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THE INFLUENCE OF CODE-SWITCHING ON BLACK WOMEN LEADERS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

By

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Interdisciplinary Leadership

Omaha, NE

(November 4, 2021)

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Abstract

A person altering their language, appearance, and mannerisms may suppress their culture and personality. These alterations, known as code-switching, may affect how these leaders are perceived by others and their influence on others. When Black women cannot be authentic, it may affect how they lead and are perceived by others in the workplace. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological Dissertation in Practice is to explore how code-switching may influence the effective rise to leadership roles of Black women. This qualitative study used a phenomenological design, specifically using interviews with Black women leaders to understand their code-switching practices as professionals and how those practices may affect their leadership and efficacy. Four major themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews. Those themes are Code-Switching, Leading as a Black Woman, Discrimination in the Workplace, and Coping Mechanisms. Code-switching is used by Black women to better integrate themselves into the dominant culture for the purposes of advancement, relating better to the dominant culture, and shielding themselves from discrimination. Five solutions were recommended to be implemented within the Department of Transportation. These solutions are: the creation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council; DEIA Onboard Training; new curriculum of courses; DEIA integrated into the management interview process; and Informal, unpaid affinity groups.

Keywords: Code-switch, Authenticity, Black women leaders, discrimination, coping mechanism, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Accessibility (DEIA)

Dedication

I have many Angels that have guided me through my life and journey. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to those Angels on Earth and in Heaven. To my late father, Dennis Ashley, you supported me and was proud of everything I did. You were a loving, giving, bigger-than-life, Godly man who would help anyone with anything. You helped me become a better me and loved me as I am always. I prayed that you would be here to see me finish this degree. You didn't quite make it, but I know you will be looking down on me, smiling at me.

To my Angel on Earth, my mother, Rosia Cook. Because of your 30 years in education, you put education and service in my heart. You have always been my best friend and there for me when no one else was. I will always be grateful for the lessons you have taught me throughout my life. Thank you for asking me every week when I would be finished so that I could keep on track.

To my best friends in Heaven, Dr. Stacy Wide-Lockhart and Virgis Manning-Brown, you always encouraged me to go after this degree. You knew I could do it even when I didn't. I miss you both every single day and its nothing more I want than to be able to celebrate with you.

To my sister, Angela Wilson, you were the first Black woman leader that I looked up to. Even though you were never formally my mentor, you have been more than a mentor could ever be to me. Thank you for all the career and life advice that you have provided. Thank you for all the times you have talked me off the ledge and kept me from having a mental breakdown about work. I would not be where I am without you.

To my sister, Felicity Weatherspoon, brother-in-law Ray Wilson, and nieces Kali Smith and Kyia Smith, thank you for always allowing me to be me and supporting me through all my journeys.

To my loving and amazing husband, Tony Macklin, God knew I needed you to balance my life and I am forever grateful. There have been times during this journey when I wanted to quit, but you pushed me to finish and follow my dreams. You have been my rock and my comfort during this process. This degree belongs to you too. Thank God for you and the love, strength, and determination you have given me.

Jeremiah 29:11: 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.'

Acknowledgments

This journey has been long and hard and not one that I took lightly. As I have often told my peers, I have had to take this journey day by day and week by week, only focusing on the here and now. That's how I got through. I also got through with the help of a village. I could not have done this alone.

First, I want to thank God, as I could never have gotten here without Him. I have seen how He has guided my educational and career path throughout my life. I have always trusted Him and followed Him, knowing that the path would be made clear in time.

To my chair, Dr. Sandy Caruso-Woolard, and committee member, Dr. Sarah Walker, thank you for your expertise. Your knowledge, patience, and guidance have helped me reach this point in my dissertation, and I will forever be grateful. I will always appreciate you both for the autonomy you provided when I needed it the most. To my advisor, Dr. Jim Martin, thank you for the excellent advice and counsel that you have given me over the past four years.

To the Black women leaders in this study, thank you for participating. You gave of your time, which you did not have to do. Your leadership, professionalism, service to others, and authenticity are a beacon of light for me. It gives me hope that we will have many more Black Women leaders who will hold the qualities and values you possess; that makes my soul happy. To Carmen Rojas, thank you for your tireless work in helping in the data analysis process.

To the Black Girl Magic Creighton group—Dr. Ophelia Morgan, Dr. Pamela McAfee, Dr. Kenya Williams, Dr. Brigid Roberson, Dr. Karen Griffen, and future Drs.

Azure Rooths and Bessie Hamilton—I love you and thank you. I am honored to have met you all. As I was going through some lonely times, the idea to connect us together was a light for me. Our group has meant everything to me because I had others who looked like me that truly understood the journey cheering me on. I am grateful to have lifelong friends, sisters, and colleagues in you.

To Dr. Brianna Chesser, from ILD 808 to now, you have been a great friend. Thank you for our talks. Thank you for inviting me to travel to Europe. Because of that trip, I felt more connected to the Creighton community and I gained a sister in you. To the 2019 In the Footsteps of Van Gogh Study Abroad class, thank you for your endless laughs and new revelations while viewing beautiful art and scenery.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation in practice (DIP) examines how code-switching influences the effective rise of Black women to leadership roles. This proposed qualitative dissertation in practice uses a phenomenological design to facilitate understanding of the extent to which Black women leaders engage in code-switching in professional settings. The results should inform practice-based solutions to help Black women rise to leadership roles more effectively.

There is increasingly encouraging news about the status of Black women in the United States. Black women have achieved higher rates of college and advanced degree completion over the last 40 years rising from eight percent to over eleven percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019) and are increasingly employed in management positions (Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, 2020). To navigate educational and professional contexts, many Black women have relied on code-switching to successfully blend in and be accepted in the workplace (Barker, 2019). Code-switching has been defined as “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities” (McCluney et al., 2019). A study by the Pew Research Center suggested that 48% of Black adults with a college degree and 53% of Black adults with college degrees under age 50 reported code-switching (Dunn, 2019). As Black women continue to achieve academically and professionally, the advantages and consequences of code-switching should be examined.

Statement of the Problem

Code-switching involves aspects that extend beyond language. For example, Black women alter their hair and wardrobe to “fit in” with White culture (Koval & Rosette, 2020). These alterations may suppress an individual’s culture and personality. Ethnically diverse managers experience authenticity when they can be and act in accordance with their personal values and personality (Barnard & Simbhoo, 2014). A work environment with more inclusion has leaders and employees that feel more comfortable being their authentic selves (Sims, 2018). This authenticity may affect how these leaders are perceived by others and their influence on others. When Black women cannot be authentic, it may affect how they lead and how they are perceived by others in the workplace. What remains unknown is how code-switching may influence the rise to leadership of Black women.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological DIP is to explore how code-switching may influence the effective rise of Black women to leadership roles. In previous research, code-switching was originally defined as “the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction” (Koch et al., 2001). Code-switching has been more recently defined as “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities” (McCluney et al., 2019). In this study, code-switching is generally defined as the broader phenomenon of Black Americans altering their personalities and cultural expressions as well as linguistic variations at work to fit in with the dominant culture.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative study:

What are the lived experiences of black women in leadership roles related to the influences of code switching?

Aim of the Study

This Dissertation In Practice study aimed to create an evidence-based guide for Black women in leadership roles or aspirations who practice code-switching in their places of work to learn how they can become effective leaders. The results shedded insight into the experiences that are unique to Black women in leadership and management. The study will benefit Black women who are in leadership roles or would like to aspire to leadership learn how to be effective in their leadership style without the need to code-switch. Another aim of this study is to contribute to the body of literature relating to code-switching among Black women in leadership.

I proposed a series of solutions that will enable organizations to recognize diversity in leadership to hire and train more diverse women. The outcome also helped organizations be more sensitive to the various issues Black women deal with in the workplace regarding identity and how identity influences their cultural perspectives in an organization or career. The proposed solutions informed organizations that strategies, training, and policies should be put in place to allow people that are culturally diverse to feel free to be themselves at the workplace.

Definition of Relevant Terms

The following terms are defined to understand the scope and intent of this study fully and used operationally throughout this document:

Authentic: True to one's own personality, spirit, or character (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Black women: U.S.-born women who self-identify as being both of African origin and the minority group of Black persons (Goddard et al., 2014).

Code-switching: A form of self-monitoring in which the individual suppresses their social identity to adapt to the current conditions, environment, and dominant culture in the workplace. The individual uses professional image construction as a means to change others' impressions of them (Bolino et al., 2008).

Culture: "A process that represents the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies, and practices peculiar" to a particular group of people, and that provides them with a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality" (Goddard et al., 2014, p. 8).

Diversity: "The state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures in a group or organization" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Linguistics: The scientific study of language. (Linguistic Society of America, n.d.).

Phenomenological research: A design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sociolinguistics: The study of multilingualism, social dialects, conversational interaction, attitudes to language, language change, and more. It was coined to bear on

issues concerning the place of language in society and address linguistic diversity's social context (Romaine, 2001).

Methodology Overview

This qualitative study uses a phenomenological design consisting of interviews with Black women leaders to understand their code-switching practices as professionals and how those practices may affect their leadership and efficacy. Due to the method's approach for "describing the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.75), a qualitative research methodology was selected to examine the research problem and answer the question. The purpose of phenomenological research is to gather individual experiences and reduce them to a description of universal essence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This phenomenological approach is used to understand a common or shared experience of a phenomenon based on incorporating what and how they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodology is most appropriate because I want to understand the lived experiences of Black women in leadership as it relates to code-switching. To understand those lived experiences, detailed interviews were needed to gather the rich content and emotion related to code-switching. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, the "goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 8). Mirroring methodology by Creswell and Creswell (2018), this DIP utilized the participants' personal and cultural views in the workplace, particularly the experiences of Black women in leadership positions, to inform the research of code-switching among the Black community.

The population for this study was Black women in leadership positions. Eligible participants included Black women over the age of 35, with a postsecondary degree from an accredited university in the United States, and currently in a middle- to senior-level executive position with five or more years' experience in their current or a previous, similar role. The sample size was eight Black women who fit these criteria.

Data collection consisted of personal interviews of the eight participants, journal entries, resumes, and the collection and review of transcripts. The participants were located through recruitment methods. I identified participants, conducted interviews, coded the data through a software program called MAXQDA, clustered the codes into themes, and synthesized the themes into textural and structural descriptions to create the essence of Black women's experience in leadership as it relates to code-switching.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Personal Biases

The first delimitation of this study was the intentional scope of the sample, which focused on Black women over 35 years of age who have a postsecondary degree and are currently in a middle- to senior-level executive position. The sample size was also limited to those over age 35 to increase the likelihood of a participant having had a longer work experience and more time in a leadership position.

The second delimitation was the choice of phenomenological methodology. Other methodologies were not chosen because I felt that they do not possess the ability to describe meaningful experiences with code-switching and how others can learn from them. Although this study's qualitative findings were not generalizable beyond the study population, the analysis and interpretation led to a combined description of the essence of Black women's lived experiences with code-switching. I purposefully narrowed the

scope of the study to Black women who have reached an executive leadership position so that peers and subordinates aspiring to this level of success can learn from their experiences.

The first limitation was the lack of peer-reviewed studies on code-switching. Code-switching has historically been researched in linguistic terms to describe switching languages or dialects within a conversation (Koch et al., 2001). The definition has been expanded to include adjusting one's style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities" (McCluney et al., 2019, para. 3). However, code-switching has not been extensively studied with these various characteristics attached.

Second, this study may not be representative of all Black women. One reason would be because not all Black women code-switch. Some Black women feel free to be authentic in their workplace. Also, some organizations encourage employees to be authentic and open to other cultural identities. Third, the participants may be apprehensive about sharing personal and sensitive information about their careers. To combat this apprehension, the participants' identities were withheld as well as the information about the companies they work for when reporting and discussing the findings. This research design strategy helped increase participants' willingness to be fully transparent about their leadership journey without compromising their careers. Fourth, the sample size could be considered a limitation, but it reflected the small number of Black female leaders. This sample size is acceptable within phenomenological research conventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, the small sample size could

translate to being able to generalize to only a small amount of the population. Finally, participation in the study was voluntary. No compensation or incentive was provided to the participants. Therefore, they were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

As I am representative of the study population, my thoughts and views were discussed. To limit personal bias in the research, I followed the interview question protocol, only using additional questions that provoke more discussion from the participants. No verbal or nonverbal cues were used to agree or disagree with the participants. Transcripts were provided to participants only to verify and clarify any statements made in the interviews. There were no follow-up questions or changing previous answers to the interview. I used cross-checking, in which after I coded, a peer researcher coded using my preselected codes to determine if we coded the same text with a similar or the same code.

Reflections of the Scholar-Practitioner

This program has prompted me to think more about the type of leader I would like to be. Often, I have focused on how I would lead and the methods I would use in a senior leadership position. Identifying myself as a servant-leader permitted me to understand the type of leader I am and how that will fit into my personality and future goals.

I grew up with a servant-leader as my role model, my mother. My mother used her role as a teacher of twenty years to help and encourage children, especially those who were vulnerable because of poverty or race. I saw my mother take action to help those in need, even on her small salary. For example, we bought clothes for needy children throughout the year and bought full Holiday dinners for families. Her small gestures of giving her time and heart to other children lifted their spirits and situations. Through

these actions, she ingrained in me a sense of empathy to put myself in the shoes of those less fortunate and to go further by helping them. Having her values as a foundation, I started my field of study as an environmental scientist because of my deep empathy for the plants and animals that had no defense over what people were doing to harm them. That empathy quickly turned to my fellow humans, especially future generations, who are inheriting a fragile and polluted planet. Keith (2016) states, “Empathy is the imaginative projection of one’s own consciousness into another being” (p. 54). This field of study aligned with my Christian beliefs and what I had been taught my entire life about helping others from my mother. Even then, I knew that my desire to help the environment was more than a career; it was a calling. Prosser (2010) stated that “it is an individual’s personal philosophy that creates who we are and thus informs, impacts, and influences what we know, and think and how we act” (p. 25). I have always tried to act and think according to the high moral principles that I learned early in life and from my faith.

Throughout my career, I have avoided being a manager, but during this Interdisciplinary Leadership program, I have learned that I am still a leader. I continually strive to make a difference in others’ lives, whether it is teaching them more about the environment or guiding them in their educational or career journey. Because of my mission to help others and make their lives better, I feel that I am a servant leader. Prosser (2010) stated that “it is this focus on service that, above all else, distinguishes servant leadership from any other consideration of leadership” (p. 31). This mission does not land me under any of the prescribed leadership theories because I am not necessarily concerned with organizational success. I am concerned about the individuals that I come across and trying to help them.

Don (Keith, 2016) states, “why are natural servants among us so routinely overlooked...These are our teachers whom we should invite to share their richness and insights” (p. 4). This quote aligns with my perspective that something can be learned from even the least of us. It also means that one does not have to be a manager or leader in an organization to lead. “The servant-leader is functionally superior because he is closer to the ground-he hears things, sees things, knows things, and his intuitive insight is exceptional. Because of this, he is dependable and trusted” (Keith, 2016, p. 122).

Every servant-leader can serve and help others in whatever capacity they are held. It is the passion of being a servant to others that makes the servant-leader. I have realized that my talents do not lie in traditional organization management structures. Some peers come to me to relay how I have helped them in some areas, whether work or personal. Perhaps in a management role, I would not have held the trust of those to listen and understand their problems.

I have realized that through this journey that I must not only be a servant to others, but I must serve myself. I cannot give from an empty cup, so I must make sure there is peace and joy in my life before I can fully become the servant-leader I would like to be. I hope that the next phase makes me a better servant-leader and allows me to pass on wisdom to the people I come across.

Summary

Many Black women are leading or aspiring to lead organizations today. Code-switching may affect how they are perceived by others and their influence on others. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to understand how code-switching may influence the effective rise of Black women to

leadership roles. This DIP study aimed to create an evidence-based guide for Black women in leadership roles or aspirations who practice code-switching in their places of work to learn how they can become effective leaders without the need to code-switch. The study participants were Black females who are currently executive leaders in their organization. Participation was voluntary with recruitment through invitation. Data collection consisted of personal interviews of eight women in the sample population, their journal entries, resumes, and the collection and review of transcripts. Data analysis was completed through a process of software coding and thematic analysis. Chapter 2 will discuss the literature review related to both the research topic and identify gaps in the literature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological Dissertation In Practice is to understand how code-switching may influence the effective rise to leadership roles of Black women. Chapter Two discusses the themes of code-switching, race and gender theories, leadership styles, and gender and leadership discussions. Black women tend to shift racial identities at the workplace, depending on what the environment dictates. This research encourages professionals in leadership to examine how code-switching and intersectional experiences can advance leadership toward a future where Black women are leading organizations, being authentically themselves, and feel encouraged to fulfill their highest potential.

Code-Switching

During this study, the words code-switching and code-shifting are sometimes used interchangeably. Code-switching, or code-shifting, is something learned by Black women at an early age. They learn to shift or switch tone and voice depending on the audience. These changes can be done effortlessly and with ease for some Black women; however, for others, it can be painful and conflicting (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Shifting or switching has been used as a survival mechanism from oppression by Black people for centuries. This switching has been a defense mechanism to avoid or deflect from the negative stereotypes or biases of Black people that other cultures may carry, such as Blacks are loud, uneducated, and uncouth. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) discuss how Black women have always been pushed to serve or think of others first before themselves, which has led to hiding their true selves, when among others.

Historically, Black women have had to shift or switch from the time of slavery to the Jim Crow era. They would have to cast their eyes down, speak in certain ways, or even move in the presence of White people (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Black women hiding their true selves continues to happen. For instance, in a survey conducted by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), 58 percent of Black women have changed to fit in or be accepted by White people and 79 percent of these women say they have had to change their speech, tone down mannerisms, and change conversations to avoid certain subjects to gain acceptance. Black women also have to code-switch to overcome negative stereotypes about Black women such as the Angry Black Woman stereotype (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Morgan (2002) discussed that code-switching includes linguistic and cultural knowledge learned within Black cultural practices. Goddard et al. (2014) explained that culture is "a process that embodies the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies, and practices individual to a particular group of people" (p.8). This process provides them with a general blueprint for living and patterns for interpreting reality. Black culture involves a complex interrelationship with identity. The distinct components of Black culture contain over 54 interrelated ideas and beliefs that serve as the crucial Black cultural template that is grounded both in African culture and in the experiences of Black people (Goddard et al., 2014). These characteristics and experiences are considered part of the identity formation process (Boulton, 2016).

Code-switching is done by Black women to maintain a perceived professional norm and to conform to a standard that is not innate to them. Code-switching can be seen

by others as a form of assimilating to fit in or seek approval from the dominant (i.e., White, male) culture. Dickens and Chavez (2018) stated that "many participants believed that switching their identities in order to create and sustain professional relationships is critical to the career development of early professional Black women, and those who resisted assimilation to the dominant culture were aware that it stifled their professional relationships" (p. 765). The assimilation into a dominant culture could also be a reason some Black women do not speak up when injustices are done to them or around them. Killough et al. (2017) suggested that this equates to "laying low and not making waves, in other words, adaptive survival behaviors contradict with experiencing the richness of intellectual freedom" (p. 95). This behavior can be summarized as cultural imperialism, which is the universalism of a dominant group's experience and culture taken and established as the norm (Dickens & Chavez, 2018).

The assimilation of the dominant culture means that everyone and everything not of the dominant groups is not typical. Bristor et al. (1995) noted that ideology was one way dominant groups maintained and reinforced the illusion of power over other groups and has legitimized the unequal distribution of power. Past studies have acknowledged that one important aspect of White ideology is the unfounded assumption on Black inferiority (Burgess, 1994). These assumptions are circulated through mass media communication and are reinforced institutionally (Ashley, 2014). Black women are forced to assimilate in some cases to a White person's world of standards when they were never taught the rules in the beginning. Black women are forced to constantly chase a moving finish line. Killough's et al.'s (2017) current research seems to indicate that there is an "institutional level of structural inequity for Blacks that is psychologically

deleterious, socially isolating, and very likely institutionally supported" (Killough et al., 2017, p. 107). The results of this constant institutionalized structural inequity can lead to a workforce of minority women who are frustrated, angry, and defeated.

Code-switching can cause interpersonal conflict for Black women in the form of identity dissonance, which is the unsettling internal experience of conflict between irreconcilable aspects of their self-concepts (Costello, 2004). Sometimes people attempt to fulfill conflicting roles even if they are unaware that their identities were in conflict because the bulk of identity exists in emotional identities and in the subconscious and embodied level of identity (Costello, 2004). Black women may feel identity dissonance when they are in an environment where they must switch identities even if they do not notice it. Also, in situational code-switching, the speaker has knowledge that there is a choice to switch even if they do not (Morgan, 2002). Dickens and Chavez (2018) stated that "a prominent theme constructed from the data is shifting identities to build and maintain personal and professional relationships, which are essential for social and professional advancement" (p. 765). This could involve a change in dialect when speaking to people of other races or even dressing and acting a different way in the professional setting than in other settings around the same race. The research suggests that code-switching can be a choice at times or can also be an automatic response to situations. McCluney et al. (2019) found evidence that code-switching can be strategic depending on the career experiences and opportunities minorities are exposed to. Code-switching is also inherent in the way Black women dress. Higher standards of dress have long been employed to accrue respect to themselves by looking unusually respectable to compensate for race (Costello, 2004).

Black women use several different code-switching strategies to deal with bigotry: scanning, surveying, and scrutinizing their environment; downplaying the impact of discrimination; seeking spiritual and emotional support; retreating to the Black community; and fighting back (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). McCluney et al. (2019) listed three main reasons Black employees code-switch, including increased perceptions of professionalism, increased chance of being seen as a leader, and an increased chance of promotions. They also found that Black employees with high career aspirations for leadership and promotion opportunities avoided being perceived as a stereotype to a higher degree than those with low career aspirations (McCluney et al., 2019). Code-switching also may lead to countering negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about who Black women are. Black women can be faced with negative stereotypes that could hinder them from rising to leadership roles. Breslin (2017) pointed out that "stereotypes serve to characterize them not only as less intellectually or technically competent but also aggressive and vocal" (p. 172). While code-switching can be a tool to advance in certain organizations, it may also alter how they are perceived as well.

Impression Management

Code-switching can be interpreted as a form of impression management, which is defined as behaviors that employees use to mold or view how coworkers and managers see them (Bolino et al., 2016). Impression management involves creating or maintaining a certain desired image, whether consciously or unconsciously (Bolino et al., 2016). Racial identity-based impression management is comparable to code-switching as it is the process of strategically manipulating racial identity indicators, such as physical appearance and verbal disclosures, to influence how they are perceived (Roberts et al.,

2014). The goal is to be viewed in an attractive or desirable light and to avoid being viewed as unattractive or undesirable (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). For Black women, it can be extremely important not to be seen as a negative stereotype or “token” employee.

One variable of impression management that can influence how individuals apply impression management behaviors is self-monitoring (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Self-monitoring is the ability to read verbal and nonverbal cues and use those cues to alter their behavior as needed (Singh et al., 2002). Bolino and Turnley (2003) found high self-monitors, those who are sensitive to how they are seen by others, tended to emphasize the more positive strategies of impression management. High self-monitors act like “social chameleons” by changing their attitudes and behaviors to fit different social situations and are attentive to social cues; they can change the way they present themselves to others and frequently utilize impression management (Bolino et al., 2016). Benton et al. (2020) found evidence that women of color in particular use impression management strategies in order to fit well in a team and control how they are viewed by others. However, women overall tended to be low self-monitors (Singh et al., 2002). Those who are high self-monitors are more often leaders and use impression management strategies to achieve fairness in the workplace.

Leaders tend to want to be seen as charismatic, trustworthy, moral, credible, and innovative (Bolino et al., 2008). They are more likely to shape how their followers and customers view them by using impression management strategies. Greenburg (as cited by Bolino et al., 2008) found that managers are more concerned about looking fair to others rather than actually being fair. On the other hand, all leaders are not concerned about their outside perception of them. Women with transformational leadership qualities tend

to be less concerned about self-promotion and more about the development of their subordinates (Singh et al., 2002). A recent study showed that women of color who are college-educated are especially prone to develop, encourage, and help others (Benton et al., 2020). Another study by Fletcher (as cited by Singh et al., 2002) showed that individuals under a transformational manager would be less likely to feel a need to use impression management to gain visibility. Singh et al. (2002) noted that transformational women leaders tend to be able to maintain authenticity and achieve results as a leader.

Black Feminist Theory

Black feminist thought emerged out of Black feminism and addresses the complexity of intersectionality (Collins, 1989; Rousseau, 2013). Departing from an approach that viewed aspects of oppression separately, Black feminist thought reflects an interpretative intersectional paradigm that is grounded in the experience of Black women to understand and explain the relationship between oppression and resistance (Collins, 1990). Black feminist thought emphasizes the relationship between power and knowledge and focuses on how power is organized and operates. The organization of power and dominance, a hierarchical exploitative system, is categorized as the matrix of domination (Collins, 1990). Black women can experience domination in many ways, each with its different challenges, further exacerbated by such factors as race, age, sex, religion, and social class.

Of significance is that oppression and resistance are assumed to be linked meaning that no single group or movement can gain power without oppressing others (Alinia, 2015). According to Rousseau (2013), Collins argued that the matrix of domination persists to maintain the structured system of stratification – to keep the

dominant in power and the marginalized oppressed. Of use to this study, Alinia (2015) extended Collins' (2009) work by identifying five fundamental principles of Black feminist thought: 1) Gender, 2) class, 3) race, 4) sexuality, and 5) demographic composition (Alina, 2005).

Upon analyzing the social construction of Black feminist thought, Collins (1989) concluded that Black women have a "self-defined standpoint on their own oppression" (p. 747); that is, they have their own way of thinking about it and defining their reality on their own terms. Black feminist thought emerged to explain the lived experiences of Black women more accurately from their point of view. Examining these experiences through a singular lens, excluding impactful societal factors, provides a limited and inaccurate description of their existence. Black feminist thought highlights the unique position of Black women in society and the interconnected oppressions they experience.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality stands for the broad body of scholarship that explores the oppressive forces that have constrained the lives of women of color; however, it can also describe the interconnecting forces of racism, sexism, and classism in the lives of black women (Alexander-Floyd, 2012). Black women occupy the dual social identity of non-White and female, both of which are undervalued and overlooked (Ko et al., 2012). According to the ethnic-prominence hypothesis, race was more salient than gender for women of color, suggesting that Black women more likely experienced racial discrimination than gender discrimination (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Intersectionality is also present in multiple contexts for Black women, such as professionally, socially, and personally (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality examines the relationship between oppression and resistance. Black women belong to groups that have been defined as congenitally inferior in intellect: Black people and women (Hull et al., 1983). Collins (1998) argued that to fully understand the experience of Black women, the analysis of oppressions should not be compartmentalized, as this is not their experience. Intersectionality should be used to consider the complex interplay between race, class, gender, and sexuality concurrently (Rousseau, 2013). Crenshaw (1989) argued that a Black woman's experience is complex and cannot be understood by independently evaluating the experience as Black or as a woman; rather, she recommended viewing race, sex (and gendered roles), and class collectively as the compounding layers of oppression create a unique experience for Black women.

Black women in leadership can vary significantly by experience and industry; however, they share the institutional patterns of both racism and sexism. Breslin (2017) acknowledged that while all women "suffer from underrepresentation at the administrator level . . . Latinas and Black women show the lowest levels of representation" (pp. 170-171). According to Ko and colleagues (2012), intersectional theorists suggest that the lived experiences of women of color outweigh the sum of racism and sexism combined, resulting in unique social situations to which White women and men of any color cannot relate. Collins (1990) determined that the lived experiences and thoughts shared only by Black women offer a matchless vision of self, community, society, and inferences made about these experiences are the central focus of the Black woman's perspective.

Leadership Styles

Black women in leadership positions present challenges to traditional organizational leadership traits because Black leadership styles, at times, are different than historical leadership approaches (Parker, 2001). In a study of 15 Black women executives, Parker (2001) discovered that Black women executives lead differently. Most significantly, instead of the either/or thinking of traditional instrumentality and collaboration, the both/and approach was more prevalent. The both/and approach is inclusive to all or most. However, Schulz and Enslin (2014) argued that although Black women's leadership styles may differ from mainstream approaches, it is not their leadership style that needs to change; instead, structures and perceptions need to continue to evolve.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders lead by example and motivate their followers by transparent decision-making, confidence, optimism, hope, resilience, and consistency between their words and deeds (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Luthans et al., 2006). The goal of authentic leadership is to present one's true self accurately and honestly to others. Authentic leaders have a strong sense of self-awareness and are perceived by others as being cognizant of their own ethical values, moral standards, intellect, and assets (Fusco et al., 2015). Authentic leaders are true to themselves, their social realities, and to the social realities of their followers (Haslam et al., 2011). Authentic leaders are seen by followers as leaders who are not only aware of their values, knowledge, and strengths but are also aware of these traits in their followers.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) speculated that increased self-awareness helps authentic leaders foster the development of authenticity in their followers, and as followers become more transparent with their authentic leaders, the leader benefits also. Illies et al. (2005) discussed that follower motivation and admiration should evolve into positive modeling, where followers want to reflect the authentic leader and their values. This evolution creates a follower who is transparent and authentic, just like the leader.

Transformational Leadership

James McGregor Burns (1978) described transformational leadership as a philosophy in which leaders stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary goals and outcomes. Burns (1978) defined transformational leaders as persons who first gain the trust and confidence of their subordinates and then identify the motives of their followers to satisfy the higher needs of the organization and develop the whole person of the follower (Miller, 2007). Transformational leaders inspire with their vision, positivity, confidence, and attention to uplifting the needs of followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Transformational leaders develop followers so that they can become effective leaders themselves (Druskat, 1994). Bass's (1990) research concluded that transformational leaders have better relationships with their supervisors and make more of a contribution to the organization than transactional leaders. Also, employees exert more extra effort to managers who are transformational leaders.

Transformational leadership also leads to group members with consistently positive reactions at work, thereby increasing their productivity (Wu & Wang, 2015). The transformational leadership model was designated for the leader who motivated

subordinates to work cohesively and focused on transforming behavior between the individual and the organization (Abdussamad et al., 2015).

Hoyt and Blascovich (2003) found that groups attained higher levels of qualitative performance and leadership satisfaction under transformational leadership. Also, the study found that followers of transformational leaders had higher levels of group cohesiveness than followers led by transactional leaders. Transformational leaders focus on motivating and inspiring employees to give discretionary effort in helping to achieve organizational goals (Tims et al., 2011). They are also keen on putting the goals of the organization ahead of their own and employees' aspirations to achieve a common strategic goal (Hu & Liden, 2011).

Bass (1990) discussed one strength of transformational leadership being that it presents opportunities for enhancing a corporation's image and improving its success in recruitment, selection, and promotion. Bass (1990) stated a firm permeated with transformational leadership from top to bottom conveys that its personnel are pulling together for the common good and its leadership places importance on its intellectual resources, flexibility, and the development of its people. In recruiting, candidates are likely to be attracted to an organization whose leader is charismatic, successful, optimistic, and dynamic leader. In the selection, promotion, and transfer of employees, transformational leadership factors should be incorporated into managerial assessment, selection, placement, and guidance programs. In training, transformational leadership can be learned, and it should be the subject of management training and development. In job design and job assignment, transformational leaders show individualized consideration by

making sure the employees' jobs are designed with the development needs of each of their employees in mind, as well as the needs of the organization.

Servant Leadership

Greenleaf (2002) is credited with coining the term servant-leader and defining it as follows: "The servant-leader is servant first-as Leo was portrayed. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 27). Veeder (2011) states there are three principles of service-learning:

Principle one: Those being served control the service(s) provided; Principle two: Those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions; Principle three: Those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned. (p. 57)

Reviewing these definitions shows that service-learning and servant leadership are linked in their underlying philosophy.

Servant leadership can also create changes in organizational culture because it looks different from other leadership models. Servant leadership focuses not only on the growth of the organizations but on the individual as a whole person. Weinberg and Locander (2014) recognize that servant leadership involves a considerable focus on the growth and development of individual employees.

Brewer (2010) defines servant leadership in the 21st-century workplace as listening, being empathetic, being aware of colleagues' needs, is committed to the growth of people, and understanding how community and building community shape lives. There are many more traits and characteristics that describe a servant leader. Some of these are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight,

stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, building community, moral love, humility, altruism, self-awareness, authenticity, integrity, trust, empowerment, and service empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship.

Servant leadership can affect an entire organization by promoting diversity and basing decisions on ethical and unselfish behaviors. This leadership style is diversity-friendly because of its focus on the need to serve others, which should result in an organizational culture where diversity and inclusiveness are embraced (Sims, 2018). Servant leadership has the potential to transform the way organizations operate, placing service in the central position of organizational values (Poon, n.d.). Organizations can have a hand in creating change in and out of their organizations. They can create change by hiring diverse leaders who have the traits of a servant leader. They can also look for servant leader traits in non-diverse leaders to nurture and encourage inclusiveness in the organization.

Black Women and Leadership

To understand the Black woman's complicated position in American society, it is critical to understand the historical context of tasks, roles, and responsibilities that women of African ancestry have long had (Burgess, 1994). Burgess noted that African women who were brought to the U.S. were forced to do all kinds of labor, and their tasks were assigned by White men who enforced their illusion of superiority with violence. The disposition of White and Black men still reinforces the notion that Black women are destined for chronic oppression because of their ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status (Robinson & Nelson, 2010). McCrea (2001) acknowledged that in contemporary

society, racial bias persists in corporations, regardless of the progress Black women have made throughout time.

In taking into consideration intersectionality, Breslin (2017) begins "to refine our understanding of how we define public leadership and our expectation about who leads and how" (p. 170). In addition to all other leadership obligations, Black women executives are also tasked with managing the intersection of gender and race in the workplace. Parker and Ogilvie (1996) speculated that Black women executives have a distinct experience in which their leadership styles may reflect those of White American middle-class women while also displaying a distinctly Black female approach to leadership. This stresses that Black women have a singularly unique experience in leadership.

Because minorities are a large part of the workforce, managers and colleagues can take into consideration several different factors to be more understanding and accepting of Black women in leadership. Effective leaders considering sociocultural perspectives will understand how Black women practice leadership and how it involves "the collective efforts to include other voices in decision making, connection to communities, and their awareness of inequities in educational and leadership practices" (Jean-Marie et al., 2009, p. 577). In considering leadership perspectives of Black women, it is important to understand how they construct and enact leadership within their professional contexts (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Black women also tend to be viewed as masculine rather than feminine, so that they are not always viewed in a negative light when acting in a leadership position (Breslin, 2017). Black women are highly educated, ambitious, competent, and have the capability to overcome problems (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

In a Catalyst study, the results highlighted that Black women executives identified the top four barriers to their success: limited access to mentorship, few professional networks, lack of having other Black women as role models, and not having enough high visibility projects to work on (Black Enterprise, 2006). Oppression, specifically sexism and racism, leadership styles, perceptions, and the concrete ceiling are further obstacles that Black women executives may experience that hinder their ability to attain senior leadership positions. Deitch et al. (2003) also confirmed that racial discrimination is a significant obstacle for Black women in the workplace.

The concrete ceiling is a term that reflects the barrier Black women experience in their quest for senior leadership positions (Beckwith et al., 2016; Tan, 2017). It also reflects significant barriers impacting promotion opportunities for Black women (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Concrete is practically impossible to break through, and it is impossible to see through. This means any upper-level destinations are not visible; everything seems like a dead end. Black women in the workforce who face this impenetrable barrier often have no idea how to get to the next level (Beckwith et al., 2016; Tan, 2017).

Holder et al. (2015) stated that two themes of racial microaggressions and coping strategies emerged in their study of ten Black women who had worked in senior-level corporate positions and experienced racism in the workplace. Sue (2010) defines microaggressions as brief, everyday exchanges and insults that have degrading meanings to certain individuals because of group membership which can be delivered unconsciously or automatically. They convey derogatory, hostile, or negative insults and snubs based on race or sex, which can be intentional or unintentional. These

microaggressions can make Black women feel often lead to people being overlooked, disrespected, and devalued.

Holder et al. (2015) noted that racial microaggressions included stereotyping Black women, assuming universality of the Black experience, invisibility, and exclusion. The study reported coping strategies were used by the participants to manage these racial microaggressions, including religion and spirituality, support networks, sponsorship and mentoring, and self-care (Holder et al., 2015). Previous studies have demonstrated that Black women have resilience in dealing with stereotypes manifesting in self-monitoring to not imitate any negative stereotypes and prioritizing self-care.

Diversity and Leadership

A lack of diversity continues to be an issue in organizations. Grant Thornton International Business Report of 2015 reports that women have increased their participation in senior management roles by only 1% during the past ten years and women hold only 6% of chief executive officer roles in the United States (Cultural Diversity at Work, n.d.).

According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), diversity can be defined as “the state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures in a group or organization.” Diversity includes cultural factors such as race, gender, age, color, physical ability, and ethnicity (Goyal & Shrivastava, 2013). In the context of organizations, workplace diversity can be defined as an organization's employees who possess distinct elements and qualities that differ from one another. These different elements can include employees' beliefs, values, and actions that vary by gender, ethnicity, age, lifestyle, and physical abilities (Foma, 2014).

Diversity climate has been defined as an organizational climate characterized by openness and appreciation of cultural differences. It has emerged as one of the most likely factors determining the success of diversity management in multicultural organizations. Organizations are likely to be more successful in dealing with cultural differences by increasing the ability of employees to display their cultural heritage in the workplace and by promoting the 'value-in-diversity'-perspective (Hofhuis et al., 2016). This display could also lead to higher job satisfaction among employees. Job satisfaction is an employee's attitude toward his or her job and can be defined as an employee's level of positive affect toward his or her job or job situation (Goyal & Shrivastava, 2013). Satisfaction is also the degree to which employees have a positive affective orientation toward employment by their organization (Barak & Levin, 2002).

Culturally diverse teams have a higher team satisfaction than culturally similar teams, and this suggests that members of multicultural teams may be highly motivated to work together (Stahl et al., 2010). There is a significant positive relationship among unique contributions of hope, optimism, and resilience to job satisfaction and work happiness. Also, there is also a relationship among unique contributions of employee optimism to job satisfaction, work happiness, and organizational commitment in diverse organizations with diverse employees (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

An organization should focus on making sure that there is a positive, diverse climate. The organization needs to select and develop employees with a sense of inclusiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2018). Failure to value diversity may reduce employees' satisfaction and commitment and increase the likelihood of their leaving. The fit between an individual's preference for a particular culture and the culture of the organization the

person joins is related to commitment, satisfaction, and turnover (O'Reilly et al., 1991). It can be concluded there is a positive relationship between diversity in organizations and the job satisfaction of employees.

Summary

The review of the literature uncovered a few key areas with respect to the experiences of Black women in leadership and code-switching. The cited literature revealed the importance and utility of intersectionality as an approach to understanding the leadership experiences of Black women. In addition, the analysis of this body of literature breaks down code-switching for professionals as tools to understand the way that perceptions and background help shape them into the leader they are. There is also a connection to other diverse employees when an organization chooses to value diversity. This feeling of connectedness can lead to higher work productivity and satisfaction as well. The literature also shows a gap in knowledge of how to allow Black women to be authentic without code-switching and how they can be mentored and trained to navigate leadership positions. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology, data collection, and data analysis that was utilized in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study uses a phenomenological design consisting of interviews with Black women leaders to understand their code-switching practices as professionals and how those experiences influence their leadership. Code-switching was originally defined as “the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction” (Koch et al., 2001). Code-switching has been more recently defined as “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities” (McCluney et al., 2019). For the purposes of this DIP, I applied code-switching to Black women. Once in leadership positions, Black women may be compelled to act and speak in a way that is not authentic to how they speak and communicate in other environments.

Ethnically diverse managers experience authenticity when they can act in accordance with their values and personality (Barnard & Simbhoo, 2014). A work environment with more diversity has leaders and employees that feel more comfortable being their authentic selves (Sims, 2018). This authenticity may affect how they are perceived by others and their influence on others. This chapter examines the method used, data collection and analysis, population, sample size, and description. The results informed practice-based solutions to help Black women rise to leadership roles more effectively.

This qualitative study was guided by the following research question: What are the lived experiences of Black women in leadership roles related to the influences of code-switching?

Research Questions

What are the lived experiences of black women in leadership roles related to the influences of code switching?

Method

Research Design Overview

A phenomenological research methodology was selected to examine the research problem due to its ability to “describe[e] the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.75). The purpose of phenomenological research is to gather individual experiences and reduce them to a description of universal essence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This phenomenological approach is used to understand a common or shared experience of a phenomenon based on incorporating what and how they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodology was used because it best facilitates understanding of the lived experiences of Black women in leadership as it relates to code-switching. To understand those lived experiences, detailed interviews are needed to gather the rich content and emotion related to code-switching. The constructivist worldview is the worldview that will inform the research approach of a qualitative study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, the “goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). I relied on the participants’ personal and cultural views in the workplace to inform the research of code-switching among the Black community, particularly the experiences of Black women in

leadership positions. This was achieved by studying eight individuals who have a shared experience and analyzing the data collected to extract themes that reflect their experience.

Participants

The sample in this study were Black women over the age of 35, with a postsecondary degree from an accredited university in the United States, and currently in a middle- to senior-level executive position with five or more years' experience in their current or previous, similar role. The sample size was eight Black women who fit these criteria. It was important that I talk about US-born Black women. I wanted this study to relate to the Black women who are born in this country but still feel the need to conform to other standards to be accepted. This criterion was chosen to increase the chances of finding Black women with several years of leadership experience in their organization or careers. Usually, if one is younger, they may not know exactly where they are headed in their careers. I wanted to limit the number of Black women who are early in their careers for this study. I wanted more seasoned professionals who have clear career goals in mind so that subordinates aspiring to this level of success can learn from their experiences. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that an acceptable sample size varies depending on the type of qualitative design. It is recommended to interview three to ten individuals for a phenomenology study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on this recommendation, I interviewed eight Black women in leadership.

Once IRB approved, I begin the recruitment process for the interviews.

Participants were recruited through direct connections as well as a Facebook group and a LinkedIn flyer. Out of the 22 interested participants I reached out to, eight of those met the qualifications and agreed to be interviewed. Potential study participants were

contacted and asked for their phone number, email address, and/or social media information, depending on our initial form of communication. I made an initial formal introduction through a phone call, which briefly explained the purpose of the study and time commitment. When they were open to further information and agreed to participate, I asked for their email address, if I did not already have it, and sent out a formal recruitment email. Once the participant agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled, and an email was sent out with the Zoom platform information along with the informed consent letter. The wording for the post and flyer is included in Appendix E. The recruitment email is included in Appendix F.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected in different forms. The participants for the study were interviewed utilizing a 13-question semi-structured interview process. The participants provided their resume. The participants were also asked to provide answers to five reflection prompts each day for up to five days at work of any experiences they may have with code-switching. The data for this study consisted of interviews, participant resumes, and participant journal entries.

Data Collection Procedures

After the participants were emailed and agreed to participate in the study, I set up a Zoom meeting for the time they indicated their availability not to exceed 90 minutes. The Zoom meeting invitations were then emailed to the participants. Before the interviews, the participants were emailed five reflection prompts to complete each day for a total of 3-5 workdays of their experiences with code-switching to provide to me a day

before the interview. Once the interview started, we engaged in pleasantries for a few minutes to warm up the participants.

Each session was recorded and the participants were informed that the interview was confidential. They were also referred to by an alias in the study. I used open-ended interview questions for each participant. During the interview, I ensured there were no distractions and I kept my focus on the participant throughout. Times were set for 90 minutes. However, all interviews were completed in under an hour. Each interview was recorded on Zoom© and the audio was sent through Rev.com© to be transcribed. All transcripts were downloaded into a passcode-protected folder from Rev.com© for this research study.

Lincoln and Gaba (as cited in Elo et al., 2014) stated that the aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to." Several methods were utilized within this research to ensure its trustworthiness. Gaba (as cited in Shenton, 2004) listed four constructs that should be used to undergo a trustworthy study: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. To ensure credibility, transcripts will be provided to participants so they can verify and clarify any statements made in the interviews or in the journal. Another element of credibility was triangulation using open interviews, resumes, and journal questions for the data collection. This study should have a wide degree of transferability, as code-switching in the workplace can be applied to many other minority and ethnic groups and other genders.

My research design process was recorded in detail so that the process can be duplicated by future researchers, thus ensuring dependability. To ensure confirmability, I

discuss my biases and susceptibility toward or against the research in this DIP and as well as weaknesses that could potentially be in my research. I used cross-checking by having a peer researcher use my preselected codes to determine if we coded the same text with a similar or the same code.

Data Collection Tools

Creswell and Poth (2018) describe interviewing as knowledge constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. I used open-ended questions for the interviews, as this will give me some structure to ask questions that help set a baseline essence. However, it also allowed the interviewee to feel comfortable to expound or share additional information that I may not have thought of asking or that my questions did not cover. I also have probing questions to further get information on a particular question if the participant does not expound initially. The Interview Protocol is included in Appendix B.

Another data collection type I employed was documentation in the form of resumes and journal entries. Resumes were gathered to ensure that participants' background and leadership experience accurately reflect the population in the study. This also allowed me a greater understanding of their background and work history as they are discussing their experiences. Reviewing resumes is important as all participants will not come from the same industry and it will be important to note if industry type makes a difference in how they either ascend to leadership or how they code-switch. All personal information such as names, addresses, employers, and awards that could identify them will be blacked out or deleted. Jacelon and Imperio (2005) stated that "solicited participant diaries can be a useful strategy for data collection when periods of prolonged

participant observation are not practical” (p. 995). The journal entries allowed me to be able to understand and capture the participant's thoughts in the moment or close to the moment of a code-switching incident. It also allowed for greater self-reflection of the participant. These entries allowed for more detail of the participants’ experiences. Journal prompt questions are included in Appendix D.

As I am also representative of the study population, my thoughts and views are discussed. I followed the interview question protocol, only using additional questions that provoked more discussion from the participants. No verbal or nonverbal cues were used to agree or disagree with the participants.

Sample questions that will be included in the interview protocol are as follows:

1. Explain your perception of code-switching. Have you ever had to code-switch in the workplace?
2. Describe a time when you felt conflicted about having to code-switch.
 - a. How did this conflict with your personal values?
3. Are there any revelations or thoughts that came out of journaling your experiences at work?

The full interview protocol, the participants’ resumes, and journal entries questions and answers were included in the Appendices.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were completed, I immediately downloaded the audio portion of the conversation. These were then uploaded into a transcription service called Rev.com to create a transcript of the interview. Once the transcripts were complete, they were saved and printed. The transcripts were sent to each participant to review through the

member checking process. No participant had changes or clarification to their transcript. I watched each Zoom recording again to memo any thoughts I had. Recordings of audio and video files of the Zoom interview were deleted once they are transcribed.

I went through Zoom to delete local recordings of the interviews. After that was done, I also went into my file folders to verify that the information has been deleted and erased from the trash folders from my computer. I read the transcripts and journals to document memo and gather any key concepts from the data that observed. After the memoing process started, coding began once some initial analysis was complete. “Coding is the process of organizing data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193). As the coding process was developed, quotes that were significant to the theme were saved.

Transcripts were uploaded into MAXQDA, and an initial coding was used to gather “first impression” words or phrases in the data (Saldana, 2009). A code list was developed from the initial thematic analysis and given to my research assistant to code from. A second round using In Vivo and emotion coding was used to assist in viewing the data through a different lens and aided in the process of sorting and condensing the data into categories and ultimately into emergent themes.

I used the template offered by Creswell and Poth (2018) to bracket significant statements, meaningful units, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions to gain the essence of the phenomenon. An independent assistant researcher was hired for cross-checking codes, or intercoder agreement (Creswell et al., 2018), for external reliability of the coding strategy. This assistant researcher also created graphs and charts based on the data collected. Once the assistant researcher finished coding based on the provided code

list, data was merged into MAXQDA to compare the two. Themes were developed as the transcripts were coded by coding the interviews and participant reflection prompts and narrowing those codes into categories. There was only one code, faith, that was identified by the researcher that was not in the original code list. Data analysis through this study revealed four major themes experienced by the eight research participants.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study begins, the interview questions to be used were reviewed to ensure that there would be no leading questions asked to sway the participants in one direction or another. The ethical concerns of transparency and informed consent were lessened by informing potential participants of the general purpose of the study. When collecting data, I avoided exploiting the participants by eliminating leading questions, refrained from sharing personal experiences, and avoided collecting sensitive information where unnecessary (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, I exercised confidentiality. Participants were assigned pseudonyms and a profile of participants was created to respect the privacy and anonymity of both. Any identifiable information was omitted from their resumes and journals. When reporting study findings, organizational information and real names were not disclosed. Only data that is useful to gain a profile of each participant was noted.

Participants were required to read and acknowledge a consent form before beginning the interview. The informed consent and the interview protocol provided a foundation for the qualitative phenomenological study. The informed consent was easy to understand and provide minimal to no risk to the participant. At the same time, the interview protocol is a guide to help the researcher elicit information from the

participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The documents as designed facilitated a collaborative approach for the researcher and participant to gather experiences and ultimately understand the phenomenon of code-switching. Appendix A included a copy of the informed consent document, including the research participant's bill of rights.

Summary

This Dissertation in Practice is designed to help Black women develop tools to become more authentic in their leadership and become leaders to others in their organizations successfully. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how code-switching may influence the effective rise to leadership roles of Black women. The goal of this phenomenological study was to create a description of the participants' lived experiences.

The study participants were Black females who are currently leaders in their organization. Participation was voluntary with recruitment through invitation. Data collection consisted of personal interviews of eight women in the sample and the collection and review of transcripts, journal entries, and resumes. Data analysis was completed through a process of software coding and thematic analysis.

This study will add to the literature in the field by expanding on the definition of code-switching while also creating tools for professionals in leadership to understand when code-switching is occurring and how it affects them and those they lead. The conclusions should be able to be generalized from the sample study to the population. This study should also be able to be transferred and duplicated with other minority groups or to subsets in different fields. Chapter 4 will present the results and findings from the data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter will present the participants for this study and findings based on participants' responses. This study presented how code-switching may influence Black women's effective rise to leadership roles. Eight Black women leaders provided information through a 13-question semi-structured interview and accompanying journal entries. The study utilized a phenomenological analysis to understand the lived experiences of Black women in leadership as it relates to code-switching. The results from these interviews of Black Women Leaders set out to answer the research question:

What are the lived experiences of Black women in leadership roles related to the influences of code-switching?

Results

Participant Demographics

For this phenomenological qualitative study, the participants were identified as eight Black women over the age of 35, with a postsecondary degree from an accredited university in the United States, and currently in a middle or senior management position with five or more years experience in their current or previous role. The participants held the title of director, business owner, principal, or instructional designer. The participants represented the states of Mississippi, California, New York, District of Columbia, Georgia, Texas, and Tennessee. Due to the small number of participants in the study, pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' identities further.

Participants had an average of three years as a leader in their current role for the group, with a minimum of one year to a maximum of six years. The average total work

experience was 19.5 years. Regarding educational attainment, all participants earned Bachelor’s degrees, seven earned a Master’s degree, and four obtained a Doctorate degree while one is currently obtaining a Doctoral Degree. The group is well educated formally and has additional certifications to support ongoing life-long education.

Figure 1

Participant Demographics

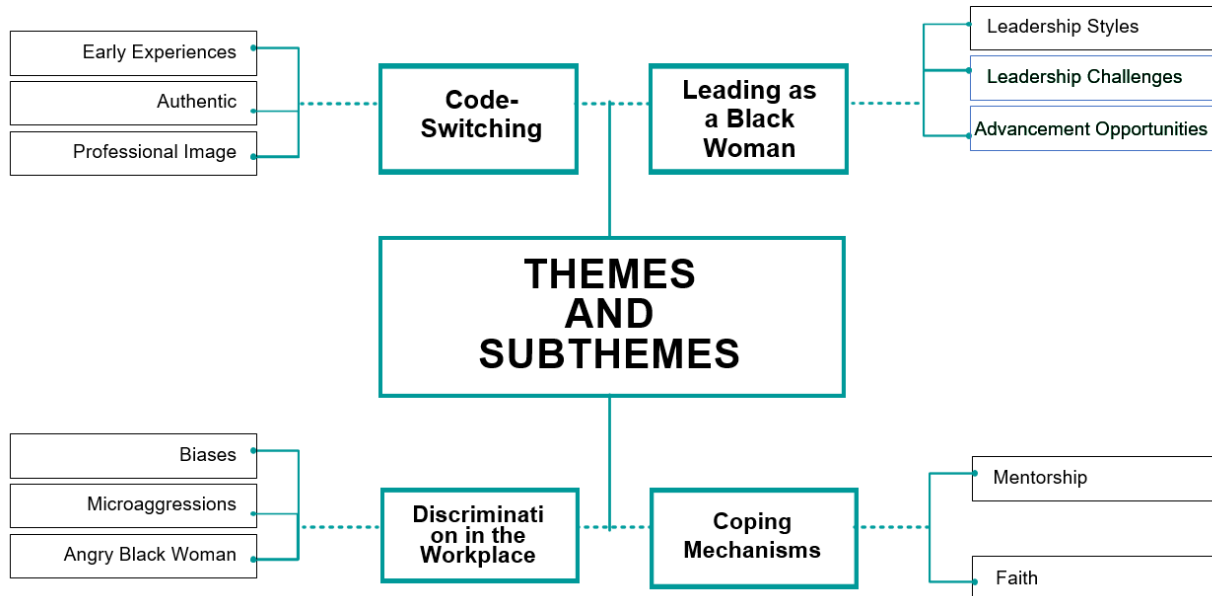
Alias	Role	Industry	Region	# of Degrees	Associates	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate (MD/PhD)	# of Certifications	Years in current role	Years of Work Experience
Zora	Project Director	Education	Southwest	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	4	18
Sonia	Director	Aviation	South	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	2	16
Alice	Deputy Director	Healthcare	Northeast	5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	1	11
Bell	Practice Owner	Healthcare	Southwest	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0	5	16
Nikki	Executive Principal	Education	South	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	2	20
Toni	Senior Director	Healthcare	South	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	3	14
Lorraine	System Wide Director	Healthcare	West	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	6	33
Maya	Instructional Designer, Adjunct Professor	Education	South	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	3	28

Major Themes

Based on the response coding, four major themes emerged. Those themes are Code-Switching, Leading as a Black Woman, Discrimination in the Workplace, and Coping Mechanisms. Several subthemes emerged from each theme. These sub-themes are Code-Switching (Early Experiences, Authenticity, Professional Image), Leading as a Black Woman (Leadership style, Challenges, Intersectionality), Discrimination in the Workplace (Biases, Microaggressions, Angry Black Woman), and Coping Mechanisms (Mentorship, Faith).

Figure 2

Themes and Subthemes



Theme 1: Code-Switching

The participants discussed how code-switching had been an integral part of their career either in the past or currently. They spoke of code-switching in terms of “turn it on or off,” “playing the game,” or “like an armor.” Based on the definition provided in the interviews, participants code-switched to fit into the dominant culture to become a leader in their organizations and shield themselves from discrimination. All participants had a shared experience of code-switching.

Toni discussed having to change her voice depending on where she is:

So, code-switching for me was, "Okay, so I have to switch it on, switch it off." I have to speak with more of a mid-western accent versus my syrupy Mississippi

accent. I slow down when I speak, but I don't speak too slowly. I don't, when I'm walking the streets of Washington D.C., speak to everybody because that's what we do at home. It was just so many different behaviors that I had to adjust because that was the expectation. The expectation was not for me to have an opinion. It was for me to be honored that I had a seat at the table so I could check that box off. That's how I felt.

Lorraine also talked about her feelings around having to code-switch:

So I know it; I can control it. I can decide when I want to do that. I can use it as an asset now, which I think probably earlier in my career it was not. It was just something I felt I had to do, and I had no choice, or else I wasn't going to be accepted, or I wasn't going to be promoted, or people weren't going to consider my information credible.

Maya proudly discussed the automatic nature of code-switching for her:

I probably code switch better than the best. It's not something I have to practice. If I'm in a professional setting, my articulation is going to improve. My pronunciation or my enunciation, it's going to change just because I know that I'm speaking, so I automatically go back to where I had to enunciate and articulate on television.

Alice also talked about how natural and automatic code-switching is to her:

I'm not sure that I ever felt conflicted about it only because it's such part of the fabric of who I am. But I do know that I have no problem switching back and forth if needed in different situations. And I don't even care what anybody thinks.

Zora felt disdain for having to code-switch:

I just want to be me 24/7. Like I don't want to have to shift to make somebody else feel comfortable and the fact of the matter is I don't even think they realize that we're putting forth all this effort to shift anyway... I admire Black women who don't code switch.

Figure 3

Code-Switching Scale

On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not at all to 5 being all the time, how often do you code-switch now?	
Maya	5.00
Zora	4.00
Alice	4.00
Nikki	1.00
Lorraine	3.00
Toni	2.00
Sonia	2.00
Bell	5.00

Early Experiences. The interviews explored where the participants learned of code-switching and when they first started using it. The participants discussed how early in childhood they needed to code-switch even when they didn't know there was a term for it.

Maya reflected on her early experiences:

Well, I think from as early as, I think as early as middle school. Early on, I think I know kids or people, human behavior, we will change the way we talk to fit in. Though, I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know the term. But I recall being in sixth grade and code-switching just to make yourself feel like you're better than what you are or to fit in so that you feel like you fit into the group of people that you want to fit into that group. Even if it's interacting with the teacher, as opposed to interacting with a student.

Alice also shared her early experiences of code-switching:

I was almost groomed to do this because I was part of a program called the desegregation program in St. Louis, where they took little children, our children from the inner-city suburbs and they bused them out. We call them to the county schools. And so my entire life from kindergarten on up, I've always been in an environment where I was the only little Black girl or maybe one or two of us, my sister and I, and in the class. And so you learn to assimilate early, you learn to code-switch early, you learn to build a certain type of confidence early. You learn how to navigate the system early.

Sonia discussed how code-switching started early in her childhood from her parents:

I feel like that's how we grew up. Parents were like, "You need to behave a certain way at work. You have to be like white people because that's what's respected, that's what people are looking for. And if you don't do that, you won't get any job opportunities, so just go ahead and get on board." So that was always the thing. How your hair looks and how you dress, watch the jewelry, watch the nails, your whole appearance.

Zora brought up how different she felt from others and how she had to learn to communicate in a way that connected to the dominant culture:

I was brought up in an all-Black neighborhood. I went to a predominantly Black Catholic elementary school. I went to a predominantly Black middle school but the middle school was unique. That experience was because I was in a magnet program that had... It brought kids from all over the city. But this general program, the population of that school besides the magnet program was predominantly Black and Hispanic. And then my high school was predominantly African-American. And then when I went to college, I went to a historically Black college. So, a lot of my education during my academic career was around predominantly people that look like me. So, when I had interactions, it was typically extracurricular interactions that I had. And I would just always notice that when I would say things, it would be like... What I would say it never connected with them. It was almost like I wasn't even in the room... I just couldn't culturally connect. There was no space for me to connect because it's all of you all and it's me. So, I think that's when I first began to pick up that there's a difference between us and them and how we communicate and then what I had to do in order to try to communicate with them like I had to do something extra just to be able to say something.

Authenticity. The participants discussed how authentic they feel code-switching. Some participants felt it was inauthentic to code-switch while others stood in their authenticity whether or not they code-switched. Lorraine spoke of the relationship between code-switching and feeling authentic:

The longer I have to code-switch, the less authentic I feel about my own personality. If I think about code-switching as a necessary skill for my work world, then I understand the importance of why I do it and that allows me to continue on in my healthcare leadership role.

Sonia described her experience in her organization:

I can generally say what I want to say in meetings with anybody, all the bosses, and everybody, but it took me years of building a certain level of credibility and learning how to say things in a way that doesn't offend. Still get the point across but can't offend. So I have to be measured about how I say what I say, and so I want us to let people just say what they want to say as long as they're respectful, and professional, people should be able to just be them.

Toni reflected on her younger self as it relates to code-switching and being authentic:

Remember the softest pillow is a clear conscious and as you learn to be your authentic self, you won't be that in your 20s, but as you navigate, especially in your 40s, you know who you are and you're more comfortable with who you are. You say what you need and you mean what you say, but your demeanor is a lot better than it was with your 22-year-old self. That's how I see it.

Bell stated that she still feels authentic even though she code-switches:

I definitely feel like I'm an authentic person. Even in being professional, I'm very friendly and very outgoing. And even in my switch, it's still very much who I am. I just might not say it with the same dialect, if you will, but this has just been very eye opening to see how very natural it is to go back and forth.

Alice stated that:

I think that being authentic as a leader, especially as a Black leader... I think the individual has to have an understanding of who they are and leadership, regardless of any industry, I think it can be brutal. And you honestly don't have any friends at the top.

Maya summed up her conversation being authentic as “Authentic, I know what it means. But, when you've had to be different, when you've had to fit into a mold to get into spaces, you lose some authenticity along the way.”

Professional Image. Another large part of code-switching is looking the part. The participants not only talked about changing how they talk and act, but also having to consider wardrobe and hairstyles as part of code-switching. Lorraine reflected on her expression of herself through attire and it relieves some of the pressure from code-switching:

I've been different all my life. It's taken me forever to accept that it's okay for me to be different. And I don't want to be the black and gray suit. I don't want to do that. I will always be me... And so that's how I rebel, is I will do all of the professional voice. I will do all of that and everything, but I will wear my orange suits and my yellow and my bright pink... But I think that's me expressing me whenever I want to, because I get tired of doing that code-switching thing. So if I can rebel just a little bit with my clothes, I'm good.

Sonia talked about the inner struggle to be herself and express herself through her hair and wardrobe, but also how that has changed since moving up in leadership:

Between my hair, before I went natural, because I was scared to death to go natural, literally scared to death. About four years ago, I think, when I got my nose ring, I was so scared to come to work. I was like, "Oh my God, this is... What's going to happen?" Even where sometimes... and now I'll do it, but even probably a couple of years ago I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have worn too much ethnic print. I wouldn't show up in little Kente jacket. Now I will, I don't care. But three years ago I would not have, I would have been like, "Mm-mm (negative), I can't wear that to work." Big earrings or whatever, whatever I thought was reflective of Black culture, too black, I would not do.

Maya discussed how she had to conform to a standard appearance as a young broadcast journalist in the 90s to how she has to dress at church today:

There's certain things, well, having been on television, especially back in the 80s. No, excuse me, the 90s. There were, and having been trained to be a broadcast journalist, there were certain ways you wore your hair. There were certain things that you wore that you didn't have your arms out. In the book you did not wear, you didn't show a lot of skin and now you show skin, curves, and all that you can. So, things have changed. Things have changed. But never would I have worn braids on the air. Never would I have had highlights or anything that took attention from the story. Bright colors were nice because the camera loves bright colors. Makeup was fine, but yeah, I always stayed in the middle of the road when it came to the way I did my hair and the clothes that I wore.... There are certain things I won't wear to church and definitely certain groups that I'm in at church, they would be looking at me. They'd pull me back to the back and be like, "What's

going on? You okay today?" There are certain things that I wouldn't be able to wear. But there are also certain things that I can't help wear just because the way my body is shaped. So at a certain point, it's like, "Okay, when can I just be free? When? At what point?"

Figure 4

Code-Switching Theme

	Code-Switching
Zora	<i>I just want to be me 24/7. Like I don't want to have to shift to make somebody else feel comfortable and the fact of the matter is I don't even think they realize that we're putting forth all this effort to shift anyway.... I admire Black women who don't code switch.</i>
Sonia	<i>I can generally say what I want to say in meetings with anybody, all the bosses, and everybody, but it took me years of building a certain level of credibility and learning how to say things in a way that doesn't offend. Still get the point across but can't offend. So I have to be measured about how I say what I say, and so I want us to let people just say what they want to say as long as they're respectful, and professional, people should be able to just be them.</i>
Alice	<i>I'm not sure that I ever felt conflicted about it only because it's such part of the fabric of who I am. But I do know that I have no problem switching back and forth if needed in different situations. And I don't even care what anybody thinks.</i>
Bell	<i>I definitely feel like I'm an authentic person. Even in being professional, I'm very friendly and very outgoing. And even in my switch, it's still very much who I am. I just might not say it with the same dialect, if you will, but this has just been very eye opening to see how very natural it is to go back and forth.</i>
Toni	<i>So, code-switching for me was, "Okay, so I have to switch it on, switch it off." I have to speak with more of a mid-western accent versus my syrupy Mississippi accent. I slow down when I speak, but I don't speak too slowly. I don't, when I'm walking the streets of Washington D.C., speak to everybody because that's what we do at home. It was just so many different behaviors that I had to adjust because that was the expectation. The expectation was not for me to have an opinion. It was for me to be honored that I had a seat at the table so I could check that box off. That's how I felt.</i>
Lorraine	<i>So I know it; I can control it. I can decide when I want to do that. I can use it as an asset now, which I think probably earlier in my career it was not. It was just something I felt I had to do, and I had no choice, or else I wasn't going to be accepted, or I wasn't going to be promoted, or people weren't going to consider my information credible.</i>
Maya	<i>I probably code switch better than the best. It's not something I have to practice. If I'm in a professional setting, my articulation is going to improve. My pronunciation or my enunciation, it's going to change just because I know that I'm speaking, so I automatically go back to where I had to enunciate and articulate on television.</i>

Theme 2: Leading as a Black Woman

The participants acknowledged that their experiences as Black women are unique and different from Black men or White women. This intersection of differences,

intersectionality, is singular to them and must be recognized. Being a Black woman in leadership is a difficult experience to navigate.

Bell recounted the gratitude she feels for being an educated Black woman in leadership:

As equals to anybody else in the field. I think that there was a statistic that came out several years back that said that African-American females are the most educated demographic in our country. And having said that, as a Black woman with three degrees, I am often very proud to say that not only do I stand on the backs of giant, but I stand shoulder to shoulder with some amazing women. I think that we have more than proven that we are not only capable but are oftentimes more capable than other people. We have had to go above and beyond to get a seat at the table. And so I would want us as Black women to be perceived as the dynamic people that we are.

Zora shared her thoughts about leadership as a woman:

But I think not so much from a race issue, but just from being a female leader that I think we sometimes are told to get in this box and behave and act this certain way, "Be a lady," and that's not fair. And what does that even mean?

She also stated, "there is a big difference in corporate America between an African-American female and a white female."

Sonia shared the staggering lack of Black women leaders in her organization:

There's no shortage of days when I am sitting in the room, be it virtual or in person, and I'm the only Black woman in the room. I am currently the only Black

female director... which is ridiculous to me. This is an organization where we have 5,000 managers. I'm the only Black female director and Black female executive... at this level, at the director level.

Maya discussed how she sees herself but also acknowledges how others see her as well:

I've never been one to hang my hat on being an African-American female, and it's me against world. I see myself as a female who is smart and talented, and just as gifted as anybody else. But I know that because of my skin color and sometimes because of my sex, I'm not going to be treated like some of my colleagues who are not Black, who are not female. So, I definitely want, whether you're white, Black, Indian, Hispanic, whatever race, gender, I think everybody deserves an opportunity to be trained and to have an opportunity to lead in his or her own, in their strengths. To make improvements to the team, I believe that.

She also shared that:

I believe I shattered a glass ceiling to a certain degree because there were forces there that were intimidated and it didn't have anything to do ... It had everything to do with my ability to be excellent. And that was difficult for them, even though I portrayed myself as a willing team player. And it was like the more I tried to display that I was willing to help and to support, there was still that, it did not decrease the intimidation that that person felt, because I did have a doctorate and he did not. And I believe that played into his feeling. He was not comfortable with my expertise, even though I was non-threatening.

Toni stated that “Learning to navigate through the various nuances can be tedious but very necessary to be successful.... There are times when being a Black woman in leadership in corporate America makes you a target.” She also discussed the elephant in the room when it comes to hiring someone diverse:

They don't typically hire women that look like me in leadership roles in certain markets. Now, as we look at diversity and inclusion, when you have people of color in roles, they're typically gay men. And if they're not gay men or they're heterosexual men, it is still harder for us as Black women to find our niche and get there.

Leadership Style. When asking the participants about their leadership styles, they varied from authentic to democratic, but all mentioned caring and having concern for their staff. Their main purpose was to develop and train them to be their best selves and mentioned empowering and motivating others to be better employees. They also value them as more than employees, but as people that need support in a variety of forms in and outside of work. The women stated that they wanted to be a better leader than they had themselves.

Nikki discussed her leadership style and forming relationships:

I also think I'm an authentic leader. I am who I am, and you get that person. I'm empathetic and I am raw and I'm real and I believe in relationships. And that can bite you. That can hurt you. And I've learned that, even though that can bite you and hurt you, I still have to stay true to myself. And that's just who I am. So I think that authentic leadership, if I had to put a style on it, that's who I am.

Sonia spoke of how she develops her staff by getting them to think about their actions and decisions:

I'm aspiring to transformational leadership... That is my comfort place where I'm empowering others, but there are times when I have to be directive, now and always. There's just those times, so I do that as well, but my comfort zone is more so towards transformational, where I am helping people get to solutions on their own using a questioning leadership approach. I try not to go in with answers. I just ask questions and try to get people to drive towards that, try to get people to drive toward why they make the decisions they do or behave the way they do in that process, so it's a coaching style as well.

Toni reflected of her style of leadership but also on the leadership that she has had to endure in the past:

My leadership style is very hands-on. I like to develop my team. I also like to encourage them to take on additional tasks. And I also foster an environment where mistakes are understood as long as we acknowledge them, learn from them, and move away from them so they're not repeated...I am a leader that is very transparent because you're ineffective as a leader when you lead in secrecy and chaos. And that's my belief because I have been in those environments and it hasn't been productive. It's actually been very counterproductive.

Alice described her style toward her team:

Democratic. Very democratic. I like to lead with others and I'll tell most people or anybody who works for me, that they honestly don't work for me. And my job is actually to work for them, to support all that they're doing because, honestly, they

are what holds up the boat... And so if you are a direct report of mine, you already know that I'm actually working for you and making sure that your job is easier, your job is more conducive to us doing better as an organization. And that's been my model for wherever I'm at. And so in doing so, I honestly take to fruit what my colleagues need, what my direct reports need. And so their opinions, their desires, whatever it is, honestly they're closer to the work than I am. And so democratic in a fact that whatever they say it truly... It's a give take, tell me what, tell me why. And if we try something, it works its good. If we try something and it doesn't, we bump heads, that's okay. We're not going to learn if we don't try, but the decisions are not all mine. I am truly a believer that a team is more invested if they are invested in, it's not just being delivered to them.

Bell also discussed her style and level of autonomy that she gives her employees:

My leadership style is more so, we all know what we need to do and I want everybody to do it. And if you need help from me, definitely come to me. But I don't... I'm not a hand-holder. I'm not very... I'm not one of those kinds of people that's going to come stand over your shoulder and be like, "Show me what you're doing. What are you doing?" I'm not going to ask a lot of questions. But should something not be done, then I will start asking questions. I'm pretty laid back. I'm not like a real hard-nosed type of person. I really believe in an open-door policy. I want everybody to just feel very comfortable coming to me and talking to me. But on the flip side, I want everybody to be mature enough to handle that level of autonomy.

Lorraine talked about how her leadership style focuses on the issues in healthcare today and how she manages:

I would say it's probably a combination of transformative and a new one that I learned from my research, intentional leadership. Partly because, I guess I should say pre-COVID or post-COVID, the purpose of our role, especially in healthcare, has significantly been turned upside down, so much disruption. And so you almost have to become intentional about what you do and how you do things, whether it's diversity, whether it's changing patient care or whether it's improving the quality of the service that you provide there, is an intention behind how you're doing it because there's no more room like in previous years of just, Well, we can wait and do this three years from now.

Zora took pride in how she develops her team for the future:

I think what's really big for me is motivating others to tap into their strengths, but not only motivating others, but just seeing people for who they really are.... I pride myself in is that I try to truly meet people where they are, even sometimes pushing them outside of their comfort zone.

While Maya simply stated that "I would say my leadership style, I believe in distributive leadership. I believe that the leader, in essence, sets the tone for the team".

Figure 5

Participants' Leadership Stylee

Participants' Leadership Style	
Zora	<i>"..motivating others to tap into their strengths, but not only motivating others, but just seeing people for who they really are."</i>
Sonia	<i>"I'm aspiring to transformational leadership. That is my comfort place where I'm empowering others, but there are times when I have to be directive, now and always."</i>
Alice	<i>"Democratic. Very democratic. I like to lead with others and I'll tell most people or anybody who works for me, that they honestly don't work for me."</i>
Bell	<i>"I'm definitely not a micromanager." "My leadership style is more so, we all know what we need to do and I want everybody to do it. And if you need help from me, definitely come to me." "I'm pretty laid back." "I really believe in an open door policy. But on the flip side, I want everybody to be mature enough to handle that level of anonymity."</i>
Nikki	<i>"...I want to say transformational. But that's not... It doesn't encompass all of it. I also think I'm an authentic leader....And I'm a cheerleader. I believe everybody can....."</i>
Toni	<i>"My leadership style is very hands on. I am a leader that is very transparent because you're ineffective as a leader when you lead in secrecy and chaos."</i>
Lorraine	<i>"I would say it's probably a combination of transformative and a new one that I learned from my research, intentional leadership."</i>
Maya	<i>"I believe in distributive leadership."</i>

Leadership Challenges. Leadership challenges can lead to Black women to lack a sense of belonging at their organizations and to feel as if they should fit into a mold to belong and advance. This lack of belonging leads to Black women code-switching to create a less complicated work environment for themselves. The participants discuss some of these challenges. Zora stated, “I was offered the opportunity to interview for the position, but in all honesty, the position had already been given to a male. And at the time, the leadership looked a lot like this person.”

Toni reflected on not being valued for her opinion and only being accepted in the room if she is quiet:

Where I was in a group of a bunch of white women and men and they want you to be pretty and don't say anything, I felt so insignificant because you were not concerned or you were not interested in my conversation or my views on policy or legislation or how it would impact the underserved community. You just wanted me to be quiet and go to dinner and hee-hee and ha-ha and then that was it.

Alice spoke of how lonely and isolating it is compounded with the social issues facing Black Americans:

And so that was a very lonely role to be in because there weren't many women in general in this space. And then you tag on being a Black woman. And then you tag on all of this social unrest that's going on in your very community... It was a very tense place to be at as a Black woman, as a leader in a very, I would say, in that whole hospital system, there were only two Black people in leadership and both of us were women.

Nikki described being an introvert and how communicating with those that do not value her is not rewarding:

So I started to try to have those false, fake conversations. And that never goes well for me. [If] we're not having rich, deep conversation, I was just don't want to talk. And I started to try to force that and to fake that. And I was miserable, putting on, I'm smiling that fake smile and I'm painting on that face for people that I know are constantly pulling me down and talking negative about me. And it didn't matter what I did. It didn't matter what conversation I had or how much I bent over, they didn't like me as their leader, period.

Sonia discussed not belonging at first, but advancing to be comfortable in those spaces:

Yeah, certainly. I personally dealt with a lot of imposter syndrome, feeling like I didn't belong, or shouldn't be at the table in the room, in discussions at such a high level, because I guess about six years ago is when I started supporting deputy vice presidents and vice presidents, and now I'm sitting in the room with the top players.

Advancement Opportunities. The participants discussed how they have had to code-switch or be inauthentic to receive advancement opportunities or promotions. Sonia stated that "It's only been, I think, probably I'd say a total of the last four years where I feel comfortable, but prior to that I made plenty of concessions so that I would be seen as worthy of promotion."

Lorraine discussed having to suppress her identity so she could have a better chance at promotion with employers:

Anytime I begin the process of revising my resume, I have to consider whether or not to include any items that will identify me as a woman of color. Leaving this information out has always made me feel like I have to 'play a game' so my interviewers won't feel uncomfortable with cultural achievements on the resume.

But it allows me to believe that I have a better chance at the job I am applying for, as no one knows I am a woman of color until I enter for the interview.

Alice discussed having to code-switch to get advancement opportunities and promotions:

Yes. Definitely, for any promotion I've ever received. Only more so I think because the people who are doing the promotion are not culturally assimilated to the way that I have been culturally assimilated, completely different individuals.

And so I definitely have found myself polishing more of my pedigree and going in with what I think, what I thought would be acceptable at that point to grab a promotion. Now, I look at this, the shifting that I see are perceived to be right now, and every time I turn around, there's this amazing Black woman getting promoted to this, or promoted to that. And it's such a beautiful thing to see. And at the same time, I love it because I think that they're also hiring women who are also equally qualified and not just picking a platform because she's a Black woman. They're hiring amazing dynamic Black women. Still, I believe if I were to be looked at for a different position or promotion, I would still have a polished pedigree so far because my assumptions would be that I would still be looking at a very non diverse hiring board or pool of individuals.

Nikki described having to go from one position to the next and pretending to be someone she's not:

I had to play the game to become the next, every step, from teacher to instructional coach, to assistant principal, to district office, to principal. Each step of the way, I had to play the game. I had to be someone different in the previous district than who I was. And I just determined when I applied for the next job, I'm going to be me. You're going to get all of this. And either you're going to love it or it's not the fit for me.

Toni discussed some of the career strategies that Black women must think about when deciding to move into leadership. She states that Black women must do more than any of her other counterparts:

So for Black women to understand what next looks like, it is important, it is imperative that you have a career road map. You can't just blindly, "Oh, because I'm Black, they going to do this for me," because we still have to do 90% more than what our counterparts do.... Now, I don't want you to be so assertive that you don't learn in your current role but I think, as Black women, we have to be open to receive that critic. We have to be open to take the necessary courses or join the organization. We need to definitely network ... So it's important to make sure you're networking and you're having those thoughtful conversations and always presenting yourself in a situation where people won't mind recommending you.

Figure 6

Leading as a Black Woman Theme

<i>Leading as a Black Woman</i>	
<i>Zora</i>	<i>There is a big difference in corporate America between an African-American female and a white female</i>
<i>Sonia</i>	<i>There's no shortage of days when I am sitting in the room, be it virtual or in person, and I'm the only Black woman in the room. I am currently the only Black female director.... which is ridiculous to me. This is an organization where we have 5,000 managers. I'm the only Black female director and Black female executive.... at this level, at the director level.</i>
<i>Alice</i>	<i>And so that was a very lonely role to be in because there weren't many women in general in this space. And then you tag on being a Black woman. And then you tag on all of this social unrest that's going on in your very community..... It was a very tense place to be at as a Black woman, as a leader.</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>As equals to anybody else in the field. I think that there was a statistic that came out several years back that said that African-American females are the most educated demographic in our country. And having said that, as a Black woman with three degrees, I am often very proud to say that not only do I stand on the backs of giant, but I stand shoulder to shoulder with some</i>
<i>Nikki</i>	<i>I had to play the game to become the next, every step, from teacher to instructional coach, to assistant principal, to district office, to principal. Each step of the way I had to play the game. I had to be someone different in the previous district than who I was. And I just determined when I applied for the next job, I'm going to be me. You're going to get all of this. And either you're going to love it or it's not the fit for me.</i>
<i>Toni</i>	<i>Learning to navigate through the various nuances can be tedious but very necessary to be successful There are times when being a Black woman in leadership in corporate America makes you a target</i>
<i>Lorraine</i>	<i>Anytime I begin the process of revising my resume I have to consider whether or not to include any items that will identify me as a woman of color. Leaving this information out has always made me feel like I have to 'play a game' so my interviewers won't feel uncomfortable with cultural achievements on the resume. But it allows me to believe that I have a better chance at the job I</i>
<i>Maya</i>	<i>I've never been one to hang my hat on being an African-American female, and it's me against world. I see myself as a female who is smart and talented, and just as gifted as anybody else. But I know that because of my skin color and sometimes because of my sex, I'm not going to be treated like some of my colleagues who are not Black, who are not female. So, I definitely want, whether you're white, Black, Indian, Hispanic, whatever race, gender, I think everybody deserves an opportunity to be trained and to have an opportunity to lead in his or her own, in their strengths. To make improvements to the team, I believe that.</i>

Theme 3: Discrimination

In the discussion of the theme of Discrimination, Lorraine may have summed it up best:

I think one of the things that probably, I don't think I recognized how painful some of the past was, because I made the decision to code switch because I didn't have a choice or because I had been discriminated against. Whether it's a woman or a Black person, it really ... And you kind of bury some of that pain so that you can actually work.

Toni described what she hates about discrimination in the workplace:

So when I say that I've encountered that, it's that indirect. I can respect you when you do it to me and I see what you doing, but it's the back biting and behind your back indirect stuff and you know that they've done it and you have to go in a meeting. You have to smile and be nice to these people that have done that type of undermining so it's not blatant racism. It's undermining that I endure.

Zora also stated "I just know to be aware that the presence of racism is always going to be there. Sexism is always going to be there. But just not to allow it to prevent me from going for an opportunity."

Biases. Code-switching can be a mechanism to shield you from the everyday hurts of racism and sexism. There are several forms of discrimination that are endured in the workplace. All of these are based on biases. Conscious and unconscious biases can hinder women from advancement opportunities because it is assumed they have family obligations, may need to stay at home more or cannot deal with the pressures of work (Ross, 2019).

Alice discussed how a patient spoke to her as she was caring for them in a hospital: "I don't want a little nigger girl taking care of me, so go get the manager. And I said, Well, you're looking at her. And there's no one else to take care of you."

Meanwhile, Lorraine recounted the very painful experience of being humiliated in front of a room full of people:

When it came time for questions, one of the physicians stated, "my, my, my, Black people have really come along in their education and understanding about patients." The room went silent, I am the only person of color or different heritage in the room.

Sonia also described some of the biases that she has encountered.

So he pulled me into his office when he came on and he said, "Look. When you're in the meetings, you're not there as part of the office's group. That's not your job. You're there to take notes, you're there to take actions, that's it. So really, you shouldn't speak otherwise.

Microaggressions. Participants had to deal with microaggressions in the workplace. Zora questioned the microaggressive statement in the form of a compliment given to her in our interview:

I have heard this a lot from white people and I don't know how to take it sometimes and it's, "You're so articulate." So, I don't know what that means like, "Do you tell other white women that they're articulate or is it that you don't expect me to be able to speak in a certain way?" And so, it's bothersome in that sense that I feel like I'm supposed to say, "Thank you." But at the same time, I feel like,

"Why is that even a compliment? Like I'm 13 or I'm 11 and I'm saying a speech in front of a bunch of people. So, why is it that as a nearly 50-year-old woman, somebody feels compelled to come tell him you are just so articulate? And so, I don't know how to take that as an adult African-American female.

Toni also discussed the microaggressions that she has been subject to:

Okay, well, "you don't speak like you're from Mississippi," or, "You don't speak a certain type of way." And I didn't get insulted in front of them because they were trying to talk about the cadence of my vernacular, but I knew what they meant.

She also pointed out others being dismissive to her as a microaggression:

Anybody that looked like me in leadership, he was dismissive to them. So I was aware and that right there, you get in the elevator with me, with the VP of governmental relations, you two have a conversation and you say nothing to me.

Sonia also recounted being dismissed by others.

I have had people be dismissive of me and I felt it was because of my color, and when I say dismissive, I wouldn't say outright refusal, but lack of responsiveness, I'd send requests for meetings or send emails, I'd get no response to phone calls and text messages.

Angry Black Woman. Compounded with the view that they should be a stereotypical woman, these women are faced with the privilege of being Black. This leads to its own challenges as Black women have their own set of labels. If you have a soft

voice, you must speak louder to get from being ignored. However, when a Black woman does speak up, they are labeled as aggressive.

Most of the women interviewed described in almost disgust about the “angry Black woman” stereotype that lingers in the background of every interaction they have. Nikki talked about not being herself even after receiving a promotion because of feedback she received and how it felt being asked to change her personality for others:

Any white teacher that complained, any white female teacher that complained, it was my fault. It was my problem. I wasn't relational enough. I was too serious. I needed to ask them about their child's soccer game. I needed to appease them and to build relationships. And so that was a hard 15 years to see people promoted before me. But then when I was promoted, to be critiqued and judged and told "Smile more. Be kinder. Be nicer. Yes, you are the smartest, but you're making others feel bad. Dial that back a little bit.”

She also explained why she felt the need to change organizations partly because of this angry Black woman stereotype.

I am in the organization that I'm in now because my previous organization, they didn't value Black women. They were... I was often told that I came across as intimidating. I was even told by... I was called into a meeting by HR and said, "You're smart. You're bright. You are probably the most talented principal that we have, but you make others feel less than. We need you to dial that back.

These factors can contribute to the harsh feelings that some Black women have in the workplace. Compounded with having to code-switch to fit in or be heard, this can

make Black women angry. Lorraine discussed having her ideas and contributions be dismissed because of being Black even as a leader in her organization in stating, "However, as I have said, the longer I have to hold this persona, the angrier I get. Not at having to code-switch, but that my information is not credible until someone else brings it to light."

She accurately described the burden of having to not only suppress her valid feelings during an incident. She also had to make everyone else feel comfortable and suppressing her feelings even when she was the one wrongly attacked.

When I am being verbally assaulted in what is supposed to be a professional meeting, and the White elites think they are giving a compliment, I do want to shout at them, use language I am not comfortable using, and basically fight back in anger. The room was made uncomfortable by the physician's comments, no one came to my defense, granted they may all have been in a state of shock. But I am not sure they would have known what to say anyway. But it was clearly my job now to make everyone else feel comfortable again. In this situation, I was angry at having to smile my way through a response and re-direct everyone's attention back to my presentation.

Sonia described the experience and how she would want Black women to be treated:

We still are dealing with the angry Black woman perception in the agency, and often we are invited to the table and told to come as we are, and then dis-invited promptly, because they don't like who we are. They're uncomfortable with who we are. And so, that's a problem. I would like white people to appreciate a Black

woman's willingness to be candid, and frank, and open, and honest, and willing to speak up without discomfort. I feel like people should learn to accept that.

Figure 7

Discrimination in the Workplace Theme

<i>Discrimination in the Workplace</i>	
<i>Zora</i>	<i>I have heard this a lot from white people and I don't know how to take it sometimes and it's, "You're so articulate." So, I don't know what that means like, "Do you tell other white women that they're articulate or is it that you don't expect me to be able to speak in a certain way?" And so, it's bothersome in that sense that I feel like I'm supposed to say, "Thank you." But at the same time, I feel like, "Why is that even a compliment? Like I'm 13 or I'm 11 and I'm saying a speech in front of a bunch of people. So, why is it that as a nearly 50-year-old woman, somebody feels compelled to come tell him you are just so articulate? And so, I don't know how to take that as an adult African-American female.</i>
<i>Sonia</i>	<i>We still are dealing with the angry Black woman perception in the agency, and often we are invited to the table and told to come as we are, and then dis-invited promptly, because they don't like who we are. They're uncomfortable with who we are. And so, that's a problem. I would like white people to appreciate a Black woman's willingness to be candid, and frank, and open, and honest, and willing to speak up without discomfort. I feel like people should learn to accept that.</i>
<i>Alice</i>	<i>I don't want a little nigger girl taking care of me, so go get the manager. And I said, Well, you're looking at her. And there's no one else to take care of you.</i>
<i>Nikki</i>	<i>Any white teacher that complained, any white female teacher that complained, it was my fault. It was my problem. I wasn't relational enough. I was too serious. I needed to ask them about their child's soccer game. I needed to appease them and to build relationships. And so that was a hard 15 years to see people promoted before me. But then when I was promoted, to be critiqued and judged and told "Smile more. Be kinder. Be nicer. Yes, you are the smartest, but you're making others feel bad. Dial that back a little bit.</i>
<i>Toni</i>	<i>It's the back biting and behind your back indirect stuff and you know that they've done it and you have to go in a meeting. You have to smile and be nice to these people that have done that type of undermining so it's not blatant racism. It's undermining that I endure.</i>
<i>Lorraine</i>	<i>I made the decision to code switch because I didn't have a choice or because I had been discriminated against. Whether it's a woman or a Black person, it really ... And you kind of bury some of that pain so that you can actually work.</i>

Theme 4: Coping Mechanisms

Code-switching, leadership challenges, and discrimination combined can cause a buildup of emotion, especially if the person feels as though their voice is not heard. This can lead to challenges such as anger or, to the other extreme, depression. One thing that all the participants had in common was the fact that they all described deep emotions around their experiences. This can lead to burn out and other feelings of overwhelm unless they have some coping mechanisms in place to deal with the stress.

Zora explained how she felt at the end of those hard days being a Black woman in leadership:

But when they go behind closed doors, you really don't know what that life is until maybe they tell you one day how depressed they are or how hard it's being or just the struggles that they go through that people take for granted. And so, I think that's a lot that people really don't know that when you go behind that closed door of the office and you don't have anybody supporting you because you're supporting everybody, so when you look behind and you're like, "Well, who is here for me?" And nobody sees that, they just see the glory of being able wear that title and say, "You're the head of this? Or you're over these people, or this is your building, or this is your department." And, man, you go home at night and you're just tapped out. You're drained. You're ready to throw in the towel many times. And so, it's a thing that you can love, but it can burn you out.

Alice said that this journey is "very lonely" and "very tense." Bell described it as painful. Also, she has been angry, livid, and furious at various times. Lorraine stated that "I know what it's like to feel like you're by yourself and there's nobody else out there to support you." Nikki talked about being miserable, scared, afraid, devastating, and fearful during her challenges. Sonia said that she "personally dealt with a lot of imposter syndrome, feeling like I didn't belong, or shouldn't be at the table in the room, in discussions at such a high level" Toni has said she felt insignificant and has had to "laugh to keep from crying." Lastly, Maya described being in a position where she couldn't show emotion and was numb and she said, "I couldn't laugh, nor could I cry or be angry, or just because it was all taken out of context."

Mentoring. Black employees may find it difficult to share the mission, vision, and values of those who disregard and disempower them (Sims, 2018). This is why same-race mentorship is essential. Most participants discussed having a mentor and/or mentoring others as things that are imperative to succeed as a Black woman in leadership. Mentoring can be considered a coping mechanism as it gives Black women leaders an opportunity to talk with other, like-minded individuals about the challenges that are sometimes bottled up in them and also provide lessons as well.

Toni discussed how it is imperative to have a mentor, "I think in order for Black women to do that, you have to have a mentor. You have to understand somebody to guide you to navigate this process because it's tumultuous water." Sonia talked about the people that pushed her to where she is now: "I luckily had advocates who refused to allow me to really live that story, because they saw something in me, and they pushed me to push myself beyond that, and just contribute what I could contribute." She also stated:

I'll say this, all of my comfort that I have today doesn't solely come from me. It comes from having leaders that look like me and some that don't, who never judged me for being me. Who were comfortable with me bringing my culture to the discussion, to the meeting and they embraced it, they enjoyed it, they seem to find it refreshing.

Mentoring can leave a lasting impact on an individual, whether formal or informal. Nikki discussed how her teachers made the difference for her, but she still looks for mentors to guide her:

And I'm from... the third, most impoverished county in the state of Mississippi as of two years ago. That's where I'm from. And so that's my purpose and my passion. If it was not for teachers saying, "You can. You can. You can, and you will. And you will," I would still be there on the street corners.... But I'm also always looking for great mentor so that I can develop in my leadership skills. I can develop in my relationship building, speaking. I'm an introvert, too. So networking is not something that just naturally comes from me. I have to work hard at, because I can go to an event and sit at the table and be by myself and be content. But that's not how you grow and develop and build a brand in a program. And so continuing to be surrounded by the people who are going to push me and develop me in those skills.

Bell stated, "so I started seeking out those people that looked like me and they were the ones that all just kind of band together to find patients for me so that I could get in, get those procedures done."

It is also important to give back by mentoring others. The participants not only discussed how they have been guided and mentored, but how they also reach out to help and mentor others when they can. Toni stated that "I have made it my business to help people and to provide a road map and to be an open book only because somebody did that for me." Zora discussed wanting to help others have a support system to release emotions to and to come to for advice:

But I encourage people to get out there if that's what you aspire to be, but, "Hey, let me help you not make some of the mistakes I've made. Or let me just help you know that, Hey, you're not going to be able to avoid this, but just know you're not

weird for feeling that way or you're not the only one that felt that way. That's normal, what you feel. So, just know that you've got a support system, you need to use it. Don't just go off in a hole and cover your head. Ask for help if you need it." That kind of thing.

Maya stated that:

When I do get an opportunity to lead or for the door to be open, when I get in, I will make sure that I leave the door open for others who look like me. So I believe I'm in this process of being more transparent and trying to help people. You do have to be willing to share your weaknesses, as well as your strengths. We don't have a problem sharing our strengths, but you have to be willing to share your weaknesses and to acknowledge mistakes, and to encourage those under you who have strengths to come up and shine.

Lorraine sought out other Black women in her organization to help as they come on board:

It does make me intentionally seek out other Black women, especially Black women. When I see that they're in a new role. Or if we make announcements, even in my current health system, we make announcements about people that are taken a new role and things like that. So every time I know that it's a Black person, I immediately send an email to them and say, "Hey, if you need any help, need any support, need some advice, and just need somebody to talk to, hit me up. Let me know you need something, you need anything. And I do want, especially Black women to know that there are other Black women out there that actually can help them and can actually support them.

Sonia also discussed seeking out others from diverse backgrounds to help them advance:

I seek out very actively people from a variety of backgrounds to come and help us accomplish our work. I look for them to give them opportunities as much as I can... So I seek those folks out and look for opportunities to bring them in and help create some energy and excitement for them about what the potential could be for their career.

Faith. Faith seemed to be a common coping mechanism for the women to help them get past the challenges or through the times of feeling inauthentic. Bell acknowledged that

Prayer and Jesus.... it's literally the grace of God that I'm still standing, but He made provision and I can just see His hand at work throughout all of it, throughout the course of it.

Maya talked about her faith and how much that means to her.

And I was just used to manning myself and I believe God will, he will in some stages of your life based on your level of maturity, he will expect certain things. He will expect more from you and in the way of trusting him. So yes, I have a doctorate and I have this and this, but my life is not my own. I know this and God. And because I do have a relationship with God and he's shown me that's a way of staying humble, and at the same time, he still gives me everything that I couldn't have gotten for myself.

Nikki described the faith she had when being fearful and afraid to move:

And I was praying to God for that change. I was praying for that shift. Like, this isn't right. I shouldn't feel like this. I shouldn't feel... I shouldn't be fearful to run my school for how others are going to feel. And I would never apply and I would never move because I was so loyal. And so He moved me. ... He made it so uncomfortable and so miserable that he moved me.... I just quit. I don't know. Child. We got a mortgage. We got two kids. But it worked out.

Figure 8

Coping Mechanisms Theme

<i>Coping Mechanisms</i>	
Zora	<i>But I encourage people to get out there if that's what you aspire to be, but, "Hey, let me help you not make some of the mistakes I've made. Or let me just help you know that, Hey, you're not going to be able to avoid this, but just know you're not weird for feeling that way or you're not the only one that felt that way. That's normal, what you feel. So, just know that you've got a support system, you need to use it. Don't just go off in a hole and cover your head. Ask for help if you need it." That kind of thing.</i>
Sonia	<i>I'll say this, all of my comfort that I have today doesn't solely come from me. It comes from having leaders that look like me and some that don't, who never judged me for being me. Who were comfortable with me bringing my culture to the discussion, to the meeting and they embraced it, they enjoyed it, they seem to find it refreshing. I seek out very actively people from a variety of backgrounds to come and help us accomplish our work. I look for them to give them opportunities as much as I can.... So I seek those folks out and look for opportunities to bring them in and help create some energy and excitement for them about what the potential could be for their career.</i>
Bell	<i>So I started seeking out those people that looked like me and they were the ones that all just kind of band together to find patients for me so that I could get in, get those procedures done.</i>
Nikki	<i>And I'm from.... the third, most impoverished county in the state of Mississippi as of two years ago. That's where I'm from. And so that's my purpose and my passion. If it was not for teachers saying, "You can. You can. You can, and you will. And you will," I would still be there on the street corners.... But I'm also always looking for great mentor so that I can develop in my leadership skills. I can develop in my relationship building, speaking. I'm an introvert, too. So networking is not something that just naturally comes from me. I have to work hard at, because I can go to an event and sit at the table and be by myself and be content. But that's not how you grow and develop and build a brand in a program. And so continuing to be surrounded by the people who are going to work me and develop me in these skills</i>
Toni	<i>I think in order for Black women to do that, you have to have a mentor. You have to understand somebody to guide you to navigate this process because it's tumultuous water.</i>
Lorraine	<i>It does make me intentionally seek out other Black women, especially Black women. When I see that they're in a new role. Or if we make announcements, even in my current health system, we make announcements about people that are taken a new role and things like that. So every time I know that it's a Black person, I immediately send an email to them and say, "Hey, if you need any help, need any support, need some advice, and just need somebody to talk to, hit me up. Let me know you need something, you need anything." And I do want, especially Black women to know that there are other Black women out there that actually can help them and can actually support them.</i>
Maya	<i>When I do get an opportunity to lead or for the door to be open, when I get in, I will make sure that I leave the door open for others who look like me. So I believe I'm in this process of being more transparent and trying to help people. You do have to be willing to share your weaknesses, as well as your strengths. We don't have a problem sharing our strengths, but you have to be willing to share your weaknesses and to acknowledge mistakes, and to encourage those under you who have strengths to come up and shine.</i>

Findings

The research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of Black women in leadership roles related to the influences of code-switching? The data analysis of participant responses shows that code-switching is a significant influence on Black women in leadership. Overall, what emerged from the data collection is that code-switching is a coping mechanism itself. The data showed that Black women use code-switching as a barrier between their professional and authentic or non-professional lives. Code-switching is used to combat discrimination, advance at work, or better deal with challenges as they ascend or while in leadership. The first theme of code-switching directly reflects the influence that code-switching has had on their lives from early childhood through leadership and their authenticity as a Black woman in leadership.

The theme of leadership reflected on their leadership styles, challenges, and advancement potential, how their leadership has been affected by each, and how code-switching can be an asset in advancement. The third theme of Discrimination speaks to why a Black woman may need to code-switch to lessen the biases and stereotypes placed on them. Lastly, the theme of Coping Mechanism discusses the disheartening and enraged feelings that these women in leadership feel during challenging times at work and two ways those feelings are mitigated. Based on this analysis, it can be determined that the influence of code-switching can play both a positive and negative role for Black women leaders depending on the circumstances of its use. Ultimately, code-switching is used by Black women to better integrate themselves into the dominant culture for the purposes of advancement, relating better to the dominant culture, and shielding themselves from discrimination.

Discussion

Research shows that female leaders are often nurturers and when dealing with a diverse workforce, nurturing is a quality that defines effective diversity management (Kirton & Greene, 2015). To develop healthy relationships with followers and to enhance satisfaction, leaders need to nurture. Caring for employees influences productive relationships, which, in turn, facilitate a healthy workplace culture that is critical for change management (Kirton & Greene, 2015). It is likely that the leader's ability to nurture and care for others led to success she has had in the past working with different groups. For leaders in contemporary organizations, the implications are to emulate a similar approach, which will result in an empowered workforce. Leaders should realize that working with diverse teams requires empowerment and motivation, which are quickly achieved through nurturing and care. Whether considering themselves an authentic leader or transformational leader, all of the participants noted that they cared about their employees and wanted to focus on making sure their staff is developed, at their full potential, and supported by leadership.

Authentic leaders describe themselves as possessing greater levels of self-esteem, motivation, and psychological well-being (Kinsler, 2014). Authentic mentors create confident followers and mentees through self-awareness and self-confidence, intent on increasing the psychological component of the mentoring relationship (Gatling, 2014). Transformational leaders are often considered effective mentors through the persistent encouragement of subordinates to develop themselves to their fullest and empowering them to meet individual and organizational goals (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Through transformational leadership, mentees are stimulated to examine problems and complete

tasks using creative thinking and open communication; mentors are committed to developing followers and being attentive to their needs (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). Many participants discussed how having a mentor is important in their leadership development and how important it is to mentor others so they do not go through the same struggles and trials as they did. Being able to help others navigate these trials is extremely important because both professional and personal development must occur to make mentoring relationships beneficial. Professional topics include career development and advancement, discipline or competency-related knowledge transfer, and professional development such as leadership development or organizational development. Personal topics include work/life balance, professional presence, and gender or race issues. The role of giving back and investing in the next generation not only raises the bar of the profession but also develops and retains talent in the organization. Katherine (2007) states that “as professional and personal discussions occur, listening skills are refined, and the ethical use of power and empowerment become better understood.”

Despite the strides women have taken, there continue to be negative connotations for women in leadership. These are notions ingrained as people’s prescribed beliefs taught through either direct or indirect interactions and experiences (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Holding on to old-fashioned ideals and not respecting the diversity of women’s experiences causes this challenge. Frye (2019) stated that “even when they have moved into jobs traditionally held by men or white workers and moved up the career ladder into managerial or leadership roles, Black women often encounter resistance because they are not perceived as fitting the traditional, typically male standard of success”(para. 10).

However, if they tend to be too assertive and outgoing, Black women are often labeled as aggressive.

Discrimination, negative stereotypes, and bias affect people's perceptions and treatment of Black women in the workplace, especially as they aspire to become leaders (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). "Even when they aren't openly expressed, stereotypes can disadvantage members of under-represented groups on several levels: recruitment, demands on time, resource allocation, evaluation, retention and promotion" (Kessler et al., 2018, para. 1). For Black leaders, managing perceptions and stereotypes continues even after the achievement of an executive leadership position.

A study by Cook and Glass (2008) found that shareholder reactions to the appointment of Black leaders, although initially positive, became significantly negative over time in comparison to non-Black leaders. This indicates stereotypes can become significant in impeding Black women's career progression. As our participants moved into leadership, they still were faced with negative biases and stereotypes that affected their overall mindset and leadership capabilities. The label of Angry Black Woman is particularly troublesome. Biewen and Headlee (2018) stated, "And so I see media coverage of Black women, calling them angry or unfeminine...but like a pain that goes back to that wooden shack on a plantation near Atlanta. It's compounded, at least for me" (p. 27). Black women tend to be overlooked in the workplace more than white women. Black women also are paid an average of 21% lower than white women (Reid, 2019). Frye (2019) noted that:

Historically, Black women's work was tied, in part, to their less-privileged status in comparison with white women, who were elevated within the societal hierarchy

and expected to represent a paternalistic feminine ideal focused exclusively on the home. From the 19th century and well into the 20th century, Black women worked but were frequently relegated to the lowest-paying jobs. (para. 8)

In an era where Black women are still fighting for equality in the workplace from hiring practices to pay disparities, these participants hold on to justified anger that they are constantly trying to suppress and cope with.

Leadership challenges and discrimination affect Black women and can cause them to code-switch. However, because of their leadership style and need to help others succeed, some participants have grown into their authentic selves to show others who they truly are. Others use code-switching as a mask to shield themselves from the pains of the challenges they face daily.

Summary

This chapter presented detailed background information on each of the participants interviewed for this study. The chapter also included the findings of the research study. Based on the participants' responses, four themes arose: Code-Switching, Leading as a Black Woman, Discrimination in the workplace, and Coping Mechanisms. The findings support this study's assertion that code-switching has influenced Black women in leadership from early childhood experiences throughout their leadership journey. The data provides evidence that this influence has been shaped by discrimination and leadership experiences. Black women have had to develop coping mechanisms in order to survive and deal with code-switching. The participants' shared experiences

highlight the navigation of complex experiences and the cultivation of resilience and strength to deal with past and future encounters.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation in practice will provide suggestions that may be used to support Black women in leadership and modify the leadership culture of organizations to encourage diversity and inclusiveness for minorities. A proposed solution to this leadership dilemma will be recommended, explaining possible stakeholders and obstacles to the solution. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the practical implications of the study, considerations for future research, and the influence this research will have on leadership theory and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROPOSED SOLUTION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological dissertation in practice (DIP) was to explore how code-switching may influence the effective rise to leadership roles of Black women.

The final chapter of this dissertation in practice is intended to propose a series of solutions, along with strategies for implementation that will enable organizations to recognize diversity in leadership to hire and train more diverse women. The outcome will also help organizations be more sensitive to the various issues Black women deal with in the workplace regarding identity and how identity influences their cultural perspectives in an organization or career. The proposed solutions will inform organizations that strategies, training, and policies can be implemented to allow people that are culturally diverse to feel free to be themselves at the workplace.

Finally, implications of the study, its influence on leadership theory, and a summary of the study will be presented.

Aim Statement

This dissertation in practice aims to create an evidence-based guide for Black women leaders who practice code-switching to learn how they can become effective leaders as themselves. Another aim of this study is to contribute to the body of literature relating to code-switching among Black women in leadership.

Proposed Solutions

The findings of this dissertation in practice are offered as recommendations to address the complex real-world problem of the various issues Black women deal with in the workplace regarding code-switching and how code-switching influences their perspectives in an organization or career. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) noted that the federal government full-time workforce consisted of 1.8 million people as of 2017, excluding military and postal workers (Wiesman, n.d.). As of 2017, 10.6% of the federal workforce was composed of Black females (Executive Branch Employment by Gender and Race/National Origin, n.d.). Less than 10% of those Black women rose to the level of Senior Executive Service (SES), executive management for federal agencies (Federal Employment Reports, 2018).

Because of these statistics, I opted to use the federal government, in particular, the Department of Transportation to direct my recommendations. This disparity among employees and leadership needs to improve for Black women to feel comfortable enough to be authentic as they are either leading or aspiring to leadership positions. Starting at lower levels of employees with leadership trainings and inclusiveness workshops to help diverse employees feel comfortable being themselves as they move up in leadership and also help others understand the complex issues facing diverse employees and leaders. This should be done throughout the levels of an employee's career and not just at the leadership or management juncture as all the organizational culture must change as a whole for diverse employees to be authentic.

My proposed solutions come as a set of recommendations that should be implemented at the Department of Transportation (DOT) to allow for Diversity, Equity,

Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) education throughout the agency. These recommendations will be implemented as part of the DEIA Strategic Plan that will be overseen by the White House. This is essential to establish a culture of DEIA in the agency which is important for greater retention of diverse employees. These recommendations address ways a government agency such as DOT can help them grow and effectively lead an organization and provide an environment that encourages authenticity and diversity.

Recommendation 1: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council

Each agency under DOT should form an interdisciplinary DEIA council that oversees the DEIA initiatives for that respective agency. This council will consist of leaders and representatives from divisions such as Human Resources, Civil Rights, and Legal Counsel. They will oversee the establishment and enhancement of agency protocols for integrating DEIA initiatives, customizing initiatives as needed for each division, trainings, and support personnel within each agency.

Recommendation 2: Onboarding training

DOT should highly recommend DEIA courses during the first 90 days of onboarding to establish basic education about DEIA and the agency's culture as it relates to diversity. These courses can be split into different subjects to allow for smaller chunks of learning and greater retention of the material. These courses can affirm the commitment and seriousness of the agency to discourage discrimination toward diverse employees, which the participants noted as being a serious issue in their workplaces.

Recommendation 3: New Curriculum of Courses

Most DOT agencies mandate certain courses to be taken every year through their online learning platform. A recommended refresher DEIA course should be included to make sure that current employees that were not subject to the onboarding courses are trained to the new culture of the agency. The refresher courses should also be offered in addition or in lieu of the online version as an in-person opportunity to gain maximum value by interacting with others and allowing for scenario situations in the training. Because of our participants' experiences with dealing with discrimination, these courses could educate others about the sensitivities that diverse employees face and how they can avoid those challenges.

Recommendation 4: DEIA Integrated into Management Interview Process

All management should be sensitive and knowledgeable of DEIA issues. As employees are interviewed for management positions, there should be components included that assess DEIA sensitivity. The interview questions should include scenarios or elements that may be created by civil rights. Interview questions that could explore the candidate's DEIA capability could include:

1. What steps would you take to create a climate that is supportive and respectful and that values differing perspectives and experiences?
2. If you managed three employees: a new hire out of college, an employee from another country, and a limited sight employee, how would you adapt your leadership style to effectively lead each of them?

3. When interacting with a person whose background is different than your own, how do you ensure that communication is effective?

As a second part of the interview process, a DEIA behavioral assessment should be taken by the candidate. These components should give the interview panel an assessment of how DEIA fits in as a part of the candidate's leadership capabilities. It should be used not to exclude candidates, but to evaluate how much diversity training the candidate may need once they are hired into a leadership position. This recommendation may stress to new leaders that DEIA is an important part of not only the agency, but their job. It may help hire and retain managers that may be willing and able to guide diverse leaders to management roles as well.

Recommendation 5: Informal, Unpaid Affinity Groups

Support networks and informal mentorships that will help young leaders find the peer, ally, and mentorship support as well as other tools such as leadership workshops, mock interviews, and resources to help prepare them for diversity issues and leadership roles in their future and current organizations. Right now, all affinity groups are paid membership organizations. Informal affinity groups should be established in partnership with paid affinity groups in the agency that will allow those without the means to pay to be able to have a support network of peers where they can go to for advice, mentorship, and professional development. The affinity groups can allow diverse employees to be comfortable being themselves when they see and hear other diverse employees' stories. The informal partnership may eventually allow for group members of the informal group to join the paid affinity group to gain even more support and networking benefits. This may lead to Black women not feeling as though they need to code switch to feel a sense

of belonging. The affinity groups can also provide coping mechanisms that the participants have stated as being important to their success.

Evidence that Supports the Solution

On June 25, 2021, President Biden issued the Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce. This executive order outline plans to create a government-wide DEIA plan within 150 days. The order also directs each agency to provide data on the state of their DEIA and create its own DEIA plan after the Governmentwide DEIA plan is issued (Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce, 2021). This executive order shows the importance and urgency that the current Administration is showing to make sure that the Federal government is a diverse workforce.

As discussed in Chapter 2, racial identity-based impression management is comparable to code-switching as it is the process of strategically manipulating racial identity indicators, such as physical appearance and verbal disclosures, to influence how they are perceived (Roberts et al., 2014). The participants used three of the five tactics of impression management at work (Benton et al., 2020). The three tactics are ingratiation, seeking to be viewed as likable; self-promotion, seeking to be viewed as competent; and exemplification, seeking to be viewed as dedicated.

Defined as an organizational climate characterized by openness and/or appreciation towards cultural differences, diversity climate has emerged as an important factor in determining the success of diversity management in inclusive organizations (Hofhuis et al., 2016). Diverse teams see things in different views because they have

different experiences and are able to catch each other's mistakes (Foma, 2014).

Organizations that have diverse teams have a lower turnover rate, have less chances of having flaws in their final productions, and tend to come up with a variety of creative ideas and techniques. People require a feeling of belongingness and security. When employees feel supported in their ideas and beliefs, they become more productive. Per the findings of this study, these participants would have felt less isolated and unhappy if they would have had a group of diverse peers that they felt as though they belonged to.

As far as coping with the stress of code-switching and the racial discrimination faced at work, a study by Hall et al. (2012) showed that some women used shifting as a way to manage stress. Black women cope with workplace stress by caring for themselves, by using spirituality, and relying on other Black females for support. My participants showed the same in this research.

Evidence that Challenges the Solution

The first challenge is the fact that employees and management may show resistance to change. Some people do not adhere to new rules well and are set in their ways (Foma, 2014).

The second challenge is engrained discrimination in the workplace. Some management show favoritism among their employees and it may be hard to change that culture. This favoritism will make it hard to create a great diverse team. The third challenge is communication problems when establishing new policies. If it's not communicated well to the employees how important DEIA is to the agency, they are less likely to value and embrace it. Lastly, if DEIA initiatives are only embraced for fear of lawsuits, fines, or

public protest, its effects may not last long. The agency is seen as creating a public relations event with little or no commitment to the underlying principles of diversity training or implementation.

Implementation of the Proposed Solutions

The proposed recommendations would need to be vetted through the highest levels of management such as DOT Secretary of Transportation, each Agency's Administrator, Assistant Administrator for Human Resources, and Assistant Administrator for Civil Rights for the recommendations to be implemented in each agency. These recommendations would be included in the DEIA Strategic Plan to be submitted and approved to the White House. Once that is complete, the DEIA Council would oversee the implementation of the DEIA Strategic Plan throughout each agency.

Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Implementation of the Solution

In order to implement the recommendations, factors should be considered such as any laws, policies, and guidance that the agency may already have to either support or contradict these new solutions. Considerations should also be taken as to how easy each recommendation is to be implemented across all divisions or are there certain positions where providing training or new management tools may be more difficult. Because the federal government has a large workforce of private contractors, consideration should be given to if these employees would be exempt from the diversity initiatives. An agency's additional needs may include additional personnel, training platforms, training funding, support of unions, and support of affinity groups. Care should be taken in making the agency more diverse, that no group is left out when planning inclusivity. Issues that may

arise during the process are pushback from management, union associations, and/or affinity group associations. These recommendations can be revised and tailored to fit the concerns of these groups and to fit the needs of everyone in the agency.

Once the recommendations are developed and customized by the DEIA Council for each agency, the stakeholders would be throughout the agency to help oversee implementation of the DEIA Strategic Plan. Management within each division would be responsible for encouraging and advancing the DEIA initiatives to the lower-level management and employees. The training team for each agency would work with the DEIA Council to develop and source DEIA trainings that would be most user friendly and convenient for the employees to use. The various union associations would need to be consulted with to make sure the solutions are not a hardship or burden to union employees. The current affinity groups would be responsible for establishing a free affinity structure in the organization or free events that can support diverse employees in addition to their paid memberships. The employees are an important stakeholders as they will receive the trainings, experience the new policies, and provide feedback on the agency's progress.

Timeline for Implementation of the Solution

The DEIA strategic plan should be submitted to the White House within 120 days of the issuance of the Government-wide DEIA Plan (Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce, 2021). Once the Strategic Plan is finalized, the timelines for implementation can vary. Each step can be approved and implemented at different times as they all can be standalone initiatives after the formation of the DEIA Council. This will more than likely allow a faster approval of each

step if they are implemented independently of each other. Because of the current Administration and the Secretary of Transportation's commitment toward diversity and inclusion, it would be feasible to have all steps implemented by the end of 2024.

Evaluating the Outcome of Implementing the Solution

Before, during, and after implementation, focus groups and surveys should be completed by those in charge to gauge how effective the solutions are at that time and to make sure that maximum input is achieved on each level of the process. Surveys used before implementation can be used as a baseline of how the agency has been effectively managing programs before implementing a new or revised DEIA program. OPM manages an Employee Satisfaction Survey that is given to employees each year by their respective agency. This survey could ask additional questions to assess the effectiveness of the DEI programs that have been implemented. DOT can implement workplace inclusion focus groups that can allow the agency to get a deeper understanding of the positives and negatives of the programs and inform future strategic plans. An additional exit survey could be given to employees to understand the perception of the diversity culture of the agency upon leaving the agency. This survey could also have open ended questions which allow for comments on how the programs could be improved. These suggestions and comments can be taken by the DEI council to improve the courses and processes that have been implemented. The most important evaluation would be submitting an annual report of the status of the DEIA strategic plan to the White House and released to the public. (*Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce*, 2021). This public accountability should make sure that the agency keeps DEIA in the forefront of its everyday goals and plans.

Implications

Practical Implications

Many diversity management and inclusion practices, such as the recruitment and promotion, training, and affinity groups all have the potential to contribute to the perception of the organization as inclusive (Shore et al., 2018). However, such practices may not be adequate if people from diverse groups are not allowed to be themselves in terms of expressing their perspectives and being heard and respected for their differences. The authenticity of the minority employee is needed for contributing to the experience of inclusion.

The results of this DIP will inform organizations how to create programs that will support Black women as they ascend and while they are in leadership. This DIP shows the leadership experiences, challenges, and discrimination that Black women go through in the workplace. This DIP also documents how Black women resort to coping mechanisms, including code-switching, to help mitigate the challenges they face at work and to integrate into the dominate culture while at work. Even though the solutions were tailored for the federal government, they could be used in any organization to help create a more diverse work environment.

Implications for Future Research

This DIP addressed the gap in literature of Black women in leadership and their code-switching experiences. Our sample size was small and reflected a singular viewpoint of a phenomenon which is Black women leaders. The study could be expanded to include other minority women and men in leadership. A quantitative survey design

could be utilized to reach more women in a future study and to gain data without sitting for an interview. This larger survey design would reach a larger population and sample size. There is a need to conduct more studies on Black women leaders and code-switching in the federal government. More studies in the federal government would help to understand why there is a lack of Black women leaders in the top tiers of management and how that can be changed. This is particularly important as DEIA initiatives are just starting to be implemented at the agency. Also, a deeper study of the coping mechanisms that Black women use to navigate the challenges of leadership would be useful.

This study could also be guided by the theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought. Although most of these women share a similar experience, not all do. As Nikki stated of not code-switching at all at this point in her career:

I get to be me. And even with my teachers, I get to be me. And my staff is very diverse. It's a very diverse staff, every race. I try to have as many races and cultures represented for our students.

Being able to explore code-switching from the different lenses of class, race, and gender oppression would explore the varied perceptions and social justice issues Black women in leadership face.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

Singh et al. (2002) noted that transformational women leaders tend to maintain authenticity and achieve results as a leader. These women have shown an incredible and unique journey to leadership and the challenges they face to get there and continue to face. Transformational leaders develop followers so that they can become effective

leaders themselves (Druskat, 1994). The findings showed that even though they face their own challenges, they are willing to lead others in a way that will transform the employees' lives and careers. This is inspirational and admirable of these leaders. Findings affirm it is this mix of transformational and authentic leadership that runs deep within our Black women leaders.

Authentic leaders have a strong sense of self-awareness and are perceived by others as being cognizant of their own ethical values, moral standards, intellect, and assets (Fusco et al., 2015). These Black women leaders are not willing to compromise their standards and values even though they face adversity at work. However, the women have only begun to start truly being authentic as they reach a higher level in their careers. The security of leadership or just the wisdom that comes with age has lessened the need to code-switch and feel inauthentic.

Pivotal to the study was the effect of coping mechanisms. Brewer (2010) defines servant leadership in the 21st-century workplace as listening, being empathetic, being aware of colleagues' needs, is committed to the growth of people, and understanding how community and building community shape lives. Having a mentor to advise, counsel, and mentor others was an important part of the leaders' journey. At its core, mentoring is about service to others. It takes specific characteristics and traits to serve others in a way they are motivated to do the same. "A mentoring relationship provides an exceptional opportunity for leaders to examine and understand their own sensitivities, emotions and aspirations as well as their influence on others" (Katherine, 2007). Being able to help shape the careers of others even if they are not their subordinates shows the commitment

to building community. In the end, these Black women leaders possess the qualities of Transformational, Authentic, and Servant Leadership.

The Jesuit Charism *Contemplation in action* is central throughout the findings, as these Black women leaders must “gather knowledge, reflect on experiences, act, and reflect again” to come to term with the challenges and discrimination they face and adjust to those experiences either by code-switching or being authentic. They all provided a level of self-reflection and then acted through their leadership. Even through the DIP interview process and providing the journals, each participant noted how that activity offered them the ability to reflect on their current and past experiences.

Summary of the Dissertation in Practice

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to understand how code-switching influences the effective rise to leadership roles of Black women. This DIP study created an evidence-based guide for Black women in leadership roles or aspirations who practice code-switching in their places of work to learn how they can become effective leaders without the need to code-switch. The goal of this phenomenological study was to create a description of the participants’ lived experiences.

The study participants were eight Black females who are currently leaders in their organization. Participation was voluntary with recruitment through invitation. Data collection consisted of personal interviews of eight women in the sample group and the collection and review of transcripts, journal entries, and resumes. Data analysis was completed through a process of software coding and thematic analysis.

Based on the participant's responses, four themes arose: Code-Switching, Leading as a Black Woman, Discrimination in the workplace, and Coping Mechanisms. The findings support this study's assertion that code-switching has influenced Black women in leadership from early childhood experiences throughout their leadership journey. The data provides evidence that this influence has been shaped by discrimination and leadership experiences. Black women have had to develop coping mechanisms to survive and deal with code-switching. The participants' shared experiences highlight the navigation of complex experiences; and the cultivation of resilience and strength to deal with past and future encounters.

There were five solutions developed as recommendations for use in the federal government, particularly, Department of Transportation. These recommendations are a creation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council, which would then implement the DEIA Onboard Training, new curriculum of courses, DEIA integrated management interview process, and Informal, Unpaid Affinity Groups as part of the Strategic Plan. The solutions can be implemented separately and within the next three years led by the DEIA Council. The implications for these solutions support Black women leaders by creating a diverse work environment and promoting organizational success through diversity and inclusivity. Further studies can be done with a variety of other minority participants and using a quantitative method for larger samples. This study has implications in leadership theory in that the participants held several leadership styles even though they all had similar leadership experiences.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent and Participant Bill of Rights

May 1, 2021

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. The purpose of this qualitative study will be to understand how code-switching influences Black women leaders. At this stage in the research, code-switching will be generally defined as “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities” (McCluney et al., 2019, para. 3). The aim of this study is to create an evidenced based guide for individuals with leadership roles or aspirations who practice code-switching in their places of work. Your participation in the study is voluntary and there is no compensation for participating. As a participant you can withdraw at any time. If you decide not to be in this study, your choice will not affect your relationship with the investigator of this study. There will be no penalty to you.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to participate in one one-on-one semi-structured interview. The interviews will include: one 60-90-minute interview regarding your experiences and a 30-minute follow-up for clarity only if needed. To provide flexibility to the participants all interviews will be conducted via Zoom video conferencing to capture and transcribe the conversation between the researcher and participant. Participants will be asked to review the transcripts from both recorded interviews to review for accuracy and add additional comments.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks and/or discomforts than what is encountered in everyday life. Feel free, at any time, to stop participation if you feel any discomfort or emotional stress.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits of participating in this study. However, your answers and your participation may help us learn more about the influence of code-switching on Black women aspiring to leadership positions.

Confidentiality

Your privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity will be respected and maintained throughout the entire study. To protect your confidentiality and anonymity of the stories and information shared with the researcher all electronic data (recordings, transcripts, and field notes) will be stored on a password-protected computer. The results will be published in a dissertation in practice study and may be used for

publications and conference presentations, however all findings will be reported in a manner which protects the participants anonymity and confidentiality.

If you have any questions about this dissertation in practice or your participation in the study, they can be directed to me via email at KristiAshley@creighton.edu or via phone at 601.622.2665 or my dissertation chair, Dr. Sandy Caruso-Woolard at sandycaruso-woolard@creighton.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board at 402.280.2126.

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research participant.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
 - a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
 - b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Thank you for volunteering and agreeing to be interviewed for this research. I will be giving you some information about the project and what my goal is for speaking with you today. I am looking understand and help Black women develop tools to become leaders in their organizations. This study will add to literature in the field by creating tools for professionals in leadership to understand when code-switching is occurring and how it influences them and those they lead. Throughout this interview, I will ask you questions about race, gender, and your leadership. My goal is to understand your experiences as you ascended in your leadership role and while you are in your leadership role.

I want to remind you that as outlined in the informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the process. I want to assure you that your identity and all information you give me is strictly confidential. I will not be reporting your name or job title other than “a leader in the organization” to anyone. I will not attach your name to any comments you make and will use your assigned participant number only to reference your comments and thoughts. You have read, signed, and been provided a copy of the informed consent for your records. Do you need me to reread it or address any questions that relate to the form? You will get the opportunity to review your transcripts and associated documents so that you can clarify any information to be included in my study.

So that I can focus on our discussion, I will be recording this Zoom interview. Is that okay with you? If not, I will need to take hand-written notes. I may need clarification on the information you are providing to make sure that I have accurately recorded the information.

You are welcome to take a break at any time, and if you ever feel uncomfortable with the interview, you may excuse yourself and decide not to participate in this study. Do you have any questions about the procedures? Okay, let us begin the interview.

Questions:

1. What has been your role as a leader in your organization?
 - a. How long have you been in your current role? How many years have you served as a leader?

- b. What will be the ultimate leadership role for you? Are you in it now or working toward it? How will all your current skills and experiences lead you to that role or keep you in that/this ultimate role?
2. What do you perceive as your leadership style?
3. What would you tell me about how your organization perceives and promotes Black women?
 - a. How would you want Black women leaders to be perceived in your organization?
4. Were there any obstacles you experienced in your ascent into leadership either race or gender related?
 - a. How did you overcome these obstacles?
 - b. How did those experiences change how you lead others if there was a change?
5. Has anyone refused to work with you or treated you differently due to your race or gender? What was that experience like for you and how did you handle it?
6. Take me to a time when you had to act in a way that was not your truly authentic self at work; what was that like?
 - a. Consider those experiences that occurred on your way to a leadership role and those that have occurred in the role.
 - b. If you have had none have you observed it occurring for others? What was your response to this observation?
7. Explain your perception of code-switching. How did you learn about code-switching or when was the first time you knew about the concept?
8. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not at all to 5 being all the time, how often do you code-switch?
9. Describe a time when you felt conflicted for having to code-switch.
 - a. How did this conflict with your personal values?
10. Has there ever been a time you ever felt it was necessary for you to code-switch in order to advance at work?
11. When buying clothes or considering a hairstyle, was how others would perceive you at work taken into consideration?
12. Are there any revelations or thoughts that came out of the reflection exercise?

13. If there is something more you would like to add about being authentic as a Black woman in leadership or code-switching in general that I have not asked please describe that for me.

Thank you for participating in this interview. I will be contacting you via email after your interview has been transcribed with questions to clarify your responses only if needed. I will also request that you review the transcript for any mistakes or clarity in responses.

Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter



Office of the Provost
Research Compliance

DETERMINATION DATE: May 2, 2021

TO: Kristi Ashley
FROM: Social and Behavioral IRB

PROJECT TITLE: The Influence of Code-Switching on Black Women Leaders: A Phenomenological Study

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exempt
RISK LEVEL: Minimal

SUBMISSION #: 2002098-01
SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application
REVIEW METHOD: Exempt
DETERMINATION: Acknowledged
EXPIRATION DATE: None

Thank you for your Initial Application submission materials for this project. The following items were reviewed in this submission:

- Creighton University HS eForm
 - Study Protocol
 - Information Letter and Participant Bill of Rights
 - Interview Protocol
 - Participants' Reflection Prompt Entries
 - Informational Post/Flyer for Recruitment
 - Recruitment Email

This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects as per 45CFR46.101 (b) 2.

1. All protocol amendments and changes are to be submitted to the IRB and may not be implemented until approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 402-280-2126 or irb@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and number in all correspondence with this Board.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Creighton University IRB records.

Institutional Review Board

☎ 402.280.2126 | ☎ 402.280.3200
Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Health Sciences Complex I
2500 California Plaza Omaha, NE 68178

creighton.edu
creighton.edu/researchservices/rcocommittees/irb

Appendix D

Participants' Reflection Prompt Entries

The following Reflection Prompts were provided to participants to answer each day for between three to five work days:

Reflecting on today, please answer the questions below thoughtfully:

1. Was there any instance today where you felt uncomfortable in the presence of others or you thought someone of another culture felt uncomfortable with you around? How did it make you feel?
2. Did you do anything today to feel more at ease or to make others feel more at ease in your presence? How did it make you feel?
3. Did you code-switch today that you are aware of?
4. How authentic did you feel after code-switching?
5. What was the outcome of the experience surrounding the code-switching today?

Appendix E

Informational Post/Flyer for Recruitment

Hello All,

My name is Kristi Ashley Macklin, and I am a doctoral candidate at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study on the influence of code-switching on Black women leaders.

To participate in the study, you must:

- Be 35 years of age or older.
- Identify as Black or African American
- Identify as a woman
- Currently live in the United States.
- Holds a postsecondary degree from an accredited university in the United States
- Currently in a middle to senior management level executive position with 5 or more years' experience in their current or a previous similar role.

Participants will be asked to take part in a short prescreening interview, a longer Zoom interview, and complete a short journaling exercise.

If you feel you meet criteria and would like to participate, please contact me for further information on the study. I also ask that you share with others that may meet the criteria and would be interested in participating. If you have questions or request more information, please feel free to contact me at kristiashley@creighton.edu.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kristi Ashley Macklin

Appendix F

Recruitment Email

The following paragraphs will be included in an email to solicit participation in the qualitative narrative study. The informed consent and Participant Bill of Rights will be attached to the email.

Date

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Kristi Ashley Macklin, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Leadership program at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. I am contacting you because I am beginning the research process for my dissertation in practice, and I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

The title of my study is *The Influence of Code-Switching on Black Women Leaders: A Phenomenological Study*. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological Dissertation in Practice will be to explore how code-switching may influence the rise to leadership of Black women. As a researcher, I am interested in understanding your experiences in code switching and leadership. This understanding will help me develop a list of best practices and initiatives for professional organizations and aspiring Black women seeking leadership roles.

If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in one 60-90 minute one-on-one semi-structured interview. In addition to the individual interview, participants will be asked to complete reflective journaling prompts prior to the interview. The participant will also be asked to provide a resume.

Finally, participants will be asked to examine and comment on interview transcripts. There is no remuneration and/or direct benefits for participation for in this study. It is entirely voluntary, and you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty. However, your answers and your participation will help us learn more about the influence of code-switching among Black women leaders.

If you have any questions about this dissertation in practice or your participation in the study, they can be directed to me via email at KristiAshley@Creighton.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Sandy Caruso-Woolard at sandycaruso-woolard@creighton.edu. I have attached the informed consent as well as the Participant Bill of Rights for your review.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Respectfully,

Kristi Ashley Macklin