given the acceleration of departures.

Moreover, a loss of equity, higher turnover, a lessened availability of training and development programs, involuntary job loss, and less attention toward systemic reform are proven outcomes to this phenomenon, advancing calls to amend policy and law. Additional implications include decreases in company engagement and retention. The loss of talent, as it concerns this demographic, is of significant implication as is the loss of the stability and structure beheld of large institutions. However, despite this loss of stability, black women are the fastest growing entrepreneurial demographic, outpacing

their counterparts, with aforesaid headlines detailing, “Done with corporate life, black women are starting businesses in droves”, “Why black women are turning job loss into a new era of entrepreneurship”, “Black women are the fastest group of entrepreneurs, report shows” in addition to “Trump’s anti-DEI policies are hurting college educated black women” and “The Great Rollback: Are DEI cuts driving black women to entrepreneurship?”, demonstrating the resulting impact of mass job losses as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor following DEI rollbacks put in place January of 2025 (Executive Order 14151) and March of 2026 (Executive Order 14398).

An acceleration of this demographic into entrepreneurship, as a result of recent executive orders, is probable to be greatly effectual, assisting in the alleviation of resulting economic downturns given the impact women-led businesses have on the global economy, as detailed through worldwide sustainability developmental goals (UN SDGs 5 & 10), providing a \$7 trillion boost to the global economy. Atkins (2023) adds that “Most, if not all, organizations are racialized and gendered organizations. Pairing this reality with the sense of professional and personal autonomy that entrepreneurship offers, business ownership for some seems to be the true path to equitability, access, and freedom.”

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research concerning black women should focus on longitudinal career outcomes surrounding corporate departure of this demographic and the impact of systemic barriers, as experienced, and structural biases and stereotypes encountered post exit as it relates to entrepreneurial endeavors and business climate.

Intersectionality and metrics systems across large corporations and institutions is an additional area that is understudied in which demographical data, systemic injustices, and structural issues are deducted, producing superficial, fictitious metrics, neglecting the addressing of deep-seated issues plaguing those with intersecting identities.

Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence concerning intersectional identities within workplace settings, the obscuring of compounding effects of multiple identities, and the corresponding impact on societal bias and inequalities throughout all stages of onboarding within institutions is an additional area of future research surrounding the utilization of historical datasets that can neglect to consider identities outside of a single axis.

Research gaps surrounding intersectional research methods encompass the incorporation of underutilized frameworks, including the ‘African American Women’s Shifting Scale’ (AAWSS), a tool measuring the psychological toll black women incur altering one’s self-presentation with the objective of navigating varied and hostile professional working environments and the “shifting” behaviors associated with these alterations. The implementation of the ‘Discriminatory and Cumulative Environmental Framework’ (DCEF), measuring compounding, interlocking, and societal systems, is an additional underutilized tool that can measure the compounding effects of certain variables and related environmental pressures as it concerns race and gender, of assistance in intersectionality research studies.

Future research should additionally center around black women whom search abroad for corporate roles and the implications of this demographic exiting the American workplace, subsequently relocating, and how departmental experiences related to

intersectional identities vary from one continent to another, contrasting customary departmental surrounding climates of inclusivity versus discriminatory institutions.

An additional area of study, as an add on to working abroad, would be the “only” experience in foreign settings and how black women expatriates navigate various nationalities within workplace environments while beholding a non-traditional identity, lesser in prevalence as it relates to race and gender, and the challenges encountered concerning assimilation, belonging, equitability, and visibility.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the implications of black women exiting corporate America, attributable to adverse experiences related to discriminatory treatment and behaviors, as rendered by counterparts in addition to senior members, were found to be greatly effectual, impacting career trajectory, interpersonal interactions, visibility, and tenure.

The diminishing of departmental resources, including training, development, mentorship, and sponsorship, as a direct consequence of ammendments to diversity, equity, and inclusion legislation and institutional policies, has lessened the covering of protected demographics such as black women, amounting to what is being referred to as a “mass exodus” and also “the great resignation”, leading to pathways toward entrepreneurship, bolstering the economy while simultaneously injecting life into the black woman’s career, lengthening one’s profession, allowing for improved autonomy.

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