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STORIES OF RESISTANCE: BLACK WOMEN CORPORATE EXECUTIVES OPPOSING
GENDERED (EVERYDAY) RACISM

CHERYL JORDAN

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership & Change Program

of Antioch University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

STORIES OF RESISTANCE: BLACK WOMEN CORPORATE EXECUTIVES OPPOSING
GENDERED (EVERYDAY) RACISM

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Dedication

I send very special love and thanks and dedicate this dissertation to my mom, Jean Jordan. Because of you, I have the courage to take risks and to not accept the ordinary or mundane. You taught me how to present myself to the world. I also send heartfelt thanks to my son, Iman Jordan. Without you gracing my existence, I could never see the endless possibilities of life. You teach me purposeful pursuit. You remind me that no one can do me better than me. I also dedicate this dissertation to my by dad, Frederick Jordan. Although you transitioned into a new life 35 years ago, you left me with your sensitivity and passion for helping others. You also left me with your creative energy. Your memory continues to live inside of me. Narvis Clayton, I dedicate this dissertation to you as well. You are no longer with us, but I can still hear your laughter. It continues to make me smile during tough times, my friend.

I also dedicate this dissertation to everyone who has crossed my path during my lifetime. Each individual played a role in getting me to where I am today. There were some who lifted me to new levels of spiritual and personal well-being. There were others who challenged me positively and negatively; thereby, causing me to grow and stretch in ways I never imagined. In all cases, you know who you are. I thank you and honor you.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my God. With you, God, all things are conceivable and achievable. We only need to believe and have faith and we can unquestionably realize our life dreams.

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Abstract

For this research, I explored contemporary resistance strategies that Black women executives in the corporate world use to oppose negative behaviors by others associated with their race and gender. The dissertation reviews scholarship about the major role the convergence of race and gender play in the day-to-day existence of Black women. Historically, negative images and beliefs have influenced the treatment of Black women in society. These same thoughts and images affect Black women executives in today's workplace. African-American women continue to see limited advancement to senior levels within the corporate organization, even though diversity programs abound. As leaders in the corporation jump higher hurdles to achieve executive level positions, Black women continue to be invisible in corporations. Using biographical inquiry, I explored resistance by Black women corporate executives to negative images. I identified specific acts and motifs of resistance in the workplace through questions designed to elicit career life histories through their personal stories. A final purpose was to connect the worlds of the corporate and the academic by sharing the career life history motifs from the interviews with Black women professors whose scholarly pursuits and interests are in the area of critical race and gender studies. I wanted to hear their suggestions for the practical application of this information toward further development and transference of knowledge in this area. The electronic version of this dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd

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Chapter I: Introduction

Old Mistress got sick, and I would fan her with a brush, to keep the flies off her. I would hither all in the face. Sometimes, I would make out I was sleep and beat her in the face. . . . Well, she died, and all the slaves come in the house just a-hollering and crying hold their hands over their eyes—just hollering for all they could. Soon as they got outside of the house, they would say, “Old goddamn son of a bitch, she gone on down to hell.” (Anonymous as cited in Mellon, 1988, p. 245)

The above quote may imply that Black women actively fought the demeaning affects of slavery. Legendary figures such as Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells pushed boundaries and intellectual thought. They took bold steps during a time when there was an expectation that Black women humble themselves because of their enslaved existence, even after the abolishment of slavery (Giddings, 1996; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; McMurray, 1998). These were times when the perceived worth of a Black women was as little more than a mule (hooks, 1981). There are many oral life stories and histories of Black women leaders working to create systems of fairness and uplift for themselves and the Black community during the era of slavery, reconstruction, and post-reconstruction (Giddings, 1996; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; McMurray, 1998).

These stories inspired me to explore present-day resistance in the lives of Black women leaders in corporations. Although Black women in general have made some progress in scaling the ladder of success in corporations over the past 40 years, they continue to face many career barriers (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004; Catalyst, 2009). Thus, a contemporary question I seek to examine is: How do Black women continue to resist race and gender oppression and “everyday racism” (Essed, 1991, p. 2) in modern work settings?

I researched Black women in organizations because of my working experiences as a manager and senior consultant in a corporate environment. In both roles, I have been responsible for leading and developing employees and demonstrating leadership in the organization. For

many years, I reflected on the personal tension I experienced as a leader in the organization because of feeling excluded from important informal networks or the questioning of my qualifications by co-workers. Many times, I worked harder to fight the perception that I was not working hard enough. I also felt scrutinized. For example, during meetings I was concerned about what other White male and female participants were thinking about me while presenting my thoughts and ideas. Dubois (2005) wrote about this state of double consciousness Blacks experience: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (p. 7). Dubois’ quote captures my feelings as an African-American woman in the business world over the past 30 years. My thoughts may sound extreme to the reader of this dissertation proposal. Admittedly, they may be. However, something leads me to analyze and examine my organizational experiences and encounters as a Black woman leader during the course of my career. That something, that force, is real to me. I cannot ignore it.

Frequently, I resisted White men’s and White women’s negative presumptions and assumptions about my identity and personhood or about my ability to contribute to the organization. I wondered frequently if White co-workers authentically embraced my presence in the organization. They could be gracious, but did those actions emanate from a place of real caring and support? I knew negative commentary about African-Americans took place behind closed doors, a phenomenon Picca and Feagin (2007) called *two-faced racism*. Picca and Feagin’s exploration of the hidden world of two-faced racism confirms my belief that African-Americans continue to be the subject of derogatory commentary. The premise of this concept is that White individuals may project two different faces to the world regarding racism. White

individuals may publicly exude the belief that they do not subscribe to racism. They are onboard with and support a multicultural society. However, their backstage behaviors may contradict their frontstage behaviors. Behind closed doors with other White family members, friends, and work colleagues, racial bias rears its ugly head. Picca and Feagin provided an example of this behavior by briefly highlighting the story about Texaco executives making disparaging remarks regarding Black employees. To their detriment, they did not realize their conversation was recorded. Picca and Feagin wrote:

Someone had surreptitiously recorded a backstage meeting of executives. According to trial evidence and recorded conversations, senior executives referred to Black company employees as “Black jelly beans” who could not move up the ladder because “all the Black jelly beans seem to be glued to the bottom of the bag.” (p. 18)

Of course, this is not to say that the experiences I outline here are the norm in my career, certainly not. However, they happened enough to me personally and to other Black women in corporate organizations to warrant attention and further exploration.

On rare occasions, I also resisted behaviors related to gender-related stereotypes from Black men and even other Black women in the workplace. This topic is another thesis in itself. In several instances, I resisted by using a firm tone against a ridiculous question from a White male colleague about how I landed the professional job I currently filled. Many times I sensitively but clearly stated, “Hey, I am a part of this conversation as well,” when White male and female employees did not establish eye contact with me during a meeting or turned their backs to me when engaged in conversations with other White males or White females. However, I admit there were times when I chose not to take any action for fear of receiving the angry Black woman label. I lived in a world of labels not only for over 25 years in the workplace but also, in the news, and on the big screen. I read great stories in my first grade reader about the everyday

adventures of three White children, Dick, Jane, Sally, and their dog, Spot. People who looked like me were not included. We were invisible.

These situations are not unique to me. Anyone experiencing marginalization may encounter the same scenarios, the same feelings, or the same response. To some degree, everyone at some point in their life has probably experienced isolation, alienation, or exclusion; however, individuals who are members of historically marginalized and oppressed groups may face these situations and feelings frequently. For them, behaviors associated with marginalization are pervasive and daily—woven throughout their life experiences. They may posture themselves daily to anticipate or expect behaviors that may minimize or retard their self-respect or erode their belief that they are worthy and respectable; that they can accomplish their goals and participate as active contributors, thought leaders, and change agents to create a better world.

Living this on a daily basis as an African-American woman leader leads me to explore the stories of other Black women leaders. Are their stories similar or different from mine? My life experiences fighting race and gender stereotypes inspired me to want to learn more about the resistance strategies that other Black women leaders use to oppose negative race and gender related behaviors from their colleagues, direct reports, and peers in the organization. How do they handle these behaviors, which may appear insurmountable at times?

Occasionally, in school and work-related projects, I engage African-American women leaders in informal dialogue about their reality of climbing the corporate ladder. Sometimes, this level of dialogue occurs clandestinely in dyads or within groups behind closed office doors, over dinner, over the phone, or even after hours in the workplace parking lot. Even in the 21st century, many Black women leaders I encounter echo the sentiment of still having to fight harder

or to repress certain behaviors that may reinforce what White men, women, and colleagues think about them. Black women leaders share times when others doubt their decisions and exclude them from important corporate networks because of what they perceive to be their race and/or gender. Many of these women question why they did not receive the promotion, even though they are intelligent, educated, and strong executors on the job. These scenarios led me on a journey to identify the resistance strategies Black women use when faced with compounding race and gender and/or everyday racism (I discuss race and gender and everyday racism later in this chapter). Specifically, what do their career life histories of resistance in the corporation look like?

Minimal empirical research exists about contemporary Black women leaders in corporations and even that is certainly not about acts of resistance by Black women leaders as a primary research question. The topic of resistance is often treated as an after thought or becomes synonymous with coping strategies of Black women, even though coping strategies and resistance are not necessarily the same. I will discuss the differences later in this chapter.

Inviting Black women to tell their stories, and thus participate in constructing knowledge grounded in their life experiences, is a point of passion for me as the facilitator and designer of this research. Self-definition is critical to uplift self and to actualize groups for positive change. As Audrey Lorde (1984) stated, “if we do not define ourselves, others will for their use and to our detriment” (p. 45). The imperative was to create academic scholarship that is truly reflective of Black women leaders’ experiences in the corporation. This is an exercise in developing powerful streams of knowledge for Black women leaders as they move forward and strive for positive outcomes in their personal and professional lives.

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this research is to use biographical forms of inquiry and analysis to identify specific behaviors Black women executives in the corporation demonstrate against race and/or gender discrimination and marginalization. Executives for this study are Black women in leadership positions in the corporation that affect change and are responsible for leading major organizational efforts and initiatives in the corporation, specifically in private industry. The women participating in this research are no fewer than four levels below the CEO. Corporate women leaders for this study are women who are responsible for a functional area, lead employee teams, and participate in the development of strategy and visioning for the functional area or division in which they work.

Black women research participants are the offspring of generations of Black presence in the United States. They are leaders born and raised in the United States and descendants of U.S. African slaves or Afro-Caribbean immigrants migrating to the U.S. between the late 1800s and shortly after the Civil Rights Era. The objective is to interview Black women raised in a society in which they have social orientation to the institution of U.S. slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement. It is likely that these women grew up hearing stories about U. S. Black community resistance, saw images or witnessed acts of resistance and protest related to Black community uplift in the media, and heard about and/or lived during a time of segregation. It is likely that the influences of these movements shaped and influenced their life experiences as Black women. However, this is not to deny the unique identities of every woman. There is a relevant reason why I limited the project to women grounded in the U. S. experience. Black women currently living in the U.S., but with ancestry from other countries, may have different identities because of early cultural, ethnic, and nationalistic socialization elsewhere. Their views

about racism and sexism in America may be informed by their country of origin. In addition, some may experience race and racism differently because society at large does not claim them as their Blacks (Essed, 1991, 2000).

The primary research question is: “How do Black women senior leaders in the corporation resist gendered (everyday) racism?” I used the notion of gendered (everyday) racism to convey the possibility of gendered racism occurring not necessarily in grandiose and extremely visible ways, even though everyday racism is an expression of larger structures; but to acknowledge the insidious and daily nature of combined racist and sexist acts in the lives of Black women. This notion also accounts for behaviors that may not be grounded, necessarily, in the intersection of race and gender, but are a result of either racism or of sexism in a racialized context. I will address this concept in more detail later in this section.

This research also includes identifying specific experiences of Black women senior leaders in the workplace attributed to race and gender. The research highlights detailed oppositional tactics Black women leaders employed to battle, avoid, deny, or handle these assumptions. It answers the questions: “What did they do to achieve a level of seniority in a system, against the odds of marginalization?” and: “What actions did they take against assumptions that were possibly detrimental to their careers and what was the learning from this situation?”

At this point, it is important to acknowledge the dynamics resulting from the intersection of race and gender. Several researchers write about this interplay using related, but different concepts to point to this phenomenon. Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of intersectionality. Essed (1991) introduced the notion of gendered racism, which she described as “the racial oppression of Black women as structured by racist and ethnicist perceptions of gender

roles” (p. 31). Essed also described gendered racism as expressions of racism shaped by gender systems. E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) referred to the entwinement of race and gender as racialized sexism, “the theoretical concept of racialized sexism also captures the idea that the experience of gender discrimination in the workplace depends on a woman’s race. For Black women managers, sexism is entwined with racism” (p. 137).

Everyday racism implies the integration of racist behaviors and cognitions into everyday situations (Essed, 1991). These behaviors and cognitions represent core power relations and are both shaped by building blocks of larger racist systems and structures. The concept of everyday racism is relevant to this research as it considers the daily prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory behavior Black women may experience as leaders in the corporation. Focusing on gendered racism might highlight the stories of Black women involving race and gender issues. It also could be challenging or even irrelevant for Black women participating in this study to specify, in an analytical way, the combination of race and gender as a contributing factor to the disparate treatment they may experience in the corporation. Essed (1991) used the concept of everyday racism to study experiences of racism through stories and accounts. Likewise, there was a possibility that stories about racism in everyday life could emerge as well, but the emphasis was on the stories of (everyday) resistance against these forms of racism. It was possible that Black women leaders in corporations may not only encounter racism daily, but may find themselves situated in larger organizational environments entrenched in and supporting sexist beliefs and ideas. I used the notion of gendered (everyday) racism to represent this thought and to imply that everyday racism is often gendered (Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

Resistance Defined

In cultural psychology literature, resistance is defined as “an exercise of power in reaction to an act of control” (Langhout, 2005, p. 125). Resistance may be overt, covert, and initiated on a large or small scale (McLaren, 1989). It may involve collective action or individual acts. Leaders may lead resistance efforts as well as employees. Feminists link resistance often to self-definition and identity (P. Collins, 1998). Resistance for this study refers to public and disguised actions by Black women leaders to oppose gender and racial barriers and regulations discouraging or preventing them from pursuing their career goals or having a dignified working life. This definition of resistance was flexible enough to include intentional and unintentional acts of resistance to gendered (everyday) racism. In other words, oppositional actions could take the form of well planned out strategic action or Black women’s acts of resistance may be reactionary. I did not intend to confine the women’s stories of resistance into the definition identified above; it was to allow Black women leaders to bring forth their realities and personal experiences regarding resistance through storytelling and accounts of their experiences. Consequently, I realized the importance of being open to the learning that emerges as the women’s stories could generate different thoughts and ideas about the nature of resistance. I will discuss resistance in more detail under the conceptual framework in chapter 2.

It is important to differentiate coping and resistance. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). Based on this definition, coping is a response to demands on individuals that are debilitating or deficit based in nature. Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) developed a coping scale to include different types of coping. The behaviors are avoiding demands, letting

things go, holding oneself back, waiting for the appropriate time to act, mentally disengaging, and seeking emotional support for emotional reasons. These behaviors are enacted to deal with stressful situations. There may be some overlap in the types of responses for resistance and coping. For example, Black women executives may have systems of support to help them think through a situation related to race and gender so they can control the outcomes of the situation. This is an act of resistance. However, seeking support as a coping strategy is to gain understanding or sympathy. It also includes receiving morale support.

Background

Researchers Feagin and Sikes (1994) found that African-American White-collar workers experience exclusion from informal social networks residing in the organizations. They also receive fewer promotions, less pay, and are recipients of unfavorable performance evaluations. In general, many African-American managers feel they have less job discretion than their White counterparts and believe their presence in the organization is contested because they are not members of the dominant culture (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormely, 1990). African-Americans are more likely to receive lower ratings in the areas of job performance, which will likely prohibit them from receiving promotions. They may also have limited experiences in exercising decision-making and having supervisory support—all critical elements for continued growth and promotional opportunities within organizations (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993). Finally, studies document that African-Americans experience exclusion from the resources and opportunities critical for successful integration into the corporation (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993; Greenhaus et al., 1990; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Feagin and Sikes (1994) commented on what is specific to Black women in the organization:

Black women face a type of double jeopardy, for their hiring or advancement may be blocked by racism or by sexism. Because they are women, they may be more likely to be hired, but once they are in the door, as one respondent put, “they’re devalued because we still devalue women in general.” (p. 183)

Many African-American women executives attribute the exclusionary environment they experience to White males’ lack of understanding and exposure to African-American women (Catalyst, 2004). E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) stated that African-American women admit to exclusion from the informal network by their peers and management level employees in the organization. Peers and direct reports also challenge them in their leadership and, at times, African-American women feel invisible. One interviewee from a Catalyst (2004) study stated:

This corporation has favorites. The field is not level. If you are the 35-year-old, 40-year-old White male, perfect hair, suit, wife, and two kids guy, you can connect easily with gentleman up and above you or beside you who looks at you as his son, his father, his friend, whatever. . . . Those connections happen are so far—from our view—so blatant it’s amazing. The favoritism is there; it’s clearly there. (p. 49)

African-American women leaders continue to encounter a concrete wall, a barrier to progressive and upward movement within organizations. They face formidable barriers hindering their ability to envision their next career move. Black women leaders also face barriers that marginalize their status as leaders within the organization (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Sanchez-Hucles (1997) discussed the myth of *double advantage* of African-American women in a framework of Affirmative Action. African-American women are perceived as having a double advantage because of their race and gender. Unfortunately, the myth of double advantage denies the privileged race or group from taking responsibility for creating a better workplace. Sanchez-Hucles stated:

The view that Black women are flourishing promotes a system where individuals continue to mentor and network with those most like themselves and thereby often overlook Black women. . . . The persistent myth of bonus status for Blacks has continued to harm Black women on multiple levels. (p. 567)

There is minimal research on African-American women senior leaders' experiences in the corporation (Cox & Nkomo, 1990). Hughes and Dodge (1997) stated little empirical knowledge exists about how conditions and influences at work affect the experiences of African-American women. For example, studies on occupational stressors on job conditions such as high psychological workload, low task variety, and low decision-making authority are based primarily on samples of male Caucasian workers. Findings from a few studies confirm the isolation and exclusion Black women executives and professionals experience in the corporation (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Parker, 2002). This is not only specific to corporations. Feagin and Sikes (1994) also included the experiences of Black men and women working in the academy. Specifically, African-American women faculty and administrators encounter marginalization in the academy (Alfred, 2001; Waring, 2003). African-American women in the academy are expected to take care of the unique needs of minority students sometimes to the neglect of their own scholarship (Essed, 2000; J. R. Miller & Vaughn, 1997). They live in isolation and face barriers erected by majority faculty when their research interests may not support mainstream culture ideas and beliefs (Cox, 2004; Cox & Nkomo, 1990). These studies confirm that experiences with marginalization in the workplace are not isolated to corporate contexts, but exist within other work environments as well.

African-American women leaders may deal with behaviors from White males and females associated with *token dynamics*. As minorities, their actions and mistakes magnify and their credibility is challenged because they are an anomaly in the sea of White majority leaders (Moss Kanter, 1977). Pettigrew and Martin (1987) argued that the fewer minorities or women within a group, the more their White colleagues or supervisors demonstrate cognitive biases when evaluating their performance. The reality is that Black women leaders continue to bump

their heads against the proverbial concrete ceiling in corporate organizations because of gendered (everyday) racism (Parker, 2002; Porter, 2002).

The Role of Race and Gender

Several research scholars discuss the major role race, gender, and class play in affecting the day-to-day existence of Black women and the reactions toward Black women (Collins, 1990; Davis, 1983; Essed, 1991; Giddings, 1996; hooks, 1981) from members of society. Historically, ideas and beliefs regarding race and gender influenced the treatment of Black women by White men and women and by other African-Americans. Prevailing gender and race related stereotypes also contribute to the perceptions Black women may have about themselves and how they conduct and present themselves to the world (hooks, 1981).

Gendered (everyday) racist acts date back to slavery, reconstruction, and post-reconstruction. Black women were not valued, appreciated, or supported in society. They did not carry the privilege associated with being White or the societal protection or pedestal status that many White women experienced because they were White. During these periods, “Black women were unable to emulate the White definition of womanhood” (McMurray, 1998, p. 54). They were second-class citizens. By controlling the definitions of White womanhood, the dominant culture could also control the images and societal beliefs about African women slaves. Painting a picture of African slaves with human or animalistic characteristics polar to the behaviors and characteristics of the dominant culture reinforced the belief that African slaves and African-Americans were inferior. Davis (1983) wrote, “the tautological definition of Black people as servants is indeed one of the essential props of racist ideology” (p. 994). By viewing Blacks as servants, Whites were lifted up above enslaved Blacks on the scale of human worth and value.

This dichotomous thinking created an opportunity to objectify Black women as the “other” (Collins, 1990, p. 68). The construction of the other perpetuates inequitable interdependent systems in which Fanon (as cited in Langley, 2007) stated “where one’s peace is another’s subjugation, one’s wealth is another poverty’s, one’s enlightenment is another’s ignorance, where one’s winning and thriving are another’s losing and suffering” (p. 2).

If racist and gendered ideologies are ensconced in the fabric of societal and cultural values and ideas, then, race and gender will likely influence the leadership of Black women in organizations. Multicultural feminist and Black feminist theory and research acknowledge the impractical and unrealistic separation of these social constructions when analyzing the experiences of Black women and people of Color in the organization (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Collins, 1990; Davis, 1983; Essed, 1991).

Effects of Gendered (Everyday) Racism and Everyday Racism on Black Women Leaders

The effects of gendered (everyday) racism on the lives and leadership of Black women leaders are tremendous for several reasons. At the individual level, Black women may find themselves in organizational systems without personal advocates, mentors, or advisers (Alfred, 2001; Parker, 2002; Porter, 2002). They may experience isolation and subtle and blatant forms of discrimination, racism, and marginalization (Parker, 2002). They may not have personal outlets to handle threatening, intimidating, and doubting behaviors about themselves from other organizational members. White men and women and even African-American men may be skeptical of Black women’s qualifications and skills (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1997). As Black women leaders navigate multiple boundaries, they may experience emotional, mental, and physical fatigue because of the shifting behaviors they must employ to deal with adversity (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Whereas the ascent of Black male leaders may be a considerable threat

to White male hegemony and privilege, Black women leaders are often invisible. Their true worth and value as leaders in the organization may be undiscoverable or ignored because of past and present stereotypes.

Effects of Gendered (Everyday) Racism and Everyday Racism on the Organization

The influence of gendered (everyday) racism may also reduce Black women leaders' organizational contributions. Klein (2008) showed that the impact of bias in the organization can have damaging effects. Employees are not motivated, which may result in absenteeism. Racist and gendered acts can incur a huge cost to the organization from a productivity standpoint. They can also limit the organizational capacity to compete in a global society. This is not to say that organizations lacking diversity cannot be thriving sustainable entities. However, there is a link between diverse thought and experiences and organizational creativity. In addition, organizations can lose critical talent and resources when operating from a place of non-inclusion. From a complex adaptive system perspective, exclusionary actions toward African-American women leaders will influence the larger corporate system. As in the rainforest where complexity exists, diversity enables the larger system, the rainforest, to adapt and meet challenges presented in nature. Kiuchi and Shireman (2002) wrote:

Each increase in diversity can lead to more diversity as emerging species create space for myriad smaller plants and animals that fit into the niches among them. Since each specialized organism is a specific information set, each represents a new tool—a choice. Since diversity means choice, this increase in diversity generally increases the resilience of the forest. (p. 62)

If diversity increases choice, individuals and systems promoting gendered (everyday) racism may also negatively affect the ability of the organization to be resilient. Gendered (everyday) racist behaviors toward Black women leaders may constrain organizational creativity, energy, flexibility, resiliency, reinvention, and recreation. Organizational members may not

benefit from Black women leaders' life experiences because of their exclusion from critical organizational conversations. The organization becomes a place where conformity and homogeneity prevail and progression and innovation is stifled and nonexistent because of a severed lifeline of diversity. Black women leaders waste precious energy because they may find themselves engaged in a fight to reside in organizations where their intelligence and creativity is thwarted or undermined.

Significance of Research

A previous examination of literature and research shows research leadership on the Black populace in the workplace and management (Cox, 2004), in general, and for Black women leadership, specifically, is limited. Accordingly, research regarding the resistance responses of Black women leaders to gendered (everyday) racism in the workplace is scant. Several researchers echo the sentiment that very little research exists on African-American women specifically in White feminist-related literature, as well as research related to workplace experiences. E. Bell, Denton, and Nkomo (1993) commented that management related research has completely ignored the management experiences of African-American women. In response, E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) later wrote *Our Separate Ways* to illuminate the differences in the experiences of Black and White women leaders in the workplace.

Parker and Ogilvie (1996) advocated the need to develop a leadership model identifying African-American women's unique leadership strategies, as current leadership models were representative of the experiences of White male leaders. Waring (2003) gathered data from 12 African-American women college presidents to understand the impact of race and gender on the origins and conceptions of their leadership because of the dearth of scholarship regarding African-American women leaders. Their research reported most of the presidents were hesitant

about taking on leadership roles. The presidents also acknowledged the importance of focusing on the task and relationship dimensions of leadership. They shared they often thought about their race and gender when they presented themselves and their ideas during meetings. Hackett and Byars (1996) wrote that “no comprehensive model of the career development of racial and ethnic minorities has yet been developed; even less attention has been devoted to models of the career development of racial and ethnic minority women” (p. 322).

Several researchers contributed to the creation of leadership principles based on Black women’s experiences within organizations. Parker (2002) examined Black women executives’ communication responses when navigating the organization. She developed a table of communication strategies based on her research. She also identified 15 strategies African-American executive women use to remain self-defined in dominant culture U.S. organizations (Parker, 2003). In their classic study that included 825 Black and White women, E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) identified actions used specifically by Black women leaders in the organization to remove the concrete wall blocking upward movement. N. Johnson (2006) identified educational, societal, and workplace factors inhibiting or promoting African-American women leaders’ career advancement. She also identified their leadership characteristics and the actions they employ against barriers within dominant culture organizations. I discuss findings from these studies in more detail, as well as additional research regarding Black women in the workplace in chapter 2.

A contribution of the current research was to determine if the concrete ceiling continues to exist for Black women. An additional contribution was identifying how Black women handle inequities in the workplace. Research about Black women’s leadership is not an afterthought. Several researchers over the years focused on the unique experiences of Black women in the organization. Even though there is some progress in this area, many questions remain

unanswered regarding the specific behaviors Black women leaders exhibit in the workplace, the actions promoting or prompting opposition by Black women, and the factors contributing to their success and failure in the organization.

Resistance in the corporation. Researching Black women leaders in corporations will show the progress or lack of progress of Black women leaders in the workplace. The corporation, promising high status and elite income opportunity, has been among the most unwelcoming for ambitious Black women. For example, Affirmative Action programs in the late 1960s and the early 1970s opened the door for Black women to enter corporations. However, movement into corporate jobs was slow for women in general. White women only represented 3.9% of managerial and administrative positions in 1970. Black women represented 1.4% of managerial and administrative positions. The major percentage of this group worked in the public sector (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001). A 79% increase of Black women into corporate manager and professional jobs occurred between 1986 and 1996. This major increase occurred just 20 to 25 years ago. These statistics confirm that the movement of Black women into corporate management and professional positions is a recent phenomenon. This research highlights the receptivity or lack of receptivity of Black women's presence in the corporation, especially as positional or formal leaders. The women leaders will provide post affirmative action reflections on the status of Black women leaders in the workplace through their life stories. Because Black women entered corporations in leadership roles not too long ago, the question is how much has changed for Black women leaders. Has the door of acceptance opened wider for Black women leaders?

The purpose of collecting career life histories of resistance of Black women executives in the corporation was to illustrate: (a) an identification of barriers preventing Black women from

movement into more senior level roles in the corporation, (b) an identification of the causes or scenarios prompting women to demonstrate resistance; and (c) the different or similar resistance behaviors Black women employ in the corporation.

Transferring knowledge to academia. This research study was designed to include the use of a focus group with the hopes that sharing the stories of Black women executives with a focus group of Black scholars would encourage the flow of relevant information, from the corporation to the academic community. Even though the flow of information between communities was not the primary objective of this study, as a corporate member and scholar myself, I was in my unique position to gauge the relevancy of research outcomes and to engage members from the academic community to provide input on how this information could be disseminated and used beyond the corporate setting. The use of a focus group is not unusual in qualitative research (Freeman, 2006). Warr (2005) wrote about the value of focus groups: “focus groups are effective in highlighting the processes of social interaction as participants present and defend their opinions and beliefs” (p. 200). As such, a focus group of subject matter advisors and scholars would create an environment of ideas and thoughts regarding this research.

Related to the transference of knowledge is a study conducted by Maher and Tetreault (2007). They provided an example of how gendered (everyday) racism may block the flow of relevant knowledge across corporate and academia. The study relates to the restriction and perceptions of using qualitative research and the impact of not using qualitative research on identifying the lived experiences of marginalized groups. They also discussed the low representation of Black women faculty, which influences the amount or degree of research on issues regarding race and gender. Maher and Tetreault provided a historical overview of the steps that Stanford University, Rutgers University, and the University of Michigan took to

mainstream diverse faculty and to introduce new methodologies for research. They discuss the contestation of new methodological practices after the 1970s because of the desire of White males to hold on to traditional and positivistic, preferably quantitative, forms of inquiry. Maher and Tetreault wrote, “White male experience is universal constituting the basis for generalizing all human beings” (p. 157). This sentiment was so strong that the Anthropology Department at Stanford University split in two. The split was symbolic of not only the fight regarding research methods, but also research topics and the race and gender composition of faculty. The department split along the lines of a humanistic interpretive approach versus an approach grounded in scientific inquiry.

The current study provides an additional data point regarding the lived experiences of Black women leaders—a data point that Black women scholars are discouraged from exploring critical race and gender research, particularly if the method of research does not support positivistic forms of inquiry. Research shows that Black women in the university are not encouraged to produce knowledge about themselves or to develop knowledge that includes a critical race theory approach (Benjamin, 1997; Cox, 2004). Even though Black women have made significant, though not sufficient, progress in higher education (Gregory, 2001), Black women faculty continue to encounter blatant negative actions and micro-aggressions related to their gender and race. There is an increase in the number of Black women faculty, but the total representation of Black women faculty and senior administrators remains low. Black faculty women publish fewer articles and do not conduct research as frequently as their colleagues do. Black women faculty members do not receive university support to conduct research, especially when the research relates to critical race issues (Henry & Glenn, 2009).

Although the focus of this research is not on the experiences of Black women faculty in the academy, there are certainly implications for what is or is not published regarding the experiences of Black women corporate executives. Black women scholars are likely the ones to develop knowledge regarding other Black women in the corporation. Discouraging Black scholars from developing knowledge about Black women prohibits real time corporate knowledge and experiences from entering the classroom.

I do not research this continuous debate among scholars in detail in this thesis, but would like to discuss Black women's knowledge, here, as an epistemological issue relevant for this research. Black feminist epistemology values qualitative forms of inquiry to build knowledge regarding the unique experiences of Black women (Collins, 1990). This includes naturalistic forms of research and inquiry. Knowledge is derived from the stories, oral histories, biographies, ethnographies, and gathering data from face-to-face interviews. As discussed earlier, these forms of research are not always valued within university settings promoting positivistic forms of inquiry.

Brewer (1997) wrote about knowledge as a social production, especially for sociological research. She discussed the dependency on statistical and mathematical modeling in dominant paradigms and the emphasis on masculine and Eurocentric perspectives in sociological research. Etter-Lewis (1997) addressed the current hegemonic paradigm existing in the academe that deflects the accomplishments of Black women scholars. This existing paradigm and the slow acknowledgement by White male scholars of newer disciplines such as critical race theory, Black feminism, and women studies, stifles and denigrates the research possibilities for Black women and women in general. Etter-Lewis wrote:

The assessment and ratings for the work and publications of those who represent nontraditional disciplines, such as Black studies and women's studies, are generally low;

this is because scholars in the academy are programmed to denigrate alternative versions of facts and because the new discipline have not yet been adequately programmed to reflect the preferred images of the hegemonic paradigm. (p. 43)

If the university is a site for critical knowledge creation, then how might race and gender critique apply to private industry? For example, do university or college business courses appropriately address diversity, multiculturalism, or differences in corporate organizations? To what extent are organizations missing critical knowledge about leading and understanding other racial, ethnic, or gender related groups because the topic of unfair practices and systems may not be a major focus in business related curriculums at universities?

The current research provided me with the opportunity to bring the academic and corporate worlds closer together. Collins (1990) examined the affect of Black women living in isolation from each other on the development of Black feminist thought and self-definition. She also writes about the reliance of Black women intellectuals on alternative institutional locations to develop critical scholarship. Her thoughts support finding additional ways to bring Black women leaders together to learn about each other's experiences and to support each other through these experiences. Additionally, the design of the current research created another institutional site for the development of Black feminist scholarship.

Drawing from Collins' (1990) thoughts on the transfer of knowledge, I wanted Black women scholars to understand and possibly learn from corporate leaders. Corporate leaders provide practical real-life examples of resistance strategies and real-life everyday situations they struggle with as Black women leaders. The hope is that the current research will provoke faculty to pursue additional critical scholarship or design and assess curriculum around race and gender related issues in the workplace. The intent is to build a bridge for practical, relevant, and helpful

knowledge about resistance strategies to flow back and forth between corporate and university boundaries.

Resistance and self-definition. As Black women leaders resist gendered (everyday) racism, they participate in an important exercise of *self-definition* (Collins, 1998). Through the fight, the importance of self takes on a new meaning. In self-defining moments, Black women leaders may come from a position of strength. Gaining an understanding of how Black women defend, build, and positively redefine and reinvent themselves as leaders working in social systems may be vital for other Black women leaders struggling to create an identity of organizational intelligence, strong leadership, and courage. Some Black women may know effective ways to eliminate or resist myths about their sexuality and race. Working in the corporation for years and experiencing subtle to extreme forms of gendered (everyday) racism throughout their lives, Black women leaders may have developed strategies to push away or block behaviors of disrespect and marginalization. Their families, Black teachers, members of the Black community, and spiritual supporters may have sent subtle or direct messages to them at an early age to anticipate societal racism. These same mentors, mothers, fathers, and elementary school teachers painted a picture of not only what to expect, but how to mentally, emotionally, and physically prepare for societal injustices.

At the same time, I also wanted to know if Black women leaders might be immobilized by the negative behaviors they experience and choose to exit the organization (L. Reid, 2002). Despite the stereotype that all Black women are strong and can take on the world, many Black women do experience the stress associated with exclusionary behavior and a lack of support in the organization (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Settles, 2006). They walk away from corporations feeling defeated and undervalued. However, Black women mastering or semi-mastering the

politics associated with race and gender may realize they are role models to other Black women. They are among the few women in career positions of high credibility and major influence. Some women in this position may embrace this role and some may not.

Resistance and knowledge creation. Exploring the resistance strategies of Black women leaders employ against gendered (everyday) racism will also highlight the creation and co-creation of informal and formal knowledge as a strategy of resistance and a strategic move to defining themselves and their standpoint as leaders (S. Harding, 2004). Examining the resistance they employ contributes to research by reshaping current-day thinking about Black women leaders in the corporation. Collins (1990) stated that “a self-defined standpoint includes Black women transforming former institutional sites of domination, such as scholarship and literature, into institutional sites of resistance” (p. 102). Identifying resistance strategies used to weather leadership storms and gendered (everyday) racism involves, with my assistance as the researcher, Black women leaders melding their voices and participating in co-creating a message of change for other Black women and individuals experiencing marginalization to hear, absorb, and follow.

Resistance and well-being. Just as important to this research was the identification of different resistance behaviors exhibited by Black women leaders. From a socio-psychological viewpoint, some resistance actions are unhealthy. For example, Robinson and Ward (1991) described resistance strategies promoting liberation and resistance strategies for survival. The former are strategies grounded in Afrocentric ideas for building a strong African-American community where the collective group is stronger than the individual. This does not suggest that embracing Afrocentric thought is preeminent for building a strong community of resistance. To the contrary, Afrocentricity embodies a collective voice representing Black patriarchy. Due to the Black male bias inherent in Afrocentric thought, the individual voice of the Black woman

may not be heard. Collins (1990) advocated an Afrocentric feminist epistemology because the patriarchal construction of Afrocentricity may not include the multiple experiences or social locations of Black women leaders.

Resistance strategies for survival are short-term in nature and may prevent the control of Black women in that moment, but also lead them down a path of isolation, alienation, and destructive behaviors that sabotage individual and community uplift (Robinson & Ward, 1991). This is not to suggest that all short-term strategies of resistance are unhealthy. However, it was important to identify resistance strategies leading to Black women's isolation and alienation in organizations and resistance behaviors that serve as a powerful platform of power and positive movement from an individual and organizational perspective. I will explore resistance further in chapter 2.

Limitations: Multiple Experiences and Standpoints

Black women may have a similar standpoint from which they make meaning of their experiences (Collins, 1998), but they are not a monolithic group. They may have common histories and encounters with race and gender bias, but their responses to those experiences as leaders may be different, influenced by their past, race and gender experiences, degree of agency and self-efficacy, and the influence of organization dynamics (E. Bell, 1990; K. Collins & Lightsey, 2001). During this study, I wanted to make sure to balance the recognition of similarities with the identification of unique characteristics and behaviors for each woman.

Methodology

“What is the role of the word—the spoken word, the preached word, the whispered-in-the-night-time word, the written word, the published word—in the fight for Black freedom?” (V. Harding, 1981, p. 81). I want to share the word of Black women leaders as they impart the

resistance strategies they use against behaviors influenced by gendered (everyday) racism. The *word* according to Lawrence (as cited in Crenshaw, Gotanada, Peller, & Thomas, 1995) is the tradition of Black people to exchange valuable information, stories, narratives, and recollections through teaching, preaching, and healing to liberate themselves from an oppressive existence. It inspires self-definition and self-representation, and motivates members of an oppressed group to speak with conviction regarding their beliefs and desire to overcome. The word pushes marginalized groups or individuals to vocalize and privilege their beliefs and perspectives over the conditions and circumstances promoting negative and unfair dominant discourse.

The word of the women participants in this research was fundamental to the research outcomes. “Real-life experiences are a rich source of information and provide insights into everyday racism that cannot be obtained any other way” (Essed, 1991, p. 55). This statement suggest the stories of real-life resistance, that is, Black women’s biographical accounts, captured in this research would provide invaluable information about Black women leaders’ resistance to gendered (everyday) racism in the corporation (Roberts, 2002). Roberts (2002) wrote about biographical inquiry:

The appeal of biographical research is that it explores, in diverse methodological and interpretive ways, how individual accounts of life experiences can be understood within the contemporary cultural and structural settings and is thereby helping to chart the major societal changes that are underway, but not merely at some broad social level. (p. 5)

The hope was that face-to-face semi-structured interviews with Black women leaders about the resistance strategies or responses they use might generate supplemental information about the struggles of being pigeon holed, branded, and forced fitted into generalizations and categories relative to race and gender. Their stories may also generate information on how Black women challenge and change the prevailing ideology and mindset of not only dominant culture organizational members, but also the mindset of other marginalized members of the organization.

Critical race theory, Black feminist principles, and constructivism informed the method of inquiry. Critical race theory was foundational to the objective of this research, which was to reveal oppressive actions in the corporation related to gendered (everyday) racism. Black feminist principles reinforce the need to go directly to Black women to hear their stories about resistance and to provide a platform for Black women to contribute to self-definition. As a researcher, I became part of co-constructing knowledge about resistance strategies related to gendered (everyday) racism with the women I interviewed. I began with primary interview questions, but at the same time, remained cognizant that knowledge creation is occurring in real time, in the moment, which meant that additional questions evolved during the interview to provoke additional stories.

The first phase of my research included semi-structured interviews with Black women leaders in the corporation. The goal was to identify themes of resistance of Black women leaders using a content comparative analysis and to identify through inference from the contextualized stories similarities and differences regarding resistance across various organizations and industries. Interviewing the women would provide supplemental information on the experiences, plights, and triumphs of African-Americans living in oppressed and marginalized states of existence. It would bring to the fore the intricacies of racist systems and structures.

The second phase of this study included a focus group of Black women scholars with a research background in or knowledge of critical race and gender. The purpose was to share the themes of resistance from the interviews with scholars for their reaction and to elicit recommendations on how to use this practical knowledge for the advancement of critical race and gender research

During the research, I also documented my personal observations, impressions of the storytellers, and reactions to the women's stories of resistance. This includes, but is not limited to, documenting my in-the-moment reactions and post-interview reflections. Due to my personal interest and encounters working in the corporation as a leader and the stories heard from other Black women leaders, I thought it was important for me to document my journey of discovery and the influence of this research on my life. I am inspired to not only create change in the workplace, but also change within me. I integrate my impressions of each storyteller into chapter 4, while discussing the research findings, and discuss the impact of this study on my leadership in chapter 6.

Organization of Study

Chapter 2 presents a theoretical and conceptual framework, which relates theories of gendered (everyday) racism to theories of resistance. It also includes a thorough review of literature and research to understand the historical, sociological, and ideological influences on the ways Black women experience and define themselves. I provide a review of the state of Black women in the workplace. A historical and contemporary examination of Black women as resisters against racism and sexism since slavery and an extensive review of literature regarding the experiences of Black women leaders working in corporations are also included in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct this research, highlights criteria for the selection of research participants, and presents the reason for the chosen methodology and the procedures used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 includes research findings and a summary of the data collected. Included in chapter 5 is a summary and interpretation of the findings within the context of the original research question. It also includes the implications and limitations of

the research findings and future considerations for research. Chapter 6 includes the implications of this study on my personal leadership and on leadership and change in general.

Chapter II: Background and Conceptual Framework

The State of Corporations

One cannot fully appreciate the experiences of corporate Black women, without some understanding of the larger movements of change happening in the business world. An examination of organizational trends in the corporation provides a context for understanding the tremendous changes any organizational leader faces. It also illuminates the organizational landscape that Black women leaders navigate. Black women leaders may not only face gendered (everyday) racism in the organizations, but also the challenges of economic and technological changes and societal trends increasing the complexity within the organization.

Tremendous changes influenced by a shrinking global economy and the shifting demographics in the workplace have huge implications for how the work is done and by whom (Currie, 1998). There is a focus by managers to create high priority corporate growth goals to compete in a global society or because of the increasing growth of the business in other parts of the world (Guth, 2009). Employees face increased workloads and expectations due to the increasing focus on organizations to maintain a competitive advantage not only in North America, but also across the world (Burke, 2001). Rapid changes external to the workplace, such as advancements in technology coupled with competing on a global scale, directly affect what employees accomplish and how. Moreover, corporate leaders expect employees to think globally, which is a newly required skill set that was not critical to most business 20 years ago. Employees across the globe not only become experts at multi-tasking, but also are required to upgrade their skills and competencies to meet the requirements of the job (Chiavenato, 2001). Leading in an international marketplace also requires leaders to embrace a different purview and mindset to interact effectively with a diverse international workforce.

Corporate U.S. leaders are now responsible for leading international teams and due to rapidly changing technology, corporations are continually redefining work processes and work flows. Chiavenato (2001) wrote about the current challenges for human resource management. The focus on maintaining the status quo or traditional perspective is giving way to flexible, creative, and innovative thinking. Organizational members must understand change is the norm. Employees and managers must be flexible and have the ability to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty in the corporation on a day-to-day basis. These changes require leaders to have management tools and resources to support and lead employees through what appears to be a never-ending cycle of change and transition in the workplace (Bridges, 2003). Organizational managers must also focus on employee development and building and enhancing the organizational bench strength to include leaders that have the capability to lead the organization into the future. In a day where corporations are providing similar products and services, having a strong pipeline of leaders is critical to differentiate companies from other corporate competitors. I hear this message frequently from workplace leaders in my role as a senior consultant. This requires leadership to meet the needs and expectations of a more sophisticated and knowledgeable 21st century consumer.

Additional challenges for leaders include the multiple generations of employees existing in organizations. N. Bell and Narz (2007) wrote, “a generation is defined by demographics and key life-events that, at least to some degree have, distinctive generational characteristics” (p. 56). Primarily, the multiple generation of employees in the workplace spans individuals born during World War II, a time when Cold War influences were shaping the ideas and thoughts of American citizens, business, and academic institutions (Maher & Tetreault, 2007). At the other end of the generational spectrum are employees who were introduced, shortly after birth, to the

internet and cutting-edge technological devices providing them with constant streaming content and knowledge with the click of a button within a matter of seconds. The various generations in the workplace such as the traditionalists, baby boomers, generation x-ers, and millennials, necessitate leaders to flex their leadership style based on the values of the employees. Values and trends are associated with each generation. For example, a trend for baby boomers is delayed retirement (N. Bell & Narz, 2007). Generation x-ers desire work-life balance and millennials seek jobs that provide flexibility and telecommuting options. The blending of values across generations and the distinct differences across generations enhances the need for situational leadership. With these multiple generations, it may be challenging for leaders to lead and guide an employee base constituted of individuals with different needs because of the values they embrace.

As organizations compete to become the best workplace for working mothers, they are challenged with creating work-life balance for working mothers and fathers. Particularly, many working women feel they need to choose between motherhood and being a corporate executive. They struggle to balance the demands of the workplace as leaders with the demands to take care of their personal lives and family matters. The assessment and successful leadership of multiple generations and workplace life issues requires the adaptive leadership that Heifetz (1994) discussed. Leadership where leaders are leading from the balcony and observing the dance on the floor is critical—leaders who can identify solutions to address and accommodate the pressure that working mothers and even fathers may experience in the workplace. Leading from the balcony assists leaders with engaging employees in problem solving, in understanding and leveraging employees' passion and inspiration to contribute to building effective work teams and work products (Nielsen, 2010). Leading from the balcony recognizes the dance of change never

stops and that thought leadership involves anticipating the next move and orchestrating the music for a dance of effectiveness and impact in the corporation.

An emphasis on globalization, technology, organizational change, multiple generations, and workplace life issues of employees in the workplace presents leaders with many challenges. This discussion does not include all of the changes occurring in the corporation, but it does paint a picture of the day-to-day organizational challenges leaders encounter. Some of the changes may be exciting to individuals motivated by a rapid pace of change. However, even in a space of excitement, an extra supply of physical, emotional, and mental energy is necessary for Black women to operate successfully as leaders because of the gendered (everyday) racism they experience.

Black women are conscious of race and gender issues. This awareness can put Black women leaders, in principle, in a good place to understand issues of unfairness and to acknowledge that different employee demographics come with different needs. Their own experiences with marginalization also place them in a position to be familiar with multiple, often unexpected, challenges. At the same time, the stress of gendered (everyday) racism intermingles with challenges associated with organizational trends to create a near perfect storm for Black women leaders. A gendered growth paradigm shaped by aggressive (White) masculine behavior also frames and undergirds the workplace culture. As such, this represents an additional challenge for Black women leaders. A discussion on the state of Black women leaders in corporations follows.

State of Black Women Leaders in the Workplace

African-American women leaders experience challenges to their leadership on a day-to-day basis, because of their marginalized place within society. They continue to face many

barriers to ascension into more senior and strategic leadership positions within corporate organizations (Catalyst, 2004). In spite of the stated intention of many organizations to embrace diversity, African-American women in corporations often continue to be invisible in the eyes of the dominant race (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

Recent data highlight the small number of African-American women in leadership positions in corporations across the United States. McGlowan-Fellow and Thomas (2004) discussed the rapid increase in population of racial and ethnic minority groups—a higher increase over the past 40 years than any other time in the history of the country. Nevertheless, despite the increase, the racial makeup of corporate executive leadership has shown minimal change, especially for African-American women. In 2002, the total number of African-American women corporate officers working for Fortune 500 companies was 106 out of 10,092. African-American women represented 5.8% of the labor force of approximately 8,469,000, and 2,412,000 African-American women held administrative and management jobs—of this number, African-American women represent 5.1% of management related positions (Catalyst, 2004). In 2009, African-American women represented 9,370,000 of the workers in the workforce. Of this number, 2,769,000 (5.3%) were in management and professional related positions (Catalyst, 2009). This represents a 0.2% increase in the number of African-American women in management and professional related positions since 2002. African-American women continue to see limited advancement to senior levels within the organization, even though diversity programs abound in many Fortune 500 companies. African-American women recognize the corporation's challenge and at times corporate leaders' inability to deal with racial bias and stereotypes (Catalyst, 2004; Klein, 2008).

The combined effects of African-American women graduating from college at an increasing rate and organizational leaders purporting a need for a diverse workforce suggests a career-progression window of opportunity for Black women in the workplace. However, job discrimination continues to exist. The stronghold of racial discrimination in the workplace led researchers Tomikewicz, Bass, and Vaicys (2005) to explore the feelings of graduating African-American women and men college seniors entering the workforce. They found that both women and men fear appearing incompetent in the workplace. They also fear success. L. Reid (2002) examined the reasons why young Black and White women exit from full-time jobs. Historically, Black women are more likely to be employed than White women; however, the exit rate of Black women is higher. The *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth*, conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1979, show that young Black women's rate of exit from full-time positions is 38% higher than the exit rate for young White women. Several structural reasons may explain the higher rate of exit. First, young Black women may find themselves employed in secondary labor markets or working in positions that are temporary and seasonal in nature. Additionally, the research highlights employment segregation by race contributes to a higher exit rate for young Black women (L. Reid, 2002).

Another national survey (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001) provided statistics on the career progression of Black and White women managers. White women managers made better progress in reaching more senior levels in the organization than Black women did. At the time of the E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) study, 32% of White women managers were in top management positions as compared to 14% of African-American women. Additional highlights of the study reveal African-American women experience more demotions in the workplace than White women and African-American women experience more lateral career moves than White

women. Another key finding is that White women have more experience in line positions in the organizations than African-American women do. Not having access to line positions, places African-American women managers at a disadvantage by not providing them with the business knowledge required for more influential and senior level management positions. In other words, it is more difficult for African-American women to penetrate the concrete ceiling for the various reasons identified above.

Additional data from this survey indicate African-American women experience significant differences in their relationships with colleagues than White women. African-American women believe they have to outperform other White men and women managers. They do not receive as much support from their manager and colleagues in the workplace. This has profound implications for African-American women leaders as high levels of execution in contemporary organizations include teaming, collaboration, and partnership behaviors. The perception by African-American women as not receiving support from their peers or manager may hinder their capability to build critical networks and partnership to execute successfully and efficiently on work objectives. The inability to penetrate the concrete ceiling is attributed to six factors (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001):

1. daily doses of racism,
2. Black women are held to a higher standard,
3. invisibility,
4. exclusion from the formal and informal network,
5. challenges to their authority more often, and
6. hollow commitment by corporate leaders to the advancement of minorities. (p. 140)

D. Thomas and Gabarro (1999) discussed the impediment to advancement for minorities in majority organizations. There are three major categories that block or impede people of Color from advancing in the organization. The categories are the catalyst of prejudice, issues of comfort and risk, and the difficulty of identifying high-potential minorities by organizational

leaders. Race and gender combined is a major barrier to advancement and prejudice occurs on an individual or systemic level. As a result of individual or systemic prejudice, individuals may begin to start doubting themselves and internalizing negative views of themselves, which may eventually lower the expectations they have for themselves and of what they can accomplish as leaders. People of Color may respond to this situation by operating in a way that validates established stereotypes about their inability to be a team player or being too confrontational.

Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) examined women's experiences with the glass ceiling in organizations. They posited discriminatory behaviors and practices as entrenched in the norms and practices of the organization. Some of the practices are routine and ordinary and tightly woven into the status quo. Commonplace practices in the culture may not always be recognizable by organizational managers. These same practices may mirror and be reinforced by societal norms. If organizational norms include a paradigm of masculine norms, then women with additional responsibilities outside of the organization, such as mothering, may not be able to meet work expectations. For example, one norm of masculinity includes working long hours. Women who are the primary provider for their children in most cases may find it difficult to work long hours because of commitments to supporting child care efforts. This is not to suggest that fathers are not primary care givers for children or that some men do not struggle with the same issue; however, this issue is more pervasive for working mothers. A working mother's inability to work long hours could create the perception that she is not as committed as her male counterpart, thus hindering promotion opportunities.

Companies take several routes to support women in general in the organization (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). These actions include helping women to assimilate into the organization and to adopt ways that are more masculine. Women leaders may participate in

workshops to help them to be more assertive. Women leaders may also be encouraged to learn sports that are dominated, commonly, by male participants. The focus of these coping efforts is to provide a common interest and activity in which women leaders can engage with male leaders in an informal way. Companies also try to accommodate the unique needs of women in the workplace. Women leaders may participate in mentoring programs to expand their networks and are assigned organizational sponsors and mentors. Finally, companies have established diversity programs to celebrate the differences that women bring to the table.

Corporations may take many approaches to help women thrive as organizational leaders. Likewise, one would like to assume that these actions are inclusive of Black women leaders. There is evidence that some of the approaches outlined by Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) work to further promote women in the workplace. Similarly, I can tell stories about women with diverse backgrounds that have a seat at the table with predominately White male corporate leaders. However, these stories are rare. As the statistics from earlier in this chapter suggest, Black women continue to have more barriers blocking their ascension into management, professional, and higher level positions in corporations. One only needs to consider the number of Black women residing in corporate senior executive positions across the country or to observe pictures of company board members in annual reports. Even though Black women experience promotion into influential positions in corporations, they continue to experience daily practices, behaviors, and structures that obstruct their growth as leaders in the organization. Just as important, these same practices can also create an unhealthy and stressful work life for Black women.

Historical Images of Black Women

Gendered (everyday) racism must be seen in a historical context of continuity and change. Alridge (2003) encouraged researchers to examine historical and contextual elements

prevailing at the time of the research, as the sociological and cultural forces and discourse existing at the time of the research may inform and shape the methodological approaches used to develop knowledge. Likewise, a well-researched topic includes recognition by the researcher of the interconnectivity of the past, present, and future (Alridge, 2003). Throughout the United States' history of Black and White relations, White society produced and reproduced offensive and distorted images of Black women (P. Collins, 1998; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1981) shaped by images of sex and sexuality. Black women and men suffer because of sexual taboos and negative images and characteristics attached to their human existence and continue to experience modern-day racism. These negative images and stereotypes about Black women served as tools for White members of society to make sense of their interactions with Black women. They lived and thrived as mechanisms to legitimate abuse, oppression, and the marginalization of Black women during the slave era, reconstruction, and post-reconstruction eras (Morton, 1991). Several stereotypes existed regarding Black women during the slave era. A prominent thought at the core of these stereotypes is the *ideology of femininity* associated with Victorian culture. Enslaved Black women did not personify this image (Davis, 1983; McMurray, 1998). They worked in the fields, took care of the plantation owner's children and home, and bred multiple children thereby adding to the owner's economic gain. Although reduced to their biological sex functions of reproduction, White male slave owners usually portrayed Black women genderless or mule-like to fulfill harsh labor requirements. The designation of enslaved Black women working the fields as genderless was necessary to keep them in their place. There were exceptions to the genderlessness, for example the mythical Mammy, who lived in the master's house. She had to be the opposite of a fragile White femininity which means some sort of social way of being a Black woman, which is what gender is about: obese, unattractive by White

standards, happy go lucky, and a consummate caregiver to everyone residing in the master's house. She took care of others even to the neglect of herself and her own children (P. Collins, 1998). The image of Black women as the non-threatening caregiver continues to exist in contemporary times. An examination of contemporary images is discussed later in this chapter.

The biologization of Black women permitted sexual exploitation of Black women. Legislation was passed as early as the 17th century to permit slave masters to impregnate Black women for the reproduction of labor (Davis, 1983). P. Collins (2005) wrote, "Black women were workers like men, and they did hard manual labor. But because they were women, Black women's sexuality and reproductive capacity presented opportunities for forms of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery" (pp. 55-56). With the passage of this legislation, the image of the hypersexual and unrestrained Black women was created.

Contemporary Images of Black Women

Historical images of Black women, such as Mammy and Jezebel, continue to exist in contemporary times (P. Collins, 2005; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). The visual images of these stereotypes may look different; however, interactions with Black women in the workplace based on the characteristics associated with these images continue. E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) wrote about several stereotypes existing in contemporary times for Black and White women:

Still, the caricature of Miss Anne, the Snow Queen, the Mammy, and Sapphire are as painful for us to read just as they are grotesque for us to accept. Yet, vestiges of these images surround us, in one form or another, every day. (p. 247)

Several researchers described Oprah Winfrey as a modern-day version of Mammy (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; P. Collins, 2005). With all the economic wealth she has, her mantra is to create individual change from inside. In other words, individuals can change their life if they change from within. She is an advocate of the power of human agency, which does not address

the poverty and disenfranchised experiences of individuals in this society from a structuralist perspective. She does not entertain the question: “Why does someone live in this current state?”

P. Collins (2005) wrote:

Change yourself and your personal problems will disappear, advises Winfrey. If we each took personal responsibility for changing ourselves, social problems in the United States would vanish. . . . Yet Winfrey’s message stops far short of linking such individual changes to the actual resources and opportunities that are needed to escape from poverty, stop an abusive spouse from battering, or avoid job discrimination. The organizational group politics that helped create the very opportunities that Winfrey herself enjoys are minimized in favor of a message of personal responsibility that resonates with the theme of “personal responsibility” used by elites to roll back social welfare programs. (p. 143)

E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) wrote that critics in the Black community perceive Oprah as an extreme caretaker who overlooks her own accomplishments. They also analyze the image of Sapphire, the Black woman with plenty of attitude and sass, bossy, the opposite of Mammy.

Whoopi Goldberg is a prototype of the modern-day Sapphire. They wrote:

When Whoopi Goldberg burst audaciously onto the silver screen, she had already established herself as a Sapphire—not just in the wisecracking, street-smart characters she had been showcasing in her one-woman Broadway shows, but also in her political life. . . . Goldberg has never shied from sassing others, regardless of their status or power. Whether she is on or off stage, she is in your face, profane and protean. (p. 249)

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) examined the images of Black women in the media, particularly the oversexed Black women portrayed in Black exploitation films in the 1970s and in videos in the 1990s. She is the modern-day Jezebel. They described the modern-day evolution of this image:

In the 1970s, she was the trash-talking prostitute, making cameos in films and on cop shows. In the 1980s, she took the form of the teenage mother who had multiple children with multiple lovers and paid her bills with government checks. And by the 1990s, she had become an omnipresent fixture in pop culture, the girl in the video who would bare her body for a ride in a Benz and a bottle of Cristal. (p. 30)

Related to the image of the modern-day Jezebel is the image of the Black welfare mother, even though this image was created post World War II and relates to the development of the

welfare state. During the Johnson administration, the Moynihan report (Moynihan, 1963) revealed Black women in a negative light. The report identified Black women as the reason for poverty, urban blight, and the fragmentation of the Black family (P. Collins, 1990; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1981). The report did not address the structural reasons for perpetuating poverty and inaccessibility to economic wealth. P. Collins (2005) pointed to the relationship between the image of the sexualized bitch, a contemporary image of Black women, and poor and working-class women in perpetuating images of Black working-class women as bad mothers. Bad Black mothers ignore and beat their children. Typically, these mothers are poor and rely on the state for support.

Another negative image is the association of the Black women with the deterioration of public spheres. Specifically, once the lives of some Black women converged with reputable public spaces such as government sectors and programs, the value of these public spaces deteriorated. P. Collins (1998) noted:

Changing racial politics in the 1980s and 1990s dramatically reconfigured the valuation of the meaning of public generally and of the social welfare stated as the quintessential public institution. When African-American women, among other, gained power within the government sector of the public sphere, this sector was increasingly abandoned by individuals and groups with power. Privatization now seems ubiquitous in the United States . . . in this context, public becomes reconfigured as anything of poor quality, marked by a lack of control and privacy—characteristics associated with poverty. (pp. 33-34)

A modern image of Black women in the professional sector is the Black lady overachiever. The Black lady overachiever is the middle class professional Black woman who works hard without any damaging consequences. She is the Claire Huxtable. She has five children, is oversexed, and does not speak Black English. She is unraced and assimilated into the dominant culture (P. Collins, 1998). Even though she is an attorney, Claire Huxtable is rarely shown working in her profession. She is always confined to the home. P. Collins (2005)

attributed this to the writers of the show not knowing how to portray an upper-middle class professional Black woman in the workplace. She wrote:

Despite the fact that she was a lawyer, the show never showed her actually at her place of employment. Doing so would introduce the theme of her sexuality into the workplace, and these contradictions apparently were beyond the skills of the show's writers. (p. 140)

In other words, Claire's sexuality was contained to her home and her professional image was not totally realized in the workplace for the viewing audience.

These images of Black women create a significant challenge for Black women leaders experience in corporations. Negative images and stereotypes frame how other organizational leaders interact with Black women leader team members or direct reports. The belief in these images about Black women by organizational leaders may cause them to doubt and question the leadership capabilities of Black women leaders. For example, according to P. Collins (1998), organizations develop workplace surveillance strategies to control Black leaders residing in places of power. Workplace surveillance includes micromanagement of Black women leaders. It also includes scrutiny and questioning of Black women leaders' work ethics and decisions. Organizational leaders use surveillance strategies to disempower Black women and to create doubt in their ability to perform in the workplace. Likewise, retaliation and surveillance measures may influence the resistance responses Black women rely on to counterattack gendered (everyday) racism. Under the scrutinizing eyes of leaders with privileged and relational power, they might be fearful to take a stand against organizational inequities.

My objective for this research was to identify how Black women leaders handle potential attacks in the workplace on their work ethics, their sexuality, and their professionalism because of preconceptions about their race and gender. If some organizational leaders believe all successful Black women are overachievers and impenetrable, how do Black women effectively

fight this image without being labeled a troublemaker or an angry Black woman. To add to this complex problem, Black women may find it difficult to escape the effects and impact of negative thoughts and perceptions about their race and gender by colleagues and employees in the workplace. This also includes stereotypical beliefs about women and by members of the Black community. Several of these stereotypes continue to contribute to the existing conflict and separation between Black women and Black men (P. Collins, 2005; Davis, 1983; Morton, 1991). Although both noteworthy topics, the focus of this dissertation is on resistance strategies in the workplace, however, this comment does not negate the possibility of issues related to Black women and Black men relationships and the Black community from emerging in their stories.

Race, Gender, and Racism

Bentz and Shapiro (1998) wrote, “critical social science or critical theory attempt to understand, analyze, criticize, and alter social, economical, cultural, and psychological structures and phenomena with features of oppression, domination, exploitation, injustice, and misery” (p. 146). Crenshaw et al. (1995) published their classical work about critical race as a tool to understand the creation and sustainability of White supremacy and the subordination of people. Critical race theory examines relationships between social structures and professed ideas of equal protection and explores ways to change the relationship for the better. Embedded in critical race theory is a commitment to human liberation. As shared in chapter 1, over 20 years of work life experiences fuel my inspiration to embark upon this research. It is a tale of success sprinkled with intermittent periods of self-doubt because of my race or gender. It is a tale of exclusion from critical informal and formal knowledge bearing networks in the organization because I was different from most of my co-workers. It is a tale of rejecting and dodging sexual advancements because of my gender. It is my desire to liberate self and to contribute to the liberation of other

Black women leaders. Discovering the influence of the intersection of race and gender in my life may help me to explain my struggle and the struggles of other Black women leaders. This biographical stance—using the other’s stories to make better sense of our own lives—as well as drawing from our own story to make sense of the experiences of others (Merrill & West, 2009) informs this research epistemologically and methodologically.

For this study, race and gender are not mutually exclusive and as such, are not treated as independent categories. Forcing ourselves into a category of race or a category of gender may limit our ability to identify discriminatory and marginalizing behaviors at play because of the intertwinement of race and gender. We may look for simple solutions to complex problems or barriers because of the influence of two intersecting systems of oppression. Bowleg (2008) discussed the methodological challenges involved in researching Black lesbian women. She wrote that multiples identities, in this case race, sex, and sexual orientation, are interdependent. The methodology and design of the research should include steps for capturing the interdependency of these social constructions. The identities are not separate or mutually exclusive. Crenshaw (1989) supported the need to understand the experiences of Black women through the confluence of race and gender. She introduced intersectionality as a framework for understanding the experiences of Black women through converging systems of oppression that include race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). She wrote:

Feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of Color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains . . . my focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed. (pp. 357-358)

Black feminist theory recognizes previous research on (White dominated) feminism did not often include the doubled-edge sword African-American women experience (Brush, 2001; P.

Collins, 1986, 1990; Davis, 1983; Essed, 1991; hooks, 1981). Brush (2001) wrote, “feminist studies of the intersection of race and gender have failed to problematize the race consciousness of women of Color” (p. 181). However, various researchers use the convergence of race and gender and in some cases, class, as a frame for interpreting the lives and experiences of African-American women (E. Bell & Nkomo, 1999; Bravette; 1996; P. Collins, 1990; Essed, 1991; Parker, 2001). Particularly, these researchers all investigate the effects of race and gender on the experiences of African-American professional women. A brief examination of some of these findings facilitates and informs a greater understanding of how the intersection of race and gender is important to understanding the resistance strategies of Black women leaders and is important for this research.

Yoder and Aniakudo (1997) explored inseparability and confluence of gender and race of African-American women firefighters and their interactions with White, African-American, and women firefighters. Specifically, the researchers attempted to understand the social interactions that promote outsider-within experiences for African-American women firefighters. They incorporated Moss Kanter’s (1977) work on token dynamics and multiple research studies on the inseparability and intersection of race and gender to illuminate African-American women’s unique positions in the workplace. They found support for the isolation and subjugation that Black women experience in systems where White women and men and Black men are present. E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) advocated the importance of understanding the role that race, gender, class, and ethnicity play in the lives and leadership of African-American and White women.

Settles (2006) explored the intersection of race and gender in constructing the identity of Black women in the science field and the psychological influence of the intersection of these variables on their self-esteem. She selected the science field because of the under representation

of African-American women in the field. Results acknowledged the integration of both race and gender identities in the lives of the participants in this study. Black women see themselves as an integration of both race and gender identities versus being either Black or a woman. Settles concluded that problems resulting from the women's race had a stronger negative psychological impact than the problems they encounter based on their gender. This is linked, possibly, to the power of race in the Black community in a society hostile to Black people. It is the common denominator and the site where a common bond and purpose exist among people with a common history. The women in her study may be sensitive about their race because it is what uplifts them from an Afrocentric perspective. Because of their Afrocentric views, they may find it more difficult to handle attacks against their race because their race is their source of pride and power. Settles wrote, "it may be that these race-related difficulties [referring to internal Black race issues] lead women to experience difficulties in the Black community and with their Black social networks, thereby disrupting important sources of social support and close relationships" (p. 597). There are sensitivities regarding the impact of race on their lives. Bravette (1996) examined her experiences as a Black woman manager working in Great Britain and her limited growth opportunities within the organization. An additional outcome of her research was to increase her knowledge regarding the experiences of Black women managers in general. She wrote her goal was "to gain an understanding of self, of other Black women managers, and the realities of their status and positions in organizations" (Bravette, 1996, p. 3). Essed's (1991) study regarding everyday racism used an intersectionality framework to research college-educated Black women in the U.S. and Afro-Surinamese women in the Netherlands. The findings of this research are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Previous research supports the need to not only understand the confluence of race and gender in the lives of Black women, but the impact of the intersection of race and gender on their lives. Research conducted by J. R. Miller and Vaughn (1997) confirmed racial and gender bias as a major barrier in the careers of Black women professionals. J. R. Miller and Vaughn wrote:

Being the target of race and gender biases was a common experience among the professionals; these biases were the major obstacles they encountered. These twin problems manifested in a variety of ways, including assumptions on the part of others that the women were inferior, incapable intellectually, and unprepared. (p. 185)

The research supports the difficulty to understand race and gender as separate constructs when researching Black women leaders. A common view is that racial domination interacts with other forms of oppression (Essed, 1991). An attempt to research the resistance strategies of Black women leaders without understanding or including the concept of gender is problematic. Racist and gender ideology inform one another, hence the notion of gendered (everyday) racism.

Gendered racism in the workplace is likely to include routine and repetitive expressions of marginalization and humiliations. Accordingly, the theory of everyday racism is important to this research. Essed (1991) labeled everyday racism as:

A process in which (a) socialized racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately definable and manageable, (b) practices with racist implications become in themselves familiar and repetitive, and (c) underlying racial and ethnic relations are actualized and reinforced through the routine or familiar practices in everyday situations. (p. 52)

Everyday racism includes individuals experiencing oppression through daily practices and actions or from overarching organizational policies and practices. E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) suggested everyday racism as a modern-day view of racism that accounts for the race related encounters experienced by Black women in a professional setting. I use the notion of gendered (everyday) racism to represent the various manifestations of gendered racism and the possibility of racist and sexism occurring in the form of everyday microaggressions.

Theories of Resistance

Resistance in the workplace has often been associated with larger labor movements developed to resist workplace conditions. For example, R. Thomas and Davies (2005a) related resistance to dissent by predominantly blue-collar White male laborers against managerial controls. Resistance is an act of opposition to power and control. Resistance constitutes a dichotomy of resistance and power in the workplace. Managers reside on one end of the spectrum; they have power and control. Employees reside on the opposing side of the spectrum with little power and control over workplace issues affecting their location in the workplace. In this view, resistance is formulaic and deterministic in that it is a response to an act of repression.

A deterministic view of resistance in the workplace may not acknowledge the complex nature of resistance at the individual level. R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) wrote about the focus of resistance research in the past:

While research has drawn attention to the ways in which worker dissent and resistance is manifested in organizations, the definition of resistance used results in the neglect of other forms of more subtle or hidden disruption. Consequently, some forms of resistance may remain under-researched and certain groups of actors neglected in analysis. (p. 685)

Organizational research scholars, feminist and Black feminist, advocate an expanded view or description of resistance. For example, Fleming and Sewell (2002) expressed the need to revisit criteria that counts as resistance activities, as traditional criteria may limit the ability to identify acts of resistance in response to what they refer to as *claustrophobic cultural hegemony*.

Fleming and Sewell wrote:

Rather than looking for patent grandiose and global strategies of insurrection, we may instead find it in the commonplace cracks and crevices of inter-subjective relations and other quiet subterranean realms of organizational life. Moreover, now that corporate power takes special care to target the informal and normative aspects of worker's lives we would expect that to be a site of resistance too. (p. 863)

R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) examined and categorized organizational and feminist theory regarding resistance. They outlined in their essay three politics of resistance. The politics of resistance includes politics of reformation, politics of revolution, and politics of re-inscription. By examining each politic of resistance, R. Thomas and Davies categorized types of resistance, identify the resisting subject and generalized the outcomes of resistance. Resistance related to the politics of reform relates to liberal feminist ideas. Within the workplace, the subject and focus of resistant reform is on creating equitable systems for men and women. For example, research and literature on politics of reform examine what is blocking women from breaking the glass ceiling. Politics of revolution framework include the agency, action, and steps women have taken collectivity to push the feminist agenda forward. R. Thomas and Davies wrote about this category of resistance:

In general, those falling within the politics of revolution frame view “woman” as a socially and politically constructed category, the ontological basis of which lies in a set of experiences rooted in the material world. It is this shared experience of oppression that unites women and acts as the catalyst for collective action by women. (p. 718)

The subject of politics of revolution is radical feminism, Black feminism, and Marxist feminism. Politics of revolution acts include, but are not limited to collective protest, conscious raising, and the transformation of systems perpetuating gender inequality. It also includes fighting patriarchy, class domination, and White supremacy. The action under this framework is to create new organizations free of oppressive actions. Patricia Collins’ (1986) description of resistance as energy exerted to promote self-definition and to value one’s self relates to an orientation of action and agency. Her description is also a fundamental principle of the Black feminist movement to promote self-definition.

Politics of re-inscription include actions that focus on challenging day-to-day discourse and meaning through deconstruction and contestation. This framework recognizes the micro-

political resistance actions that women demonstrate everyday. The examination of resistance is at the individual level. Individual women participate in rewriting the script, destabilizing truth and normalizing harmful and marginalizing discourse. An outcome of the politics of re-inscription is the everyday construction of a women's identity. P. Collins' (1986) description of resistance as action toward self-definition may also fall under the category of politics of re-inscription.

Specific acts of resistance are diverse. Resistance is not always overt and aggressive. McLaren (1989) explained resistance is always present when hegemony exists and can be presented and expressed in docile, passive, and subtle ways by the oppressed. Fleming and Sewell (2002) used Svejik, a character from Jaroslav Has'ek's (1973) novel, *The Good Soldiers*, to describe the subtle manifestation and alternative modalities of resistance in the contemporary workplace. Svejikism involves a degree of ambiguity attached to resistance in the workplace. Resistance does not show up as visible and direct conflict in the organization. Svejikism is undercover and participants of szejikism use cunning and guile behaviors as resistance. Svejik employees may subtly shirk their responsibilities, feign ignorance, and give the appearance they are collaborating without compromising their resistance. Fleming and Sewell further described the Svejik, "svejikism is about the ebb and flow of outsmarting the more powerful, not a hand-to-hand fight for territory at the frontier of control" (p. 868).

Scott (1990) examined forms of public resistance and disguised, undisclosed, and low profile forms of resistance within the context of ideological domination. Public resistance in response to ideological domination includes public counter-ideologies propagating equality, revolution, or negating the ruling ideology. Disguised forms of resistance include development

of dissident subcultures such as millennial religions, slave hush-harbors, and myths of social banditry.

During this research, there was a possibility that public and undercover forms of resistance may surface as Black women leaders respond to organizational systems and structures of gendered and raced domination. Black women leaders may also respond to domination related to status, as in the case of public humiliation and insults on one's dignity. Dissidents may resist status domination by demonstrating public assertions of worth through their gestures, dress, speech, and open desecration of status symbols of the dominant. Disguised responses to status domination include hidden transcripts of anger, aggression, rituals of aggression, and tales of revenge.

Zoller and Fairhurst (2007) analyzed resistance in relation to organizational leadership. They discussed leadership as an element of resistance and explored the value in examining leaders as mobilizing resources to build collective resistance efforts within the organization. They also examined how resistance leadership facilitates change by coalescing individual covert actions of resistance into overt collective actions. Their focus was on how change influenced by resistance leadership becomes institutionalized and becomes the norm within the organization.

Resistance researchers specifically acknowledge human agency as an important component when researching resistance in the workplace. Mumby (2005) intimated a dialectical approach to studying resistance in the workplace. He wrote:

I suggest that resistance (and theorizing about resistance) be understood as an effort to engage in some form of praxis—individual or collective, routine, or organized—in the context of established social patterns and structures are, at some level, dereified, and their “identity logic” interrogated. (p. 23)

Additional research has been conducted of resistance centers on identifying specific acts of resistance in the organization. For example, Fleming (2005) wrote about cynicism as an act of

resistance. Cynicism is described as a productive act of resistance to defend an employee's self-identity in organizations promoting employee compliance. The idea of employees using cynicism to distance and defend themselves has now evolved into using cynicism to maintain or hold onto one's own values when faced with organizational politics and practices of control. Fleming further wrote that self-identity is consistently being created based on the situation. This view of resistance highlights the relationship between resistance and human agency. Additional research suggests examining resistance by focusing on the targets, practices, and consequences of resistance (Putnam, Grant, Michelson, & Cutcher, 2005). The objective is to identify the possible transformational affects of resistance in the workplace.

Related to politics of re-inscription, a post-structuralism examination of resistance in the workplace includes a subject-position perspective and acknowledgment that employees will enact individualistic responses to resistance based on the situation, their identity, and alternative discourse they embrace at the time. Workplace resistance involves dialectic tension between the employees and privileged organizational discourse. Holmer-Nadesan (1996) wrote:

Within a post-structuralist framework, resistance is often explained in terms of individuals' capacities to draw upon alternative discourses that subvert the privileged position of the dominant system of social identities and values. Subversion occurs because the alternative discourses constitute a "surplus of meaning" that destabilizes the dominant system's autonomy and self-containment. (p. 57)

Employees may identify, counter-identify, or dis-identify with dominant discourse in the organization (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). Identification with dominant discourse includes employees' acceptance of the dominant discourse in the organization. They embrace their identity within the context of the dominant discourse. This may include adhering to and believing in traditional rules and the adoption of roles within the organization. With counter-identification, employees reject organizational identity, but at the same time comply with the

identities situated in the dominant discourse. As with identification, counter-identification also excludes identification with alternative discourse. Counter-identification may not manifest in acts of resistance, as employees have not embraced alternative subjectivities or identities. Dis-identification includes the replacement of managerial discourse.

Holmer-Nadesan (1996) introduced a concept developed by Daudi (1986) related to dis-identification labeled *space in action*. Space in action represents an individual's striving toward emancipation and personal freedom and autonomy. In other words, individuals have the desire to take actions and make decisions; they are not acted or decided upon. When faced with situations in which they are seeking emancipation, they take action to create, to fulfill, and to support their identity or alternative discourse. In other words, their act of resistance is creating in the current situation what does not exist to support the identity in which they embrace.

I explored resistance in the workplace from structuralist and post-structuralist perspectives to illuminate the role of larger organizational structures in influencing the experiences of Black women leaders. These structures could include formal or informal barriers and spoken and unspoken rules and regulations promoting unfair practices and nonsupport of Black women leaders. I was also interested in knowing how Black women enact singularly or with others to construct and assign meaning to acts of resistance. This speaks to human agency and action to oppose negative circumstances and to create a new reality. The research implies resistance as a force to maintain or create a positive sense of self and one's group identity within a given situation and in opposition to controlling practices, behaviors, and regulations in the organization. The research also includes a focus on leadership, resistance, and actions leaders may embrace to mobilize change at a collective group effort. In their opposition, Black women create some type of internal and external change; they enact politics of re-inscription.

This thought relates to the relationship between resistance and human agency and standpoint theory. Advocates of standpoint theory support the belief that individuals living in states of marginalization may find places of strength and radical possibility in their current state or position (S. Harding, 2004). A marriage of thought and action is at the core of standpoint theory (P. Collins, 1998). Individuals see a different view and perspective residing in the margins and as such may see ways to challenge the system of domination and create a new world order.

Therefore, through the act of resistance, Black women leaders in corporate settings may co-create and participate in structuring a world, new realities, and life experiences based on oppositional behaviors to gendered (everyday) racism. They may also resist inequities not at an individual level, but with the support of a collectivity of other Black women leaders or non-Black leaders in the organization, thereby participating in politics of revolution. Black women leaders may identify, co-identify, or dis-identify with the dominant discourse regarding race and gender in the corporation impacting their leadership. Finally, my understanding of resistance also recognizes organizational barriers and regulations as influencing the leadership experiences of Black women leaders in corporate organizations. As such, institutional practices are considerable influences on the acts of resistance by Black women leaders.

A Historical Overview of Black Women and Resistance

Black women in the U.S. can look back on a long history of resistance from foremothers (and foreparents). This is the ground, basis, and framework against which to place current resistance among U.S. Black women. A historical overview reveals numerous acts by Blacks to fight oppression due to their race and dominant culture economic gain. There are 250 documented cases of American slave revolts or plans to revolt. This number does not include

slave ship mutinies (Feagin & Sikes, 1994). Black women in general and as leaders fought, silently or overtly, against demeaning ideology tied to race and gender. Enslaved Black females resisted through dramatic acts such as having abortions to prevent birthing babies into a world where they were destined to become slaves (Giddings, 1996). More subtle forms of resistance to their oppressive state included teaching themselves how to read and holding midnight schools, which were forbidden during the slave era (Davis, 1983).

Slanger and Sanger (1995) discussed the creation and singing of spirituals as a way for enslaved men and women to claim rhetorical power in their lives. They wrote:

Singing allowed slaves to appear to work within the system while effectively resisting it. With their singing, slaves could behave as their oppressors bid them, but still share perceptions that resisted and refuted White definitions. Enslaved men and women were changing their lives. (p. 5)

Slaves redefined their identities as they sang spirituals. The very act of creating spirituals was a form of resistance.

Black women during the slavery era demonstrated early evidence of resistance including opposition against sexual assaults by White males (Davis, 1983). Frederick Douglass (1962) wrote about a cousin who was the frequent victim of flogging by her master because of her rebellious spirit. In this situation, his cousin's master flogged her because she would not stop seeing a man she loved. Davis (1983) wrote about women like Ann Wood, a teenager who led a wagon full of boys and girls to freedom on Christmas Eve of 1855. This attempt to flee slavery conditions erupted into a shoot-out between the runaway teenagers and the slave catchers. Several of the slaves died in the shoot-out; however, several individuals escaped. Another story includes a hideaway community of individuals escaping from slavery conditions. In this story, one Maroon fortress (Maroon communities were infamous among Whites for hiding fugitives

from slavery) protected over 300 fugitive slave women, men, and children. Fugitive women engaged in a battle against an army fighting to capture the fugitives.

Enslaved women also ended the lives of their newborn infants to prevent them from living a life of slavery. Infanticide was documented in Toni Morrison's book, *Beloved* (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Morrison told the story of Margaret Garner, a runaway slave. Captured by her slave master, Margaret committed infanticide to prevent her baby from living an enslaved life. Self-development was a form of resistance, because Black women were not seen as cognitively capable human beings (Etter-Lewis, 1993). These early acts of resistance suggest brave moves by enslaved Black women.

There are stories of women and resistance during the Jim Crow era. Kimmons (2003) completed a textual analysis of 31 narratives of Black female domestic workers living during the Jim Crow era to identify strategies of resistance to combat ideological hegemony. In her analysis, Kimmons concluded that, to survive a life of subordination in the workplace, domestic workers resisted by creating a separate reality from the dominant culture. Depressing work conditions were not the focus of their lives when they returned to the Black community. Work became a means to an end. Engagement in the Black community as mothers, church leaders, wives, and community advocates became additional avenues for self-definition and fulfillment. The additional avenues led to personal efficacy, a sense of self that only flourishes when one does not give up hope under oppression.

After the abolition of slavery, Black women leaders created their own clubs as a form of resistance against the exclusion of Black women from White women's political movements (Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1996; Hull et al., 1982). Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin organized the first National Conference of Colored Women in Boston in 1895 (Davis, 1983). The Women's Loyal

Union was the first club created and led by Black women. Black women founded the Women Wage Earners Association to protect Black working women (Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1996).

Black women challenged labor practices and recognized education as a vehicle for upward movement and change. In 1866, Black washerwomen in Jackson, Mississippi fought for a standard rate for their services. This was the first collective effort in the history of free Black women to challenge the unfair treatment they experienced in the labor market (Giddings, 1996). The National Association of Colored Women developed programs to provide scholarships and loans to Black women for college. This organization also assisted Black women with migrating to the North and provided job training and placement during the turn of the 19th century (Giddings, 1996).

In addition to collective acts of resistance, there were Black women who singularly and publicly opposed unfair systems and structures directed toward Black women and the Black community. Sojourner Truth exposed the class and race bias of the women's movement of that era in her famous 1851 "Ain't I a Woman" address (Davis, 1983; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Speaking to an audience of White women and men, she challenged the prevailing tendency to represent only the interests of White, middle class women. Fannie Barrier Williams expressed her views about the exclusion of Black women to the majority White Congress of Representative Women at the World Columbian Exposition in 1893. She professed the need for Black women to fight negative myths about themselves grounded in sexual exploitive ideology (Giddings, 1996; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). During post-reconstruction, Maria Stewart challenged Black women to reject current negative images of Black womanhood. As possibly one of the first African-American freed women to speak about women's rights in public, Maria Stewart urged Black women to forge self-definitions of self-reliance and independence and championed Black women to build

strong relationships with one another to fight oppression (P. Collins, 1998; Giddings, 1996; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Stewart spoke (as cited in Guy-Sheftall, 1995), “O, ye daughters of Africa, awake! Awake! Arise! No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves” (p. 27).

Ida B. Wells was one of the first Black woman journalists known for catalyzing the anti-lynching campaign (McMurray, 1998). She fueled this campaign to a level of international recognition. Wells identified the use of lynching during reconstruction as a psychological weapon by White males to control Blacks during reconstruction. The desired result of this psychological weapon was the suppression of Black economic and political growth by preventing Blacks from voting. Whites were also afraid of “Negro domination” (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 71). The act of lynching became a symbolic method of control to curtail the mythological savaged and oversexed Black male (P. Collins, 2005; Giddings, 1998). In other words, the rape of White women by the mythical beast-like Black man legitimized lynching. Giddings wrote about the non-existence of lynching as an issue in the pre-reconstruction period and the distorted justification of lynching:

Rape as a new rationale required some historical distortions to be credible. How did one explain why rape had only recently required lynching as a remedy? The only plausible answer was that Black rapists had just become a problem. Why had Black men not raped White women in the past and why had they suddenly become a race of rapist? The solution to that riddle became the proclaimed ability of slavery to restrain the “bestial tendencies” of African-Americans. (p. 146)

Wells’ campaign was unpopular and a brave act of resistance against White power structures during this period. Wells also expanded the range of topics written in the daily paper by editorializing the presumed immorality of Black women. She wrote about her personal struggle with race, gender, and class in her earlier newspaper articles (Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1996; McMurray, 1998). P. Collins (2005) wrote:

Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s anti-lynching work clearly rejected both the myth of the

Black male rapist as well as the thesis of Black women's inherent immorality and advanced her highly controversial interpretation. Not only did Wells-Barnett spark a huge controversy when she dared to claim that many of the sexual liaisons between White women and Black men were in fact consensual, she indicted White men as the actual perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence *both* against African American men (lynching) *and* against African-American women (rape). (p. 221)

Mary McLeod Bethune not only placed the issues of race, education, and youth on the national agenda during the FDR administration, but was also an advocate of women's rights. She found the National Council of Negro Women (Giddings, 1996).

A more contemporary change agent example is Angela Davis. Known as a social advocate as early as 1970, Davis later challenged the presentation of the experiences of Black male as the norm in African-American History (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Guy-Sheftall wrote Angela Davis' early essay, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," was an early presentation of Black Feminist thought. She called attention to the omission of the experiences of Black women in scholarly work. Davis began her essay with "the paucity of literature on the Black woman is outrageous on its face" (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 200). She further explored the negative images of Black women during the era of slavery in her essay and counterinsurgent attacks by women to demoralizing and oppressive experiences.

Audre Lorde (1984), a prolific writer and poet, espoused intersectionality theory as not only including race, gender, and class as systems of domination, but also heterosexuality in her essay, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." Guy-Sheftall (1995) wrote, "Audre Lorde, born in Harlem to parents from Grenada, is the most revered and influential Black feminist lesbian writer of the modern era" (p. 283). Notably, Lorde was also an anti-war and women rights activist. Her writing became a weapon against the relegation of African-American women in society.

Toni Morrison's library of literary accomplishments garnered the Nobel Prize in 1993 and the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. P. Collins (1990) recognized Toni Morrison as one of many African-American women who contributed to creating a Black women's intellectual tradition. Morrison's literary accomplishments contributed by powerfully exposing the barriers Black women experience; the power of their friendships with each other, their spiritual beliefs, and their fight against negative images and stereotypes. P. Collins wrote about the suppression of knowledge regarding African-American women:

The shadow obscuring the Black women's intellectual tradition is neither accidental nor benign. Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of an independent consciousness in the oppressed can be taken to mean that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization. (p. 5)

P. Collins shared that Toni Morrison is one of many Black women to fight to have the voices of Black women heard through her intellectual work. Her literature raises the level of societal consciousness regarding issue affecting the lives of Black women.

I could write about many more Black women who have uplifted the voices and thoughts of their Black sisters. There are too many to mention in this review. They aspired to fight poverty, exploitation, and interlocking systems of domination based on race, gender, and sexuality. I wondered if the resistance behaviors of Black women leaders in the corporation are similar to legendary and historical Black women like Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells, or to more contemporary change agents like Angela Davis and Audre Lorde.

Although one can identify individual Black leaders, resistance did not happen in isolation. Contemporary collective activism against gendered (everyday) racism includes the formulation of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) in 1973 and the recognition of critical Black women leaders to the Civil Rights Movement (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Organizers of

the NBFO wanted to remind Black nationalists and members of the Black liberation movement that Black women should also be recipients of liberation. The Combahee River Collection, a radical offshoot of the NBFO, was founded in 1975 to give Black feminist lesbians a voice in the women's movement. The groups highlighted sexual politics in the Black community as just as prevalent as racial tension (Hull et al., 1982). Ella Baker ran the day-to-day operations of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) under King's leadership. Baker had a strong interest in social change and was the catalyst for the formation of SNCC, an organization for students interested in participating in the movement (Giddings, 1996).

Demonstrating acts of resistance during the era of segregation was a common theme that emerged from the oral histories of 50 retired educators interviewed in 1993 and 1994 (Slevin & Wingrove, 1998). Teachers controlled what they taught in the classroom and prepared the students for racism by providing them with the tools and resources to resist negative messages embedded in racist practices. Findings from this study also confirmed a participant's cumulative experiences with gendered-racism helped them to deal with gendered-racism later in their lives.

A historical overview supports the fighting spirit of Black women leaders against race and gender issues based on the definition of resistance provided earlier in this chapter. Black women have not sat silently on the sidelines in the face of oppression. Overall, Black women leaders created a mask of dissention, conflict, and courage in spite of dangerous and perilous circumstances of the times. Resistance is not only a fleeting act of undercover rebellion, but actions including strategic thought leadership by Black women. Finally, Slevin and Wingrove (1998) recognized the use of different strategies of resistance according to the eras of segregation and post-segregation. I am not suggesting that all Black women are resisters of gendered (everyday) racism. The objective for this study was to identify resistance behaviors of Black

women leaders, not to prove or validate that all Black women resist or even acknowledge gendered (everyday) racism. Exploring the resistance responses and strategies in contemporary times may mirror the types of resistance used in the past or may also reveal new strategies that are based on the historical and ideological context of the day.

Current Research on Black Women Leadership and Resistance

Scarce research exists to facilitate understanding about the leadership experiences of African-American women leaders and their resistance strategies. The focus of this literature review is not to identify the frequency of resistance, but to examine and learn more about the nature of resistance. A few research studies address resistance as the primary research question. I highlight these studies later in this chapter. In addition, the topic of resistance in several studies may not be a primary research outcome, but information about resistance emerged during the research and is included in the research discussion. I also discuss these studies later in the chapter.

Past corporate management research examined women as one monolithic group. Women, as a research category, included women from several racial and ethnic groups. Researchers did not necessarily include race, ethnicity, and gender demographics as additional research variables or as informing and shaping the realities of individuals whose lived experiences differ from the lived experiences of the dominant culture. Waring (2003) acknowledged there are obviously notable differences among Latina, African-American, and Caucasian women. Cox and Nkomo (1991) published the first cross-race/gender study of comparative job involvement levels. Several studies focus on African-American men and women's experiences with biculturalism and workplace mobility, power, and performance. For example, Wingfield (2007) explored the lived experiences of African-American men and women

in corporate America to identify the effects of partial inclusion and biculturalism. Elliott and Smith (2004) researched the differential access to workplace power for women and minorities in comparison to White males. Their study involved the examination of race and gender differences on four dimensions of career experiences among recent MBA graduates. In their seminal work, Greenhaus et al. (1990) explored the relationships between race, organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. Notably, the research brought to light the fewer number of sponsorship relationships opportunities for Black managers than White managers. Bartol, Martin, and Kromkowski (2003) explored the influence of gender, organizational norms, and ethnic influences on the leadership of mid to executive level managers; however, all ethnic groups were lumped into one category for this study.

The research highlighted above contributes to build the body of knowledge of workplace performance and career mobility for groups that may typically reside on the margins. The research also demonstrates the influences of ethnicity on leadership and confirms the differing experiences of ethnic groups working in organizations. However, Black women in these studies, as well as other ethnic females, are not parceled into separate research categories for a deeper analysis.

A few studies include an examination of African-American men's and women's experiences in the organization within the context of a specific profession or role. Barrett, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2003) researched the experiences of Black human resource developers by exploring how outsider and insider experiences influence the career development of Black human resources developers. S. Collins (1997) researched race and the associated problem of corporate mobility. Her research validated the slow movement of African-American men and women into executive roles. She explored the impact of African-American leaders

placement in racialized roles in their career progression. In summary, their placement in racialized roles hindered their promotion into executive mainstream roles in the organization. Using a life history methodology, E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) investigated the effect of race and gender on their own lives. J. R. Miller and Vaughn's (1997) research included surveying Black professionals across a variety of professions. They administered a survey to 40 professionals in business and law colleges and universities to gather information on the career journeys and maps participants followed to accomplish career goals. They also identified obstacles they encountered in their career quests and how they described success.

An analysis of resistance strategies across various corporate industries and roles could reveal similar acts of resistance. Conversely, Black women leaders may demonstrate similar strategies of resistance regardless of the industry and role. The primary outcome of this research was to discover similar resistance behaviors Black women leaders use to mitigate gendered (everyday) racism.

Black women leadership and resistance in the corporation. Though minimal, research does exist regarding the resistance and coping strategies African-American women use in corporations, Porter (2002) did examine Black women executives' encounters with the glass ceiling in the corporation using a case study analysis. She revealed the coping strategies these women embrace to be successful leaders in the workplace. Specific research outcomes included the identification of similar leadership characteristics of 14 vice president-level managers and above who facilitated chiseling the concrete ceiling. Several of the characteristics included balancing work and family life, receiving the support of a mentor, and avoiding company politics. Similarities among the women included having an undergraduate education, working hard, and being a team player. Other research related specifically to resistance and coping

strategies includes Shorter-Gooden's (2004) study. She identified the coping strategies of African-American women in response to gendered racism. Coping strategies are role flexing, avoiding conflict, and fighting back. Both studies include the act of avoiding conflict as a strategy for career mobility. Coping and resisting may be used synonymously in some studies even though resistance denotes taking action against controlling efforts, such as gendered (everyday) racism. Conversely, the focus of resistance is to create change, not to manage or deal with extenuating circumstances. As discussed in chapter 1, coping is managing taxing demands that are placed on an individual. The demands exceed what the individual is capable of handling. For this study, resistance denotes intentional action against gendered (everyday) by Black women executives in the corporation.

Using a communication theory framework, Parker (2002) identified communication strategies African-American women executives use to manage negative interactions with other co-workers related to race and gender. She explored this topic with women working in private and public organizations. Through unstructured interviews, Parker identified negative communicative interactions African-American women executives experienced with Black men, White men, and White women. She concluded that African-American women executives experience exclusion from important informal networks, have their ideas co-opted, and encounter interpersonal conflict. To counter these barriers, African-American women executives use resistance strategies that entail striving for excellence in the workplace and face-to-face confrontation.

Additional research by Parker (2003) identified strategies 15 African-American women used to remain self-defined in the workplace. She identified leadership themes in their life histories that inform their growth as leaders and explore the transformative communication and

resistance strategies executives used during their ascent to senior levels of management. Themes heard during the leaders' childhood are their need to achieve educationally, to have an understanding of race relations, and to maintain a strong self-identity. Their strategies for self-definition include knowing who you are, being the best at what you do, establishing systems of support, and contributing strongly to the organization. Specific behaviors embedded in these themes are focusing on personal outcomes, building cross-race alliance, either denying or recognizing racism, refusing to embrace racism as a problem, and ensuring their contributions to the organization are known. Parker's research is paramount to the literature on resistance and coping strategies used by executive African-American women in the workplace. Her research supports the relationship between resistance actions and leadership communication themes in the organization. She wrote:

I notice striking similarities in the ways the women enacted leadership, as revealed in the five leadership communication themes. I argue that underlying these themes is the influence of a Black women's standpoint, which emerges through the struggle against oppression and the controlling images of Black womanhood. (p. 71)

Parker (2003) also identified specific types of leadership communication Black women used in these organizations and creates a description for each type of communication. For example, Parker identifies *openness in communication* as a leadership theme. She described openness in communication as "bringing important issues into the open, making sure voices (including their own) that need to be heard on a certain issue get that opportunity, and having no hidden agenda" (p. 57). Even though communication theory and principles are not the foundation for this research, I acknowledge the contribution of communication interactions and exchanges in constructing organization realities for organizational members

N. Johnson (2006) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the impeding factors preventing African-American women leaders in organizations from receiving support and from

penetrating the concrete ceiling. She also identified the actions the women leaders take against obstacles to their ascent in the organization. The focus was not necessarily on resistance strategies; however, several themes relating to the actions African-American women leaders take to circumvent organizational roadblocks emerged from interviews with 10 corporate women leaders. They include maintaining a spiritual stance, receiving an education, providing peer support to each other through professional organizations, and establishing mentoring relationships with other African-American women leaders. Additional themes from this research are not compromising self, having integrity, and providing support to each other in professional organizations.

Parker (2003), Porter (2002), and N. Johnson (2006) contributed to the body of knowledge of resistance regarding Black women leaders. Common themes of resistance and coping resonate across each study. Similarities include the importance of Black women supporting and mentoring each other during tough times and placing a premium on upholding high-standards for themselves. The research also supports Black feminist principles regarding the link between Black women achieving and living in powerful states of existence and self-definition. It was important for the women in these studies to define who they are and to radiate authenticity consistently in their leadership journeys. Finally, the studies contribute to the experiences of Black women leaders across different work-related organizations.

Other related research on Black women and resistance. A review of the literature involving the experiences of Black women operating in organizational systems outside of the corporation is addressed in this section. Themes related to coping and resistance in these studies may have implications for this research. Related to leadership in private industry is research regarding leadership in the academy. More research exists regarding the experiences of Black

senior women professors and administrators in the academy than research in private industry. This could be attributed to the pursuit and discovery of knowledge as a critical area of focus by academics. Despite several challenges that sometimes may constrain Black women leaders from a hearty and robust existence as faculty members and contributing scholars, Black faculty may be more action oriented to prevent their ideas and research interests from a location of marginalization.

G. Thomas and Hollenshead (2001) included an analysis of responses by faculty women-of-Color to a faculty work-life study (FWLS). An objective of the study was to explore the existence and survival of women-of-Color living on the margins in the academy and to know how their marginalized state informs their resistance behaviors. In comparing responses of women-of-Color to the responses of White women and White and Black males, the data confirmed women-of-Color receive less mentoring and encounter more negative organizational barriers to their growth in the academe. Noteworthy in this study is that even though the women experience pressure from members of the academy when their research agendas and interests differed from the research agendas of the unit in which they reside, the women optimized their marginalized placement in the academy to resist organizational challenges and barriers. The women admitted to researching their topic of interest and sought other colleagues in similar situations with whom to share their stories of oppression.

A participant from G. Thomas and Hollenshead's (2001) study expressed how women-of-Color can succeed and resist in their marginalized locations:

First of all rely on yourself. . . . [Y]ou have to have confidence in your skills as a teacher and a researcher, and . . . you have to not let whatever goes on shake that confidence. You're going to have to learn how to deal with criticism and figure out what parts of that criticism are constructive and [that] you can use, and what parts of that criticism you should simply ignore and not let it bother you. You need to have a personal life and you need to have a professional life, and these two things can operate on very divergent paths.

But I think you need a personal life to sustain yourself. You need to find the community of Color in [your local area] so that you can look at some people and see yourself reflected, because in your professional life at [predominantly White] university, you will not see that. (p. 185)

Additional research supports the fact of isolation Black women faculty may experience in academia and their push toward self-definition. Alfred (2001) gathered life history data from five tenured African-American women faculty working at the same institution to answer the following question: “What are the avenues through which Black women navigate the White academic culture to fulfill the expectations of their academic career?” (p. 115). Alfred discovered having a positive self-definition facilitated the participants’ management of White dominated cultures. She wrote about the culture of resistance participants lived in during segregation:

Although they were confronted with White domination and oppression during a period of total segregation, African-Americans adopted what P. Collins (1990) and hooks (1989) call “a culture of resistance” to create a social reality of Black equality and positive cultural identity. (p. 118)

These women found safe havens where the objectification of the other was minimized.

Slevin and Wingrove (1998) interviewed 50 retired professional African-American women between the ages of 53 and 57 in 1993 and 1994 to understand their life experiences as family members and in the workplace. The majority of the women were college professors, teachers or supervisors in elementary or secondary schools, and public service workers. They documented in their research that women successfully navigating in their careers became adept at analyzing the realities of the organization, sought the advice of mentors, observed their surroundings, and stood up for what was right in the workplace. The women also admitted to the value of educational preparation, self-awareness, and perseverance and strength to block attempts to denigrate their personhood.

Findings from the research on Black women's experiences in the academe suggest that participants exercise several strategies to be successful in predominantly White institutions. They embrace the power of self-definition by creating positive images about themselves, learn the culture in the academy, find ways to maintain their visibility within their discipline, and exhibit bicultural competence. They also find supportive and safe networks where they receive affirmation as Black women.

Not specifically related to executive leadership in the workplace, but relevant to coping strategies Black women use when feeling isolated, Terhune (2008) researched the coping strategies of African-American women relocating to a predominantly White community in Oregon with a history of racism. When experiencing feelings of isolation, interviewees rely on positive racial socialization messages that reinforce racial identity and encourage a sense of pride. They also develop social networks to override negative messages attributed to racism. These themes are similar to other research exploring Black women's ability to function in an environment of racism. Socialization messages undergird the recipient's ability to function when feeling isolated.

Similar to the power of socialization messages and orientation to racism, Essed (1991) conducted a cross-cultural study to explore how professional Afro-Surinamese women living in the Netherlands and Black women in the United States acquired knowledge of racism. An additional outcome of her study explored how the acquisition of knowledge related to racism might influence the resistance strategies the women use to combat everyday racism. Essed posited a link between the acquisition of knowledge regarding racism and the women's responses to resistance. For example, Afro-Surinamese women in the Netherlands learned about racism through the day-to-day interactions with the Dutch—through their oppressors.

Knowledge of racism was seldom a part of their socialization process growing up. At times, paternalistic expressions of racism and the denial of racism generated feelings of apathy and powerlessness to racist acts.

Black women in the U.S., on the other hand, often learned about racism directly from family, community members, and by witnessing acts of group resistance associated with the Civil Rights Movement. Essed (1991) wrote, “many Black women learned from an early age to see race relations in terms of race conflict” (p. 210). Black women’s resistance to racism includes knowing your history, gaining power, maintaining your culture, and your own perspective and separatism. The women from the Netherlands deal with everyday racism by adopting skeptical behaviors and not trusting Whites. Essed’s research is noteworthy as it may have implications for the relationship between how Black women leaders acquire knowledge about gendered (everyday) racism and the types of resistance strategies they employ.

In a comparative study of White and Black women professionals, E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) highlighted the coping and resistance strategies Black women professionals use to chisel away the concrete ceiling. Several strategies include: (a) critical observation of social structures and barriers to their ascent, (b) ensuring they exercise a tempered voice, (c) relying on formal networks such as professional organizations to acquire knowledge, (d) gaining sponsorship, (e) being the initiators of their own careers, and (f) staying in touch with their culture.

E. Bell (1990) explored Black career-oriented women’s biculturalistic experiences by identifying how Black women manage their lives personally and professionally and how Black career-oriented women organize their lives and maintain relationships living in two separate worlds. Results of the study indicate the complex life structures of career-oriented Black women. E. Bell highlighted the stress related to this complexity and Black women’s use of

biculturalism as a source of strength and power. Several participants compartmentalize their lives as a coping action to reduce the complexity resulting from living a bicultural existence. Other women view living a biculturally as a strength. They became more creative, stronger divergent thinkers and risk takers, and more adaptable because of spanning multiple boundaries.

The research highlighted above supports the need for Black women to exhibit actions of resistance even outside of the organization. Resistance may be integrated into every component of their lives. Similarly, the women in this research may share acts of resistance separate from their leadership in the workplace. Another possible message in their stories may be the articulation of the complex life structures they live. The participants may share stories about their lives outside of the organization and the multiple demands and expectations they face because they are Black women (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). As such, the use and type of resistance behaviors demonstrated are influenced by the complexity of their lives. Finally, life experiences and knowledge of gendered (everyday) racism may influence how they resist.

The primary question for the current research is: “How do Black women corporate executives resist gendered (everyday) racism?” To operationalize this question, I thought of a number of foreshadowing themes to guide the actual interviews:

1. Will their stories include subversive, subtle, and/or very open resistance actions to change?
2. Will their actions influence the view of Black women leaders by White males and females and even people of Color in the organization?
3. As a result of their resistance, what was the impact on leaders and employees in the organization?
4. What is the impact of their resistance on organizational structures and systems?

5. If there was a shift, what occurred?
6. Why did they resist?
7. What did it mean for them to resist?
8. In what kinds of situations did they feel they wanted to but could not resist?

The methodology and design for gathering resistance information is addressed at length in chapter 3.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The *word* is discussed in chapter 1 as the tradition of Black people to exchange valuable information, stories, narratives, and recollections through teaching, preaching, and healing, thus liberating themselves from an oppressive existence. The word inspires self-definition, self-representation, and motivates members of an oppressed group to speak with conviction regarding their beliefs and desire to overcome. It pushes marginalized groups or individuals to vocalize their *positioned perspective* and validates and acknowledges the real life experiences of Black people. Lawrence (1995) related positioned perspective to the subjectivity the researcher embraces in observing or documenting social constructions. Positioned perspective suggests the impossibility of the researcher or scholar from being a non-participant during research; it challenges the idea of the researcher as an objective third party who does not bring his or her perspective to the research. Exercising a researcher's positioned perspective includes a researcher giving authority to his or her perspective, opinions, or beliefs during the research process. As the researcher, I acknowledged and concurred with the idea that one objective universal truth is not a reality. I partnered with Black women leaders in the creation of knowledge and multiple truths.

Positioned perspective privileges the stories of the storyteller during research. The storyteller's perspective is valued. The storyteller is encouraged to share her story based on her personal experiences, beliefs, and opinions. With probing and empathy, the researcher lends an empathic ear. Thus, the power of position perspective is the shared effort. Together, the researcher and the storyteller rewrite history that use to be based on the concept of one universal

truth (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Exerting a position perspective is liberating. This research study was designed to capture the unique stories of resistance of Black women leaders in the corporation and the meaning they make of their resistance.

Biographical research can be a powerful form of research inquiry for the purpose of this research. Yow (2005) used oral histories, a form of biographical research, to understand the process of meaning making by individuals. She suggested researchers using oral histories are concerned with how the interviewer interprets and responds to the stories of the interviewee and how the interviewee interprets his or her experiences. Torres (1998) included biography and narrative to provide a personal touch in essays on critical educators. He suggested the power of dialogue as a tool for teaching and building knowledge. Torres wrote, “from critical perspectives, through dialogue and narrative, lived experiences can be constructed as stories that may speak of truth and sincere caring but also of struggles, dreams, and hopes” (p. 8).

Personal dialogue in the development of biographies can become uplifting and enlightened tools for creating change in the lives of the others. As participants tell their stories, their voices emerge. For this research, participants tell their career life histories of resistance. Their expressions are not bound necessarily by writing conventions such as using the correct grammar and syntax. The storyteller has the opportunity to reflect on his or her thoughts and beliefs.

As individuals tell their stories, the researcher may see connections between events and drivers and influences of those events. These individuals also have the opportunity to provide historical and societal context. Their stories of resistance assist with knowing what is going on in the workplace or in larger society as their stories are situated within this larger context. While sharing their stories, Black women have the opportunity to reexamine their resistance behaviors.

For example, did their behaviors drive positive or negative change for themselves personally and within the larger organization? In other words, as a research method, biographical research, which includes life histories, is a way of knowing (Lawrence, 1995).

Biographical research is used in sociology to understand social relationships and in cultural, literary, and historical research. Roberts (2002) wrote about the versatility of biographical inquiry:

For example, within sociology the focus is on the uncovering of the meanings attributed to personal and social relationships and situation, whereas in oral history, the concern can be said to be the individual's interpretation of past experiences, or in life course and life review research the emphasis tends toward how accounts related to a life pattern. (p. 22)

In his essay, *The Search for an Oppositional View*, Lawrence (1995) expressed the relationship between language and self-definition. He shared that language is critical to self-definition of which self-definition plays a crucial role in human liberation and emancipation. For example, the lack of a collective voice of enslaved Africans contributed to an apathetic and disappearing African consciousness. The lack of voice and self-consciousness reinforced ideas from the European Renaissance that included rationalization and reinforced the justification of the enslavement of Africans. Lawrence (1995) wrote:

Early practitioners of the Word recognized the necessity of self-representation to combat this dehumanizing ideology that determines one's very being by presence (or lack thereof) in history and, in turn, viewed one's absence from history as proof one's lack of consciousness. (p. 341)

Lawrence (1995) believed that storytelling is persuasive. As African-Americans tell their stories, they decrease their invisibility and contribute to self-definition. Within the context of storytelling, they create a collective consciousness from which they can draw upon for liberation and strength. Likewise, Black women leaders also explicate and illuminate the affects of their resistance on the workplace. They answer the foreshadowing questions noted in chapter 2.

Their stories also provide answers to additional questions, such as “How did their actions change, enhance, or contribute to the organizational culture or to the productivity of the workplace,” and “Did their actions open the door for organizational leaders to assess the practices and behaviors promoting unfair behaviors and mistreatment of marginalized groups in general?” Their stories contribute to building a knowledge repository to include the resistance actions they embrace to oppose gendered (everyday) racism. Because contributing to knowledge production is one of the desired outcomes of this research, I will discuss the concept of knowledge production and construction later in this chapter.

Finally, formal, structured, and deductive methods aligned with quantitative research may not richly capture the personal struggles involving the heart and soul of Black women, exposed to gendered (everyday) racism (P. Collins, 1998). A purely quantitative approach may not be robust and hardy enough to deconstruct subtle contextual actions and behaviors taking place in real time (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Wheatley, 1999). Narratives and storytelling would capture some of the chaos, nuances, and growth related to gendered (everyday) racist dynamics in the workplace.

Research Purpose and Foreshadowing Questions

The research question for this study was designed to provoke Black women leaders to share their word or their stories regarding their experiences with resistance as leaders in the corporate organizations. The main question to illicit this information was: “How do Black women senior leaders in the corporation resist gendered (everyday) racism?” The objective was to highlight detailed oppositional tactics and strategies Black senior-level women leaders employ to operate successfully in the corporation.

Semi-structured interviews would encourage ordinary conversations between the participants and me. Some guided questions provided focus to the interview, but at the same time would leave ample space for the participants to give their own direction to the conversation. This approach was critical to creating a conversational, authentic, and trustworthy environment for *deep talk* to occur—a conversation between African-American women, steeped in traditional African cosmology (King & Ferguson, 2001). During deep talk, spiritual idioms emerge to assist with assigning meaning to events African-American women leaders experience in life and restores African-American women leaders to a place where they are able to affect their communities and the workplace. Deep talk with each Black women leader would inspire additional thoughts about their personal leadership. A semi-structured interviewing approach is likely to provoke deep dialogue to occur.

Constructivism and Creating Knowledge

Using biographical forms of inquiry, such as career life histories and self-reflection, supports a constructivist approach to gather and analyze stories of resistance. “Constructionism argues that knowledge rises from social processes and interaction” (R. Miller & Brewer, 2003, p. 41). Included in constructivism are the process of reflection and the development of multiple realities through the interaction between the researcher and the narrator of the story. The selection of biography and storytelling creates a space where multiple truths can emerge. Kvale (1996) wrote about the relationship between post-modernism and constructivism:

In a postmodern era, the belief in foundations of true knowledge, in an absolute God, or an objective reality has dissolved. The conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a linguistic and social construction of reality. (p. 306)

The researcher is a contributor to socially constructing reality and co-creating knowledge.

Knowledge is understood within the context of the communication (Kvale, 1996). Roberts

(2002) wrote that the meaning individuals assign to everyday experiences is a major element of biographical research. In articulating their experiences with resistance within the corporation, the executives participate in creating and contributing to knowledge outcomes for this research project. A brief examination of knowledge is important to fully understand this research study. As suggested earlier in this dissertation, a major principle of Black feminism is the act of Black women self-defining and constructing their history. They illuminate their leadership experiences as seen through their own eyes. In the process of interviewing, they assign new meaning to their experiences as Black women leaders, thereby potentially creating new knowledge.

Knowledge is not an uncontested phenomenon. Continual debates exist among scholars as to what knowledge is, where knowledge originates, and who creates knowledge. Several perspectives exist on the ontology and construction of knowledge. A realist epistemology suggests that knowledge is a tangible resource (Styhre, 2003). It is fixed and stable. You can bracket knowledge by developing taxonomies. Knowledge is an event and static. Another view is that knowledge is produced at the individual level. It becomes organizational knowledge through the actions of organizational members. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) wrote, “an organization cannot create knowledge without individuals. The organization supports creative individuals or provides contexts for them to create knowledge” (p. 59). This view suggests knowledge as a process. Knowledge is fluid and emergent. Styhre (2003) wrote, “knowledge is always in a process of becoming, of continuously being altered and further refined or modified” (p. 35).

Another view is that knowledge is integrated into the everyday practices of social relationships. Deleuze (as cited in Styhre, 2003) asserted, “everything is knowledge, and this is the first reason why there is no ‘savage experience’ there is nothing beneath or prior to

knowledge . . . knowledge bridges seeing and saying” (p. 36). This suggests a never-ending production of knowledge. If knowledge is embedded in social relationships and it bridges the gap between seeing and saying, as such, the stories of each woman contribute to building a repository of knowledge on resistance. In addition, through social interaction, I document what I see and hear from each woman.

Bird (1994) researched careers as repositories of knowledge. He wrote, “I define careers as accumulations of information and knowledge embodied in skills, expertise, and relationship networks acquired through an evolving sequence of work experiences over time” (p. 327). Bird suggested that employees contribute to the formation of their careers through the information they acquire through their work experiences. As creators of knowledge, employees are invaluable to the organization. Their knowledge is critical to creating a spirit of competition in organizations.

Knowledge is also described as tacit or explicit. Tacit knowledge is personal and is woven deeply into the life experiences of individuals. It may be difficult to communicate this knowledge because of its embeddedness (Bird, 1994). Bird wrote, “tacit knowledge is the sum of a person’s understanding as described by Polanyi (1966) when he states, ‘We know more than we can tell’ (p. 4)” (p. 328). Explicit knowledge is not personal and is not affected by context. For example, a faculty lecture incorporating charts and graphs for the transmission of knowledge is explicit knowledge. The creation of knowledge occurs from the interplay of explicit and tacit knowledge (Bird, 1994). The conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge and explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge is where most knowledge creation occurs.

Converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge is relevant for this research. Knowledge that was normally unavailable becomes known and usable. Bird (1994) referred to

this conversion as *articulation*. Embedded in the stories of each woman is tacit knowledge. Questions and probing during the interviews and my tacit knowledge as the researcher and a Black woman leader, contribute to the process of articulation. This articulated knowledge becomes knowable to the readers of this dissertation and to me as the researcher.

The interplay of explicit to tacit knowledge is also relevant for this research. Bird (1994) referred to this conversion as *internalization*. The conversion of explicit to tacit influences the development of new knowledge or the modification of old knowledge. I hope that the new knowledge or the modification of old knowledge influences readers and reviewers of this research to reflect on the negative images and generalizations they may use to make sense of the leadership of Black women. Even though changing the perceptions or the way individuals think may be a complex process, this tacit knowledge may influence or provoke some readers to rethink or assess how they may contribute to keeping these negatives images alive in the corporation. It is also possible that the storyteller internalizes and reframes the knowledge of her situation by explicating her stories of resistance.

Reflexivity and Reflection

The process of reflexivity is an element of constructivism. Reflexivity incites critical thinking and assessment regarding events (Vaill, 1996). This is true for the researcher as well as the participants. Incorporating reflexivity includes the constant assessment of the subjectivities that the researcher brings during the entire research process (Daley, 2010). At every step of the research process, it was important to critique the methods and subjective lens that I bring to the research engagement, interviews, and interpretive process. I would also have to be cognizant of the power that I have as the researcher to shape and influence the knowledge emerging from the interaction between the storytellers and me.

The storytellers would also learn critical information by reflecting on the meaning of their resistance strategies to oppression and marginalization. Grant, Franklin, and Langford (2002) wrote self-reflection refers “to the inspection and evaluation of one’s own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (p. 821). Self-reflection is not a method of critique or evaluation of the influence of research subjectivities or the process toward achieving research outcomes. The focus of reflection is on one’s self. Through reflection, a more complex picture of the multiple realities would emerge from the voices of Black women leaders in corporations. The power of reflection not only resided within the consciousness of the narrator, but also in the consciousness of the researcher. I will discuss my role as researcher and the recipient of information in more detail later in this chapter.

Research Design

This research was designed to support biographical inquiry. It was important to design a study that would provide and elicit information about how the storytellers were socialized to unfair practices related to race and gender. I also wanted to discover the storytellers’ personal experiences with gendered (everyday) racism from their viewpoint, especially in corporate organizations. A semi-structured interviewing approach permitted me to develop interview questions relevant to the research question prior to the interviews, but also simultaneously allowed me to have the flexibility to ask additional questions during the interview for deeper understanding of the storyteller’s experiences. I also desired to capture early memories of gendered (everyday) racism and later memories of gendered (everyday) racism in their careers. Therefore, I developed categories of questions with a focus on past and current experiences.

The focus group supported my goal to identify ways for the practical application of the knowledge gained during the interviews. A group of academics with an interest in critical race

and gender studies for Black Americans would create an environment in which intellectual exchange occurred. Finally, my own personal reflections from the interviews and the focus group helped me to make future recommendations to address the issues associated with Black women executives' experiences with gendered (everyday) racism. It also helped me to address and advance my leadership skills. I provide more specifics about the appropriateness of the research design below.

The research occurred in three stages. The first stage of inquiry included semi-structured interviews of 12 Black women executives in corporations. Part 2 included a focus group of academic subject matter advisors. Prior to part 2, I conducted a content analysis of the stories with the objective of sharing this information with the focus group. Specifically, the content analysis involved the development of resistance motifs and general themes informed by the stories and comments shared by the storytellers in part 1. Part 3 was the influence of the interview themes and focus group discussion on my leadership. I discuss this influence in chapter 6.

Research participant criteria. Research participants were 12 Black women executive leaders working in a corporate environment (private industry). They are no more than four levels below the CEO. The women in this research are at the top of the organizational hierarchy and participate in the development of strategy and visioning for a functional area or division. The women also influence cross-divisional teams and initiatives that have an impact across the organization. They directly influence major corporate outcomes and are stewards over organizational assets and financials.

As discussed briefly in chapter 1, research participants are Black women leaders born and raised in the U.S. and descendants of U.S. African slaves or Afro-Caribbean immigrants

migrating to the U.S. between the late 1800s and the early 1960s, directly after the Civil Rights Movement. The objective was to interview Black women raised in a society in which their descendants were socially oriented to or experienced the institution of U.S. slavery and Jim Crow and have a strong familiarity or experiences with the Civil Rights Era. It is likely that the movement influenced their life experiences as Black women. Their historical lens of and their experience with racism may be different from women of African origin migrating to the U.S. within the past 45 years. For example, V. Johnson (2008) wrote that Afro-Caribbean immigrants living in the states prior to the Civil Rights Movement also experienced or witnessed openly expressed racism in employment, education, and housing. However, women migrating to the U.S. shortly after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 experienced open doors for Black Americans in these sectors. Their orientation to race and sexism in the U.S. may be very different.

For example, Twine and Warren (2000) referenced a Black African woman researcher's experience researching race in the U.S. Even though the woman's skin color was Black, she admitted to experiencing racism for the first time during her fieldwork. She admitted her status as an outsider sheltered her from the negativity associated with racism. Prior to the study, the woman had never experienced the pain and degradation because of her race. To ensure research participants met the following criteria, I itemized specific criteria prior to contacting the women directly and ensured research participants met the criteria listed above during an introductory phone screen. One of the participants in this research is of Caribbean descent; however, her mother was raised in the U.S. shortly after the Civil Rights Movement. I took the risk of adding her to the list of other Black women who are descendants of enslaved men and women in this country. I wondered if her experiences would be similar to the rest of the group. I discuss her (Tia) experiences and highlight specific demographics of the participants in chapter 4.

Part 1: Semi-structured interviews. Constructing knowledge regarding life resistance strategies of Black women requires and summons sound systematic, rigorous, and scholarly methods. Building viable, meritorious, and relevant knowledge requires methods that will consider the lives of Black women holistically. The primary research question and foreshadowing questions were designed to assist with a naturalistic and holistic study of resistance through the eyes of the resisters. Providing Black women with the opportunity to share their personal stories of resistance would cause them to uplift their voices and enhance the recognition of their personal contributions to creating change in scholarly and business related endeavors.

I used a semi-structured interview approach to elicit resistance stories from each interviewee (see Appendix A for the interview protocol). A semi-structured interview is more flexible and conversational than a structured interview, but for comparative work it is better than a completely unstructured interview. Regarding semi-structured interviews, R. Miller and Brewer (2003) wrote:

Interviewers begin with the assumption that they do not know in advance what all the necessary questions are . . . they enable the interviewer to see the world through the eyes of the interviewee and discover how they make sense of their experiences. (p. 188)

A semi-structured interview format enables space for the interviewee or narrator to guide sometimes the direction of the interview, particularly when the direction of the discourse provides additional insight into the nature of resistance.

Face-to-face interviews were a priority for this research. Interpersonal communication cues such as body language, vocal variation, and facial expressions would provide additional messages that are not visible or observable via telephone; however, expenses associated with

traveling restricted my recruitment to Black women executives living in the Southeastern region of the U.S.

Recruitment and orientation of participants. A snowball sampling (R. Miller & Brewer, 2003) approach was used to locate women for the study. Recruiting began with talking to individuals I knew for interviewee recommendations. This included, but was not limited to, individuals in the learning and development area, senior leaders in organizations, university faculty and administrators, Antioch University colleagues, co-workers, previous managers, and friends. I asked for the names of other women who fit the participant criteria identified in this chapter.

I provided an orientation of the research during the recruitment stage. This included an overview of the consent form (see Appendix B), research objectives and outcomes, interviewee roles, and time commitments. Each participant received a copy of the interview protocol (see Appendix A) several days prior to the interviews to provide them with an opportunity to reflect on the questions in order to discover resistance strategies in their lives. The women also had the opportunity to ask questions about the research during the orientation. The objective was not only to discuss the administrative and logistical elements of the interview, but also to begin to foster a collaborative partnership between the storytellers and me. Another objective was to dismiss or dispel any anxieties or concerns about participating in the research. I scheduled two-hour interviews for part 1 of the study.

Part 2: Focus group. Part 2 included assembling a focus group of four Black women academics with knowledge and/or background in critical race and gender studies for their reactions to the study. Focus groups serve as a bridge between research outcomes and action research. They are designed for participants to provide their ideas regarding a concentrated

matter or issue. Chiu (2003) discussed the transformational nature of focus groups for action related research. Focus groups can play a role in facilitating change by providing a forum for problem solving, decision-making, and reflection.

My desire to conduct a focus group of Black women scholars was fueled by the power and influence of the academy to produce critical knowledge—the very theories and knowledge that can inspire and support other Black women, for this study, Black women leaders, in their struggles against oppression. This knowledge can be a powerful tool when popularized and can shape and influence societal thoughts and beliefs (Benjamin, 1997; P. Collins, 1998). An additional objective was for the group of academics to provide input on the practical use of this information. How can the information be used toward the development of additional knowledge regarding critical race and gender research or study?

The focus group included four Black women academics teaching and conducting research at universities in the South and the Atlanta metropolitan area. I used the following criteria to select the participants: (a) is a Black women, (b) has a background in critical race and/or gender studies, and (c) is a professor and scholar. I initially contacted 6 women I found through personal contacts and referrals from other Black women either working in academia or corporate. Two of the women declined and four accepted. I was familiar with the research of one of the participants. I was introduced to another participant at a social event several years ago. A focus group participant referred one participant to me. Another participant is a professor in my doctoral program at Antioch University. The names of the subject matter advisors and their fields of study are listed in the table below:

Table 3.1

Participant Names, Titles, and Fields of Study

Name	Title	Field of Study
Virginia Whatley Smith, Ph.D.	Retired Director of African-Studies, University of Alabama	English
Adia Wingfield, Ph.D.	Associate Professor, Georgia State University	Race, Class, & Gender; Work & Occupations; Social Theory
Tera Hurt, Ph.D.	Researcher University of Georgia Adjunct Professor, Evans Technical College	Project Director for the Program for Strong African-American Marriages Study
Laura Morgan Roberts, Ph.D.	Professor, Antioch University, Leadership and Change	Psychology, Culture, and Organization Studies

The subject matter advisors received focus group protocols (see Appendix C) and a descriptive summary of the 17 motifs of resistance (to be discussed below) several days prior to the 2-hour focus group. They also received a summary of the storytellers' views on the state of Black women leaders in private industry and additional research themes. Not only would the subject matter advisors contribute to making information gleaned from this study relevant and practical to the development of knowledge in the area of critical race and gender research, but they would also have the opportunity to hear knowledge that reflects the everyday realities of Black women in the corporation. I also had the opportunity to learn from the four scholars. I address the influence of this research on my learning in general in chapter 6.

Part 1 of the study informed the focus group protocols that were used in part 2 of the study. The semi-structured interviews added to the breath and depth of my knowledge as the

interviewer, thereby organically broadening my perspective of resistance and provoking additional questions for part 2 of the study. The session included an introduction to my research objective, the conceptual framework, and the anticipated outcomes for the study. The presentation took about 10 minutes. The remaining time was dedicated to discussing the research outcomes.

Overall, the focus group would further influence the development and classification of the resistance themes, provoke ideas for future research, and question and inquire about and challenge the descriptive categories of the data created from the interviews. The participants would also confirm the value of using a critical race approach to the study and eventually share ideas for practical application of the knowledge created from this research.

Researcher reflection. Documenting my story of the research journey provided me with the opportunity to highlight and track my reactions to the stories of each interviewee, to connect their stories to my own personal experiences, to capture the personal learning, and what I hoped would be my personal transformation as a Black woman leader. Including time for me to reflect on the interview was important to the development of research outcomes. I took notes as Black women executives told their stories of resistance. Immediately after the interviews, I took time to review the notes and listened to the tape recordings. I logged any unique comments or statements made during the interview. In some cases, I captured the interviewee's body language and described the location of the interview. Finally, I referred back to my primary research question to ensure the interview conversation and questions posed aligned to the primary research question. I knew it was important for me to answer the following question (the objective was clearly to keep the sessions conversational, however, modification of the questions may have been necessary to address the primary research question): "Is there a need to modify

the questions to gather more information from the next interviews?” Finally, I documented my personal reactions to the stories of each woman. I also developed a summary of initial impressions for each woman, which is discussed in chapter 4.

Researcher interpretation. R. Miller and Brewer (2003) described interpretation as “the process by which meaning is attached to data. Interpretation is a creative enterprise that depends on the insight and imagination of the researcher” (p. 184). Any form of research-related inquiry includes some level of interpretation by the researcher. Interpretation of biographical forms of inquiry includes the researcher’s interpretation of the narrator’s stories and the narrator’s interpretation of his or her story. For this research, in the process of interpreting, I could not avoid imparting my awareness, knowledge, and experiences to interpreting the themes emerging from the narratives of the 12 storytellers. This issue will be discussed in the “Situating the researcher” section of this chapter.

Finally, there are several interpretive devices for biographical inquiry (Roberts, 2002). The interpretative framework for distilling the stories of resistance of Black women leaders included summaries of interpretive themes and excerpts from Black women leaders’ life histories to support the themes.

Content Analysis

The primary research question was: “What resistance strategies do Black women senior leaders use against gendered (everyday) racism in corporate organizations?” I used content analysis to analyze the responses. Content analysis included a review and analysis of the 12 women’s stories in order to produce thematic outcomes, identify language embedded in the resistance stories of each storyteller, and to identify the women’s tone and thoughts about resistance against gendered (everyday) racism. R. Miller and Brewer (2003) wrote, “content

analysis established ‘meaning’ only in the sense of what is explicit in the words used in the text and what is implied by their use from the range of alternatives that could have been employed” (p. 43).

The first step of the analysis included a review of each transcript to ensure the digital recordings of the interviews were accurately transcribed. The transcripts were compared to the recording for accuracy. Changes were made to the transcript based on this review. After corrections were made, each storyteller received a copy of their transcript for review to ensure their stories were captured appropriately and accurately. Upon receipt of the interviewers’ approvals of their transcript, the transcripts were entered into a spreadsheet for analysis.

A high-level of analysis involved identifying high-level motifs and information related to the interviewees biographical, educational, and career experiences. Information relevant to the research was highlighted. Also, stories and comments not specific to the research question but valuable knowledge and information for providing context were noted in addition to the interviewees’ thoughts about race and gender.

Another high-level of analysis included a more detailed line-by-line analysis of the transcripts referring back to the primary research question and interview questions. Stories and comments regarding early memories and experiences of gendered (everyday) racism and messages regarding Black women in the workforce were identified. This analysis also included revisiting the transcripts to capture stories of resistance and opposition to gendered (everyday) racism. Story tables were created to highlight demographic information, early memories, and messages of race and discrimination. Another story table was created highlighting resistance stories and comments.

Another level of analysis included the identification of recurring and repetitive acts of resistance and the development of categories of resistance based on these recurring acts. A total of 17 career life history motifs of resistance emerged from this analysis. The 17 motifs of resistance were grouped into larger groups based on the focus of the resistance motif. Covert and overt acts of resistance were also identified. For example, the focus of several actions were behaviors of advocacy. This included advocating for other employees in the organization, not just the storytellers advocating for themselves to oppose gendered (everyday) racism. The outcome of this analysis is groupings of resistance, which is discussed in chapter 4.

Finally, it was critical to try to understand the executives' acceptance or non-acceptance of negative corporate discourse or narratives regarding gendered (everyday) racism. The framework and continuum of identifying, dis-identifying, or counter identifying (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996) (as was discussed in chapter 2) with corporate narratives regarding gendered (everyday) racism was used to assess the executives' acceptance or non-acceptance of negative behavior assumptions and beliefs related to race and gender. This included a review of each transcript to identify the woman's career life history of resistance stories to assess the degree of assimilation and acceptance of corporate narratives that may perpetuate, mask, or promote gendered (everyday) racism. The objective was to identify to what degree the women accepted corporate discourse that limits the number of other Black executive women in the corporation and/or that negatively influence the experiences of Black women in corporate organizations overall.

Table 3.2 highlights a more detailed level of analysis, the content explored, and the coding and classification of the content from the storytellers.

Table 3.2

Content Analysis

Level of Analysis	Analysis	Coding Elements/Classification
1.	Reviewed transcripts for accuracy	N/A
2.	Analyzed data to identify demographics for each storyteller. This included the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • level of education • age • career/work experience/tenure • profession 	N/A
3.	Identified stories and comments related to early memories, experiences, and messages of racism (family and community).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Influence of memories and messages on personal leadership b. Influence of memories and messages on their career
4.	Identified stories they heard as children about Black women in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Types of careers b. Influence of stories on their careers
5.	Identified stories and comments regarding personal leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Influence of stories personally b. Influence of stories organizationally
6.	Identified early personal stories related to race.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Influence of stories personally
7.	Identified early stories related to gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Influence of stories personally
8.	Identified stories related to the status of Black women in corporations (private industry).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Positive comments about the status b. Negative comments about the status c. Elements influencing the status of Black women in the corporation
9.	Identified first experiences with gendered (everyday) racism in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Impact on individual level b. Impact on organizational level

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 10. | Identified early career stories related to resisting gendered (everyday) racism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Type of action b. Focus of action c. Impact of action d. Covert action e. Overt action |
| 11. | Identified actions against gendered (everyday) racism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Type of action b. Focus of action c. Impact of action d. Covert action e. Overt action |
| 12. | Identified resistance stories and comments aligned to interview questions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nature of action b. Nature of comment c. Focus of action d. Focus of comment e. Impact of action f. Covert action g. Statements with covert elements h. Overt action i. Statements with overt elements |
| 13. | Identified similar behaviors and statements of opposition based on definition of resistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Grouped similar behaviors b. Grouped similar statements |
| 14. | Developed 17 motifs of resistance based on similar behaviors and statements. | N/A |
| 15. | Developed taxonomy of resistance motifs and four areas of focus. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified directionality of the resistance b. Identified who is involved in the resistance c. Identified the outcome of the resistance |
| 16. | Reviewed transcripts holistically to assess commitment to changing corporate discourse regarding Black women. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified transcripts for statements and stories related to enhancing systemic and structural inequities in the organization. This included mentoring and supporting other Black women, challenging unfair HR practices, participating on |

- organizational task teams in response to class action lawsuits, and marketing efforts development of policies and procedures
- b. Identified transcripts for statements and stories in which the storytellers acquiesced to corporate discourse regarding Black women.
 - c. Reviewed transcripts to identify stories and statements in which the storytellers admitted to non-involvement in changing corporate narratives regarding Black women.
 - d. Reviewed post-interview reflections and impressions
-

Integrating Focus Group Content

I also reviewed the focus group transcripts to identify specific reactions to the motifs. Conducting the focus group provided me with the opportunity to permit the learning from the previous interviews to inspire additional thoughts, ideas, and questions regarding resistance. I provide more detail about the integration of the focus group's reactions and the impact of the focus group on my leadership and learning in chapter 6.

Limitations of Methodology: Reliability and Validity

Critics of qualitative forms of inquiry discuss the limited generalizability of naturalistic forms of inquiry (Kvale, 1996; R. Miller & Brewer, 2003; Roberts, 2002). In addition, procedures such as validity and reliability typically associated with instrumentation and measurement in quantitative research may look different and be difficult to incorporate in qualitative research. Principles associated with quantitative research such as validity and reliability and associated with instrumentation are difficult to incorporate in qualitative research. For example, reliability, the ability of research instruments to measure consistently what the instrument is intended to measure is difficult to replicate in biographical inquiry. During a semi-

structured interviewing approach, additional questions may evolve real time during the interview. I began each interview with the same questions; however, the stories of each woman prompted different questions to understand resistance in that moment.

Generalizability is not a goal of qualitative inquiry. The intentions are to identify the unique experiences of each Black woman executive. Each woman is not a representative research sample to identify one universal truth regarding resistance. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) wrote about the difference between quantitative inquiry and portraiture, a form of storytelling that resonates with and relates to the types of stories I sought to elicit in this project. Beginning with a descriptor of quantitative research, they wrote:

Before generalizing, the parameters of the universe are clearly articulated, as is the selection of the sample in an effort to define the relationship between them, and to be able to point to statistically significant differences. By contrast, the portraiture seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it, trusting that the readers will feel identified. (p. 14)

Validity relates to numbers and measures in traditional quantitative research. A sample question regarding validity in quantitative research is: "Is the instrumentation in the study measuring what it is designed to measure?" Kvale (1996) discussed the concept validity more broadly, "in a broader concept, validity pertains to the degree that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate" (p. 238). He stated there are no validity rules in qualitative research. This view of validity provides space for incorporating the requirement of validity into biographical research in a different way.

In biographical research, validity may be achieved through the researcher's accurate observation and documentation of the storyteller's story during the interview. It includes frequently checking the findings of the information disclosed during the interview. Validity involves the researcher questioning his or her personal influence on research outcomes. Validity

also includes sensitive interpretation of the stories of the storyteller and the craftsmanship of the research and the trustworthiness of the researcher (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Additional questions regarding validity in qualitative research are: “What is the value of the study?,” “Do the research protocols support harmless data gathering from the research participants?,” and “To enhance the quality and accuracy of qualitative research outcomes?”

Denzin (1994) suggested that researchers maintain a log to track the time and context in which the stories are told and to document the emotional, physical, and psychological shifts of the narrator as he or she tells the story. It is also recommended that the final transcripts be shared with the narrators for validation and accuracy (R. Miller & Brewer, 2003).

I took several steps to develop a rigorous, meritorious, accurate, and trustworthy research process. First, I conducted a pilot interview with a colleague to test the quality and relevancy of the interview questions to the primary research question. The pilot interview took about an hour. I did not make any major changes to the interview questions based on my colleague’s feedback and the flow of the interview. Post interview, each storyteller interviewee received a copy of the transcript for review and modification if necessary. Overall, the transcripts were accurate. One of the storytellers wanted to add additional comments to the transcript; however, no other notable changes were made. The focus group of subject matter advisors was a sounding board for my research. They confirmed the value of the methodology, provided feedback on the resistance themes, and provided ideas for the practical application of the knowledge obtained from the research. Finally, I documented the research process and lingering thoughts after each interview. I also assessed whether or not there was a need for me to make any changes during the interviews. For example, I knew after the first interview there was a need for me to probe deeper

and to manage the length of time the interviewees had to respond to questions. The highlighted steps strengthened the validity of the study.

Situating the Researcher

Researchers embracing positivistic values highlight the challenge of researchers to achieve a delicate balance between working within the research and being present as a researcher. Some researchers embracing positivistic values may even say it is impossible. Alridge (2003), an interviewer of African-Americans, reported that “White scholars frequently ask how we remain objective and detached from our research and how we avoid ‘contaminating’ our research as African-American scholars” (p. 25). This comment is valid for any researcher conducting quantitative or qualitative research, as all researchers carries preconceived notions about the topic under study prior to conducting the study. However, White researchers interviewing other White participants seldom acknowledge this perceived conflict. Minority researchers who may have been victims of marginalization, discrimination, oppression, and denigration can be most passionate and committed to creating change and destroying inequitable and marginalizing systems (Nelson & Gould, 2005; K. Thomas, Mack, Williams, & Perkins, 1999).

Biographical research supports the presentation of stories based on the interaction between the storyteller and the researcher. The researcher should acknowledge his or her relationship to or influence on the study. Roberts (2002) wrote, “writers have called for researchers to indicate their own relationships to the study—their presence in the research and the influence of social background, for example gender, race, social class, or religion” (p. 13). I acknowledged my position and relatedness to the research and the impossibility of separating myself from what was occurring when studying the resistance strategies of Black women

executives. Achieving a delicate balance between working within the research and being present as a researcher to record new information would be difficult. This could have represented a paradox when recording the stories of resistance Black women leaders. Even though my voice as the researcher was important, it did not overshadow the voice of the storyteller. Even though I brought my perspective to the interview, I ensured my voice and views did not eclipse the voices of the women in this study.

My identity as a Black woman leader working in a corporation and as a scholar created a trusting environment because of sharing similar positions and insiders' understandings. At the same time, my insider's position also warranted extra caution. I acknowledged the potential influence of my race and gender on research outcomes and took every step I could to ensure participants' comments were not diluted with the noise from my own past. I engaged in the research by embracing a spirit of caring for the storytellers and topic of inquiry. This suggested a need for me to come from a place of authenticity at all times and to shower the research process and participants with the utmost dignity and respect. Similarly, exploring the topic of resistance and gendered (everyday) racism could open up old wounds; therefore, established interview protocols for handling sensitivities was paramount.

Chapter IV: Research Findings and Results

Demographics of Storytellers

The 12 storytellers work in the private sector (see Appendix D for a summary of participant demographics) and are ages 39 to 60. Nine of the storytellers are baby boomers (born between 1949 and 1961). Ten of the women were born and raised in the South. The remaining women are from the Midwest, East Coast, and one storyteller is of Caribbean descent but spent the majority of her youth in the South. The educational level of the women varied as well. Two of the women have doctoral degrees in industrial organization psychology; two have Juris Doctor (JD) degrees of which one has a combined JD and Masters of Business Administration (MBA). Another two of the storytellers have MBAs, one has a Masters of Arts, three completed their undergraduate degree, and one graduated from the Air Force Academy.

The storytellers represent the very minute percent of Black women in the upper echelons of private industry. Their titles vary from General Counsel to Senior Manager. The majority of the women have Senior Vice President and Vice President titles. Over half of the women report directly to someone in the executive suite or directly to the CEO. They work in the following departments: legal, marketing, human resources, technology, and operations. The following industries are represented: consumer packaging, telecommunications, media/entertainment, financial services, industrial, and technology. The storytellers have been in their current position between six months and six years. Seven of the executive storytellers have been with their current employer over 10 years. The sizes of the company vary as well; however, nine of the women interviewed work in Fortune 500 companies with revenues between \$3.8 billion and \$98.6 billion dollars (CNNMoney, 2010).

Many of the women were the first, or found themselves as the only, Black female in primary, secondary, and advanced education settings. They were either one of the first to integrate their high school or elementary school, or entered degree programs where they were the only Black female or one of a handful.

Reactions to Participating in the Research

When asked the question “What were your initial thoughts when asked to participate in this study?,” everyone shared their interest in hearing the stories of other Black women executives in the organization and also sharing their stories as a learning opportunity for other Black women working in corporations. Several wanted to ensure the information gleaned from this research is used for the uplift and betterment of other Black women employees trying to find their way to senior levels of management in corporate organizations. The expectation is that the themes from this study are publicly shared so that many groups residing on the margins can learn how to navigate their careers based on the stories of the Black women executives interviewed.

Tracking Storytellers

To invite the reader to become more familiar with the executives beyond a summary of research themes, I share brief profiles, offering a few of my own impressions upon meeting each storyteller. The confidential nature of this study excludes using the real names of each executive storyteller—I have used pseudonyms.

Profile 1: Allyson. Arriving at the office, I am greeted by a strikingly confident and serious young Black woman executive. I am surprised by Allyson’s youthfulness, as she looks too young for someone at her level in the corporation. Allyson gregariously provided great depth and detail about how she got to where she is in the organization starting with her college days. I could tell she was extremely proud of her accomplishments. I quickly thought to myself, “that is

okay . . . she should be.” I felt a little pressure because of her educational background, she probably approaches situations with a quantitative lens. After all, she is an industrial organization psychologist. But the scientific mind and personality I anticipated only crept into the interview every now and then.

Profile 2: Teresa. Based on her title in the organization, I envisioned a majestic, over average height Black woman with a beaming extroverted personality. I am not sure how or why I concocted this image and it really does not matter at this point. Once I checked my assumptions at the door, I saw an elegant, serious, and intense Black woman who left a touching and hugely positive impression on me. As I got to know her, an extremely gracious, caring, and provocative human being emerged. It was a poignant experience to hear a powerful executive express her views on the subject of sister support. Teresa cared a great deal about the lack of support she experienced herself. I left the interview moved by her reliance on her spirituality to make a difference for others.

Profile 3: Katrina. Meeting with Katrina, a quick-witted, brilliant, and business savvy executive brought back memories of the quote “Speak truth to power” (American Friends Service Committee, 1955). Katrina made me question my focus and own sense of courage. I was intrigued to catch a glimpse of how she thinks on a day-to-day basis. It was powerful to see how she adapts to situations, how she thinks through very sensitive and controversial scenarios, and how she utilizes other people within the organization to make positive change for herself or other employees.

Profile 4: Rhonda. Rhonda, a soft spoken, extremely smart, and wise senior manager has had varied experience working in major corporations. During the interview, she related an incident that happened during her career. She was accused of treating someone in the workplace

unfairly several years ago. It was obvious that her memory of the incident had not totally faded. I could feel her pain as she told her story, tinged with White privilege. In the stillness of a hotel suite, she shared her evolution as a leader because of this incident. She imparted her wisdom several times during the interview by communicating the need to know when an organizational system is truly ready for the change that a diverse workforce can bring. Even though it was a dark time in her life, she discovered a new-found strength—a strength that radiated through the hotel suite.

Profile 5: Sonia. Loquacious, spirited, and energetic and sitting in a very bright, comfortable, and warmly decorated room, Sonia was passionate about the need to build gender and race awareness in corporate environments. I could tell she knew her material on how to build an inclusive work culture. Sonia had the courage to tackle and fix inequitable issues dealing with race and gender in the corporation. The fierce energy I felt during the interview resonated in her stories.

Profile 6: Jeanette. Jeanette's bungalow is enchanting and inviting. I am greeted by soothing music and beautiful Afrocentric art on the walls, excited that she is allowing me into her private world for a couple of hours. I feel great care in her answering the interview questions and how she does whatever she can to ensure I am comfortable in her home. Even though it is a lazy Sunday afternoon and Jeanette appears to be in a relaxed and laid back mode, I sense an aggressive executive who knows what she wants in her career. Within the first five minutes of our dialogue, I also gather that she tempers her aggressiveness with patience and tolerance. Her moves are smooth, calculated, and obviously effective.

Profile 7: Carolyn. Carolyn is a VP for an organization that does work for the government. I was interested in meeting with her because I knew she had experienced not only

race and gender-related marginalization, but had also been the victim of disparaging remarks because of having a different sexual orientation. I was glued to her words and impressed that she could remember finite details of each story that she shared, thus painting extraordinary images and contextual nuances of her experiences. I could not help but feel her joy and pain, a woman who has embraced her whole self—regardless of what she heard from others about her identity or how difficult it was for her professionally. Carolyn is a fighter.

Profile 8: Sandra. Sandra has a magnificent view from her high-rise condominium window. She is one of the younger executives who have achieved great career success as a VP for a Fortune 100 company. Wise and very thoughtful when answering my questions, she is also skeptical of how she can contribute to this research. Her experiences with gendered (everyday) racism throughout her career are not as magnified, but she is totally aware that it does exist especially because of a recent personal experience. At the time of the interview, she was transitioning into another job in the organization because of changes in the organizational structure. Sandra provoked me to look at some things about race and gender in the organization a little differently.

Profile 9: Madeline. Madeline, purposeful and talkative, brightened her neutral office with her vivid and descriptive stories about her career. I knew that she was an agent of change after spending a few minutes with her. Her mission is to prepare Black leaders in the organization for the next level, to advocate for them, and to quietly challenge systemic barriers of race. It was refreshing to know that Black cause related trailblazers in this day and age are not a myth. Madeline is crystal clear about what is important to her—helping other Black employees excel in the organization.

Profile 10: Ida. Ida's preference was not to meet in her office, but in the lobby, so we took an elevator ride back down to the ground level. I was a little concerned about privacy and distractions, but quickly acquiesced to her wish. I was particularly interested in her stories because of her status of entering the corporation in the early days of affirmative action. She was one of the first. Ida carved the path for other Black women leaders in the corporation. Ida came across very gentle and with a gracious aura, but at the same time exuded a very tough exterior. She even described herself as an armadillo, because of her thick skin. Ida will speak up when something has gone awry regarding issues pertaining to race and gender. Listening to her, I imagined her as Angela Davis in corporate attire.

Profile 11: Tia. Tia, the youngest of my storytellers, has a different background. She hails from the Caribbean; however she has lived the majority of her life in the United States, growing up as a child in the South. Her mom lived in the United States during the time of Black unrest in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, Tia was an Afro American studies major in college. I must confess that I was a little concerned about the perspective she would bring. However, her Black diaspora roots integrated with North American experiences living in the South and encountering racism brought a unique perspective on the issue of race and gender. She appeared to experience and observe gendered (everyday) racism even more than some of the other storytellers.

Profile 12: Laura. I have known Laura for many years. She is a highly approachable, personable, serious, and strategic business leader who cares passionately about people and the business. With a degree of savvy, she navigates the corporate world of politics with ease and sophistication. But at the same time, I have never known her not to inject raw humor into her life and into the lives of others. When Laura tells her stories, she inserts humor at critical

junctions. She reminds me that we do not have to take things so seriously. She reminds me not to drench myself in serious issues all the time or to look for what is wrong, but to look for what is right. I believe the sequence of the 12 interviews occurred naturally, one interview building off of another. Her words made me reflect upon the other 11 interviews. I can recall many times when the storytellers and I shared a smile or when one of us made a comment that caused us to laugh from the core of our bellies. Laura is the queen—the queen of humor.

Early Memories of Black Women in the Workplace

The majority of the women stated that growing up they did not hear any stories about Black women in the workplace. It was not a topic of discussion in the family or in the community. They recalled observing women working as domestic workers and teachers, but only Sonia relayed memories of Black women working in a corporate environment. Her mother and father worked for a Black-owned insurance company in the South. She believed she had an advantage of understanding corporate life and politics because both of her parents were situated in a corporate environment and because of her parents' corporate circle of friends. Sonia shared:

Well, you know what? It's kind of what I alluded to before. I had no excuses, because my mother worked. She worked in a corporation. She worked around other women who were not—when I think about growing up, they weren't running divisions and departments, but they were pretty important to the company . . . and so that's what I saw.

However, Sonia quickly emphasized that even though her mother worked in a corporation, clear roles and expectations for women were a reality—women did not run divisions or departments in the organization. Furthermore, the women continued to cook and clean their homes, even though they worked. Sonia shared:

Now, the gender thing is a little different, because I do think that even where I grew up, while women worked, they were still expected to do certain roles. They were still expected to cook, and keep kids and do homework after work, and clean and whatever else. So they still had that role identification, but most of them—again, as I was growing, women still cooked and cleaned even though they worked.

Madeline shared the male/female role reversal she experienced with her mother and father and the impact this role reversal had on her:

So we had role reversal in a lot of ways, and after daddy retired, he cooked a lot, and so it was not unusual to walk in my house and see my dad in the kitchen cooking breakfast or dinner, and mama on the front porch, which is where she preferred to be, with a motor that she had taken out of somebody's car, and she was piecing back together to try and get it going. So—and a common scene would be to walk out and see daddy holding the flashlight, and complaining about the grease on his hands—mama's pretty straightforward trash-talking, you know? She just liked the outdoorsy stuff. She went to college, and told her dad that he needed to come pick her up, or she was walking home, because she wanted to help him—help him raise, you know, her nieces, so, I'll give you that to say I never grew up, first of all, with any inclination of thinking—what a woman couldn't do—or race.

Teresa knew that her mother aspired to be an orthodontist, but knew this would not happen because of her race and gender. She reaffirmed that Blacks were limited in the occupational fields they could enter at that time. Both of her parents were educators even though they were interested in other professions. Teresa shared a story about her mom's limited career choices influenced by school guidance counselors:

So I know, you know, looking back that there were racial issues that they were all dealing with. My aunt talks a lot about how we—everybody—my mother's friends—my mother and father's friends that I know are all educators. And it was largely a function, I think, at that time when Blacks were finally getting an education; they kept being steered into becoming a teacher. And my mom would often talk about she wanted to be able to become an orthodontist, and my dad wanted to do—but the counselors at the college was kind of steering everybody toward education. But I didn't know anyone that worked in a corporation. I didn't know any Black women or men that worked in business . . . they were either educators, or they worked at the post office, or they worked on the assembly line at the Ford plant.

Allyson, a member of generation X and one of the younger executives of the 12 women, also stated that her parents did not discuss Black women in the workforce. She knew that she would have to work because she saw mothers and fathers working in her community. However,

even though her parents did not speak of Black women in the workplace she was taught the sky is the limit by her parents. She shared:

No stories, it [working] was the reality; You know, working class families, doing what they had to do to make ends meet, but nothing [messages about Black women in the workplace] that would resonate with me that I can recall and say. Yeah, that message was kind of etched in my brain in terms of how or what it was supposed to be. I will say that from my parents, though, it was always the sky's the limit for you, you know? You can do whatever you want to do. And so that message was from, I can remember that message from day one. I will say this: My mother constantly, and I remember it even when I was five or six years old, she used to always say, "You're a leader not a follower." You're a leader not a follower.

A strong theme of self-efficacy and control of one's career emerged as the executives told their stories. I will discuss this belief in self and high levels of self-confidence later in this chapter.

Jeanette, an executive reporting directly into the CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation also stated that Black women in the workplace were not discussed among family members. She shared that her reality was different because her mom worked in a Black public institution. Finally, Ida's experiences and messages regarding Black women in the workplace were similar to the other storytellers. She conveyed that there was not much discussion regarding Black women in the workplace. She attributed some of this to her mother's traditional role a caretaker of the family and the home. Ida stated:

This is not a subject we discussed and that's because of my age obviously. And I grew up in a very traditional family, so my father worked and my mother did not work. My mother was a stay at home—you know a homemaker and there were four of us so she had—you know she was full-time managing the family and raising the children while my dad worked. So my mother and my sisters even till they went to school didn't talk much about being in the workplace. Most women in my community were either homemakers or teachers. My aunts worked for the government in administrative positions.

Not having discussions about Black women in the workplace in their early lives means that these women were not exposed to a line-of-sight for themselves and their careers, something

to inspire or motivate them to what they could become. Although most of the women did not remember discussing women in the workforce with their parents, they were able to speak about traditional roles for Black women during their childhood. Their observations within the family and community also need to be considered. The dialogue may not have taken place around the dinner table, but they knew Black women held very traditional roles. They learned about Black women in the workplace primarily through observation. However, from a career perspective, their parents pushed them to move beyond restrictive and limiting thoughts about what Black women could be and do. The resounding message for all of these women was to break out of the box of victimization and jump into a new reality—the reality in which they can carve out the career path they want.

Early Memories of Racism

All of the storytellers admitted racism existed and that they had been the victims of racists' behavior or recalled a time when their race contributed to discord in their lives. However, they chose not to reflect on their race or gender as a career or aspiration barrier. Twelve of the executive storytellers eventually knew they had to work harder to get to where they are, but 10 knew nothing other than, "I will ascend in the organization regardless of the barriers placed before me."

Sandra, a VP at a Fortune 500 consumer packaging company and one of the younger executive storytellers, recalled the powerful messages from her father, a Black corporate employee, during her childhood. Her father did not want her to be bitter about what he experienced during his career because of his race:

And so I always had that philosophy growing up, that nothing could stop me, like if I hear, "No," figure out how. And so I never felt there was a race barrier, or a gender barrier—because I always thought that I could do anything, because he instilled that in

us, and then I think also the fact that he didn't really bring all his bitter and horrible stories home, we didn't have that festering in us.

Katrina knew that racism also existed, but knew that her parents shielded her from negative experiences related to racism. Race was not discussed early on because she went to an all Black elementary and high school. She admitted learning early in her life to stay away from White people. Katrina recalled early messages about racism. Her parents sent subliminal messages about race. In addition, segregation in the South shaped and influenced her thoughts about racism:

I never knew that there was, there were issues that my parents had protected me from. I never paid any attention to them. I mean, I, we were very cautious around White people, I knew that, and I knew you had to be cautious around White people, but I didn't really—and I guess you intuitively know, but you don't really focus on it. It wasn't a focus point, you know? I knew that, and I had an incident with my mother in a grocery store with White people, and so for the most part, you know, I didn't—and we just kind of stayed away from each other. I mean, we were segregated then, you know.

Katrina learned early she had to be conscious around White people from her parents and from living in an environment of segregation. This same thought carried over into her career as an executive. She learned that White people “didn't really play in your reality and you and you didn't play in theirs.”

Rhonda, a Black leader with over 25 years of experience in financial services, also echoed that her parents tried to protect her from racism when she was a child growing up in the South. She also stated racism was not always the focus of her parents:

So my parents taught power through understanding, and they tried to make sure that we saw the best aspects of life in our exposure of all the good and the best, and they sheltered us from a lot of the negativity—but it happened all around us. It happened all around us. I don't remember deliberate conversation about (racism)—it was just our life. I just remember the observation of—so my learning is more about the experience and the observation rather than direct conversations of what we can't do, even more of what we could do and how we would do that. Learning about racism came from observation and experience versus conversation.

Madeline recognized later in her life that she experienced racism as a child, but did not name it as such. She attributed a lack of focus on race to her mother's racial identity. Her mothers' mother was White and her father was Black:

So, for example, well, when we—they put us into the school to integrate the schools, the White kids would like run the merry-go-round real fast, so we couldn't get on, you know? And it took me later, I went, "You know, they were just being, you know"—"It was just some mean kids, but the biggest revelation—and I swear to you I didn't figure this out till I was a grown woman working. I was in Durham, North Carolina at some conference, and sitting around with a few guys talking. And they were talking about back in the day, and how bad things were, and—the fact that when we'd travel, and you couldn't stop at the bathrooms, so you'd have something in the car, you know, so the kids could use the bathroom, and they'd always pack a chicken, and I went, "Is that why we did that, because . . ." I said, "Son of a bitch." I wouldn't—[laughter]—I was like, "So, we didn't have—we couldn't stop at a bathroom, and use it, or you couldn't stop, and get something to eat?"

Carolyn, an established technology executive also recalled the protectiveness and beliefs of her parents regarding racism and the influence of their actions on her:

I have to be honest. I don't think we ever really had conversations about what I wanted to do, because both of my parents were kind of—I won't say my mother as much as my dad, but I think they were always kind of worried about—worried for me and my brother about what was going to happen to us. I think they had a lot of fear that, and I also think that they thought because of being Black, that you don't want to get your hopes set too high, and you don't want to go too far out, because, because all they knew was what was around them. So anything beyond that, you know, they were kind of cautious about, and they didn't give me a lot of instruction or guidance, because they had no frame of reference, and I think they worried about what would happen once we got out there.

Early Messages Regarding High Performance

A constant theme throughout the executives' stories was a continuous and repeated message they heard growing up. They knew they had to work harder to experience the success they desired in their careers. The storytellers also conveyed high levels of self-confidence and belief in themselves. A high level of self-efficacy drove them to work harder and to ascend the proverbial ladder of success in the corporation. Laura, an HR executive with 25 years of experience in the field shared what she heard growing up as a Black female in the South:

I think that the one common thread, or comment that I heard from everybody is—I don't know if it was being a Black woman, as much as it is just being Black, and always remember that you've got to work twice as hard, and be twice as good, because you're not going to get that extra break that they're going to get. And unfortunately that's true. I don't know that that has changed a whole lot.

Sandra had the same thoughts regarding the messages she heard to override negative behaviors and experiences related to gendered (everyday) racism:

Now, I do think that there was an idea of being mindful of who you are, and/or the message—you always have to be better, or you always have to be above reproach, because you don't have—you're not afforded the same—the same luxuries around benefit of the doubt.

Allyson vocalized her thoughts of achievement in the organization. As noted earlier, her parents taught her the sky is the limit. She experienced working-class families doing what they had to do to live:

You know, working class families, doing what they had to do to make ends meet, but nothing that would resonate with me that I can recall and say. Yeah, that message was kind of etched in my brain in terms of how or what it was supposed to be.

Early Experiences With Gendered (Everyday) Racism

Several of the women recalled experiences where they encountered racism as children, in elementary and high school, or as young professionals. Some of the acts were overt and others were subtle. Jeanette remembered a story when she was in school. She was called a derogatory name:

I was the only Black student in my class. I don't know. We were playing basketball with a couple of girls and I stole the basketball, which is what you're supposed to do, from this girl and she just turned around and she called me a little Black Sambo nigger, Black Sambo nigger you know?

Katrina also dealt with blatant gendered (everyday) racism during her freshman year in college. The incident moved her to a place of rage. It reminded her of a time when she was a child and a little White girl spat on her mother in the department store. Katrina communicated

with intensity her earliest memory of personally experiencing racism and realizing she had been protected from racism during her youth:

Although I knew it wasn't going to be fair, I didn't know the odds would be stacked against me, right? I had a student spit on me, or spit at me, and the rage that I felt was as much from remembering what happened to my mother, as it was from what that student just did to me. That's not something I'm ever going to forget. . . . She called me a nigger.

The interviews revealed that most of the Black women executives did not hear stories about Black women in the workplace. Even though they knew that racism existed, their parents did not have deep conversations with them about racism. The women received messages from their parents that they had to work harder in their lives and that they could be what ever they wanted to be. All of the storytellers shared moments when they demonstrated high levels of self-assurance during their career.

State of Black Women Leaders in the Workplace

All 12 storytellers stated there are not enough Black women executives in the corporation (private industry). The lack of critical mass affects Black women in the organization, from many angles. First, Black women do not have Black women role models. They do not see the line of sight to executive levels of management in the organization. Secondly, Black women live in isolation feeling misunderstood and alienated from the informal social network. A lack of critical mass isolates Black women executives from other Black women in the organization because Black women will not advocate for other Black women for fear of retribution. The storytellers discussed these areas.

Too Few Black Women Executives in Corporate Organizations

Allyson, a VP in talent management, spoke about the lack of Black women managers in the corporation:

There has been progress, but there is a lot more progress needed. The more women in decision-making positions, the better the progress. The more of us that enter into leadership roles, the more of us that should be making the way for others to make it into their leadership roles, and so I look at it as—as we more effectively become decision makers, then I think we can make more diverse selections of visions, so that you have more and more representation across organizations.

Teresa agreed with Allyson's observations, "it's just—they're just so few, it's just kind of scary." She took her observations a step further by expressing the impact this small number has on the relationship Black women leaders have with each other. She continued:

And if there are [Black women executives], I don't think that there's a lot of interaction at that level. They kind of keep to themselves, and they're very protective, and everybody has kind of approached it from a different way. Some people are going to hang with the guys, and be very much one of them, and not kind of relate to other females, and other minorities, and then some are very much engaged in pushing back, and pulling people through it.

The theme of Black women having to work harder to achieve success was brought up when another interviewee communicated her thoughts on the state of Black women leaders in the organization. Katrina's comments even addressed the assimilation and adjustment that Black women face to gain acceptance in the corporate environment. She shared the sentiment that Black women are not appropriately represented at higher levels in the organizations:

Well, (A), there are not enough of us, not enough women, period, but certainly not enough Black women. And the Black women that have gotten there have—ha, have better than earned it; they've worked harder than anybody in the whole corporation to get there. They've had to prove themselves time and time again. And so, I look at like an Ursula Burns, for instance—who has maintained who she is this entire time, and she's a very real, down-to-earth person. And then I look at others, and have to think, no, not so much, you know? They're had to adjust who they are to the environment. And I don't blame them for it; I mean, you know, that's what they did to survive, and that's what they did to get ahead, and I don't take anything away from them, because I still know they worked harder than anybody else; they worked twice as hard as anybody else there, right?

Laura agreed with Katrina's, Teresa's, and Allyson's comments about the minimal number of Black women executives in private industry. She further commented that the support provided to Black women leaders in the organization should not reside only with Black

executives in HR. She articulated the need for others in the organization to assume the responsibility of supporting Black women's rise to executive leadership levels in the organization. Laura also believed that there are qualified Black women in the organization:

I think I'd like to see more authentic giving back. It's just not the HR girl's job to do it, and I don't do it because I'm an HR person. I would hope that I would do it, regardless of what role I was in. So, I'd like to see more of that reaching and building that next tier, that next generation of Black female leaders, but I will tell you I like what I see in terms of the people are sharp, they're qualified, they're prepared, they can hold their own with anybody out there.

Lack of Support of Each Other

Similar to the theme of Black women not receiving support from others in the organization, several of the women spoke of the lack of support Black women receive from each other in corporations. Tia shared a story about exiting a Fortune 100 organization because her contracting work was completed. She attempted to build a relationship with two prominent Black women with similar backgrounds to hers before leaving the organization. Tia shared they were not always responsive to her action. One Black women executive even had a Ph.D. in the same field as Tia:

I think there's not that many of us. And, and we, we still, I think, get a very bad rap, and I don't know that we're always helpful to each other. There were some very prominent African-American women in high-level positions; immediately, I like to network with people, and being the new person and then also one of them was a soro of mine. So, I just wanted to talk to them. I reached out to a few. One or two of them, one got back to me, and one didn't. Okay, okay. And then the one that got back to me, she was very much wrapped up in herself.

Madeline not only commented on Black women not advocating for other Black women but also introduced the concept of the influence of organizational culture on the identity of Black women:

Once Black women reach a certain level in the organization, they forget who they are. They don't advocate for other Black women. Well, generally, I think there's too few, and too few beyond that, so you've got too few to start with, and of the ones that are there, I

think there were still—this is men and women, frankly, that once they reach a certain level they feel they have to act safe, so they don't advocate; they don't reach back; they don't help the cause, they lose their identity in my opinion.

Katrina also introduced the constructs of identity and assimilation regarding Black women executives. She talked about the balancing act of Black women executives securing sponsors and mentors with maintaining their identity:

[Black women] have to be smart, but holding on to who you are and at the same time allow someone more powerful than you to bring you along. So you have to be smart, you have to, without assimilating, because you really don't want to give up yourself—but you have to fit in and you have to then ingratiate yourself to somebody powerful, so that they bring you along with them. Now, can I bring Black younger sisters along? Yeah, I can and I do. But at the end of the day, I still have to have these people who believe in me and who can open the door and make the way. It's not just because of what I've done and who I am.

Black Women Navigating in Corporate Organizations

According to Rhonda, Black women leaders continue to navigate through corporate landmines related to racial bias, even though Black women in the corporation have made progress. Black women have to spend time in the corporation avoiding traps and politics related to race. They continue to live in isolation. In addition, if Black women are at executive levels, they are usually in staff roles:

I'd still say, being at the top of the house or in significant leadership roles in corporations is still an isolating experience. One has to look very hard to have a community of people or resources that are safe to talk to, to have shared experiences with, because most of the time, we're having to spend being "on," being knowledgeable, aware, sensitive to the traps, understanding the nuance of politics, and recognizing that without a mentor or without a sponsor, even today, I don't think it's safe in the fullest sense of the word.

Rhonda described the word "safe" as being conservative and conforming to expectations. Black women have to look and speak in a way that fits in with the majority culture. While discussing the state of Black women leaders in the organization, several of the women discussed the acceptance or affinity that White male corporate leaders have toward White women in the

organization and the impact on Black women. Cynthia commented on this relationship between White men and White women:

White women and men look for a certain kind of person to pull up—someone they can associate themselves with. Because seriously, you know as well as I do, that okay, Affirmative Action really helped White women, okay, and the White men felt more comfortable bringing people in that looked like their wives and their mothers and their sisters, and taking them through the ranks than they did bringing Black women up. And that really is the truth.

In her discussion about the misunderstanding of Black women, Sandra also spoke of the relationship between White men and White women and provided input on the relationship between White men and Black men. She feels that Black and White men share a common bond because they are both men:

And really, White men don't know—my assumption is White men don't really know what to do with Black women. You know? They know what to do with Black men, because they're men, you know? And they have their own assumptions, and insecurities, and perceptions about Black men. They know fundamentally you're a man, so they kind of know that. And White women, clearly, because that's who they're married to, that's their daughters, that's their moms.

Overall there was resounding agreement that Black women are underrepresented and misunderstood. Contrarily, several of the executives vocalized the powerful stance that Black women have in corporate organizations. Black women demonstrate courage and strength. Allyson described Black women as “a force to be reckoned with.” Jeanette also believed that Black women executives are strong. She spoke of what that contributes to their success in private industry:

For those who have made it, what do they have in common? We are strong. No one gets us. And I think that those of us who are there [pause] probably have a lot in common that we may or may not realize. And, and [pause] it would be interesting sort of to see what that is. I think we've all had to put up with you know a lot of crap [pause] probably not so much—some of it may be based on being Black, but some of it based on being a woman.

The storytellers agreed that there are too few Black women managers in

corporate organizations. There was also consensus that Black women do not only receive support from the majority population in the organization, but that Black women do not always support each other. There is obviously more work to do in this area by research scholars and leaders in corporate organizations. I will discuss this topic in more detail in chapter 6.

Career Experiences With Gendered (Everyday) Racism

All of the women shared stories of experiencing gendered (everyday) racism early in their careers, some acts blatant and overt, and other acts subtle. I discuss subtle and overt experiences in more detail below.

Blatant gendered (everyday) racism. Allyson received a job offer for an internship position immediately after she was interviewed. Her excitement about the offer was diffused after she learned from another colleague that one of her college peers stated that she received the job because she was Black.

Carolyn experienced an offensive encounter with a White male senior officer needing work-related information. He did not think she was a subject matter expert in the area of information in which he needed. In fact, according to Carolyn, it took a White male to convince the senior officer that Carolyn was in fact an air analyst and could answer his questions:

There was this colonel who wanted an air analyst to come up and talk to him about something that had gone on, that was continuing to go on with the war. And so, my boss, without his say, said, “Hey, Carolyn, go up there and talk to this colonel, see what he wants. I go, “Hi, Sir. I’m Carolyn, and I understand that you have an issue about—were talking about Iraq and the air.” And he goes, he goes, “Well, I asked for an air analyst.” And I said, “Well, sir, I am an air analyst.” And he goes, “Well, I’m looking—I want an air analyst.” And I go, “Sir, I am a air analyst.” He goes, “Well, I’m, I’m, I’m really looking for a air analyst,” and I said, “Sir,” I said, “Tell you what,” I said, “Let me go call my boss.” So I call my boss. I said, “This colonel doesn’t believe that I’m an air analyst,” and I said, “So, you want to come up here and talk to him? “ So he walked in, so the colonel says, “So, are you the air analyst?” And he says, “No, sir.” He goes, “If you want to talk to an air analyst, you need to talk to her.”

Jeanette reminisced about a time when she was a young attorney at a law firm. A client assumed she was an administrative assistant when she walked into a meeting:

So, you know probably the first time I remember it was when I walked into a meeting as a young lawyer and the client that was in the meeting asked me to go get his coffee or something. I mean you know he thought that I was . . . coming in to serve him. So. I would say, that's the first thing I remember.

One storyteller shared a story about an experience she had as an interviewee for a job. The interviewer assumed that people with her ethnic background did not pursue advanced degree. She was shocked by his assumption and his behavior in the interview. She was even more concerned because the interviewer's role in the organization is to develop an inclusive workplace culture.

Katrina and Jeanette shared stories of when they encountered resistance from their direct reports because of what they perceived as gendered (everyday) racism. As a young woman and recent graduate, Katrina assumed the role of leading a summer youth program. Katrina stated the White supporters and employees of the program had a problem with her because she was young and Black. This was her first memory of experiencing racism in the workplace:

The people that supported this operation, excuse me—I don't think they were ready for a young person, (A), and a young Black person, (B), to be the person that was kind of running the program. But I mean, I met a lot of . . . seriously, you're not the person that I'm supposed to report to, to get this done, right? Because you know—so I had to deal with older, and people, White people, and resistant White people to get the work done.

Jeanette's story regarding resistance from direct reports occurred later in her career. She was asked to lead an additional major division in the organization as an executive. Two White male executives operating in the new division became Jeanette's direct reports. She talked about the resistance she encountered, "when my manager asked me to oversee them and they learned about it, that was not a pretty picture. Oh, they undermined me at every turn. They were just out and out rude."

Ida also spoke of experiencing blatant everyday racist behaviors. She tried to communicate her encounters with gendered (everyday) racism to her boss, a White male, with whom she had a close relationship. He did not believe that she experienced some form of marginalization or discrimination everyday. She decided to prove to him what she experiences on day-to-day basis:

“You can just ride with me any day you want and I will guarantee you that in a course of one day I will be discriminated against.” He says, “Oh, that’s not possible.” “Yes it is.” We went to a company to talk to them about a sales opportunity because they had you know, so I had taken—we go in and there is a lady and a man at a desk and then he and I walk in and we introduce ourselves and it became very clear that they were not going to shake my hand and neither were they going to ask me to have a seat. So my branch, so they said to my branch manager, his name was John, “John have a seat.” And they looked at me like I wasn’t even there.

Sonia and Katrina were victims of inappropriate comments about their race from their managers. Sonia explained an encounter she had with her manager:

I remember being at work, it probably was 9:00 at night, doing something really ridiculously crazy, and I said something just kind of out of my own frustration, like “I cannot believe that you expect me to do this.” This was something that his assistant should have been doing. And he said to me, “I expect you to work harder because you’re Black.”

Katrina’s story is very compelling. It is a blatant example of gendered (everyday) racism. She shared a specific experience that occurred in the early 1990s:

I was preparing business plans for us to deliver, and we were going up to the business plan meeting. Now, we didn’t control the meetings. We were coming there to do our plans and the gentleman that actually controlled the meetings was another Black guy, and the way it’s set up, the finance people sit together, so I’m coming in, and he was a finance person, so we’re sitting together . . . well, my, the senior vice president that I worked for came in, and called me out, as he walked in the room. And he said, “You’ve got to move.” And I said, “What?” He said, “You have to move. I can’t have two Black people sitting together.” Yeah. These were White people. We were the only two Black people in the room. Right. He says, “I can’t have two Black people sitting together.” I go, “You’ve got to be kidding me. It’s White people, you know?” And he said, and he screamed at me out in the open, finally. He said, “Damn it, I said move! Just move.”

Subtle gendered (everyday) racism. Allyson shared an example of when her credibility was doubted in a work-related situation. The incident occurred when she was presenting as an analyst to a group of senior-level leaders in a Fortune 100 organization:

At that time I had a Ph.D., fully graduated. I was a senior analyst. There was a room of maybe 15 senior leaders, and I was walking them through the process and how it would be built, what it is, and you know, what it means to measure certain behaviors when you're trying to predict future performance, and what that looks like, and what kinds of exercises we can use for their jobs, and one woman, I remember her vividly. She raises her hand, and she says, "Have you gotten a, have you gotten a contractor or a firm or someone, you know, to look at this, and validate this process? I mean, you know, someone that's an IO psychologist? Before I could even—I giggled, of course, to myself, but before I could get it out and the HR vice president at that time of that business unit happened to be an African-American male, so he didn't even let me get it to my lips. He was like, "Ah, she is an IO psychologist."

Sonia shared subtle acts of racism when she was a store buyer. This situation occurred earlier in her retail career:

With the Black schools, where the competition looked like you, it wasn't about the subtle messages or the not having access to information and to powerful people. That wasn't my reality, until corporate America. I mean, I just remember my first job out of undergraduate school with the retail chain and watching how a lot of the young yuppie White women got really peachy assignments, like they would get to go with a senior buyer to New York. . . . But I was assigned to a buyer who used her assistant buyers for things like inventory and stocking clothes and that kind of stuff.

Carolyn communicated that it was assumed several times during her military career that she was not an officer. For example, many times subordinate army personnel did not salute her because they did not perceive her as an army officer. Several of the storytellers spoke of inequality in human resources related processes and about the subtle everyday racist behaviors that manifests in meeting through nonverbal communication such as minimal eye contact and the dismissal of ideas by White colleagues. Rhonda remembered her first job working in a manufacturing plant. She spoke of the support and accolades she received from other Black

employees in the plant. Because she was in a professional role, Black employees in the plant felt a source of pride. However, she also experienced subtle day-to-day racist behaviors:

I don't remember a specific incident. I think more of the environment, because my first job was in the manufacturing plant, in HR in the manufacturing plant in [city], because it was largely manufacturing. There was development, but it was a product plant. And I think in that environment, where you're set up to be a professional, I can remember just the pride of a Black woman's presenting a topic, of people meeting me, and discovering that I was Black. . . . There were just the small slights you encounter, being with White men who were not looking you in the eye, or being dismissed in conversations, having to repeat, or someone else saying what you said. All those things that are classic have occurred innumerable times.

Rhonda also spoke of other subtle racist acts that influenced her as a leader. She spoke of the inability to self-correct her behavior because she did not receive constructive feedback from her White manager regarding her performance:

Here's the thing that I feel and I look back on and I do remember, and it was the first time my HR leader said, "We changed your executive resources potential. We're lowering your potential. We aren't seeing you as being a likely head of HR." Like I hadn't seen myself being a likely head of HR either [laughter]. And here's some of the reasons why. I was 15, 16 years into my career, so I think for me, and I think for people of Color, where we are discriminated against is in the receipt of feedback given the receipt of constructive developmental coaching in a timely, direct way that we can respond to. Instead, there are discussions and ideas formed and shaped that we had no awareness of, and then it comes. It comes. It's not too late to be actionable, but you also know that it didn't just materialize in that moment, 14 or 15 years into your career.

All of the storytellers have experienced some level of gendered (everyday) racism during their careers. Gendered (everyday) racism occurred as blatant and subtle acts. Subtle acts included the storytellers not being viewed as a credible source by work colleagues and experiencing subtle acts of racism on a day-to-day basis during meetings and interactions with work colleagues. All of the Black women executives acknowledged that gendered (everyday) racism exists and is entrenched in the fabric of the corporate environment.

Gender Versus Race

Very few of the executives acknowledged the issue of gender in their stories. When asked to discuss how gender and race were discussed growing up, none of them mentioned gender discrimination. Several of them discussed the role of women, but the discussion did not include negative stories that they, their mothers, or sisters experienced because of their gender. Race, on the other hand, was highly correlated with stories of discrimination. There were a few exceptions to this pattern of silence on gender. For example, Teresa told a story about an incident that happened earlier in her career at a law firm:

I'll give you a couple of examples, like, when I was—and this is more sexism—when I was a first, when I was an attorney, the second law firm that I worked for didn't have a maternity policy, and I didn't—I hadn't had any kids yet, and wasn't pregnant, and wasn't thinking about it. There were three women in this law firm of about 67 people, so we all got together, and said, "Hey, let's try to get them to get a maternity leave policy before any of us get pregnant, so we'll know what—you know, we need to be able to plan." . . . But it was like they just didn't want to be bothered with a maternity policy. We just want to know what to expect, so that we can plan accordingly. So, we pushed it through, and they eventually came back with a maternity leave policy, but it was like, "Why are you all bringing this up? Why do we have to deal with it?"

Ida, a 60-year old executive also shared a story specifically related to her gender. Ida discovered that her compensation was less than that of a White male counterpart, even though she was more effective in her role than he was. In addition, she was assuming his job responsibilities at the time she discovered this inequity. Her manager responded to her concerns with a blatant sexist comment. She shared the conversation she had with her manager upon discovering the discrepancy:

So it was just kind of a strange thing and then there was another guy that was doing the same job that I was doing so it was split and then the guy left and then I had all of it. So it just so happened that my boss was on one of these long trips and he had left me in charge so he left all the files open and so I looked in the files because they were open! And as I did the guy who I was working with, his salary was in there. He is a White male. Okay. That's fine. And so I looked at the salary and I am thinking well, I should be making more because I am more effective and now I am taking on his job and mine.

So when he came back I confronted him. I just told him. I said, “I am just going to be straight up.” And he said to me, “Yes, but he’s a man and he needs to make more because he’s supporting his family.” I almost fell out of my chair [laughter]. He said that to me. I got right up, went straight to the HR office and I said, “You all have a problem and this is my recommendation on how you are going to fix it.”

Madeline provided a very different example of discrimination or possible marginalization related to gender roles. Madeline voiced her concern about being marginalized because of her weight. Her story may highlight the layers of complexity regarding gender related issues and images.

Being obese is not cool in a lot of circles either, because you know, people look at it for whatever way, you know they do—you know, they think you ought to have more self-care and control. So, for whatever people work into it, you know, but you’ll find like a lot of the guys that, the White guys usually marry, usually a stay-at-home wife, or you know, not in a demanding career like theirs.

Carolyn, an executive in a technology related industry and a lesbian, provided several stories regarding not only her race but her sexual orientation:

Because I knew that there were times when, in my old job, that I actually had customers who said, “Well, I don’t want to work with Cynthia, because she’s gay. She looks gay.” Yeah, I had a customer. She actually, luckily, she got fired for sexual harassment. But this woman actually said, she was a political appointee—that she did not want to work with me, because I look gay. Now she didn’t know I was gay, but because I looked gay, she didn’t want to work with me.

However, even though she met resistance because of her sexual orientation she identified more with being Black than with being a woman and even as being gay:

More about race than gender, because I grew up in one of those households where my dad kind of ruled the roost, and my mother was, even though I think my mother was a far smarter and stronger person than my dad, he kind of ruled with a heavy fist, you know. So she brought dinner to the table and all that kind of junk. And he was upset when she even worked. But I would say in our house, and that may be why I identify being more Black than being female, is the fact that everything was really more about race, and about White people versus—I mean, we talked about White people all the time, whereas I’m sure White people never talked about Black people hardly. The stories of these women indicate the multiple identities of Black women. Even though sexual orientation and physical image are not the focus of this study, additional identities should add to the complexity of their experiences.

Seventeen Motifs of Resistance

As the women told their stories, their acts to resistance to race and gender discrimination emerged. A total of 17 motifs of resistance emerged from 253 stories or comments about resistance. The focus of resistance varied depending on the circumstances. A summary description of resistance motifs are listed below:

Summary Description of Resistance Motifs

1. **Advocating:** Supporting and promoting Black women and other Black employees.
2. **Coaching and educating others:** Coaching Black women on how to deal with issues related to gendered (everyday) racism in the organization. Enhancing colleagues' understanding of and/or their ability to tackle issues related to gendered (everyday) racism.
3. **Confronting for self:** Openly challenging issues related to gendered (everyday) racism.
4. **Confronting for others:** On issues related to gendered (everyday) racism.
5. **Performing:** Focusing on delivery and quality results.
6. **Promoting and creating identity:** Demonstrating acts relating to personal identity, image, and self-efficacy.
7. **Memorializing and emulating others:** Remembering those who paved the path for contemporary Black women leaders and enacting behaviors from role models.
8. **Using positional power:** Using role and level to effect organizational change.
9. **Practicing:** Developing expertise in addressing race/gender issues based on past experiences.

10. Protecting: Protecting other Black women in the organization from gendered (everyday) racism.
11. Reconstructing or reshaping reality: Bi-culturalism immunity to gendered (everyday) racism.
12. Relating: Developing supportive relationships (sponsors, mentors, peers, sisterhood, and colleagues).
13. Self-advocating: Promoting self for advancement.
14. Leading servantly: Humbling self to help other Black women and men in the organization regardless of consequences.
15. Spiritualizing: Relying on faith, belief, and purpose as affirmation of their current status and state in the organization and for their ability dismiss or diminish gendered (everyday) racist barriers.
16. Strategizing: Being tactical, navigating, plotting, and planful to get what you want in the organization and to circumvent gendered (everyday) racism.
17. Structure/system/culture: Changing policy, procedures, and introducing or creating organizational initiatives related to race, culture, gender, and ethnicity.

Four Foci of Resistance

I learned during the focus group the need to classify the 17 motifs of resistance under larger categories, but at the same time, present the data in a schema that would be easy to understand. The classifications would also provide another layer of understanding regarding the direction, focus, and influence of the resistance strategies of the Black women executives. I found during the literature review process that several researchers developed classifications and taxonomies to classify and deconstruct research on resistance (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996;

R. Thomas & Davies, 2005b). I discuss the alignment of my research findings with the

R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) and Holmer-Nadesan (1996) research on resistance in chapter 5.

The resistance focuses/classifications are:

1. Acts of resistance that are external to the storyteller. These are acts in which the storyteller's focus was on the interest of another employee in the organization. They are labeled outward acts. This category includes four career life histories of resistance motifs: advocating for others, coaching, educating, confronting for others, and protecting.
2. Acts of resistance that are internal to the storyteller. These are acts in which the storyteller's focus is on their own immediate interest. They are labeled inward acts. This category includes eight career life histories of resistance motifs: confronting for self, performing, promoting and creating identity, practicing, reconstructing or reshaping reality, relating, self-advocating, and strategizing.
3. Acts of resistance that are faith based, spiritual in nature, or resistance related to past memories regarding others. The focus is on trans-momentary acts of resistance. This classification includes three career life histories of resistance motifs: emulating and memorializing others, leading servantly, and spiritualizing.
4. Acts of resistance that focus on and influence corporate structure. This category includes two career life histories of resistance motifs: influencing infrastructure and using positional power.

Each focus and motif of resistance is described in greater detail in each individual section and in Appendix E. Table 4.1 aligns the 17 resistance motifs with each focus area and highlights the frequency of stories related to each motif:

Table 4.1

Focus, Type, and Frequency of Resistance

Focus of Resistance	Motifs of Resistance	Frequency
External Focus	Advocating for others	8%
	Confronting for others	7%
	Coaching and Educating	4%
	Protecting	1%
	(4)	
Internal Focus	Strategizing	18%
	Relating	17%
	Performing	8%
	Reconstructing or Reshaping Reality	7%
	Confronting for Self	7%
	Promoting and Creating Identity	6%
	Advocating for Self	3%
	Practicing	1%
	(8)	
Trans-momental Focus	Leading Servantly	2%
	Spiritualizing	2%
	Memorializing/Emulating	1%
	(3)	
Organizational Infrastructure Focus	Influencing Organizational Structure/ Using Positional Power	5%
		2%
	(2)	
	17 TOTAL	

I acknowledge there is some overlap of the motifs. I could have collapsed the number of resistance strategies in to fewer motifs. Presenting my research to the focus group also provided me with the opportunity to gather feedback on the thematic categorization of the Black women executives' stories and their statements of resistance. For example, Roberts, a member of the

focus group of scholars and advisors, perceived a similarity between the motifs creating and maintaining identity and emulating others. I agree with the overlap, but it was important for me to highlight the findings in the purest form possible, even though the interpretation of the data would to some degree include possible uncontrolled subjectivities as the researcher. Roberts' reaction to the motifs stressed the need for me to be able to articulate the differences between the various motifs. Her reaction also provoked me to be mindful of interpreting the data. To preserve the purity of the women's stories, I decided to embrace the themes emerging initially during the content analysis. I also acknowledge that I could have potentially created more motifs of resistance based on the stories of the storytellers if more time was devoted to interviews and if there was larger sample of storytellers.

Top 10 Motifs of Resistance

Before discussing the four areas of focus to include the motifs of resistance, the top 10 motifs of resistance are highlighted below. The majority of the stories or comments of resistance fall into these 10 motifs. The top seven are strategizing (18%), relating (17%), performing (8%), advocating for others (8%), reconstructing reality (7%), confronting for self (7%), and confronting for others (7%). The remaining seven are maintaining and promoting identity (6%), influencing organizational infrastructure (5%), coaching and educating (4%), advocating for self (3%), using positional power (2%), spiritualizing (2%), and leading servantly (2%). The remaining motifs out of the 17 motifs are memorializing and emulating others (1%), practicing (1%), and protecting (1%).

External motifs. Table 4.2 highlights motifs with an external focus. As discussed in the previous section, several external acts of resistance were employed more than others. I discuss each motif in this section. I also provide examples.

Table 4.2

External Resistance Motifs

Advocating for Others	8%
Confronting for Others	7%
Coaching and Educating	4%
Protecting	1%

Advocating for others. The storytellers shared 19 of 253 stories or comments of resistance related to advocating for Black women and other marginalized groups in the organization. Carolyn provided an example of advocating for others in the organization:

And so, she came over and she became—she started out as just my business manager, okay, and then after she'd been there for a while, I said to myself, "You know, this young lady is really smart." I brought her to all of my meetings, the GM got to know her, everybody—and I would always say, and this is what I always do with anybody who I want to make sure that people know, but in particular with my African-American people, I always use their name, whenever I'm, not, even when they're not in the room.

Carolyn continued to tell a story about the extra steps she took to try hire a young Black female into her organization with a glitch in her employment history:

And so what I did was, I said, well, you know what, I'm going to take this one step further, because, you know, it's easy just to blow off this little Black kid. So I went back to HR, and I made them go back and check the records, and everything.

Ida told a similar story to Carolyn's about advocating and looking for someone to replace her after she was promoted:

I got promoted, and I ran a national sales force, and then I was moving on, but I was in my mind I think, you know, we're going to lose ground if I don't make sure that there's an African-American that replaces me, so I look around and say, "Who is it? And I need to start getting them in condition," and I got this sister conditioned to take my place.

Several of the storytellers adopted the mindset that part of their role is to advocate for other Black women in the organization. Madeline admitted there were times she advocated for others and it did not always turn out right. However, given unfortunate outcomes at time,

Madeline continues with her commitment to advocating for other African-Americans in general.

This advocacy occurs not only in the corporation, but also outside of the corporation where she has built a strong brand for helping others with career management and development:

But I'm, but I am very forthright about representing and advocating, so I try to—for example, I try to make sure that all of the African-Americans I know, I try to mentor and put them in play for positions, not just, you know I'm not afraid to say, you know, "I want you to take a look at Cheryl. I think you'd really like her, and the reason I think you'd like her." In order for me to do it, I've got to, I know I've got to push a little harder, because there's not this natural tendency of whoever I'm trying to pitch him with. But I see, I see a lot of people that will pick—they expect, just like the majority population does—expect Black people to be perfect for a position, before they'll advocate for it.

Carolyn communicated her acts of resistance are not always overt in nature. At times, she takes a more silent route of advocacy for other Black employees in the company:

I don't think it was always necessarily a very overt resistance, meaning that I would say something, but I think the way that I've always resisted it is, is that I've always been very cognizant of what the other Black folk around me were experiencing or doing, and if I had an opportunity to help them and to make sure that things were not, and to give them a little bit of a clue as to what they're doing wrong, even when I may have been even a peer of someone, you know, I would just pull a person aside and say, "Hey, you know, this isn't working. Let me tell you why. You need to do X, Y, & Z with this person."

Advocating for others primarily includes resistance actions that the storytellers took to promote other Black women and marginalized groups in the organization. Even though a theme from the storytellers is the need for Black women to support each other in the workplace, the stories highlighted in the research show that the majority of the women interviewed were committed to helping other Black women advance their roles or achieve employment in the organization.

Confronting for others. Related to advocating for others is directly confronting gendered (everyday) racism to help other Black women in the organization. The women shared 34 stories that included confrontational behavior. In some scenarios, they confronted gendered

(everyday) racism for themselves (inward) and in other cases for others (outward). Initially, I created one confrontation motif of resistance. However, I realized very quickly that confrontation should be separated into two categories. At times the women displayed confrontational acts of resistance for themselves and at other times they displayed confrontational acts of resistance for others. I also recognized that there could be some overlap between advocating and confronting for other Black women and protecting, even though for this research, they are manifested differently. One can advocate for someone without confronting. For example, Teresa advocated and confronted White attorneys about hiring Black law interns. She advocated by discussing the strong work performance they displayed over the course of the summer. She confronted the White attorneys about not hiring the students into full-time positions because their grade point averages were not as high as some of the other attorneys, even though the interns proved they could do the work. Teresa was bothered by these actions because typically student interns are hired at the end of summer for the companies in which they interned. Consequently, there was a possibility that the students might not find a job because they had committed themselves to working for this particular law firm for the summer. Inward expressions of resistance are discussed later in the “Internal resistance motif” discussion.

Teresa’s specific story is below:

I remember when I was at second, a third law firm, there were several young African-American attorneys that were clerking summer students with grants, okay I thought were outstanding attorneys, and had potential to be very good attorneys, but because their GPA wasn’t as high as the firm would like, they wouldn’t, they came; they brought them in, and they gave them summer clerkships, but they didn’t make them final offers, and they all blew it away in the summer programs, so there’s nobody criticizing their work—but it was just because their GPAs weren’t as high as some of the others they didn’t get offers, and I was livid. I was extremely upset, and I challenged it, and went back to them and everything, so I ended up getting one young lady a job in another law firm that I had left before.

Teresa continued with her dissatisfaction by sharing her concern with the hiring committee:

Well, they just, “We [hiring committee] have our standards, you know? Our standards are this.” And I am like, “But you have to make exceptions; not everybody is going to have, a GPA doesn’t determine success for everybody. And if it’s up to the committee to diversify, and you’ve seen their work; you’ve seen, you know, you’ve had experience with them; you’re not, it’s not a blind interview.” And the part that I always struggle with is while, yeah, you should take those things into consideration, unfortunately sometimes if they had come, they would have been probably labeled and would have had a stigma.

Madeline is careful not to project the stereotype of the angry Black woman when she is addressing inequities in the organization; however, her approach is direct, but without malice.

She told a story about challenging a comment made by a White female peer:

I feel like it’s my duty to call it out in a way that makes it, makes a person stop and think, not make them feel defensive, or feel like they have to tread lightly with me. You know, I don’t want to be the mad Black woman walking around, but I try to bring it up in a way that makes it more of a pensive type discussion. This one girl, we would play golf together, and any time we’d travel, we’d make sure we hung out and had dinner. And, you know, she was a pretty straightforward person, too, so during the time that we were working together, I would take off in September for a Black Enterprise golf and tennis event. She says, “So, what are you doing this weekend?” I said, “Well, I’m going to a Black Enterprise golf and tennis event.” She said, “Well, when are they going to have a White Enterprise?” I said in February. They call it “[company] Pebble Beach.” [Laughter] She was like, “Okay, got it.”

Madeline shared another story where she confronted a White female work colleague with a twist of irony. She challenged the inequities of promotion decisions made in the organization:

One of my friends, there was a Black guy, who was getting promoted, and she said, “Madeline, you know, I don’t have a problem with them promoting him, but he’s just, you know, he’s not competent.” I said, “Well, let me ask you something: Is he the first incompetent person you know that got promoted?” She’s like, “No.” I said, “So, why do Black people have to be competent? Can’t we have our own share of incompetent promotions, too? I mean, seriously.” Like, I mean, why do Black people have to be perfect in order to be eligible for the promotion, when everybody else doesn’t have to be? You’ve got 10% that are incompetent.

Several of the storytellers’ stories included strong acts of advocating for Black women and marginalized groups in the organization. They took bold and daring steps to challenge systems where racism may have been intentional or unintentional. It is not known if these

instances of confrontation affected the storyteller's careers in any way. However, these women were willing to do what they thought was right and were not overly concerned about the consequences of their actions on their careers.

Coaching and educating. In several cases, advocacy takes on the form of coaching or educating; however, the motifs of coaching include coaching and advising individuals demonstrating subtle or overt acts of gendered (everyday) racism and teaching others how to manage these acts as well. It also includes educating individuals in the organization who misunderstand or have limited knowledge on the overt and at times subtle dynamics of gendered (everyday) racism behaviors. The coaching and educating other motif included nine examples out of the 253 stories or comments regarding resistance. Tia, the youngest storyteller provided an example of when she had to build her manager's capability to address an inappropriate racial comment made by an executive in her presence:

So I told him; I said, "You know, we have to be careful." I said, "I can't correct the CEO," but I said, "You know, you have that relationship with him, so certain things, you probably, you know, should point out, because when they all get together, I'm sure they say a lot of inappropriate things.

Ida educated her manager on the social isolation she would feel if she relocated to a state where African-Americans represent a small percentage of the population of the city:

Well this job is, there is an opening out there and you could take this job. Why don't, you need to." And I said, "And why would I go out there?" And he said, "Well, because this is a great career opportunity." I said, "Yes it is. Okay, if you didn't notice it, there are no Black people in that city and I am not going to. I have a life outside of work." He goes, "Well what do you mean?" I am like "Oh! Okay!" And so I explain it to him and then he gets it and then he says, "You know I just didn't even consider that." I said, "I know you didn't, but I have to tell you because you are not aware." But those are the kinds of conversations that we could have and he could appreciate my viewpoint and respect what I am saying and say, "Yeah, I do understand. We will find something that's more appropriate."

Madeline shared how she prepares and educates individuals she is advocating for positions in the organization:

So that's why I work hard with my candidates, because I don't want my candidates to, you know, just make them go, "Oh, here's Madeline throwing one of her buddies over the fence," kind of thing, you know? And sometimes I do—the other thing that happens is once one or two bites you, you know, because they will bite you. I mean, and when you do it as much as I do, you will get bitten.

The data provide few examples of coaching and educating others on gendered (everyday) racism in the organization. This motif potentially overlaps with confronting for others and self, as with both of these resistance motifs the storytellers contribute to building the awareness of their work colleagues. However, coaching and educating also differ from the confronting motifs as coaching and educating colleagues was the focus of the storytellers' actions. Specifically, the objective of the storyteller was to build the awareness level of their work colleagues by pointing out how their actions may contribute to building a culture of unfair treatment.

Protecting. Protecting other African-Americans in the organization is not included in the top 10 motifs; however, it is notable. Sandra told the one story related to protecting. Her story is about a Black man who demonstrated godfather-like tendencies at a major corporation over 25 years ago. He was the man that was respected by White people and Black employees in the organization and the community. He assisted HR with recruiting other African-Americans into the organization. He also looked out for all African-Americans. He brought people into the company and helped Black people manage their careers. This act of resistance is also related to advocating for other Blacks in the organization; however, as Sandra told the story, it was apparent that this man was revered by all and almost had mystical and supernatural

characteristics. He was a shield for many other African-Americans in the community who had family members working for this corporation:

He was a very close part of our family growing up, and so I remember the godfather, and everyone, you know, so we had easily 30 groups of, 30 families that were very close . . . but they were all of our friends, and, and everyone can give you a godfather story . . . something that [he] did . . . he looked out for all of African-Americans, and he was kind of that steward to help bring folks in, and help see, help see their careers through.

Internal motifs of resistance. As with external acts, several internal acts of resistance were used more than others. For example, the women told 48 stories or comments of resistance relating to developing a strategy to maneuver through gendered (everyday) racism. This represents 18% of the 253 stories and comments related to acts of resistance and opposition in their careers. Developing supportive relationships to forge upward and negate dynamics associated with gendered (everyday) racism behaviors represents 17% of 253 stories and comments. Overall, inward focus acts of resistance represent over 60% of the 253 stories and comments, which is a significant percent. Again this category includes eight career life histories of resistance motifs: advocating for self, confronting for self, performing, promoting and creating identity, practicing, reconstructing or reshaping reality, relating, and strategizing. Table 4.3 highlights the frequency of internal resistance motifs.

Table 4.3

Internal Resistance Motifs

Strategizing	18%
Relating	17%
Performing	8%
Reconstructing or Reshaping Reality	7%
Confronting for Self	7%
Promoting and Creating Identity	6%
Advocating for Self	3%
Practicing	1%

Strategizing. The executives used a variety of strategic actions to resist acts related to gendered (everyday) racism. They used shock, tolerance, intelligence, and irony to navigate the treacherous corporate waters. In addition, they were charted in their approach and cognizant of the outcomes they would like to achieve.

Early in the interview, Katrina shared a common belief that guides her actions in gendered (everyday) racism scenarios in the organization. In these scenarios, Katrina gets what she wants and develops the power to control situations. She uses shock to her advantage:

But people who are surprised are thrown off their game, and so they're resistant, but they will do things that they would not normally do if they were on their game, if they were really thinking about it, so you can actually convince a person that they're doing something they want to do while they're off their game.

Katrina used the word "manipulative" to describe her actions. She shrugged her shoulders almost apologetically as she shared that she is manipulative. However, her reality is that regardless of your level, for the sake of surviving in the organization, Black women have to be tactical and calculating to survive:

I think there's still tactics for survival though, no matter where you are within that kind of level of the organizational hierarchy. Manipulative, tactical are really just a point of view. Well-placed comments, all of those things, I've used. . . . Now, and dealing with them is, you know, there are different ways to deal with it. I have done the very subtle let them come to the conclusion I came to based on the facts. You know? If I can just sense that somehow they're going to be open to that, you know? So, I just kind of let them deal with the facts, and let them come to the same conclusion. . . . And so in a lot of situations, how do you set up the situation, or manipulate the situation to get the results that you want?

Another strategy used by Jeanette is convincing colleagues and direct reports in the organization that they have more power by assigning them more authority. These actions may cause the individual to feel they have more power than Jeanette. To the contrary, Katrina does not care about whether or not the employee feels they have an advantage over her; she is only concerned about getting what she needs from the employee. She provided an example of when

she ran a summer program and dealt with resistant older White employees that reported into her. Katrina gave them authority and engaged them by making the employees responsible for running important training programs:

So I had to deal with older, and people, White people, and resistant White people to get the work done, and I had to get it done despite there being resistance and shocking . . . I just want you to do the job, right? You give that person to go run something, a piece of it, or part of it, and give them authority in their particular world, and they think they got something, you know? And for all I know they think they got something over on this Black person. But that's not it; I just want you to do it. I've got to deliver these training programs, and you run the training program. And interestingly enough, so by the end of the summer, the working relationship ends up fine; they come in; they're telling me things, but they're not telling me because they like reporting into me, right? They're telling me to just kind of keep work moving; keep things going, right?

Jeanette shared a scenario specifically related to her ability to demonstrate strategic foresight and to get what she wants in an environment where she is not supported and “talked down to.” She used the metaphor of “slowly eroding a rock” to get the results that she wants.

This story includes one of her new direct reports:

I remember the older guy coming in his office —and now he's reporting to me now right and I come in his office and say, “I want to ask you about something,” and he is just working and I said, “I want to ask you about something,” and he looks up and gives me that look. And he says, “What is it 'cause I'm kind of busy?” Yeah, “What is it 'cause I'm kind of busy?” And he is somebody who reports to me. And so I had to work through that for, that kind of thing for a year. [It was kind of hard, but . . .] I tolerated it and I also . . . I tolerated it but I also continued to confront. So it's like, “You're not going to make me go away. You can, you know whatever you're doing you can continue to do, but I'm not going away and you're still going to be accountable for these things.” And so over a period of time that started to, now, other people would have handled it differently. Other people might have said you know, “I don't know what your issue is but just in case you didn't get the memo, you report to me.” I mean you know, but (A) remember this is an area where I didn't have expertise. These people had the expertise. Right? And so, and (B) I was younger than both of them, and (C) I'm a woman, and (D) I'm Black! You know so I [pause] you know I just didn't—and maybe its confidence; I did not feel like I could handle it that way. . . . But then you know, with the comments I mean I would just play it off you know. So I guess in that sense it was the same kind of reaction, which is that I tolerated it and figured out how to just sort of suck it up and get what I needed to get out of the situation. . . . And so the way I chose to handle it was just to be like a drop of water on a rock.

Another strategy that Jeanette uses is to take on projects that no one else wants. She shared, “you know another thing is doing those projects that nobody wants to do, you know? Because it puts you in a position to be in front of people you need to be in front of and be noticed.” Ida recognized and acknowledged the game like behavior required to oppose gendered (everyday) racism. She used the same phrase that Jeanette used to problem solve racial challenges or barriers, “you have to figure it out.” Ida talked about playing the game during the interview:

You always are going to have some group that just you know, but you had to carry yourself a certain way. You had to be able to maneuver it a certain way without feeling discriminated against, because you were discriminated against all the time. So you either had to figure out, well how am I going to maneuver in this or, I mean it’s almost, it becomes a game. Are you gonna let them do this to you or are you gonna take advantage of the system? So you have to make, you have to have a kind of strong constitution, see, that’s what I am saying about my father and my mother; they gave me a strong enough constitution that said okay, well fine. That’s the way you think but that doesn’t mean that’s the way the world is or it will be.

Ida’s statement also closely aligns with two other inwardly focussed resistance motifs: creating and promoting her own identity and reconstructing and reshaping her reality. The outcome of her strategy is a stronger identity and a belief that is she in control of the present situation.

Madeline’s strategic acts of resistance involve conscious programming regarding mentoring and reinforcing positive imagery. She believes it is critical to think about having other individuals in leadership roles that look like her. Madeline communicated her thoughts about the mindset and the degree of intentionality Black women leaders in the organization must have to effect positive change in this area:

If I don’t have somebody in that chain of command that looks like the people that work for me, then I’ve got to make sure that I bring in speakers, that I set up mentoring relationships, that I help them develop and grow kind of their own positive imagery. So, I think there has to be a conscious programming around that. So, I think you have to be

deliberate in that, and not, because you don't have an environment where it incidentally will happen, whereas with a White male and White female, incidentally it will happen. So, I think that that deliberate surrogate for showing visions of success, okay, needs to happen.

Jeanette's strategy includes building her influence in the organization by borrowing power from executives more senior than her. With a stoic-like expression, she stated that she could not report to anyone below the CEO level in the organization. She believes in a strong correlation between power, relationships, and creating fear:

And so . . . and it may be because of the relationships you are having. I was very conscious and still am. I mean I am not going to be in a situation where I report to anyone under the CEO. Because I am very conscious of the need to have a platform and you know the ear of the CEO. Yeah. And so people know when they talk to you—which promotes, can promote, it may not be that you're trying to, to promote fear . . . people always associate power with relationships. And so I will say that I have been conscious about the relationships that I have developed in this place and outside of this place.

Carolyn uses her intelligence to handle situations where her direct reports are trying to override one of her decisions. She shared that she will think of things that nobody else does to present additional options or alternatives:

And I do that with my guys now. You know, I'll sit in a meeting, and I'll let them go and go and go, and then, I'll make a correction. . . . Because, sometimes you have to do that with, especially with White boys, they want to run your little thing . . . I'll sit back and I'll listen to what's going on and then I'll put, make a point . . . sometimes they're like, astonished, you know, "Oh." Like for example, that happened yesterday. My deputy, who is my deputy because, because they basically, he had, he was running the ship before I came in. . . . He and I were both up for the same position. I got the position . . . he didn't. Well, I know he's still not happy about that. And so, whenever he gets a chance to, you know, run, he likes to make sure he's in charge . . . he was running the thing, and there were some points that he was missing, that he hadn't thought of. And since he had decided he wanted to run everything, run his mouth, I go, "Okay, fine," listened, and then finally, I said, "Oh, yeah, by the way," I said, "Why don't we have a meeting on Sunday . . . just a check-in session so that we make sure that midday, everybody will be here, to know whether or not we're going to need people at 6:00 tomorrow evening to sign off on the proposal so we can get it out the door," I said, "because I'm concerned that if we don't check in with people during the day, then that they will not be ready at 6:00 in the afternoon to go." So I said, "We need to have just a quick meeting to check in." And he was like, "Oh. I forgot that." You know, he goes, "Oh, well, Carolyn just made a good suggestion, maybe we should do blah, blah, blah." But the thing is, is that—and those

kind of things, I know, this sound stupid, but it just kind of keeps people understanding why I'm there, and it just kind of validates that, you know, you may think you know every damned thing, but I still—there's a reason why I'm necessary.

The majority of the storytellers strategize to resist gendered (everyday) racism. They carefully stepped back to think about how they could get through unfair practices and to ascend in corporate organizations. Their actions included demonstrating tolerance and planful and calculating actions to achieve personal and organizational goals.

Confronting for self. Confronting for self represents 7% of the comments and stories of resistance. The storytellers shared 18 comments and stories about resisting gendered (everyday) racism by directly challenging unfair practices and behaviors directed toward them. Carolyn challenged other colleagues in the workplace who make disparaging remarks about homosexuality:

You know, I'm going to be honest with you. I think that I always think that I'm going to be treated or looked at differently because I'm Black or because I'm gay or whatever. And the way in which I handle that is, there's a couple of ways. Number one, I'm very direct, and number two, I'm very consistent. I'm just going to be direct with you and open with you about it's this way or that way and all, and I think people appreciate that, and that, that seems to have helped me a whole lot in being able to overcome some of the things, you know, and not being caught.

She provided a specific example of a time when she confronted someone in the workplace for making a negative comment:

And he goes, "Oh," he goes, "I'm sorry. Only homosexuals fly F15s." And I go, "Oh, really?" I said, "Well," I said, "Really?" And there were two other women in the room, when this happened. I said, "Really?" I said, "Well, I'm a homosexual," and I said, "I don't fly F15s." And the sucker nearly passed out [laughter]. And he was like, "Oh." And so then he goes, and this is what he did, he went, "I'm so embarrassed." And I go, "You should be."

Tia communicated several times when she had to confront a junior employee who was very disrespectful to her when Tia first joined the organization:

I don't know, from the first week she actually was the one that gave me, showed me around. The first day she gave me the tour . . . literally she introduced me to almost everybody in the office. "This is Tia, she's starting today in HR," end of story. So, after the first few times with that, you know, I started, you know, doing my own introductions, so she would say that, and then I would shake their hand, and I said, "Hi, I'm Tia, I'm Director of Talent Management." And of course, they went, "Oh, what's talent management? I don't know what the hell that is." [Laughter].

She also shared a brief story about a time the same junior colleague did not perform a task that Tia had given to her:

But we had a conversation a couple of months ago. Right before her boss left we had a conversation. I said, "So, how do you think our relationship is going?" [Laughter] And I took her completely off-guard, because we had talked about—we were talking about the company—just a task that she was doing, and then I said, "Okay, can you close the door." And then she closed the door, and I said, "I just want to kind of check in on us. We've been working together for a while, and I just want to . . ." So, you know, I said, "So, how do you think this relationship is going?" And she was like, "Well, that's a loaded question." And I said, "No, I just, you know, want to check in," because I said, "I feel like sometimes, you know, we're not necessarily communicating very well," and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then, and then I said, "For example, you were supposed to do this one upload for me on Tuesday, and then it was Friday, and pretty much said in front of people that you didn't get, you didn't do it." And she said, "Well, I had other things to do." Her excuse is always she has something else to do, because nobody is, nobody was tracking her time.

So, she always has something else to do other than mine. So, you know, she was like, and then she made some comment about, "Well, I was doing this, and well, I was doing that," and blah, blah, blah. And then I said, "Well, but, but you know, you were supposed to do this on Tuesday." And I just, was trying to hold her accountable, and hold her feet to the fire, which nobody ever did, and you know.

Sonia told a story of when she confronted a White female OD consultant. She reminisced:

So I did have this White woman who I was ,I didn't work for her. We were on the same team, and she was our OD consultant, and you know, she, one, we had this feedback session or whatever, and she said to me once, she said, "You really have this air, and I can't figure out what it is and where it comes from, but you know, it just doesn't sit right with me." And I remember saying to her, "Don't you ever tell another Black woman that she has an air." I said, "Know it's just about confidence," and not subordinating herself. Yeah, I probably just went off on that woman.

Without exception, all of the executive storytellers acknowledged they did not always receive credit or acknowledgement because of their contribution during a meeting including other White leaders. Sonia shared how she confronts this form of marginalizing behavior:

So, in that regard, one of the things that I do find myself needing to do a lot is, you can be in a meeting, and I will, of any assistant, someone will say, you can have an idea or say, here's a thought, here's a solution. White person comes along and says the same thing. Who do they hear? The White person. So you know what, I am so okay with going, "I just said that 10 minutes ago. What is different about what she just said? Help me with that." And then what you get are the, "Oh, well, yeah, you know, well, right.

As mentioned earlier, Ida and Katrina shared stories of when they threatened to leave the organization because of gendered (everyday) racism. In both cases, the executives experienced obvious acts of marginalizing behaviors and confronted the situation by resigning, addressing the perpetrators, and going to HR. Ida shared a time when a major announcement impacting her was made in the meeting without her receiving prior notice. She threatened to leave the company.

Ida provided the details of her experience:

So I told you I went to a startup in Raleigh and as we were tapering off and the place was falling apart and all that we were in a big board meeting and our CEO in the meeting announced that he was going to move my organization under one of my peers, and so there is a room—there was a CFO, there is a CIO, I mean there is everybody in this room and of course you know I couldn't handle that and I made all of them so uncomfortable. . . . The CFO was right there, I mean all of them and the head of HR was down there along with his like number two. "First of all, this is inappropriate for you to come in here and say this in front of everyone and not have the courtesy or the decency—this is a CEO but he was crazy anyway—to at least address this with me before we got here. My boss is sitting right next to me and never said a word, but he was, that's just the way he was. And so because what I was doing impacted everyone, and I said, "I want to understand something. Does everybody in this room," and I called them by name, "Do you agree with this move? Is this up for discussion or is this a foregone conclusion?" I said, "Because I am in total disagreement. I said this is not handled properly and I am going immediately right now to the head of the HR's office, so you can follow me."

The data show the storytellers courageously stood up for themselves even though they ran the risk of being perceived as the angry Black women. A lower percent of confronting (18 out of 253) behaviors may be linked to a fear that Black women do not want to be linked to this

stereotype. Parker and Ogilvie (1996) discussed this stereotype within the context of communication in the organization. Black women are perceived by White females as being more confrontational because of an expressive style that is linked to culture (McGoldrick, Garcia-Preto, Hines, & Lee, 1988). A lower number of stories and comments may also be linked to the conservative, demure, and reserved behaviors that are expected in a corporate setting. Either way, there are times when confronting directly was necessary in the eyes of the storytellers.

Relating. Relationships with others accounted for 43 comments or stories related to resistance and opposition gendered (everyday) racism in the executives' careers. This is 17% of the 253 stories or comments regarding resistance. All of the executives stressed the importance of building supportive relationships to oppose race and gender related blockades in the corporation. Carolyn was the only executive that admitted to not having a mentor during her career; however, even though she has achieved career success in a technical field, she stressed her desire to have someone to help her earlier in her career. She told the story of approaching a Latino male earlier in her career to see if he would be her mentor. Unfortunately, he was not willing to mentor her:

No, but you know, thinking back, not putting myself where I am now, but where I was, you know, one of the things that I think has hampered my career is never really having that mentor, and not having that person that I could really confide in or ask questions to. And you know, I remember when I was at X corporation, there was this guy, he was one level ahead of me, and I had said to him, matter of fact, I didn't even realize he was Latino, because he kind of hid it. But I had gone to him and I said, "Look," I said, "You know, Bill, I really want to be at your level," and I said, "I was wondering whether or not you could mentor me." And he looked at me dead in my face, and said, "Me? Mentor you?" He goes, "I don't think I could do that." And I was like going, "Huh?" He goes, "No," he says, "I don't think I could mentor you." And later, I thought about it, and I said to myself, I shouldn't have been put off by that, because I think what he was really, after I thought about it, years later, I thought, maybe what he meant is, is that I was the competition to him, why the hell would he want to mentor me?

Carolyn continued with her story by acknowledging the deficits or gaps in her career experiences and exposure because she did not have a mentor:

And I kind of took it as; well maybe I'm not mentorable. Maybe I, you know, whatever. And I did not go back and try to find another mentor because I know that there are things that I missed as far as my education, moving up the ranks, that there are, and I still have holes and deficits, because there are certain things, I just, I didn't have a lot of all of the experiences, the broadening that some of these folks had, because I'd never had access to some of the places that they went to and all those kinds of things. And some of the conversations and now, I'm finally a little bit more comfortable with some of the, having some of these one-on-one conversations with some of these folks, you know, that are higher up in the company. But for years, I really kind of stayed away from it, and then I, because I'd never been brought in to listen, you know, when somebody else was doing that, or whatever. And now, most of the stuff is really by the seat of my pants, and just like I say, remaining who I am and being consistent in it.

Sonia also communicated how critical sponsors and mentors are to the career success of Black women. She believes the support of mentors and sponsors in terms of career ascent for Black women leaders may trump intelligence. They may be excluded from the informal circle of influence if they do not secure mentors or sponsors:

You know what? I think it's still very difficult for Black women in corporate America. I think the only way we're successful has nothing to do with how bright you are, unfortunately. It has everything to do with who sponsors you and who mentors you, and we still have to have that sponsor to really progress and have impact. It's still all about who lets you into their circle.

She continued with her thoughts that included her beliefs on how White women astutely and intentionally gain power in the organization through the protective relationships they develop and the need for Black women to attach themselves to these power bases for survival and protection:

That's the gender lesson that we learn from White women. White women connect themselves to the power base. It is the whole corporate family situation, where you'll see a White woman who connects herself to a powerful White man, and she is usually his HR person, or she's his corporate communications person, or she's some person surrounding him, but White women work that thing, because they always are going to have, they're always going to have that powerful White man to protect them. And that's the lesson . . . unfortunately, we have to have—if you can find a powerful White man to take care of

you, great. I say, more power to you. Or maybe it's a White woman who is right there with that White man, who becomes, as Black women, our go-to person, and then you have that. And you just have to. You just have to. Cannot tell you the number of Black women who are way smarter, just way more skilled, I would say than I am and than a lot of sisters I know, but if they don't have that, then they get caught up. So when that merger happens, they're not safe. If something political happens, then they're not safe. It's crazy. That, to me, that's the work of going to work, is having to cultivate and manage those relationships that keep you [pause] in the pocket.

Inclusion in the inner circle is crucial to gaining critical information about the business and to developing relationships with leaders that can promote the careers of others leaders.

Rhonda also shared her belief about the power of the informal network and her exclusion from it:

I look back at IBM and I say, because, I think, that there were many informal networks in which information was exchanged and learning opportunities occurred that we were not a part of. Let's call it golf. Let's call it the weekend fishing trip. So as I think about racism, genderism, I started to see it play out in those ways that were more benign, but still impactful. While it wasn't intentionally directed to me, I think it had an impact. So, people who were my colleagues and peers were socializing with White men who were in more significant leadership positions, so while I had Black mentors and sponsors, and some others across race, that's what I started to see as the difference, is that group of people with their parties and gatherings and informal exchanges that help decode the ways to success in the workplace that I was not a part of.

Sustaining key relationships is just as important as building important relationships.

Laura relayed the story of touching base with one of her mentors every time she is promoted to tell him "thank you:"

The things I really tried to do over the years is there are a lot of people who believe in me, believed in me, and invested in me, and the guy that I talked about, who actually recommended me for that first generalist, quasi-generalist type role that I had, actually hired me into HR to be the technical recruiter, and I joke about it. I used to tease him about, "Yeah, you took a chance on a little country girl from [state], and then recommended me for the other one." And what I tried to do each time I got a promotion or whatever, I usually call him, and say, "Thank you."

Laura is a strong believer that relationships are just as important as performance and critical to mitigating gendered (everyday) racism. She stated that performance is what gets you in the door, but relationships are imperative to moving upward. Laura shared that all of her

mentors have been White men. She believes that the key to building these relationships is to find a common ground or bond. In other words, people are more comfortable interacting with people who are like them or who have similarities. Her goal is to always find a common interest:

And you know what? That's what I realized along the way that, yeah, there's some assholes out there are going to discriminate, just because you're different, but what I found is that they're just more comfortable being around people who have common thoughts, common experience. . . . Figuring out the common bond. So, I think once people figure out what that common bond is, it breaks down a lot of that other stuff. And for me, very quickly, that was the common bond. And I think in terms of building relationships over the years, whether it was there, or any other job that I've been in, what I learned from that was to figure out what the common bond is with other people, and make that connection.

She entered the circle of White male colleagues through the door of sports. Laura grew up hearing about sports from her brothers. Sports may be important to possibly eradicating gender issues in her career life history:

And so, I'm in the Deep South with a bunch of White boys who all they talk about is college football, and whatever, and I can hold my own with the best of them. As a matter of fact, I knew more about it than most of them. So, I don't know if they really saw me as a girl.

Sandra, a marketing executive, benefited from her relationship with her manager, a White female. She shared:

I came in, and you know, had a really good time my first two and a half years. I really bonded with my boss. She promoted me to be her EA, a White woman, so she's one of my biggest advocates now in the organization, and helped me get this new job that I have.

She admitted to witnessing the slow movement upward for high-performing Black employees compared to the quicker movement of their White colleagues. Sandra attributed this slow movement to not having advocates in the organization:

You see who gets the shorter end of the stick, when you look at the landscape at [my company]. You know, you see White people who have been in jobs forever who are performing and delivering. You see strong Black people who aren't given the benefit of the doubt, and who don't have the advocacy, but who are clearly smarter, and had more performance results than these people.

Building open and honest relationships in the organization opens the door for rich and authentic dialogue about sensitive issues such as race. Tia developed this type of relationship with one of her managers. A strong degree of trust exists between the two of them. She shared that she advises him on sensitive issues in the organization regarding race and gender; however, she is very selective about what she shares with him:

And I told him, I told him, specifically. I said, "If I say something every time, I'm going to be saying something all the time." And I said, "I'm not as sensitive to those things as some people." I said that, "So, I'm not, so, I will be, you know, I will say things," but I said, "Usually, it has to be something pretty big for me to, for me to say something. . . . Yes, yeah. . . . And so, and I have. I've been comfortable with him, because he looks to me for that. Yeah. Yeah, I have that relationship with him.

Allyson and Katrina openly shared that they use mentors to prevent them from making important decisions in isolation. Allyson communicated the place of mentoring in her professional career:

I have mentors in the building that, you know, that I'll call and say, "This don't look right to me. What do you think?" And you know, just make sure that it's not a unilateral decision, or a perspective that's not being weighed or balanced, that I'm not trusting to give him good counsel on. It happens, but not, not to the extent that, you know, you'd say.

Katrina's comments about the value of having mentors when making critical decisions aligned with Allyson's. She also admitted to having different mentors for different situations.

She spoke about how mentors have served as a grounding force in her career life:

Mentors are incredibly valuable, and so you're going to go do something that's halfway emotional, check in with somebody. Stop yourself before you go do it, go back. I cannot, I tell people mentors are valuable and they don't, actually I can never explain to them, you know, all the reasons why you've got to have that person that you can trust that will tell you, "Oh, no, no, And they come in different, just see, I have my sister who helps me in some ways; I have my brother-in-law who is great with manipulating words. If I need the words the right, words to get a point across? You know, and so, and I know the culture, so I take his words and spin it in this culture. You know? Or I have a lot of times my boss, because he's a master at manipulating situations, or I have, I mean I have them for different situations, I have them. And they help me with different things. And

they get me through things, and they'll go, "Okay, no, you're being emotional. Stop. You're not ready to tackle this problem. Wait till you're not emotional." You know? And so, and you learn from these people; you learn what, you know, what do they do? So, it kind of becomes ingrained in you to some extent. So, trust me, major things have significant consequences, I check in. I check in with somebody.

The executives not only spoke of mentors and sponsors, but of building relationships with other Black women who are also experiencing isolation because they may also be the sole Black women executive leader. Teresa provided an example:

There's a lot of Black people, but nobody's working in corporate law firms, except like White men. All these Black people are never partners in firms, none of them partners in firms. So, I'm working in this law firm, and just kind of isolated. I didn't know anybody, and there were no other Blacks in the firm, and this Black partner at another firm—at another firm—said, "Hey, there's a young lady who works down the street at another firm. She's just like you; she just started off in the firm and doesn't know anybody. You guys need to get together, because you're going through the same thing." And so he put us together, and so we've been friends ever since, but I thought that was just something that was very good to be able to have that other person who you could vent with, who was outside of the office environment that you can talk to, and relate to.

Katrina also stressed the need to have a support system. Even though creating and promoting identity is discussed later in this section, Katrina believes a support system is important to maintaining one's identity. Black women that do not have support systems may find themselves losing parts of who they really are:

I think when we don't have a support system for support, and we're trying to maneuver our way through, and figure out what it takes to get along, that you start, you actually start kind of losing parts of yourself. Because parts of yourself, you start taking on the personalities of the people you see succeeding, and I think sometimes we wake up, and don't know who we are, right?

The data revealed that developing supportive relationships in the organization is a way to move forward and to push through negative brigades associated with gendered (everyday) racism. All of the women storytellers recognized the value of mentoring and sponsoring relationships in the organization. It is not only important to develop these relationships, but it is important to work on sustaining these relationships. Networking with other African-American

peers is also important to resisting social isolation and may serve as a vehicle for Black women executives to maintain their sense of identity. In other words, the storytellers will not get lost in a climate that forces assimilation into the dominant discourse.

Performing. Many of the stories of resistance with an inward focus included high performance and expertise. A total of 20 stories and comments focused on getting quality results and demonstrating expertise in the workplace. This is 8% of the 253 stories and comments.

Allyson shared her views on the need for Black women to always demonstrate better and stronger performance:

You always have to be better, or you always have to be above reproach, because you don't have, you're not afforded the same, the same luxuries around benefit of the doubt, so just recognizing that being on your Ps and Qs was hugely important, or making sure that you were extremely prepared for anything that you had to do, so just this idea of really focusing in on doing your best work because there would always be nay sayers or folks that didn't want you to succeed.

Allyson stated her approach is to “knock it out of the park.” She believes the rest will come. Her focus is not on getting promoted, but getting the work done.

Katrina referred to achieving results several times in her stories of resistance. Her ultimate goal is to get results. She asks the question: “How do you get the deliverable done?” This drives her behavior and is a mechanism for resisting gendered (everyday) racism. She is not preoccupied with the barriers that she may face because of her race or gender:

I focus less on the resistance, but I am very focused on the deliverable. And so it's how do you get the deliverable done? And you know, over time I've said to people, “Okay, forget me. You don't work for me? Fine. You have a deliverable. Do you not want to get this deliverable done, you know?” And so basically you all have the same end game. How you get there is up for grabs, but everybody has to get to the same place, right?

Madeline also believes in the power of performance to diminish gendered (everyday) racism. She not only performs, but also finds a way to communicate her achievements:

When I was on the climb, there was a lot of, there was a lot of competition amongst your peers, and, you know, people were trying to downplay maybe what you were doing, and whatever, but I just always approach my work to say I'm going to do the best I can, and I'm going to do my best to articulate it.

Laura believes that the price of entry is delivery. She knows that she has got to work harder than her White colleagues to find sponsors and advocates. She discussed the need to have credibility in the workplace before an advocate or sponsor will endorse you:

You've got to deliver—and you've got to deliver at a high level, because you're not even going to get the shot—it goes back to that belief that you've got to be twice as good. And so you get some credibility with that, and so, really, in order for people to endorse you, they have to feel like you're credible. I mean, I don't care what you look like, if you're not credible, there's just some people I'm not going to endorse.

Jeanette advocated high performance as a mechanism for opening the corporate doors for more Black women leaders to enter. She does not necessarily believe you can force organizational leaders to change their mindset to alleviate gendered (everyday) racism. In her mind it is all about proficiency for Black women leaders:

But I also think that it is those of us who are there doing our best every single day because people eventually in a workplace will get used to seeing proficiency, seeing confidence, and [pause] you know that obviously is a long-term proposition. So I mean I recognize that; I'm not blind to that, but [pause] but I think it's really hard to force an organization to be a certain way. I don't think you can force corporate America to change, but I do think that with the globalization of our society and our economy that the more and more Black people being in higher positions both politically and economically that those of us every single day doing our best to you know succeed and with you know researchers and others making a link between the value of you know non-discrimination and diversity to economics in your customer base, you know all of those kinds of things that over time there will be an evolution.

The data reveal that high performance is a resistance strategy used to mitigate gendered (everyday) racism. Most of the women in this research have high expectations regarding their performance. All of the storytellers discussed the importance of performance in their careers. They worked hard to ascend the corporate lattice and, for the most part, agreed with Laura's view that high-levels of execution is “the price you pay for admission.”

Reconstructing reality. The reconstructing reality motif included acts of resistance to reframe or change the perceptions of negative situations related to gendered (everyday) racism. It also includes prohibiting racism from overshadowing their reality of successfully navigating and achieving in the corporate world. Eight percent of the 253 stories and comments of resistance relate to reconstructing reality. Changing or reshaping a reality of gendered (everyday) racism includes shifting a focus from racism to achievement and success. It also includes the expectation that gendered (everyday) racism is real, but choosing to focus on what you can do in the moment to get what you want and to win. In some instances, it is a mental or emotional decision to view unfair circumstances in the workplace as not based in racist acts, but attributable to a need for employees to be with other employees that are similar to them. Several of the executives shared that they chose, at times, not to acknowledge gendered (everyday) racism. They took steps to reshape the current reality in order to pursue the career related outcomes they desired. Their focus was not on the racist views they knew existed; it was on achievement and results.

For example, Allyson knows that life is not always going to be fair. She spoke of this reality and the need to be ready to fight for what you want:

Yes, Jesus got crucified. [Laughter] So, why not you. I mean, you know, like just this whole idea of recognizing, “Yeah, it’s going to happen.” It’s going to happen, so now what are you going to do about it, or what context do you put that in, and do you recognize that that says nothing about you other than, okay, I’m ready. I’m ready for, I’m ready for the fight, and how am I going to fight? What does my fight look like?

Jeanette also recognizes that racism exists. As shared in the executing motif section, she chooses to work harder than to focus on gendered (everyday) racism. She stated, “it is like the, - yeah, so racism exists and it’s a, it is a circumstance. Black people have to work harder.” Jeanette also believes she is immune to subtle behaviors related to gendered (everyday) racism.

Jeanette spoke about behaviors such as not being invited to join other White executives in social or non-social conversations or situations:

Hopefully. I mean you know there's still situations, I mean there's, in every environment there are situations and there, it probably happens more than, more than I sort of acknowledge because the subtle instances of it, I think I've become more immune to. Oh . . . executives getting together and either socially or not socially and not inviting me. That would be a subtle instance, conversations or situations in meetings where your point is minimized. Or, situations where you are—whatever your work is could be highlighted and it's not highlighted. . . . Where it's either patronizing or it is just borderline rude, you know that kind of thing you know. . . . Okay. But my point is, and obviously you've got to look sort of beyond—you've got to not let that destroy you.

Several of the executives explained the behaviors that produce inequities in the organization as not necessarily related to racism. They believe that some times inequitable acts are related to the factor of similarity, not racism. Sandra believes that people gravitate to people that are similar to them and unfortunately, this gravitation produces favoritism and unequal treatment toward people who are different:

Where you're dealing with other people as people, and so you naturally gravitate to other people that are similar to you. So, I think a lot of it is just, is that. They don't understand that that natural association, and attraction and bonding for people that are just like you is creating a situation where you have unequal opportunities for people.

She continued by providing an example of her manager, a White male. Sandra stated that he demonstrates fraternity-like behavior with other White male direct reports. However, she and another woman of Hispanic origin are excluded from the circle. Even though she experiences exclusion, she does not see it as racism. She chooses to focus on his behavior as a natural tendency for people who are similar to be attracted to one another:

I just have more immunity. Because he gave some very childish, incorrect feedback to my counterpart, the Latina woman, that was just wrong, like he's just, he doesn't, he doesn't spend the time to get to know. He doesn't spend—because he just easily goes to people who are like him, and that's how he, he banters it up, and so I don't, I really don't think it's racist, I just think it's him not, and he's not unlike a lot of people. You feel comfortable with people—that's who you gravitate toward. You know, you always have

favorites. You know, like your favorites on your team, that's who you, so, I think it's just more of that.

Sandra made a conscious decision not to focus on her manager's exclusionary behavior toward her, but to focus on her team and doing her job. "So I mean, I kind of just did my job. I focused on my job. I focused on my team by delivering the results, you know, versus anything else, you know?"

Tia reshapes her reality by not expecting fair treatment in the workplace. She considers herself to be a tough fighter that easily overcomes sensitive situations with a "matter-of-fact" and unsurprised disposition:

I've always been a tough one, so it just kind of, a lot of things don't faze me, so, and then I think my expectations of people are different, though.

I think I probably don't expect, you know, I don't expect the high levels of empathy and, and understanding? And understanding that other people do. And broad thinking, broad thinkers? And, I don't, and that's partly coming from the South, I think, and all, you know, I just don't expect it. Just being around people who haven't traveled much, and haven't really, have very narrow points of view.

Laura expressed a theme of immunity and a nonchalant response to her experiences with gendered (everyday) racism in the workplace. She does not allow it to derail her. Laura told a story about an event that happened when she was a little girl. The event shaped her reality of what is and how she chooses to respond to gendered (everyday) racism:

In the Head Start program, so very challenging. I mean, I think part of the reason now that I'm not, I could care less about overt racism in the workplace, and what, how it appears, or I can respond to it, and it is what it is. It probably has a lot to do with that first year of school experience. So, what was the experience like? Oh, we were all put in the back of the class. We were all put in back of the classroom. Teachers gave you very little attention. My teacher retired the year after. I think she couldn't handle it. It was an older lady. And you know you, you just, you'd show up for school, and, I mean, our parents would show up for like PTA night, or whatever, and I remember my first grade teacher telling my mother, "Wow, she's really smart. I didn't expect that." I mean, who says that to a parent.

Laura does not expect things to come easily, but she does believe that you can choose how you want to respond to the negativity that you may encounter related to unfairness in the workplace. She does not accept racism. She fights by moving forward in spite of its existence. Laura shared, “you can’t change people, and you can’t impact what people do, or how they react to you. All you can impact is how you choose to respond to it.” She reiterates that she does not expect things to be easy because she knows she is competing against other good people. Laura handles this by identifying the behaviors that will set her apart from other high performing corporate colleagues:

And then I guess for me it is just accepting that I don’t expect it to come easy. And I don’t expect to get it, just because I’m good, because there are a lot of good people out there. What’s going to set me apart, and how can I make that happen?

Laura also reconstructed reality by sometimes purposefully viewing the corporate world using the lens of a White male. She responded:

And so, when I think about my mentors over the years in the workplace, they have all been White men, all, and I wish I could say otherwise, but, you need to be able to see through that [White male] lens.

Even though she refers to mentoring, which could relate to the relating motif, the point is that Laura is intentionally altering how she views corporate reality, by incorporating a White male perspective.

Katrina also knew that individuals in the organization did not like her because she was a Black woman:

I mean I knew there were people there who didn’t like me and I knew that there would be these ugly things that would be said . . . I knew that there was an expectation about my behavior that I had to try and live up to.

The women in this research found ways to reshape and reconstruct their realities to deal with gendered (everyday) racism. Their actions include ignoring or becoming immune to

racism. The storytellers try not to allow gendered (everyday) racism to permeate or control their experiences in the organization. They take control of their life in corporate organizations by pushing through racist thoughts and events that get in their way. Several of the storytellers even chose to view unfair practices in the organization as not attributed to race and gender discrimination, but to the factor of similarity, which is an interesting concept to explore in future research.

Promoting, maintaining, and creating identity. Acts related to promoting, maintaining, and creating identity relate to self-efficacy, personal identity, and image. Six percent of the resistance themes were related to the identity motif. A total of 18 stories or comments included discussions of when the Black women executives relied on a strong belief in themselves and what they could achieve in life because of who they are as individuals. Even in times of adversity, they maintained a strong sense of their identity shaped by their parents, community, and the need to work harder because of their race and gender. All of the storytellers displayed a strong sense of not backing down in the face of adversity or in situations that involved gendered (everyday) racism issues. They believe in the strength and power of creating and maintaining a strong self-identity.

The majority of the storytellers discussed authenticity as a prerequisite for having critical conversations about race and gender with others in the organization. If Black women executives do not feel comfortable expressing and acting out who they are from a race and gender perspective during serious discussions, then the dialogue is superficial. It will not make a difference. Sonia shared that feeling okay about bringing elements of your identity into difficult conversations is important to effect change:

It's like, you have got to be able to have, you can't have the person bring his or her authentic self to work if he or she doesn't feel comfortable saying, "As a Black woman,"

“As a Black man,” “As an Asian woman,” “As an Hispanic,.” If they can’t self-identify, they can’t have real conversations. You’ve got to be okay with that.

Allyson articulated the need for Black women to be in touch with who they are as well.

She spoke of the unique characteristics Black women bring to the table and attributes their success to being in touch with one’s self:

There are some things about us that nobody else will ever be able to compete with, because we just, there are some things about us that are special nuances, and so leveraging what those things are, I think becomes important—but there’s absolutely a way to be successful, and to me the foundation, though, of being successful is recognizing who you are out of the gate, so you don’t get shocked.

Teresa’s words echoed the words of the other storytellers. She stated that Black women have to have a strong self-identity. For example, she is a strong believer in giving back to others. She explained this is who she is as an individual and strongly presents the need for Black women to define what success is for them based on a strong self-identity.

And I think we all kind of have to kind of make our decisions around how we’re going to be successful. For me I’m just, I’m going to be me, you know? I’m just, I can’t, you know, I’m just very, everything God’s given me I’m going to give back to everybody else. That’s how I am, but everybody, I think all the women have kind of defined how they’re going to be successful.

She continued to discuss the importance of self-identification by providing an example of a Black woman executive she knows who works for a major corporation. Teresa admires this woman for maintaining her identity in a corporate environment:

A woman I know—[name] who is an [executive for a major corporation]—I have the utmost respect for her, because she is her ethnic self. She has maintained her ethnicity in her [executive] role. She has her hair shaved, and she wears big bulky jewelry, and ethnic art all over her office and I just so respect that she’s herself, you know? . . . And she’s very much looking back; she’s always trying to help somebody. She will be the first one to raise her hand and say, “That’s racist.” You know, but that’s her. You know? I think that’s reflective of her experience, and . . . You know? It’s how God made, I mean, it’s there, so when you try to do something else, you might get to a certain point, and, but initially it is, you’re not going to continue to move forward, you know? Right, absolutely. But you have to, like you have to be authentic.

Rhonda reaffirmed the power of maintaining a strong self-identity during times of trauma and trouble in the organization. She experienced a career-life changing event of a confidential nature related to race that shook her core as a leader in the organization, but she persevered. Rhonda rose above the fray in this situation and found strength in being true to who she is as leader. She shared the aftermath of this difficult and challenging situation:

It was absolutely devastating. But it was important to stay the course with who I was, and lead, and ultimately, it was the way I led that people really affirmed, and saw the kind of executive behaviors that I'd learned and were deeply ingrained in me, and that you lead through diversity. You can be defined by diversity, but you also have to lead through diversity, whether it's poor business results, poor feedback, whether it was on the survey. This was not a survey, but it was something very similar, and how you behave is a measure of who you are, and I earned more respect and more support than I ever thought possible.

Maintaining a strong sense of identity is critical for storytellers to resist gendered (everyday) racism. Their actions include not forgetting who they are and believing that they must define themselves. Self-definition is a source of strength for the storytellers. They also believe that they can do and be whatever they want to be and do in their career lives. Most of the women expressed the need for Black women to be comfortable with expressing who they are. Being comfortable with ones self is a requirement for having genuine and authentic conversations about race and gender with other work colleagues in the organization.

Advocating for self. Strongly related to identity is the motif of self-advocacy. Self-advocacy is promoting oneself to overshadow or disrupt negative organizational dynamics attributed to gendered (everyday) racism. It represents 3% of the comments and stories related to resistance and 9 of the 253 comments and stories. Self-advocacy is different from advocating for others. The focus of the stories and comments were on advocating for self through competition, taking on assignments that no one else wants, and promoting and investing in self-development. Jeanette provided an example that includes the need for Black women to be proactive when it

comes to their own growth and development. She has learned not to wait on the company to pay for her to go to training related to her profession. Contrarily, she is always identifying what she needs to learn next to heighten and promote her credibility as a leader. She shared:

I have said this to people when I've done talks about career and leadership and things like that, but one, one of those things that, and I've had several sort of middle management women that you know a light bulb goes on in their head that they are like wow, I never thought of that one, which is pay for your own educational development. So for instance, I mean, I mean I, I have invested in my own career development, so seminars, I am not talking about school.

Similar to Jeanette, Ida stated that Black women should take ownership of their careers.

Not only do they have to achieve high levels of performance, they also have to promote themselves. Ida shared her thoughts on this subject:

You have always got to be beyond . . . if this is the bar as a Black male or female, you have got to be higher. So let's just accept that and say okay, this is my job, but I know I have to do this because that's gonna be, in order for me to meet the bar I am going to have to do this much as opposed to this person doing that much. And then the second thing is you have to promote yourself. You have to take ownership of your own career and you have to be bold about some things. You have got to just say I have got to be bold about something, whatever that is, you just have to take the bull and say I am going to be bold about these things.

Promoting yourself also means publicizing your work. Black women need to place themselves in situations in which their names are dropped in important meetings and with key leaders. Sandra explained this technique further:

You have to publicize your work, like we're so big [the company], I may have a certain set that I'm kind of working in this group, but I need this person, that person, this, her, him, her to know what I've done, so you have to basically be your own PR agent, and publicize your work, and in a way that's appropriate given your corporate culture.

Laura self-promotes by being a fierce competitor and believing in her ability to outdo her White peers. She admitted that she has always been a competitor:

You know, I'm a competitor. I'm competitive, and I've always been competitive, and so for me it was just like, "Oh, whatever. I'm better than you, and I'm going to show you that I'm better than you." And so I didn't take, I just guess I didn't take it personally

[gendered (everyday) racism], because they were just stupid. . . . But my thing is, “Bring it on, because I’m still better than all you all, anyway.”

I like a little competition. I don’t care where the competition comes from, and it makes you stay on your A game, and guess what? It looks good when you look around.

The data revealed that several of the storytellers have learned how to advocate for self. They have personally committed to not only demonstrating high-performance as discussed in the performing motif, but to promote and make their work visible, to financially invest in their growth and development, and to demonstrate a sense of competition. Resistance in this category also includes taking on work projects that are not popular.

Organizational infrastructure. A more detailed discussion of organizational infrastructure motifs and examples is provided in this section. Table 4.4 highlights the frequency of resistance motifs related to organizational infrastructure.

Table 4.4

Organizational Structure/Culture Resistance Motifs

Influencing Organizational Structure	5%
Using Positional Power	2%

Organizational infrastructure acts of resistance accounted for 18 stories or comments of resistance against gendered (everyday) racism. This represents 7% of the 253 stories and comments related to acts of resistance and opposition. A total of 7% is small in comparison to the percent of inward and outward resistance motifs. The following motifs are included in this category: influencing organizational structure/system/culture and using positional power.

Influencing organizational structure/system/culture. The category of organizational structure/system/culture includes 14 stories (5%) and comments regarding resistance. Black women executives oppose inequitable systems in the organization by introducing policies and

procedures and monitoring system processes related to race and gender to create an inclusive environment. Several of these stories may relate to subtle acts of confrontation. In other words, the women directly challenge organizational inequities related to race and gender. However, their stories and comments indicate actions targeted toward repairing organizational infrastructure issues.

Positional power. The women also use their positional power to make recommendations or to challenge these systems. Allyson shared comments she used in the past to address succession planning infrastructure issues that could create discriminatory practices. During succession planning meetings, she challenges the lack of diverse successors for senior roles in the organization. Allyson admitted that her comments might create discomfort; however, she does not think that leaders in her organization intentionally bar diverse candidates from the succession planning list. She believes they do not see the disparity. Admittedly, she stated it is her job to challenge these situations:

It's been important that I be willing to avoid concern if a process looks like it's discriminatory. So, while I don't remember an incident, it is a big part of the work that I do, and if I'm doing an analysis on a particular instrument, and find out that it is, it does have adverse impact, then it's up to me to say we really shouldn't use this, and let me tell you why, but also here's an alternative. The other thing that I say—it's important as we're looking at successes for roles for me to say, "But you do realize that this slate has no diversity on it." So, we can't talk about that we have an issue with diversity at the leadership level, if we're not even looking at a diverse candidate slate to begin with; we'll never get there, and has had those conversations several times, and absolutely it raises, it raises the level of I'd say discomfort for the leaders and then making the decision, but you've got to do it.

Teresa has an executive role in the legal department of her organization, as such, the nature of her role permits her to address unfair labor practices in the organization. She has reduced the number of discrimination lawsuits in the organization and developed the first diversity committee to promote a more inclusive culture. Similar to Allyson, Teresa also

challenges leaders to increase the slate of diverse candidates during succession planning reviews.

She shared:

So when we did not have as strong of a leader at one time or the other, I constantly have to push for recognition that this is important for the organization, and constantly, so we will have this succession planning reviews, and someone who will be in charge of the engineering department is going through all his candidates, and there's not a single female, and there's not a single African-American.

Rhonda also used her role as an HR leader to rectify unfair practices. She evaluated organizational structure and systems issues to determine if unfair practices were attributed to more systemic problems. She provoked leaders to look at complaints through the eyes of the complainant:

I think the examples of opposing, for me, came through in situations where cases would be brought to my attention for either review or investigation that involved people of Color, and bringing the lens of everyday racism, the sense of a manager who says, "Well, that's not true, and it's my word against that employee," but helping to coach my team, helping to grow myself, to look at an environment or department to see if there were systemic issues that were playing out, and while an individual situation might be as much an overreaction of the employee, to look it seemed. So I think my recollection of my time and experience in that regard throughout my career has been to raise the issue of, "Is there more to that story? Are you looking at it from the lens of that individual?"

At times, the focus on changing structural issues in the organization is an outcome of a lawsuit. Madeline worked for a company that experienced a class-action lawsuit. She worked as a part of an alliance to make structural and systemic changes in the organization to mitigate discriminatory practices. The alliance developed a plan that included the development of a supplier diversity program and a review of HR practices related to creating an inclusive culture:

It was a mistake, but we're not, like the problem was we didn't have enough other stuff to show that it was a mistake. But we put into place a supplier and diversity program to spend. I mean, the stuff we did after that, they started looking at promotions, and what the diversity profile looked like, so I was here when that happened. In fact, I had just gotten a promotion, and I was kind of ticked, I said, because if I had just waited, I could have probably got two. [Laughter].

Related to unfair HR related practices, Madeline portrayed a time when she discovered inequitable bonus payouts. While not personally experiencing any blatant acts of gendered (everyday) racism in her company currently, at one time she did realize the disparity in bonus payouts when she was promoted to a manager years ago:

Now, I know things existed, like it was a long time before I realized how the bonus pay is like, there were bonuses every year. I didn't realize it until I was manager, and I was having to give out bonuses, so I'm looking back and saying, "All these years I didn't get it, you know, there were things that went on that showed favoritism," but again, I didn't have privy to it, so I didn't know it.

The stories provided in this section include circumstances in which the storytellers exercised their positional authority or their influence in the organization to mitigate unfair practices and procedures. In some instances, the women were not in roles designed to create equitable systems, but they still took action against highly visible discriminatory practices that impacted the organization. There were other stories where the storytellers, because of their role, were not afraid to openly challenge organizational trends related to human resources practices. The reader of this dissertation might think that if it is someone's role to effect change, then why is positional authority highlighted as an act of resistance. I caution the reader not to assume that because someone is in a position to monitor unfair practices, that the individual will exercise his or her authority to do so. Fighting discriminatory practices in a system where discriminatory practices are institutionalized is not easy. The stories shared in this dissertation are proof that it is not easy for Black women in the workplace. This, of course, is a larger issue and is not the focus of this dissertation.

Trans-momental motifs. A more detailed discussion of trans-momental motifs and examples is provided in this section. Below is a table highlighting the frequency of resistance motifs related to a trans-momental focus.

Table 4.5

Trans-momental Resistance Motifs

Leading Servantly	2%
Spiritualizing	2%
Memorializing/Emulating	1%

Trans-momental acts of resistance include spiritualizing, and memorializing and emulating others that have paved the path for the advancement of Black women in the organization. These actions include stories and comments grounded in spirituality and remembrance. A total of five stories or comments relate to this motif of resistance.

Spiritualizing. Fewer stories or comments were given in this category, but 8 of the women spoke of giving back to others in the organization because of their faith. They were driven and inspired through their faith to improve career-related conditions for themselves and for others living on the margins in the organization. Specific comments related to a higher power were few.

Teresa was the most expressive about relying on her faith as an act of resistance. Her comments about faith suggest that things will work out the way that God wants them to work out once you define who you are and who you want to be:

You know, you just have to, you know, define your own path, and be comfortable in who you are, and set your boundaries, and you know God will work through it and if it is meant to be it will be, you know, you can't worry about all the other stuff. You'll go crazy.

Likewise, Allyson expressed a strong belief in stewardship and destiny. She believes that what is meant for her in her life is meant for her. “Just be a good steward of what you have, and then that other stuff, is going to come, and what’s yours is yours. That’s it. Nobody can take it from you; they can’t have what you’re supposed to have.”

Rhonda stated that she was able to persevere through a difficult career situation because of her faith. There was tension between her and her boss during this situation; however, their faith helped to bridge their differences. Their belief in God brought the two of them closer together after the controversy. Quietly, she discussed the role that faith played during a very difficult time in her career:

Another thing I haven’t mentioned, but I think it became stronger for me, and this is probably where my boss and I have bridged our differences, is around faith. Really being led, supported, finding wisdom and strength in the messages in the sermon at church, in the stories of others, and that has supported me, that doing it on my own, I am bound not to be successful, but for me, having a higher power, having an inner reserve that comes from those, all that’s been instilled in me by my parents and my upbringing and my educational training, and all those experiences, with them by my faith, and by my belief that I can pray for guidance and strength, and it was granted to me.

Madeline demonstrates a servant leadership demeanor in her role as an executive. She reaches out to help others. Essentially, she believes in paying back what others have done to pave the way for her to get to where she is in her career life. She spoke of developing networks to help others, so individuals in this network can someday return the favor to someone else. She also spoke about her commitment to this task as if it relates to a higher calling:

So, I keep that network active, because they might not all work for me, you know? And so, the few that work out make it worth, like everything. And always, my joke with people is I tell them one of the reasons I do it is because especially with the young people that they’re going to be somewhere important one day, when I’m no longer doing this, and somebody’s got to take care of my boy. [Laughter] Somebody’s going to return the favor.

Teresa is passionate about helping other Black women and women in general as well.

Her actions go beyond selecting a few women in the organization to mentor. She sees her work as driven by a higher calling in her life. Teresa professed the connection between her spiritual beliefs and her career. She believes she is in her role because God placed her there. Even though Teresa is in an executive role in the organization, she believes she is in her role to serve others. Her role is to help other women advance in the legal profession. Teresa shared that her administrative assistant teases her about the amount of time she spends mentoring other women:

I mean, I have—in and out of my office—my secretary laughs; she’s like, “You have more meetings with people.” I do a lot of mentoring, you know, when I go, particularly young female attorneys; you know, if you want to come talk, anybody can come and talk to me. Just call me up, and I’ll, so, I always have a group of women all across the country.

Similar to Teresa’s and Madeline’s stories of a higher calling, Katrina will at times silently help others Black employees to advance in the organization. Embedded in her comments are her beliefs that individuals should practice advocating and promoting others who are marginalized, if they are in a position to do so. Similar to Teresa, she shows a strong desire to help others, but not receive recognition for doing so. She commented about secretly helping others:

But the person that kind of stands out, so it’s a person that either seeks the help, so they make themselves known in that way, and say, “Well, look, I really want to be successful here, what does it take?” Right? And they get, they get help to get and you know they’ve got everything it takes. When they get to that certain level they’re going to reach back and pick somebody else up. They’re going to, you know, and those are the people that, people like me help, and whether they recognize they need the help or not to help them; they may never know you helped them, and that’s okay.

The women knew that they would not be able to help every Black woman seeking support from them, however, Madeline is so committed to supporting other Black women and men to excel that she does not let one situation that did not work out prevent her from helping Black women and men in the future. She stated, “so, I would take 10 losses to get that one win.”

Madeline is a Black woman executive who, regardless of the consequences or impact on her credibility, will support the ascent of another Black woman. As in Katrina's case, her actions appear to be selfless.

The focus of the spirituality motif is not only on one's belief in God, but also on the storytellers' strong belief to serve others because they believe they are destined to do so. They envision their role as broader than demonstrating functional expertise and personally advancing in their careers. The storytellers see their role encompassing a spirit of sacrificing for others and servant-hood.

Memorializing and emulating others. Memorializing and emulating others emerged as a theme of resistance during the interviews. As noted in an earlier section of this chapter, the women acknowledged the influence of their parents' behaviors while they were growing up. The stories and comments in this section, although minimal, refer to modeling the behaviors of others during childhood and others in the organization, even White males. By emulating successful role models in the organization, the women positioned themselves for success. They witnessed and incorporated successful behaviors for moving beyond stereotypes associated with race and gender.

Katrina spoke of emulating individuals that were close to her:

I think that I have to some extent taken on some of the personalities of the people that have been close to me, because you know, but I think it's been based on seeing something I liked and emulated what I liked, versus what worked. Because I took on some personalities from people, but I don't think it necessarily worked in the workplace, but I thought it was strong; I thought it was forceful; I thought it was appropriate.

Related to emulating others, Madeline expressed her thoughts about creating similar experiences for other Black junior employees in the organization. Madeline is concerned that it is difficult to find Black women and men in the organization to emulate. She believes that

to aspire to move upward, it is important to see others at that level to emulate and if you do not have other Black employees to emulate, how do you surrogate or create those experiences?

Now, and what I say to people is that was very important to me, because I had never thought about it consciously, but when I look back it never was, it seemed impossible to me, never, ever, because I always had somebody higher than me that I could aspire to be. But how do you surrogate for that? And you have to surrogate for it.

The majority of the women grew up during a time when the Civil Rights Movement was happening. They saw strong leaders fighting against race discrimination. The memories of the their parents and others in the community served as a foundation for winning and achieving in their lives. Most of the storytellers modeled the liberatory and diligent behaviors they saw during their childhood.

Overt and Covert Acts of Resistance

Another level of analysis included identifying the percentage of covert and overt acts of resistance. I read through each comment or statement and identified if the resistance was covert or overt. Of the 253 stories or comments of resistance, 72% were covert and 27% were overt acts of resistance. Of the over 180 covert comments or stories related to career life histories, 23% of the covert acts were strategizing (see Table 4.5). An additional, 23% were related to building relationships in the corporation. Executing, maintaining, promoting, and creating identity and reconstructing reality are in the 9% to 11% range for covert acts. The 72 overt acts of resistance relate to confronting (46%), changing systems and structures (18%), advocating (6%), and educating (5%).

Table 4.6

Percentage of Covert Acts of Resistance

Resistance Motif	Percentage of Covert Acts
Strategizing	23%
Relating	23%
Performing	11%
Reconstructing and Reshaping Reality	10%
Promoting and Creating Identity	9%
Advocating for Self and Others	7%

Table 4.7

Percentage of Overt Acts of Resistance

Resistance Motif(s)	Percentage of Overt Acts
Confronting (for Self and Others)	46%
Organization Infrastructure	46%
Advocating for Others	8%
Coaching and Educating Others	6%

A discussion on covert and overt acts of resistance is included in more detail in chapter 5 and several examples of overt and covert behaviors are found in Appendix F. It is notable that the following statistics confirm that the majority of stories and acts of resistance referred to acts that are covert in nature. This is not surprising given the political nature involved in navigating the organization at an executive level.

Differences in Resistance Strategies Across Organizations and Industries

Initially, I wanted to explore if strategies of resistance were different across industries and organization during my research. The thought was that working in different industries might provoke different responses of resistance. For example, are some industries more conservative than others regarding race and gender issues? However, I found that utilizing different resistance strategies across industries is insignificant. For example, all of the women demonstrated the strategizing motif. They also advocated for themselves and most of the women advocated for other Black women as well. Finally, all of the storytellers used the reconstructing reality motif against gendered (everyday) racism. Yet, this research only included a sample size of 12 women working in five industries (consumer packaging, industrial, entertainment, technology, and financial services). Consequently, a broader representation of women and industries could show something different.

Acceptance of Organizational Discourse Regarding Black Women

The primary goal of this research was to identify resistance strategies employed by Black women executives in opposition to gendered (everyday) racism. Stories and comments from each interview were analyzed and categorized into four areas of focus and discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Prior to the interviews, I assumed that all of the women would provide stories of resisting gendered (everyday) racism, vigorously. That was not the case. Conversely, the spirit in which the women discussed their career life histories of resisting gendered (everyday) racism varied. Even though this was not the original research goal, I decided to explore this aspect further. The additional data captured from the stories of the women proved helpful in discussing each woman's acceptance or non-acceptance of corporate discourse related to race and gender for Black women.

A basic continuum (see Figure 4.1) was developed to align with Holmer-Nadesan's (1996) three-level framework, which describes the variations of employees identifying or not identifying with organizational and corporate discourse. As discussed in chapter 2, employees may identify, counter-identify, or dis-identify with dominant discourse in the organization (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996).

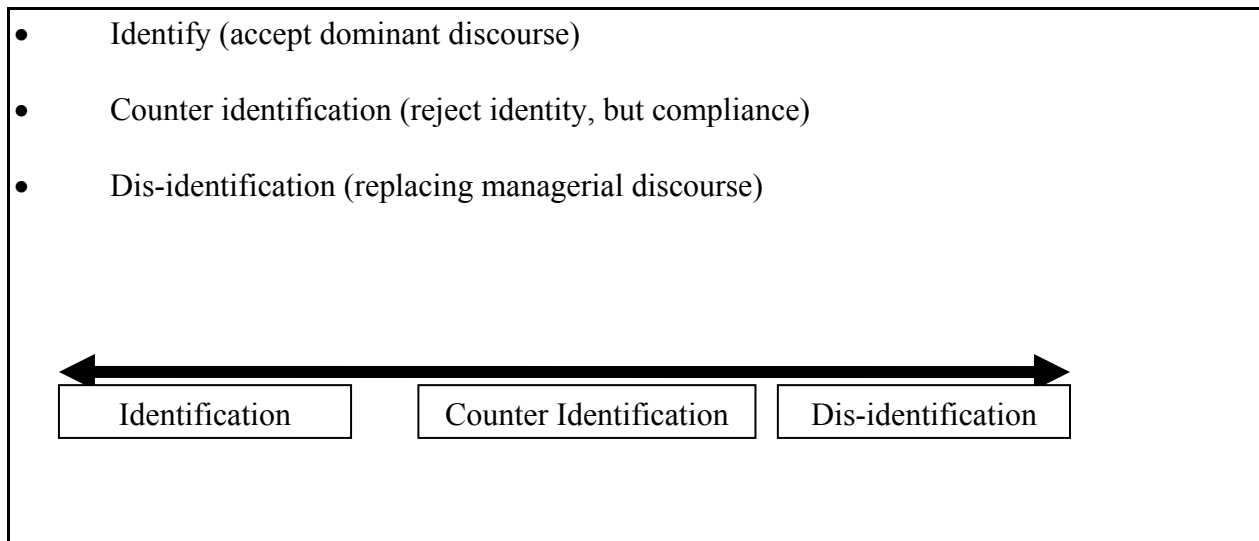


Figure 4.1. Continuum of acceptance of gendered (everyday) racism in corporate discourse.

Identification with dominant discourse involves employees' acceptance of the dominant discourse in the organization. They embrace their identity within the context of the dominant discourse. This may include adhering and believing in traditional rules and the adoption of roles within the organization. With counter-identification, employees reject organizational identity, but at the same time comply with the identities situated in the dominant discourse. As with identification, counter-identification also excludes identification with alternative discourse. Counter-identification may not manifest into acts of resistance, as employees have not embraced alternative subjectivities or identities. Dis-identification includes the replacement of managerial discourse with alternative discourse.

This framework is helpful for a deeper understanding of the varying degrees and foci of the executives expressed in their stories of resisting gendered (everyday) racism in the corporation. The intent of using this continuum is to provide another layer of holistic analysis of the results. The interviews provided evidence that the storytellers held varying levels of commitment and focus to resisting gendered (everyday) racism during their careers. For example, the majority of executives demonstrated some passion or concern for eliminating organizational behavior that limited the progress of Black women in private industry. However, the storytellers expressed different levels of passion as was indicated in the way they told their stories, the outcomes of their stories and the focus of their resistance actions. Four of the women vocalized extreme passion to eliminating organizational behaviors limiting the progression of Black women. As they spoke, I could envision them on the frontline of change to repair and eliminate inequities and gendered (everyday) racism in the organization.

The continuum is helpful by serving as a gauge for discussing, acknowledging, and understanding the attitudes and views of the 12 women regarding their acceptance or non-acceptance of corporate discourse regarding their identity and the identity of Black women in general. It is also helpful for discussing the degree of resistance they exerted to contest corporate negative discourse as it relates to their career life histories. The intention for using this continuum is not to evaluate or judge the women in this study. Even though I assigned numbers 1 to 3 to represent each level of identification (see Table 4.6) as defined by Holmer-Nadesan (1996) for greater clarity and simplicity, it is important to note that the women in the study are not a number. They are complex human beings existing and living in a complicated context of organizational dynamics. In addition, the numbers are assigned by me based only on the transcripts and the climate I experienced during the interview. I recognize that the interview is a

limited and self-contained system, so the information evolving from the interview is based solely on what the women said and what I heard as the researcher. Their acceptance and non-acceptance of corporate discourse fluctuated based on the circumstances they encountered in their careers. In other words, the assignment of each storyteller to a number is not exact, but a means for identifying the variance in beliefs, actions, and responses to and about gendered (everyday) racism in their career. The assignment is to provoke moments of reflection for me as the researcher.

For this analysis, women who identify with dominant discourse regarding Black women leaders in the organization may not outwardly or directly resist the current organization discourse about their identity as Black women. They may accept the rules and beliefs regarding their existence and may not aggressively exert or oppose systems and structures perpetuating gendered (everyday) racism or may even choose not to see these systems and structures. They may demonstrate assimilation behaviors. The focus is to fit in and not rock the boat when they experience or observe unfair practices in the organization except if they are in a role designed to do so. Their focus is on doing what ever they need to do for upward movement, even if it involves at times conforming to or accepting marginalizing behavioral patterns directed toward them or other Black women.

Women who counter-identify with dominant discourse about Black women in the organization may reject organizational beliefs about their identity as Black women. They may not believe in the rules and the systems that exist to block their upward movement; however similar to women who identify with the dominant discourse, they may demonstrate behaviors of compliance. The women may not aggressively exert or oppose systems and structures perpetuating gendered (everyday) racism, but they do not agree with what the organizational

culture is promoting regarding the identity of Black women. In other words, they do not sit on the sidelines and just let things happen. They resist using their assigned role and by changing organizational structures and systems in a quiet and un-revolutionary way. These women may systematically compartmentalize what they truly feel about themselves from what the organization expects of Black women leaders in general.

Dis-identification includes behaviors that create an alternative organizational discourse. It includes the replacement of Black women leader discourse that propagates gendered (everyday) racism. Women that dis-identify reject organizational beliefs about their identity by creating an alternative discourse regarding Black women leaders. Maintaining, creating, and promoting their self-identity are important. Their focus is to deliver organizational results, but at the same time pave the way for other Black women leaders to rise in the organization. They demonstrate a spiritual and purpose driven leadership. When faced with situations in which they are seeking emancipation for themselves or other marginalized groups, the Black women take action to create, to fulfill, and to support their identity and the identity of others or alternative discourse. In other words, their act of resistance is creating in the current situation what does not exist to support the identity in which they embrace.

Continuum Analysis

Each storyteller was assigned a number from 1 to 3 (see Table 4.6). As a reminder, 1 represents identification, 2 is counter-identification, and 3 is dis-identification. Eight women were assigned 2 or above. Four out of the 8 were assigned 2.5 or above. Four were assigned 1.9 or below. Two of the 4 received a numerical rating higher than 1.5 and two lower than a 1.5. Eight of the women were in the 1.5 to 2.5 range. The average rating for all 12 women was 2.14.

Table 4.6

Continuum Rating Assignment

Storyteller	Rating	Description
a.	2.7	Overtly confronts gendered (everyday) racism.
b.	2.7	Fighter/overtly confronts inequity in the organization.
c.	2.7	Promotes the advancement of Black men and women.
d.	2.5	Overtly confronts.
e.	2.4	Committed to helping other Black women advance (goes the extra mile).
f.	2.3	Challenges and educates.
g.	2.2	Uses role to create equity in the organization.
h.	2.0	Covertly supports other Black women.
i.	1.8	Subtle acknowledgement of gendered (everyday) racism.
j.	1.5	Plays it safe.
k.	1.4	Denies gendered (everyday) racism (reconstruction) regardless of the cost to her.
l.	1.3	Strong focus on advancing self.

Average Score = 2.14

Based on these numerical assignments, most of the women counter-identify with the dominant organizational discourse regarding Black women and their identity. There is some compliance to organizational discourse that may inhibit the progression of Black women leaders; however, these women do not identify with the discourse. They maintain their self-identity, but

have learned how to successfully navigate for change and at the same time escape a challenging or radical image. The storytellers may take a more organizationally acceptable route to create change in the organization for other Black women. They are mentors, networkers, and relationships builders to get what they want and to make changes in the organization. These women may tip toe around race issues publicly, but all the time are strategizing about what they can change for themselves and for other Black women in the organization. The following comment reveals how one executive got in the inner circle of White males working for a Fortune 100 company. She was intentional about getting in the inner circle to influence the outcomes of a union negotiation, which ultimately made her look good:

And so a lot of it was just building a relationship, but building that relationship with them at their level, so between knowing how to play golf—a Black woman knowing how to play golf, oh, my God. And the food and beer, and sports, you know? It was during football season, and we were talking SCC football every week. . . . It is, so it totally broke down the barriers, and they were like, “Now, you know, we’re agreeing to stuff, because we trust you, and we believe in you.”

The women are clear about holding on to the identity they have defined for themselves.

The comment below conveys the sentiment of one executive living in two worlds. She chooses to live bi-culturally, keeping her personal life separate from her work life:

You don’t go to the same clubs. Everybody here in [company name] lives east of the city. I choose to live west of the city, so just by virtue of that, I’m different. I live in an all Black community, west of the city, drive an hour to work. So, my kids go to schools over there, and they’re going to an all Black—well, not all Black; but it’s not—a lot of that immersion going on and so all of my activities are typically affiliated with my church. I don’t go to the same country clubs. I don’t see them at the amphitheatre. So, you know, that discussion is just not the same. You know, I’ll engage, but they just don’t have any perception of my life, versus I can probably guess about theirs, you know? So, it’s just, it’s just a difference in, you know?

The women assigned a number lower than 2 did believe in having a strong self-identity, however, they may not be committed currently to building an easier path for other Black women to follow. Again, this assignment was based on the stories shared during the interview. The

women assigned to this range used inward motifs of resistance most of the time. The focus was more on themselves and thinking about what they needed to do to advance, strategizing to get ahead, and in some instances, tolerating for a while the gendered (everyday) racism barriers that are in their way. For example, one of the executives shared a comment about exercising tolerance to get what she wants in a difficult situation that was related to gendered (everyday) racism, “so I guess in that sense it was the same kind of reaction, which is that I tolerated it and figured out how to just sort of suck it up and get what I needed to get out of the situation.”

They may not readily or intentionally acknowledge the existence of gendered (everyday) racism and if they do, they view it as an anomaly, circumstance or a result of the factor of similarity. One executive does acknowledge racism exist, but attributes some unfairness in the organization to the factor of similarity:

It’s obvious it’s there. I would say it’s interesting, because I think that, I think that the White majority, they don’t, a lot of them, many of them are racist, and they don’t, many are racist for a number of different reasons. They’re scared; they’re unaware; they have their own insecurities. Then I think that there’s a group that is just, is comfortable with their own kind. And doesn’t understand how that manifests itself in the workplace. So, for example, most of my friends, I have a spectrum of friends. Most of my closest are Black, just because I naturally gravitate to them, as friends. I think in the workplace, it works the same way. And because it’s a workplace, but it’s also a social situation, the same way. White men gravitate toward people that they’re just like, where you’re dealing with other people as people, and so you naturally gravitate to other people that are similar to you. So, I think a lot of it is just, is that. They don’t understand that that natural association, and attraction and bonding for people that are just like you is creating a situation where you have unequal opportunities for people.

These women have developed to a certain degree, immunity to seeing or experiencing subtle everyday racism behaviors. When they do see it, they may not directly challenge these behaviors to support change in the organization. Their focus is working within the system and the current dominant discourse, not necessarily changing it. This does not mean they do not care; it just is not their current focus. In addition, they may have resisted gendered (everyday)

racism or other forms of inequities in the past, but have decided it is detrimental to their career to take action against discrimination in the workplace. An executive shared how she felt after she was reprimanded for not handling a situation with racial overtones correctly. She talked about losing her confidence after they changed her reporting structure because of this incident, “but, it impacted my confidence. There were rumors and discussions about what it was that led to the shift and the change.” She continued to describe her feelings after receiving a reprimand:

Oh, brutalized. My husband was a safe place. We talked about it, in the way that people talk about grief; I can look back and recall the many, many times that I told that story in various ways, because it was wrong. And I felt misunderstood. I felt unfairly treated.

In addition to feeling brutalized, the impact of this incident altered her voice for change in the organization. She talked about how her voice changed:

It’s much more directed, and tends most often to be in very safe places. I do individual coaching of people; I have mentees that value my counsel. But I have been much more thoughtful about the organization, and I recognize in some ways—I don’t know what I thought at the time, but I underestimated how loud the voice of uninformed people could be. I did.

A comment by one of the executives is a poignant example of her decision not to get directly involved in organizational issues related to diversity. She stated:

And I will tell you that I have purposely avoided, and some people will say this is a copout and that I’m not doing what I’m supposed to be doing. But I have purposely avoided putting myself in a situation where I am speaking out against discrimination in the workplace, diversity programs, you know things like, like that. Unless intolerance, unless it’s related to my, my job. In other words, if it is a, us having, you know the company having discriminated against somebody causing us to have a potential liability then I’m gonna speak out against it. But it’s within the context of my job. I purposely avoid doing it outside of the context of my job and I guess some may say it’s a copout; I would say that it has contributed to my ability to succeed and advance.

It does not mean that women in this category do not mentor or provide support to other Black women. For example, the women in this category supported this research by making

themselves available and were excited about telling their stories. In addition three of the four women in this category spoke of mentoring others in the organization.

Women closely anchoring a score of 2, counter-identification, have found a way to move upward in the organization, but without compromising who they are. Their self-identity is strongly intact and they have a strong degree of self-efficacy. They feel good about who they are and focusing on themselves; however, they vocalized a strong belief in giving back to others who may need a helping hand with ascending in the organization, especially Black women. One of the younger executives of the 12 shared her thoughts about giving back. She believes that many Black women leaders feel they have a responsibility to support the growth and development of marginalized individuals in the organization:

I've met so many African-American women that are in leadership roles in large organizations, just making things happen, and it's an interesting responsibility, and I say the large majority of us feel the way I feel, which is we have a responsibility, like we're not just here for us, and so it—and you know, there's a conscience associated with, or consciousness associated with having achieved a certain level and figuring out how, who else are you going to bring along, or what else is it that you're doing from your role that creates opportunities for other—not just African-American females—just other, other individuals that need a voice.

Another executive stated she does not want to be an exception in terms of executive leadership; to the contrary, she desires Black women in executive positions to be the rule. She talked about the Black women executives supporting each other:

You know, I don't want employees at [company name] to look up and see me as an exception to the rule. There needs to be more than one of me around here, because it sets the tone for what Black women in the organization think they can achieve. If it's just one, they think that's an accident . . . one of the things that I try to do at least once a year is like pull out my contact list, and everybody Black, every Black female that I know in the area that is an executive, I have a networking event because I think we need to be networked, and we need to have a support structure, and it is for no reason other than yeah, we need to know each other.

Even though they have strong self-identities, they continue to demonstrate a degree of compliance with the dominant discourse in the organization regarding gendered (everyday) racism. Their stories of resistance did not include confrontation. They operate safely within organizational systems to create change, using their role. Similar to the women in the mid and lower ranges of the score of 1, their focus is on inward motifs of resistance. They strategize and self-advocate for their advancement in the organization—working behind the scenes to get a promotion.

Women falling in the 2.5 and above range demonstrate an extreme degree of passion as they told stories of overt resistance to gendered (everyday) racism. Many of their stories included the motif of confronting for others or for themselves. They do not negate or ignore the existence of gendered (everyday) racism behavior. They openly take more risks by challenging practices in the organization and developed strong enough relationships with White male and females to educate them on race and gender issues. One executive in particular was extremely committed and loyal to advocating for others in the organization even if her actions resulted in negative consequences for her. The women in this category brought forth injustices. For example, one executive talks about a reorganization that could have left negative perception regarding diversity. She brought this issue to the attention of the CEO:

So, in a current reorganization, it wasn't this year, but it was about [3 years ago] there were three women—Black women that were going to be impacted and in terms of the statistics it could have worked. It wasn't good, but it could have worked. All right. But nobody was taking it to the right level. And I didn't understand it. So, I had a conversation with the [executive in charge], and I said, "So, tell me what's going to happen with these people, whatever," and so he told me, and I said, "Well, okay, does the [CEO] know?" He said, "Well, you know, he sent in the report, and somebody pointed it out to him . . . and I said, because, you know, [CEO] would do something about it if he knew," and so I asked [CEO]; and I said, "Look, you know, your numbers aren't bad, so let me tell you what I see. How I see it, how I perceive it, and how it's going to be seen by others?" And he acted on it, and so he found positions for those three women, and

then he made them [the executives in charge] move through the reports and tell him who else was impacted.

They challenged and dis-identified with the dominant discourse regarding the identity of Black women leaders and other groups on the margins. Two of the women threatened to leave the organization because they were mistreated due to their race and gender. Their plan to exit shook the foundation of executive leadership in the organization. One executive tells her story of coming very close to leaving the organization because of a negative comment her manager made about Black employees. She told how she handled the situation:

So what did I do about that? Well, you know what, I was really, obviously, I was really upset about it, and I came home that night, and talked to my husband and said, “You know, I’m not, I can’t do this.” And so I went in there the next day, and I told him, I said, “I’m leaving, and because you said this, I cannot work for somebody who would address me that way.” And I told him, I said, “And you and I will go tell [name] why I’m leaving,” because the gentleman who at the time was running the—we were in [the state] at the time—the [state] franchise, was the reason I was there. And so, he didn’t want to have to go tell [name] why I was leaving, and he just, you know, “Oh, no, I don’t want that to happen. I didn’t mean it this way,” blah-blah-blah, whatever. And so, at the end of the day, I still have my job and that never happened again. But how blatant can that be? I mean, it really was a very hard thing to hear. Hard thing to hear.

The women in the 2.5 and above range told stories of when they spoke up for other Black women or men in the organization. Below is a comment one of the storytellers made about speaking up for other Black women. Her words reflect an allegiance to altering corporate discourse regarding how Black women’s ideas are sometimes overlooked in meetings. She commented on the role of Black women to speak up when they see this type of behavior. Her words suggest Black women leaders have two roles in corporations, their job and the job to address inequities in the corporation:

And I think Black women have to, you know, we have to be watching the other sister at the table, too, because if she says it and they don’t acknowledge it, then I will stop and say, “Just said this five minutes ago. What is different about what she said and what he said?” . . . So I do think, yes, I do think that’s something that as leaders, Black women have to be facilitating the room. You have to be tracking, because you’ve got to be able

to say, “Here is the pattern that I’m noticing. It’s not that I feel this way, it’s not that I’m emotional,” because you know, you get called on that, because you feel this way. “No, what I have seen in this room is that when this man says the same thing this woman has said, everybody acknowledges, but she said it before he did and nobody said a word.” And you’ve got to be able to watch it and put it back out there. And so that’s why I said, you know, it’s almost, being a Black woman in corporate America, that’s almost the darn job. You work as hard at being the Black woman in corporate America as you do your job.

As stated earlier, it is important not to box these women into these categories. Women assigned lower numbers believe in mentoring and helping other Black women find their way in the organization. They may not have demonstrated as much passion about it as the women in the higher ranges. Accordingly, the women in the higher ranges may not always challenge the existing discourse regarding Black women leaders and also focus inwardly—strategizing and advocating for themselves. The focus of this research is purely qualitative. It is important to note that the interpretation of the transcripts and the communication and tone conveyed by the women during the interview is based on the reality that I have personally constructed. I discuss my findings in chapter 5.

Chapter V: Discussion

Gendered (Everyday) Racism in the Corporation

The interviews confirm that African-American women leaders continue to experience challenges to their leadership. To varying degrees, each storyteller confessed to one or more of the six challenges Black women experience moving upward in their careers (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001). The challenges include the following: “(a) daily doses of racism, (b) Black women are held to a higher standard, (c) invisibility, (d) exclusion from the formal and informal network, (e) challenges to their authority more often, and (f) hollow commitment by corporate leaders to the advancement of minorities” (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001, p. 140).

Several women in this study acknowledge that their experiences with blatant racism were minimal, especially as senior executives; however, they do admit to having to work harder and to taking the assignments that other employees avoid. Their responses align with the challenge of Black women being held to a higher standard. The storytellers acknowledge they have been targets of gendered (everyday) racism, but at times choose to ignore, deny, or not to entertain it. It appears that they have built a gendered (everyday) racism buffer or shield. They subconsciously or consciously reconstruct their realities regarding race and gender.

Several of the executives also admit to their authority being challenged by colleagues in the workplace. They also share personally witnessing other Black women’s ideas and presence ignored. These experiences beg the need for organizational leaders enacting these behaviors to understand and be aware of the lens of marginalization and alienation they bring to work daily. However, several of the executives in this study believe in many cases gendered (everyday) racism is not intentionally anti-Black. They attribute White colleagues’ behavior to the factor of similarity. Because you look like me, I seek you out more than someone that does not look like

me. Nevertheless, these behaviors prevent Black women professionals from experiencing a dignified work life and cause them to be overlooked for promotions and other initiatives that provide them with more visibility. The behaviors also may temporarily or permanently diminish the self-esteem of Black women leaders. In spite of gendered (everyday) racism in corporations, the majority of the interviewees portrayed high-levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. But at some point in their career, a few of the executives found themselves in a quagmire of self-doubt or confusion because of behaviors associated with gendered (everyday) racism. This confusion and self-doubt was manifested in several ways. For example, several of the storytellers almost resigned because of gendered (everyday) racism actions of White males in the work place. In all cases, the women were convinced by their mentors not to make any rash decisions.

D. Thomas and Gabarro (1999) wrote that people of Color may respond to racist situations in a way that validates established stereotypes about their inability to be a team player or being too confrontational. One of the executives found herself in this predicament. She now speaks her mind only in safe places for fear of being accused of White anti-establishment behavior or for being perceived as the angry Black woman, when in fact she is only voicing the concerns of others in the organization. Another storyteller created a wall between her and her White manager because he excluded her from the informal network. The network happens to include his direct reports who are White males and her colleagues. She only communicates with him when it is absolutely necessary and chooses not to confront her manager about his actions. Unfortunately, her exclusion from team members coupled with her decision not to confront her manager could lead her teammates to perceive her as not being a team player.

Another noteworthy outcome of this research is that several of the women shared they had not recently experienced blatant or subtle forms of marginalization. I would like to explore

this finding in more detail. Even though several of the women believed they had not recently experienced gendered (everyday) racism in their career, I question why a strong message of results orientation stays with them even at this point in their careers. This is not to negate the need to work harder to climb or maneuver the corporate ladder. It is also not to dismiss the fact that they are high achievers. However, their actions for getting ahead were very strategic and embedded in their paradigm for success and major achievements. They knew they had to work harder because they were Black. The women had to prove themselves in the corporation. Working harder because of race or gender suggests the women expected to experience some form of marginalization.

Critical Mass and Racialized Roles

Recent data highlight the small number of African-American women in leadership positions in corporations across the United States. McGlowan-Fellow and Thomas (2004) discussed the rapid increase in population of racial and ethnic minority groups—a higher increase over the past 40 years than any other time in the history of the country. Nevertheless, despite the increase, the racial make up of corporate executive leadership has shown minimal change, especially for African-American women. All of the storytellers in this study confirmed the scant number of Black women executives in private industry. Conversely, one executive stated that she believes Black women self-select themselves out of consideration for these higher-level jobs. Inherent in this statement is that Black women have a choice to become senior executives in the organization. This may be the case in some situations. However, the burning question is why do they self select out? Are Black women leaders threatened by what it takes to be successful? Do they not want to engage in organizational politics? These are questions for future research. Another executive acknowledged the small number of Black women executives

in revenue generating positions. One could question why this is the case. Her comment aligns with S. Collins' (1997) research regarding the slow movement of African-American men and women into revenue generating executive roles because of their career placement in racialized roles in the organization. I think this is an important factor in the exclusion of Black women in executive level positions.

Problematizing Race Over Gender

Few of the storytellers in this study alluded to gender as an issue in their careers, but most of the women problematize race. The few stories related to gender suggest that the women are more preoccupied with race than gender, even though in theory and reality these constructs are intertwined. Several of the women in this study commented on the relationship of race and gender for Black women. They know the relationship is manifested in stereotypes and generalities regarding Black women; however, only a few executives recalled conversations or remembered subtle messages regarding gender only. For example, none of the women brought up early childhood discussions regarding the women's liberation movement or Black women's non-support of women's liberation 40 years ago

Stereotypes and Tokenism

Data from the interviews show that for the most part, these women do not demonstrate the angry Black woman image in the corporation (Parker, 2002). In situations where anger was displayed, it typically was provoked by blatant acts of gendered (everyday) racism. The story about a White male executive asking a Black woman executive not to sit next to another Black employee was likely to precipitate an angry response, especially because the Black woman executive in this situation was the recipient of bullying behavior. Because Black women experience invisibility at times, they have to take extra steps to be seen and heard. They have to

work harder because they are aware of another lingering stereotype, the welfare mother, which suggests they do not want to work. It is on the shoulders of the storytellers to eliminate these stereotypes through their day-to-day interactions with corporate colleagues.

The work for Black women at this level is magnified in comparison to their White colleagues. Black executive women become the example, the role model, and the go to person for other Black women trying to figure out what they need to do to advance. The storytellers become caretakers and superwomen, both behaviors related to the Mammy stereotype as discussed in E. Bell and Nkomo (2001) and reviewed earlier in chapter 2. The mammy takes care of everyone else to the detriment of herself. The women in this research are the few Black women who have made it, which means they have to carefully pick and choose where and with whom they place their energy. This is another dynamic the women have to face during their careers.

Being one of a successful few also has consequences for how they perform and manage their image in the corporation. Moss Kanter's (1977) token dynamics and the importance of a critical mass of minorities of the 1970s continue to be relevant even almost 40 years later. The decisions made by Black women are frequently scrutinized. Their mistakes are magnified. All of these dynamics require that Black women expend more energy to maintain their credibility in the workplace. It also requires that they are continuously strategizing and building relationships to stay afloat and to move upward without losing their identity.

A contemporary image of Black women is the Black lady overachiever, the middle class professional Black woman who works hard without any damaging consequences. She is unraced and assimilated into the dominant culture (P. Collins, 1998). This stereotype does not capture the reality of these women. However, with every storyteller, the strategy of demonstrating high

levels of execution was paramount to their success. In some cases, high performance became the entrée into the inner circle.

Early Messages Regarding Gendered (Everyday) Racism

All of the women were exposed to a similar message they received or observed from their parents at an early age. They were told they had to work harder. The women saw their parents work hard to make a way for themselves and the family. Their parents were role models. Even though the majority of the women did not recall their parents having discussions about race, they could recall early experiences in which either they or their parents were targets of racism. They learned the various responses and reactions to racism early in their lives. Several storytellers even shared that they had practice in dealing with racism or they knew how to cut through it because it was the norm for them growing up. These early experiences shaped their responses to the gendered (everyday) racism they encountered later in their careers. This has been found in other research as well (Essed, 1991).

Because of the small number of women in this study, it is difficult to confirm a relationship between how individuals learn about racism and their response to racism; however, there is some evidence suggesting that these women embraced and enacted what they saw growing up. For example, their resistance strategies are not always observable or public. Mirroring their parents' covert strategies for survival in a world of racism, the women chose not to draw attention in the organization. However, it is possible that deconstructing covert acts of resistance does not publicly reveal structural issues or behaviors associated with gendered (everyday) racism. Organizational leaders, in some cases, are not aware of their behavior or structures perpetuating gendered (everyday) racism. If negative actions are not overtly addressed in the workplace, it is difficult to hold colleagues accountable for their actions.

Black Women Executives Supporting One Another in the Workplace

The need for Black women to support one another was a major theme in this research. Even though several of the storytellers believed they had not experienced overt gendered (everyday) racism later in their careers, they saw a strong need for Black women leaders to exercise more support for one another. They have found ways to engage other Black women executives in the community; however, several executives communicated their displeasure with the support that Black women in the corporate environment provide one another. The level of passion displayed by these executives regarding this subject speaks to the loneliness and isolation Black women executives encounter because they represent a minority of Black women executives at that level. They know what it takes to get where they are. The women understand the sacrifices other Black women professionals aspiring to become senior executives in the corporation must make. It was not an easy road to travel for the majority of the women; however, once several of the women learned or adopted successful resistance tactics to garner corporate acceptance and to achieve promotions in their careers, they became skilled in knowing what to do to circumvent behaviors or to ignore actions related to gendered (everyday) racism.

Discussions of Resistance

The total of 253 stories or comments related to resistance demonstrates the fact that Black women need to take extra steps to promote themselves or other Black women or to correct inequality in organizational systems, structures, and discourses. A total of four areas of focus and 17 motifs of resistance were identified as a result of exploring the primary research question: “What strategies of resistance do Black women executives use against gendered (everyday) racism?” In this section, I discuss in more detail the resistance strategies the executives used to thwart actions, behaviors, systems, and structures perpetuating inequities in the organization.

Specifically, I discuss the types of resistance within the context of past resistance research. I also elaborate on the relevance and application of the resistance motifs and categories developed during the data analysis and the implications of these resistance strategies. I conclude with a discussion on research benefits and limitations.

Distinguishing resistance and coping. Before proceeding with a detailed discussion on the motifs of resistance, I will distinguish coping strategies from resistance strategies. The interviewees demonstrated actions and behaviors not to cope with organizational reality regarding race and gender, but to challenge and navigate through organizational politics to intentionally affect change for themselves or for others. Porter (2002) examined coping strategies used by VP-level Black women executives to be successful in the workplace. Porter identified similar characteristics as those shown in this research that Black leaders use to restore their health and vitality. Mentoring is one of the characteristics from Porter's research, which also happens to be one of the acts of resistance revealed in this current study. Balancing work and family life and avoiding company politics are additional characteristics from the Porter study. The 12 women in this study did not speak about avoiding company politics. As a matter of fact, several of the women became skilled at navigating company politics to promote their careers. The women operated from a position of intentionally changing outcomes related to race and gender, not a position of coping. Rather than coping (Porter, 2002; Shorter-Gooden, 2004), several women in this study intentionally engaged in conflict to override gendered (everyday) racism or other forms of marginalization in the organization. They were not silent partners or operating from a position of self-deficiency.

Empowering resistance. The motifs of resistance align with some past concepts and research on resistance in the workplace; however, this research is unique in that through

storytelling, I identified more detailed acts of resistance Black women leaders employ in private industry related to gendered (everyday) racism. In addition, the current research identifies the impact of the executive's action on themselves and/or on organizational systems. As noted in previous research (R. Thomas & Davies, 2005b), resistance constitutes a dichotomy of resistance and power in the workplace. Managers and employees reside on opposite ends of the spectrum with employees having little power and control in the workplace.

While power and control are foundational to management practices and provoke resistance behavior on the part of employees, the primary results of this study shows that resistance is an act of strength. For the most part, the executives in this study do not see themselves or have not presented themselves in a victimized or defeated manner. Their acts of resistance are indicative of high levels of self-efficacy and self-love. Most of the women do not feel they are controlled in the workplace. Even earlier in their careers, the women did not view themselves as having minimal power and control over their careers. Once they entered the workplace as young professionals, several of the executives were surprised by the negative behaviors they experienced because of their race and gender; however, most of them stood firm in what they believe and did not allow gendered (everyday) racism to belittle their identities or destroy their careers. Many of the executives saw and continue to see themselves on the frontline for creating change for themselves and other Black women in the organization.

Resistance as a response to unfair practices. However, the results of this study show resistance as a response to an act of oppression. This is an interesting dichotomy or contradiction. The women feel they are in control of their careers; however, they have had to resist against oppressive systems of control related to race and gender in the organization. Perhaps this speaks to the strong belief these executives have in themselves to not let anything

deter them from reaching their career goals and objectives. They demonstrated resistance not only for their own cause and for fellow Black women, but also for other organizational members in marginalized groups. Finally, some of their acts of resistance targeted unfair organizational systems and structures. For example, 10 of the executives commented on their participation in establishing fair human resources practices and procedures or confronting senior executives on the lack of diversity that exist at higher levels in the organization. Their actions established fair procedures, reduced the number of discrimination cases related to race in the organization, and influenced internal and external public relations and external marketing initiatives.

Long and short-term strategies of resistance. Robinson and Ward (1991) separated resistance strategies into two categories: resistance strategies promoting liberation and resistance strategies for survival. Resistance strategies, which relates to Black feminist epistemology, contribute to self-definition and collective action. Resisting for survival are unhealthy acts of resistance. Resistance strategies for survival are short-term and may lead Black women down a path of isolation, alienation, and destructive behaviors that eventually sabotage individual and community uplift (Robinson & Ward, 1991).

Short-term strategies of resistance are not, however, always unhealthy. The executives in this study demonstrated both long and short-term resistance strategies. Notably, the majority of their short-term strategies did not have negative consequences. Several stories did include acts of resistance that did lead to some isolation. For the most part, the women did not seem to suffer any negative consequences from confronting. If anything, their acts of confrontation created positive changes for them or for the organization. For instance, Ida's disclosure of unfair compensation practices prompted the organization to review their practices. This is not to suggest that additional displays of resistance did not create problems for the storytellers. It is

only to say that negative consequences of their resistance were not brought up as a major issue. This is not surprising as most of the women have been successful in their careers.

Everyday resistance. Fleming and Sewell (2002) identified the need to look for acts of resistance in what they described as the commonplace cracks and crevices in corporation. Because gendered (everyday) racism is often subtle, acts of resistance also appear in these same crevices and cracks. They show up where subtle undertakings of inequality prevail, such as the experiences of the storytellers. Yet, this is not meant to cover all acts. Resistance to address structural issues often requires collective, public displays of resistance and discussions with senior level organizational leaders to rectify systemic problems. For example, are total rewards packages and practices fairly distributed? Are external and internal marketing and public relations communication void of racial, gender, and ethnic biases, perceptions, or images?

On a different note, prior research describes workplace resistance as acts of insurrection and rebellion (R. Thomas & Davies, 2005b). My research on resistance does not discount the need for larger and more public collective displays of resistance. The study reveals women often standing alone in their own resistance in the corporation, but at times using relationships with key leaders in the organization to promote their career agendas and/or to manage unfair practices. The majority of the women have mentors, but because they represent the few Black women at this level, they are resisting by themselves most of the time. There is not a group of protesters barricading the doors of human resources. The women are working within a conservative system promoting conventional and status quo behavior—a system requiring employees to abide by corporate norms (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). As tempered-radicals (Meyerson & Scully, 1995), the storytellers maintain a sense of corporate decorum, but also push forward their agendas to change corporate discourse. The executives use their relationship with

White males or females to strategically assuage marginalizing and discriminatory behaviors. Parker (2003) identified communicative strategies of resistance against race and gender marginalization in the workplace. Communication certainly serves as a vehicle for the resistance, but this is not always the case. For example, strategizing could include Black women executives conversations with other members of the organization, but it can also be a very private exercise of self-talk.

Resistance motifs and politics of resistance. R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) examined and categorized organizational and feminist theory and research regarding resistance. They outlined that resistance research falls into three *politics of resistance*. The politics of resistance include politics of reformation, politics of revolution, and politics of re-inscription. R. Thomas and Davies categorized the types of resistance, identified research by the resisting subject, and generalized the outcomes of resistance. There are also additional similarities between the current study on resistance and R. Thomas and Davies' categorization of resistance research. For example, politics of re-inscription includes research with a focus on resistance acts to construct one's identity. It also includes challenging the day-to-day discourse. One of the resistance motifs included the reconstruction and reshaping of reality. Another resistance motif similar to politics of inscription is creating and maintaining identity. Politics of re-inscription research includes women rewriting the script to change harmful and marginalizing discourse and to promote self-efficacy and agency. The examination of resistance is at the individual level.

The resistance motifs in the current study are also similar to R. Thomas and Davies' (2005a) categorization of politics of reformation research. The resistance behaviors of the women in this research influenced organizational systems, policies, and culture. There was a focus on creating equality in the workplace. Research regarding politics of revolution examines

the challenges women face breaking the glass ceiling. R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) discussed feminist resistance that is collective in nature. Women have shared experiences of oppression that inspires collective action. This framework of resistance includes collective action by women to fight patriarchy, class domination, and White supremacy. Several of the resistance motifs include Black women executives assisting other Black women or marginalized groups with career ascension in the organization.

I align several of the resistance motifs from this study with the research categories developed by R. Thomas and Davies (2005b). In my analysis, I saw a stronger relationship between some of the resistance motifs and R. Thomas and Davies' categories than with others. It is important to note that the resistance motifs developed from this study do not exactly mirror R. Thomas and Davies' research. In addition, several of the motifs fall into more than one of the classifications highlighted in the politics resistance research categories they devised. However, the majority of the resistance motifs, in some way indirectly or directly, support building a more inclusive workplace, which relates to politics of reform—changing the organizational culture, structure, and systems.

Table 5.1

Alignment of Resistance Motifs with R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) Resistance Research Categories

<u>R. Thomas and Davies</u>	<u>Motifs of Resistance</u>	<u>Focus</u>
Politics of Reform:	Influencing organizational systems/structure/culture	Organizational infrastructure
Resistance that relates to liberal Feminist ideas. Within the workplace, the subject/focus of resistant reform is on creating equitable systems for men and women.	Using positional power	Organizational infrastructure

Politics of Re-inscription:	Advocating for self	Internal
Resistance that challenges day-to-day discourse and meaning through deconstruction and contestation. This framework recognizes the micro-political resistance actions that women demonstrate everyday.	Advocating for others	Internal
	Confronting for self	Internal
	Performing	Internal
	Promoting, creating, and maintaining identity	Internal
	Reconstructing and reshaping reality	Trans-momental
	Relating	Internal
	Spiritualizing	Trans-momental
Politics of Revolution:	Advocating for others	External
Resistance that includes the agency, action and steps women have taken collectively to push the feminist agenda forward.	Confronting for others	External

Focus of Resistance

The outcomes of this research include a classification of resistance, but the classification in this study subsumes specific detailed acts of resistance. It also includes four different focus areas of resistance. Developing the four areas of focus to include external, internal, trans-momental, and structural acts was helpful in organizing the 17 motifs. This framework helps to clarify the directionality, nature, and impact of resistance by Black women executives. The motifs and the four areas of focus identified in this study overlap. This is not unusual when trying to make sense of a complex, dynamic, and situational act. However, a schema of

resistance in opposition to gendered (everyday) racism is helpful for interpretation, understanding, and practical application.

External resistance motifs. This category includes five career life histories of resistance motifs: advocating for others, coaching, educating, confronting for others, and protecting.

I incorrectly assumed prior to the research that the focus of resistance would be on the women themselves. However, in many cases, the women focused on helping and supporting other Black men and women in the organization. The executives self-reported advocating or confronting for or protecting other Black women in the corporation. They advocated for other Black professionals by showcasing their accomplishments in meetings, by coaching employees to be their successors, and by having an open door for individuals needing advice to make it in the corporation. The women strategically positioned other Black women and men for jobs. They spoke up for Black women experiencing gendered (everyday) racism in meetings.

Several of the executives spoke of educating and coaching their immediate manager and colleagues on negative race and gender related discourse in the organization, which made their working relationships of trust with their manager or co-workers stronger. Building these relationships provided the executives with the opportunity to address real-time harmful racial-gender remarks. They enhanced the awareness of their colleagues and managers regarding race- and gender-related issues. The women's actions show that it is possible to have strong and trusting relationships with people who are different in the organization.

The storytellers tried to reshape the views and perceptions that corporate leaders have about the abilities and capabilities of Black women in the organization. For example, one of the storytellers spoke of challenging a White female colleague when she made statements insinuating one standard for White colleagues and another for Black colleagues. Another

executive spoke of making her manager aware of how his actions and comments may be perceived by other Black and women employees in the organization. The storytellers demonstrated micro-political resistance actions everyday. It is important for Black women to demonstrate internal resistance strategies; however, there is a strong need for Black women to participate in creating an organizational reality dedicated to acceptance, inclusion, and deconstructing negative corporate discourse about Black women in general.

Internal resistance motifs. Internal focus does not necessarily stand-alone; it can also provoke an external alteration on the organizational structure. The internal resistance forms include confronting for self, performing, promoting and creating identity, practicing, reconstructing or reshaping reality, relating, self-advocating, and are all inward resistance motifs, similar to R. Thomas and Davies' (2005b) politics of inscription. This study reveals that the reason the storytellers resist is to open the door for personal career advancement and edification. It is debatable whether relating should be in this category. For this research, relating is working with mentors and sponsors to navigate organizational politics, perceptions, and assumptions to ascend in the organization. Even though there is an external focus, the reason for relating is for personal advancement. The executives take ownership for who they are and where they would like to go from a career perspective. The women invest in themselves by securing the assistance of mentors and sponsors. They promote their capabilities by demonstrating exceptional levels of execution and high achievement. This accelerated level of high-quality execution builds their credibility in the organization.

An internal focus also equips Black women with gaining knowledge as observers. P. Collins' (1986) concept of "outsider within" (p. 514) relates to this thought. As an outsider, the women are learning the tricks, trades, and tools of the other. They are absorbing information

about what they need to do to get special assignments, how to build a relationship with the executive next door, or how to position themselves to receive an invitation to have a seat at the proverbial table of Whiteness. Therefore, their position and place in the organization becomes a site for building knowledge and personal power. As an insider-outsider they become astute on how to play the game. McLaren (1989) explained the oppressed may resist docilely, passively, and subtly when hegemony exists. Fleming and Sewell (2002) described *svejkism* as “the ebb and flow of outsmarting the more powerful, not a hand-to-hand fight for territory at the frontier of control” (p. 868). Many of the stories and comments about resistance include this sort of covert resistance. For example, the strategizing motif was frequently used by the women in this research. All of the executives had to process how they were going to push forward in their careers despite racial and gender boundaries.

Trans-momental resistance motifs. This category includes memorializing others, leading for others, and embracing spirituality. Trans-momental acts of resistance relate to the classification resistance research of R. Thomas and Davies’ (2005b) entitled politics of inscription. Trans-momental acts of resistance include faith-based acts and memorializing others that have paved the path for the advancement of Black women and men in the organization. These actions include stories and comments grounded in spirituality and remembrance. Women exercised trans-momental acts of resistance by intentionally bringing God, faith, and ancestors into their experiences in the workplace. Even though this is a separate categorization, the acts of resistance were internally or externally focused. For example, in some cases the women were purposeful about giving back to others in the organization, but there were times when the focus on trans-momental behaviors was internal.

In past research, spirituality has been cited as a coping mechanism for Black women (Porter, 2002). About half of the women in the current study acknowledged their spirituality as a form of resistance. They did not speak of spirituality as a coping mechanism. They discussed spirituality as a way to guide their actions through the corporate terrain. The storytellers did not fall back on their spirituality when they were hurt or struggling. To the contrary, spirituality framed their destiny. The women were not as concerned about the outcomes of their resistance to systems of gendered (everyday) racism. They knew their destiny was to be in their current role—roles that provide them with the opportunity at times to challenge the unfairness they see in the organization.

Similar to the results of this research, Garner (2004) explored the intersection of spirituality and leadership by examining the strategies that African-American women leaders use in higher education to fulfill their purpose. She highlighted *empowering resistance*, which is overcoming obstacles and challenges through a woman's spiritual self, with a focus on liberating the situation, having the ability to be nimble, flexible, fluid, and eventually celebrating the outcome of the situation or problem. Empowering resistance creates new possibilities. Spirituality, in this case, is not a coping strategy. P. Collins (1998) discussed how African-American women use spirituality as a critical social critique—a catalyst for eradicating societal ills and creating societal parity. With both researchers, spirituality is not a coping strategy; it is a catalyst for change.

Several of the women's spiritual beliefs influenced their leadership to help others. They were not concerned about how their resistance presented them as leaders; they demonstrated a fierce commitment to help Black women and men to move upward in the organization. As servant leaders, the women worked long hours to meet business objectives, but also took time to

focus on building a strong presence of African-Americans in the corporation. Black women executives also built a strong self-identity and persevered in the corporation through memorializing others. Black women executives reflected on family members, community fighters, and corporate trailblazers who addressed the agenda of race and were loyal to the cause of racial uplift. Memorializing others was a catalyst for Black women executives to build personal power and a belief that if the Black men and women preceding them could make it and opened the door of opportunity for other African-Americans, they could also rise to high levels of accomplishment.

Organizational infrastructure resistance motifs. This category includes two career life histories of resistance motifs: influencing infrastructure and using positional power. R. Thomas and Davies (2005b) classified additional studies of resistance as politics for reform. The data in the current study reveal that the majority of the storytellers oppose inequitable systems in the organization by introducing policies and procedures and monitoring system processes related to race and gender to create an inclusive environment. It also includes using positional power to make recommendations or to challenge these systems. Positional power relates to the notion of leadership as a mobilizing resource to build collective resistance efforts within the organization. It also relates to how resistance leadership facilitates change (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007).

Resisting at this level includes major systemic and organizational change in the corporation. The impact of these acts of resistance creates change in the corporate culture by affecting corporate guidelines, procedures, and messaging that can create inequality. Black women executives in these roles save the corporation fees associated with race and gender lawsuits by reducing the number of Equal Employment Opportunity claims. One woman participated on a corporate task team designed to reshape the image of a company after a major

lawsuit and to educate other corporate executives about human resources decisions that are detrimental to the organization.

Discussion on Identification, Counter-Identification, and Dis-Identification

The nature of these 12 interviews pushed me to go beyond what I had anticipated would be captured using the interview protocols. After several interviews, I realized that the women carried different views, perceptions, and experiences than what I expected. Their views, perceptions, and experiences regarding gendered (everyday) racism in the corporation also varied. I detected various degrees of acceptance of corporate narratives and discourse regarding gendered (everyday) racism. The agenda for minimizing racist and gendered systems in the organization was more of an area of focus for some of the women than others. My objective was not to compare the women, but to understand where each executive fell on the continuum of acceptance of creating corporate discourse regarding Black women.

A common theme is that the executives have been affected by negative corporate discourse regarding their race and gender at some point in their career life. They displayed similar and divergent strategies for navigating the organization. Some were comfortable with assimilating into the dominant culture and other women resisted total assimilation more frequently. They embraced organizational norms and values, but also believed in integrating their unique thoughts, perspective, ideas, and identities into the organization. Their belief was predicated on the idea that acceptance of the current state of corporate discourse can block the advancement of not just Black women, but the advancement of diverse thoughts and ideas in general.

Additional Future Research Considerations

Resistance is an interesting topic to explore in the future research for several reasons. With a larger sample size, researchers can assess if gendered (everyday) racism is more rampant in some industries. Future research can explore the reasons for resistance and the frequency of resistance based on industries. For example, what causes Black women leaders to resist? Are causes related to the educational or geographical demographics of corporate employees and the leadership body? An additional area for future consideration relates to the acceptance or non-acceptance of corporate discourse by Black women executives. There are potentially important implications for the degree of acceptance or non-acceptance of corporate discourse by Black women leaders. How does this acceptance influence their well-being? Additionally, a case study regarding Black women and their encounters with corporate discourse would be an interesting way to understand how corporate narratives and discourse are created and how they are deconstructed. I discuss the implications of this research in more detail in chapter 6.

Research Benefits

The research shows that while Black women executives experience gendered (everyday) racism, they do not perceive themselves as victims of gendered (everyday) racism in the corporation. In many cases, the storytellers created an alternate reality. However, it is unquestioned that gendered (everyday) racism continues to exist in corporate environments and that little progression has occurred regarding the promotion of Black women into executive positions. The stories shared during this research regarding resistance support that gendered (everyday) racism is very real. Additionally, this study contributes to resistance research by addressing specifically how resistance is manifested by Black women executives in the corporation. It identifies the nature and nuances identified with resistance. The focus was not on

coping with gendered (everyday) racism, but opposing it at an individual, relational, organizational, system, and structural level.

The study is instructional in several ways. First, it situates and contextualizes resistance methods used to oppose inequality in the corporation. Secondly, it illuminates the real life experiences of Black women corporate executives, a subject that is not widely or frequently discussed in previous research. In some cases, the women in this study report directly to corporate suite executives or the chief executive officer. Consequently, this research provides a different view of Black women leadership, by hearing the stories of women at executive levels—women responsible for shaping and influencing organizational strategy, but living in some cases in corporate isolation. This study provokes a need to explore and develop additional knowledge about their experiences at senior levels within the organization. Furthermore, identifying career life histories of resistance is illuminating and informational for corporate leaders, regardless of race or gender. Corporate leaders can enhance their understanding of what Black women executives encounter to get to where they are and the energy they expend to get there.

The 17 motifs of resistance are guidepost and are relevant for other Black women desiring to move forward in their careers. I use the word guidepost gingerly. The qualitative nature of this study precludes presenting linear steps or a blueprint for resisting negative corporate discourse related to race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. One must take into account the situational and unique experiences associated with qualitative research. Even though the 17 motifs of resistance are helpful to mitigate gendered (everyday) racism, it is important to consider that not all Black women will have the same capability to demonstrate all 17 motifs. For example, if a woman has a natural and strong disposition to think strategically, she may have a greater chance of scaling the corporate hierarchy. At the same

time, there is no magical formula for success in the organization. Each situation is unique and affected by contextual elements such as timing, skill, mitigating gendered (everyday) racism, industry and global changes, and individual, group, and organizational dynamics.

This scholarship also reinforces and supports the need by other subordinated groups to undertake their own research and to explore resistance strategies to facilitate positive self and group definition and identity. The desire was to illuminate positive resistance strategies that may inspire marginalized and oppressed groups to challenge the false knowledge created about them by institutions designed to maintain White privilege. An additional desire was to identify everyday racism practices and larger systems of domination limiting the vision of achievement for Black women leadership.

Research Limitations

There are several limitations of this research. I acknowledge that the women in this study do not represent the variety of executive roles existing in corporation organizations. Most of the women are in corporate staff positions and not revenue generating positions. They impact the bottom line, but not directly according to corporate beliefs. Black women executives in revenue generating positions may have different stories of resistance based on navigating the corporation in roles that are primarily filled by White males. Also, the varying degrees of acceptance and creation of corporate discourse observed in this study are not static. Assigning a number to each woman is based solely on a 2-hour interview; however, it does support the notion that Black women executives are not a monolithic group.

There are also a few methodological and research design limitations to this study. It is impossible to capture every story related to gendered (everyday) racism in a 2-hour timeframe. Spending more time with storytellers would provide them with the opportunity to go deeper with

their stories. Also, the purity of the women's stories may be lost through the process of interpretation. Even though I exercised a great deal of objectivity when hearing their stories, there is the potential for my previous history and life as a Black woman working in a corporate organization to influence the outcomes. I worked hard to accept the stories of the women as their valid versions of reality, even when I may have disagreed with their approaches to dealing with gendered (everyday) racism in the corporation.

I will discuss the implications of this research for leadership and change in chapter 6. I also provide recommendations for practice based on research outcomes.

Chapter VI: Implications for Leadership and Change

The practical implications of this study for leadership and change are discussed in this chapter. I also highlight suggestions from the focus group regarding the practical application of the information gleaned from this study. I summarize the influence of this research journey on my personal leadership and conclude with my vision for this research.

Resistance and Leadership

The research confirms a link between resistance and leadership. Even though Black women are in executive positions, they continue to display acts of resistance on their own behalf. Black women executives oppose negative acts directed toward them related to race and gender. The women also use their leadership to make a difference in the organization. Resistance is not a response to powerlessness. It is, ultimately, about creating change for others in the corporation. Additional research about the interaction between resistance and leadership for Black women executives will provide additional knowledge of the impact of resistance on the organization and Black women's leadership.

Resistance and Organizational Change

The research also confirms diverse acts of resistance. Resistance is not always forceful and egregious in nature. To the contrary, this research shows that acts of resistance can heighten the social awareness of perpetrators of gendered (everyday) racism. Through coaching and education, Black women are promoting diversity awareness in the organization. They are also developing stronger relationships with their colleagues and managers. This thought suggests that not only should White organizational leaders try to reduce the great divide, but that Black women can also play a role in building and developing relationships of trust. Additional research

on the influence of coaching and educating motifs on building relationships and creating positive change is important toward developing corporate structures of authenticity and trust.

Intersectionality, Race, and Gender: Race Foregrounding Gender

This research implies that racial identity is experienced as salient over gender. Most of the stories shared were about incidents Black women executives perceived as related to their race, not their gender, even though the concept of gendered (everyday) racism includes the construct of gender.

That the storytellers identified with race over gender does not deny the relevance of intersectionality theory. Focus group participants confirmed the unique position of Black women in the workplace from an identity and intersectionality perspective. An intersectionality perspective is important to deconstruct the experiences of Black women. Wingfield, a member of the focus group stated:

But I think it is just so important to bring up how for Black women, these issues of race and gender intersect to make such a unique and particular challenge and particular opportunities that they are going to have to face in these work settings in ways where there are so many things that they have to balance and be careful about; how they engage in the self presentation, how they engage in interactions with their superiors and with their peers and with their subordinates and with people who they may randomly interact with in the workplace, people they interact with outside of the workplace.

Even though an intersectionality framework is important for researching Black women in corporate organizations, it may also be important to examine not only the constructs of race and gender, but also ethnicity and class. Roberts, a member of the focus group, advocated focusing on the embeddedness of multiple identities, which adds additional layers of complexity from an intersectionality perspective. She cautioned the prescriptive use of an intersectionality framework as it may negate unique experiences of Black women beyond race and gender.

Acknowledging the multiple identities of Black women also relates to the application of past leadership scholarship based on White males' experiences to understand Black women leaders. For example, the focus group challenged the concept of leading for others (servant leadership). A critical race and gender lens sheds light on the construction of servant leadership as a White male paradigm regarding leadership. For this research, leading servantly included storytellers embodying behaviors associated with being loyal to other employees in the organization. These storytellers demonstrated virtuous and humble behaviors for the advancement of other Black women leaders. I acknowledge this concern, but also believe that this research contributes to leadership scholarship unique to the lived experiences of Black women executives in the organization. Exploring the resistance strategies of Black women leaders begins to formulate an equation or process for leadership success for Black women. In other words, the research builds upon leadership scholarship for Black women.

Varying Perspectives of Black Women

This research continues to reinforce the idea that all Black women do not think the same way. They do not have the same objectives, desires, and provide varying levels of support toward the uplift of the Black community. There are multiple modes and responses of Black women facing gendered (everyday) racism personally and collectively. Future leadership and change research should continue to embrace the unique qualities of research participants, specifically Black women.

Black Women Executives in Corporate Organizations

The outcomes of this research imply that Black women leaders jump many hurdles to continue to ascend in the organization because of gendered (everyday) racism. The stories suggest the strength and focus that Black women must have to overcome gendered (everyday)

racism. It implies that even though blatant acts of racism are not as prevalent at their current level, the women continue to find ways to help correct unequal practices.

Black women and corporate isolation. The current study confirms the isolation Black women executives experience at the top and the need for Black women executives to support one another and educate and mentor other junior Black women in the corporation. Isolation for Black women in the organization is problematic. Isolating Black women in the workplace creates conditions in which it is easier for corporate leaders to overlook them for career opportunities. If Black women are not included in the informal network because of their race and gender, assessment of their work performance and potential may be excluded from succession planning conversations. It is important for corporate leaders to be aware of the isolation Black women can experience in the workplace. Corporate leaders should also enhance their awareness about the experiences of Black women professionals and executives in corporate settings. Finally, corporate leaders must be aware of how they might contribute to the condition of isolation for Black women professionals.

Black women supporting one another. The study reveals that Black women executives are concerned about the support they provide each other. It is recommended that Black women executives extend support to other Black women interested in executive leadership positions and other Black women executives. The more support Black women provide to one another, the more they can benefit from sharing ideas and stories of how they handled gendered (everyday) racism and other challenges to their career in similar situations. They can take a more proactive stance. Focus group participants support the general theme that Black women do not sufficiently advocate for and support each other in the corporation. Smith's comments, a member of the focus group of scholar and advisors, align with some of the storyteller's comments:

We try to advocate and support each other in the group but sometimes there is that competitiveness that still exists where not because of you but sometimes you're selected by the corporation to be the token, which creates animosity for others struggling to the top. And women, we still need to get beyond those kinds of things. I don't know how it is done. It is manipulation in the corporation to choose the favorites.

Focus group member, Hurt, brought a very different, but yet critical viewpoint to the discussion about the support Black women provide each other in corporate organizations. She is concerned about Black women over extending themselves to help other Black women in the organization. Hurt believes there is an expectation that because a Black woman is in a role of influence, she should automatically advocate for bringing other Black employees in the organization along. She commented:

But I wondered to what degree the women talked about because you are in a given position the expectation that you will do something every time something comes up, and I guess thinking about servant leadership it's like I can't be caught up in all of these different things that come up you know all—I can't be the one to champion each and every time. It goes back to picking and choosing your battles and knowing the culture that you are in. And I think sometimes culturally personally I feel like Blacks put that responsibility on those who are further ahead on the ladder.

It is evident that Black women supporting each other in the corporation warrants further exploration. One can assume that the lack of critical mass of Black women in senior corporate positions and a pyramid organizational hierarchy creates conditions for competitiveness between members of marginalized groups. A top-down organizational structure also creates isolation and probably creates the conditions to focus on corporate politics at that level. These are merely assumptions, but are worth future consideration and exploration. As discussed earlier, seeing another Black woman in an executive role makes it more believable that another Black woman can achieve the same level of leadership.

The fact that there are so few Black women executives in major roles in the organization had a direct impact on the presentation of my research findings. For example, I interviewed two

of the only five Black women in the country in the same role. It was challenging to develop a different understanding of each storyteller without comprising confidentiality. In addition, I discovered that most of the women referred to me were not in revenue generating positions, which is another separate topic of discussion, but related to the marginalization of the Black women in the workplace. My experience aligns with the information shared in a national survey providing statistics on the career progression of Black and White women managers (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

Although the objective of this study was not to explore the number of Black women executives in line positions, I think it is important to note not having access to line positions, places African-American women managers at a disadvantage. They may not acquire the business knowledge required for more influential and senior level management positions. The Black women in this research were senior in the organization; however, the majority of the women were in staff positions. They were not in positions that directly drive revenue for the organization. This is an issue to explore, as it is tied to the very few number of Black women at executive levels in the organization.

Acceptance and Non-Acceptance of Corporate Discourse

The continuum of acceptance or non-acceptance of corporate discourse discussed implies that Black women executives will find themselves teetering between choosing an identity defined by stereotypes, assumptions, and generalization for the sake of compliance or splitting their identity to face and operate within an environment in which they have little trust. Also, Black women dis-identifying with corporate narratives are alone in their battles to influence corporate discourse related to gendered (everyday) racism. Their efforts make a difference in the organization, but they are split between leading, supporting causes related to gender and race and

resisting for their own personal career advancement. Organizational leaders must assess where negative discourse/narratives regarding Black women are present and identify what actions contribute to perpetuating this negative discourse.

Corporate Accountability and Gendered (Everyday) Racism

The research implies the need for corporate leaders to develop systems of accountability to mitigate gendered (everyday) racism in the workplace. Organizational leaders must be held accountable for their behaviors. They must also audit their human resources, public relations, and marketing departments—departments that manage internal employee relations issues and external branding and marketing to the consumer—for unfair and damaging practices and procedures. There is a need to go beyond building awareness of corporate inequalities. It also involves applying and practicing new behaviors. People managers must participate in creating a workplace that demands every individual employee be respected. This is not only in response to the treatment of Black women, but all marginalized groups in the corporation. The global presence of many organizations requires that corporations assure the respectful and valuable treatment of all employees. It is a business priority and humanist imperative.

Application, Transference, and Development of Knowledge

A personal goal of this research was to increase knowledge and scholarship on the experiences of Black women leaders and to identify ways to apply and disseminate the data gathered. The focus group was instrumental in accomplishing this objective. They not only provided insights and ideas on the themes from the study, but also shared ideas for the practical application and transference of knowledge emerging from this study. The scholars also assisted me with bringing the realities of Black women leaders in corporate environments and academia closer to each other.

The focus group suggestions for disseminating the knowledge included developing an online peer-mentoring program to include virtual cohorts for Black women leaders in corporate organizations. The online site could also include practical tools and resources designed to support Black women corporate leaders with real-time workplace issues. Smith also suggested doing a Public Broadcasting System project to communicate the outcomes of this study. Hurt recommended developing a listserv. She shared the journey of Kerry Ann Roquemore, who developed a listserv that eventually grew into a national center for faculty development and diversity:

Kerry Ann Roquemore has a large network of individuals and she, the way in which I understand her journey is she's, started out much like you; she was an assistant professor at a school in Chicago wrestling with issues in academia, left academia, started writing about, started talking about a lot of these issues. And so it has you know developed into this listserv. She now has a national center for faculty development and diversity.

Several of the recommendations for sharing this knowledge are feasible. Online cohorts and listserv are examples of positive grassroots efforts that will ultimately inform systemic change. The most important next step is to spread the word. This includes speaking at conferences, emailing positive daily reminders to Black women leaders, or facilitating corporate and community workshops and keynote speaking. Another idea is to develop and market a curriculum inclusive of the outcomes of this study for business schools or to write a book. The most important step is to do something with this critical knowledge.

My Leadership and Practice

I always knew that there was something that needed to blossom within.
Curiosity provoked learning and seeing with a third eye . . . my soul . . . my heart . . . my mind is altered . . . transformed by stories of yesterday and future visions.
Living in a half-lit room of darkness, but now in a half-lit room of light.
Seeing the hearts and hearing the words of others, I now see a new me that always existed.

I exhale . . . rejuvenated . . . and ready to make a difference. (Cheryl Jordan, journal entry, 2011)

The word of these women participants was critical for this research not only for the sake of sharing new knowledge with groups on the margins who employ resistance strategies to gendered (everyday) racism, but for my own personal growth and development as a leader. The research provided me with the opportunity to deeply understand my identity as a Black woman and senior professional and practitioner in the corporation, and to confirm my life purpose. The focus group also assisted me in several ways. Even though the participants affirmed in several instances the methodological approach and conceptual framework I used to explore the resistance strategies of Black women executives, they also challenged my ideas, contributed to the presentation and analysis of the content, and provided me with ideas for the practical application of the research outcomes. I discuss the impact of the research on my personal leadership and the insights I received from the focus group in the following section.

Post-Interview Reflections

Recognizing my assumptions. Until I read Allyson's transcript, I did not think about how her acts of resistance were different from what I had expected to hear. Her stories did not support my assumptions. Her stories related more to resistance against gendered (everyday) racism at an organizational systems level, not her personal experiences. This situation reminds me of the need to have an open mind to what may emerge in future interviews. I must be mindful about the degree to which my stories, histories, and preconceived notions affect the nature and tone of the interview. My thoughts and biases should not take control.

This thought translates to my leadership and practice in my career. I must remember to allow the corporate stories to unfold without pre-conceived notions or presumptions. I am required, as a leader, to embrace the uniqueness of my colleagues and direct reports. For

example, as a project leader, it is important to circle back frequently to understand the thoughts of the team before proceeding forward with the agenda. I also need to keep an open mind during consulting engagements. It is important to listen to the stories of the client without interrupting or assuming I have the answers. I must frame my approach around the actual stories of individuals I am coaching, not the stories I have heard about them from others. Hearing their story, their truth, and their reality supports successful coaching outcomes.

Speaking truth to power. Katrina caused me to ponder about my courage to affect change in the organization and to speak truth to power, not only regarding gendered (everyday) racism, but also regarding my influence as a leader. Sonia made me think about my ability to speak up—to confront scenarios related to gendered (everyday) racism. I am reminded that courageous leadership can be intimidating, especially when it creates discomfort and loss for others who are accustomed to being in control. I must be comfortable with this thought and challenge what is not fair.

Resilient leadership. Rhonda's ability to be resilient during times of corporate hardship resonated with me. I have also navigated through White privilege during my corporate career. My encounters were not as exaggerated as hers. The emotional aftermath for me might not have been as volatile, but our two very distinct situations produced similar outcomes—a temporary dose of damaged self-esteem. I say temporary because we both bounced back very quickly from being in a dark place. I am reminded the more resilient I am as a leader, the less my self-esteem will suffer as a leader in the organization.

I am my sister's keeper. Madeline's stories made me reflect on the degree and frequency of advocacy I displayed for other Black women and men in the organization during my 30-year career. Some came to me for career advice and others were struck and shocked by

the contentious reception they received as new professionals in the organization. I have coached back-office operation employees up to senior executives. My intent is not to put myself on a pedestal or to tout my accomplishments, but to embrace my career purpose. I believe the greatest gift you can give to others is the gift of self—to make the time to help anyone walking into my office with a problem or to see the possibilities for their career. I am my sister's and brother's keeper.

Evolving as a leader. I was one of the first of many Black women to enter into private industry in the 1970s, a sacred environment primarily reserved for White male managers and White female stenographers. I realize I have resisted gendered (everyday) racism several times during my career. Now after having worked in different corporate environments in various roles, things are little easier for me. I believe this is the case for several reasons. First, with maturity comes wisdom and practice. Jeanette talked about practice as a form of resistance in her life. She knew what to expect and prepared herself for what she knew was about to come. Secondly, I learned how building relationships in the corporation could take you a long way. Laura was and continues to be an expert at creating a common bond with others to advance, particularly with White males. In addition, my spiritual beliefs are fundamental to my endurance in the corporate arena. Tara named her belief in God as a force and driver of organizational change and personal and purposeful career progression.

In many instances, I have had to remove antiquated ways of thinking to develop a stronger self-identity as a leader and practitioner. I reconstructed and reshaped my reality as a leader to deal with corporate issues. This research implies my leadership will continue to evolve. I am hopeful and driven to continue to think about integrating what I have learned and discovered during this research journey into my life as a leader and practitioner.

Concluding Thoughts

My desire is that this scholarship contributes to healing old wounds attached to gender-related stereotypes of Black women leaders. Inevitably, through the stories of the executives, new learning about the unique standpoint and challenges of Black women in corporations emerged. I believe the career life histories of resistance will provoke reflection about the power Black women leaders have to move forward in corporations. The executives telling their personal stories will incite their potential to become or continue to act as mentors, role models, and coaches for not only other Black women, but for other marginalized groups in corporate organizations.

Finally, as a Black woman leader, I recognize oppressive practices and behaviors in the corporation are a current reality. Therefore, this research study is my own act of resistance. From a Black feminist viewpoint, I have contributed to the production of knowledge regarding Black women leaders' experiences in corporate organizations as they oppose gendered (everyday) racism.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Dissertation Title: Stories of Resistance: Black women Corporate Executives Opposing Gendered (Everyday) Racism

Institution: Antioch University, Ph.D, in Leadership and Change

Interviewer: Cheryl Jordan, Student of Antioch University

Interviewee: (name)

Introduction to Study:

I am a candidate in the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program at Antioch University. My research is about Black women corporate leaders. I am interested how race and gender play out in their careers lives. What are their challenges and experiences related to race and/or gender during their careers? What is the response to these challenges?

Introduction to Data Gathering:

I will conduct two meetings with you. The first meeting is to review the interview protocols and to answer any questions you may have regarding the research. I will also review the *Informed Consent* form that includes, but is not limited to the following information for you:

- (1) All information regarding this research is confidential. To facilitate note taking, I will use audiotape conversations in the second meeting. The interview tapes will be anonymous and transcribed by a transcription agency. The transcripts will be stored in a secure place for possible use in further research.
- (2) Your understanding that minimal risk is involved in participating in this study. Although unlikely, there is a chance that you may experience some discomfort in the telling of your experiences.
- (3) Participation is voluntary and that you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.
- (4) My intention is not to inflict any harm.
- (5) Your name and the name of your company will be kept confidential, unless and only if you give express permission for me to use in my report. You will also have the opportunity to remove any quotations from the transcribed interview.
- (6) Before the study can take place, you are required to sign the Informed Consent.

The second meeting includes an extensive interview, which I will arrange at your convenience. I have planned this interview to last a minimum of 2.0 hours. I hope to cover the topics and the

questions I have prepared for our conversation in this length of time. However, my primary questions may produce additional questions not listed in the original interview protocols. Additionally, I can imagine that in the course of our conversation, issues or thoughts will emerge I had not thought of before, which may inspire additional questions. Finally, I may need to follow up with you with additional questions after the interview. Total commitment time to participate in this study is 2.5 – 3 hours.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study and I will do whatever I can to make this a rich and meaningful experience for both of us.

Interview Questions:

Background Information

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your educational background?
4. What is your current title?
5. What are your responsibilities in this role?
6. How many years have you worked in your current role?
7. How many years have you worked in this profession?
8. Tell me about the journey leading you to this profession.
9. What other corporations have you worked in your current profession?

Orientation to Race and/or Gender Related Issues

10. Growing up, what stories did you hear from family members about Black women in the workplace?
 - a. Who were they about?
 - b. What did these stories mean to you?
 - c. What do these stories mean for you now?
11. How did your family, friends and community members discuss race and/or gender discrimination and oppression?
 - a. What was the message and sentiment regarding race and/or gender related issues?
 - b. What did these stories mean for you?
 - c. What was the impact of these stories on others?
12. What are your views on the current state of Black women leaders in the corporation?
 - a. Why do you have these views?

General Questions Related to Race and/or Gender Challenges and Resistance

13. Tell me about the first time you personally experienced race and/or gender discrimination or oppression in the workplace.
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. When did it occur?
 - c. How did you react?
 - d. What was the outcome?
 - e. What was the impact to the organization?

14. Describe the first time you remember personally, opposing race and/or gender discrimination or oppression in the workplace.
 - a. What were the circumstances?
 - b. Describe the actions that you took and why?
 - c. What were you feeling or thinking at the time?
 - d. What was the affect of your actions on your career and leadership?
 - e. If any, what changed after your actions?

15. What repeated and consistent acts of resistance have you demonstrated in your career because of race and/or gender discrimination or oppression?
 - a. What occurred to promote these actions?
 - b. What was the affect of your actions on your career and leadership?
 - c. What affect did your actions have on others?
 - d. What was your most powerful stance of resistance?

16. Have your acts of resistance changed over the course of your career? If so, how have they changed?

17. Tell me about a time when you challenging race and/or gender discrimination or oppression affected other Black women leaders in the corporation.

18. Tell me about me about a time when your resistance to race and/or gender discrimination, marginalization or oppression had positive consequences on your career as a leader.
 - a. What changed?
 - b. What was the impact of your actions on others?

19. Tell me about a time when your resistance to race and/or gender discrimination, marginalization or oppression had negative consequences on your career as a leader.
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What was the impact of your actions on others?

20. Tell me about a time when you were prevented from or decided not to resist or oppose gender and/or race related discrimination during your career?
 - a. What were the implications for you and your career as a leader?
 - b. What were the implications for others?
21. What steps do you recommend to eliminate race and/or gender discrimination and oppression in the corporation?
22. Please share any additional thoughts you have regarding resistance in your career as a Black women leader.
23. What were your initial thoughts and reactions about participating in this study?

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Appendix B: Informed Consent Statement

Antioch University
PhD in Leadership & Change
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Human Subjects Research Review

Informed Consent Statement
Interviewees

Study Overview and Purpose

I am a candidate in the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program at Antioch University. My research is about Black women corporate executives. I am interested in how race and gender play out in their careers lives. What are their challenges and experiences related to race and/or gender during their careers? What is the response to these challenges?

Specifically, for this research, I will explore contemporary resistance strategies that Black women leaders in the corporate world use in their career lives to oppose negative behaviors associated with their race and gender. Using biographical inquiry, I will explore the career life histories of resistance of Black women leaders in the corporation. I will also bridge the worlds of corporate and academia, by sharing the themes gathered from one-on-one interviews with corporate women leaders with Black women scholars who have research experience and backgrounds in critical race and gender studies. This will include a focus group of Black women scholars/advisors to react to, interpret and advise on the use of practical wisdom gathered from corporate women for purposes of generating knowledge.

I will conduct two meetings with you. The first meeting is to review the interview protocols and to answer any questions you may have regarding the research. I will also review this *Informed Consent* form with you, of which you are required to sign before you can participate in this study. The second meeting is a 2- hour interview.

Please review the following:

I understand there is a minimal risk involved in this research study and the risk will be further minimized by:

1. The researcher taking all precautions to enforce confidentiality of all data and information emerging from the study and ensuring no identifiable information is disclosed in the dissertation. This includes, but is not limited to participant's names, addresses, place of employment, and schools of attendance
2. Placing all audio tapes from the interviews in a secure locked file cabinet.
3. Having all participants consenting to keep all information and data emerging from this study confidential.

I understand that all information regarding this research is confidential; however, to facilitate note taking, the researcher will use audiotape conversations during the interviews. The interview

tape will be anonymous and transcribed by a transcription agency. The transcript from the interview will be stored in a secure place for possible use in further research.

I understand that the researcher may have to follow up with me post interview to clarify any questions regarding the interview transcript.

I understand that the information from the interview will be shared with focus group members. All factors pointing to my identity as a participant will remain confidential and will not be shared with focus group members.

I understand that minimal risk is involved in participating in this study. Although unlikely, there is a chance that I may experience some discomfort during the interview in reaction to the experiences of the interviewees.

I am aware that my opinions may be used for research purposes, but that I will not be identified by name in the final written document.

I understand the research findings may benefit other Black women executives and members of other marginalized groups and as such, may appear in future publications.

I understand that I have the right to discontinue participation at any time without negative consequences and that all data I provide during the research will be struck from the record.

I have the right to express my concerns and complaints to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Lisa Kreeger, Antioch University, Ph.D in Leadership and Change, lkreeger@antioch.edu. Tel: 937-654-0076.

I understand if I have any additional questions regarding my rights as a research participant, I can contact the researcher, Cheryl Jordan or the primary evaluator for this project, Dr. Philomena Essed.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Jordan
217 Bordeaux Drive
Fayetteville, GA 30296
Antioch University, Ph.D. in Leadership and Change
cjordan@antioch.edu
678-591-9311

Consent**Your Name:** _____**Date:** _____**Address:** _____

e-mail _____

Name of project:

Stories of Resistance: Black women Corporate Leaders Opposing Gendered (Everyday) Racism
Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

I have read and understood the information above. The researcher has answered all the questions I had to my satisfaction. I was given a copy of this form and I consent to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol

Dissertation Title: Stories of Resistance: Black Corporate Executives Opposing Gendered (Everyday) Racism

Institution: Antioch University, Ph.D, in Leadership and Change

Focus Group Facilitator: Cheryl Jordan, Student of Antioch University

Introduction to Study:

I am a candidate in the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program at Antioch University. My research is about Black women corporate leaders. I am interested in how race and gender play out in their careers lives. What are their challenges and experiences related to race and/or gender during their careers? What is the response to these challenges? Please see abstract below:

Abstract

For this research, I will explore contemporary resistance strategies that Black women leaders in the corporate world use in their career lives to oppose negative behaviors associated with their race and gender. Scholars discuss the major role converging race and gender play in affecting the day-to-day existence of Black women. Historically, negative images and beliefs influence the treatment of Black women in society. It is likely that these same thoughts and images affect Black women leaders in the workplace. African-American women continue to see limited advancement to senior levels within the corporation, even though diversity programs abound.

Using biographical inquiry, I will explore the career life histories of resistance of Black women leaders in the corporation. I will also bridge the worlds of corporate and academia, by sharing the themes gathered from one-on-one interviews with corporate women leaders with Black women scholars/advisors who have research experience and backgrounds in critical race and gender studies. This will include a focus group of Black women scholars/advisors to react to, interpret and advise on the use of practical wisdom gathered from corporate women for purposes of generating knowledge. I will culminate my research with an autobiography/ethnography of my personal experiences as a senior professional in the corporation and my journey through the research experience.

The second meeting includes a focus group that will include an additional three Black women scholar/advisors with a background in critical race and gender research. I will schedule the focus group when it is convenient for all participants. The focus group is scheduled for a maximum of two hours. During the focus group, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback about information I received during one-on-one interviews from corporate Black women leaders regarding their career history of resistance against race and gender oppression and marginalization in the workplace. Finally, I may need to follow up with you with additional questions after the focus group. Total commitment time to participate in this study is a maximum of 2.5 hours.

Focus Group Methodology and Focus Group Questions:

1. Scholars will receive a copy of the themes (the interviewees will remain confidential) generated from the 12 one-on-one interviews several days prior to the focus group.
2. To the degree possible, all participants will participate in person. If this is not possible due to geographical location of the participant(s), a teleconference will be set up.
3. The focus group agenda will include the following:

a. Welcome/Introductions	10 minutes
b. Review of Study	10 minutes
c. Focus Group Discussion	90 minutes
d. Questions/Wrap-up	10 minutes
4. Focus Group Questions (these questions may slightly change based on the information gathered from the interviews). The questions are:
 - a. What are your current thoughts about the state of critical race and gender research?
 - b. What are your thoughts about the state of Black women leaders in corporations?
 - c. What were your initial reactions to the career life history themes of resistance gathered from the interviews?
 - d. What are your thoughts about the transference of knowledge regarding the experiences of Black women leaders in the corporation to the academy?
 - e. Please interpret the themes from these interviews within the context of your research and previous research in the area of critical race and gender issues. Is it relevant? Did you learn anything new? What could these themes mean for further research?
 - f. What are your suggestions for using this knowledge within the academy? How can it be applied or add value?
5. To facilitate note taking, I will use audiotape conversations during the focus group. The focus group tape will be transcribed by a transcription agency. The transcript from the focus group will be stored for possible use in further research.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Appendix D: Participant Demographics

1. 35	Attended undergrad in the South; Sociology Major; Ph.D. in I/O Psychology in the South	In current position for a year	Director of Talent Management	Generation X Was in South Africa for 6 months. Study in South Africa for 6 months; Dissertation is exploring female manager experience; Worked in early childhood development prior to joining corporate.
2. 39	Undergraduate (HBCU south); MA/Ph.D. I/O Psychology in the South	One year with current responsibilities; 3 years in VP role. 11 years total	VP Talent Management Diversity	Generation X 1982 - 1964; Wanted to go to a HBCU Intrigued by human behavior; Usually only one or two AA's in class pre college. Was in accelerated classes pre college.; First Black female to graduate with her Ph.D. from the IO program she attending.
3. 50	Public School and then to private school in junior high and high school; Started private school in 5th grade; Attended college in the South; Dual MBA and JD in Northeast	In current profession for 25 years.; Been in current role for 3.5 years	Executive Vice President and General Counsel	Baby Boomer; One of the first Black students to attend an all White school that attending the school.; She was the only one in her fifth grade class
4. 60	Attended College in the Southeast; English major	Started full career in her late 20's; Worked in technology, marketing sales, operations. In current role for less than a	VP of Application Delivery	First class to integrate a White high school.

		year; Worked over seas		
5. 46	Private school and then went to magnet public school; Attended college in Midwest; JD in school located in the south	4 years in current position; Have been with company for 15 years.	SVP, General Counsel	Baby Boomer/cusp of Generation X; In South for 25 years; Product of busing . 1st class President after reorganization of school district; diverse high school. Attended a predominantly White private school in early years.
6. 53	Attended public schools; Attended a state college in the South; Speech and English major	Over 25 years of service with current organization	VP of Sales	Class valedictorian; Very involved in school activities; She discovered through her research that she was only one of a few African-Americans that graduated on time.
7. 52	Attended Public School; Went to an all Black elementary and high school. Also CPA Undergraduate in Northeast; MBA at the same school	Over 20 years of service with current organization	VP, Accounting	Baby Boomer
8. 46	Attended college in the South; Undergraduate in computer information systems. Received her MBA	In current role for 3 years; in HR for 25 years	SVP, Human Resources	Senior Class President; Started public school in the year of forced integration
9. 53	Attended college in the South and the Midwest;	With current company 10 years.	Manager of Work Force Policy	Baby Boomer

	Industrial Psychology major			
10. 51	Attended an HBCU in the South Masters at HBCU in the South	Six years in Philanthropy; Prior to that HR/Diversity Recruiting; 17 years with the company	Director and SVP of Philanthropy; Philanthropy, Community Development, Environmental Affairs	Baby Boomer
11. 50	Attended school on the airforce base. Attended Air Force Academy.	Eight years as a Vice President and Division Manager, IT. Vice President of Operations.	Vice President Line of Business	In one of the first classes to graduate Black women from the Air Force academy.
12. .41	Undergrad in the south MBA in Marketing at big 10 university; Went straight through to receive her MBA.	In current role for 6 months; 18 years in brand management	VP, Field Marketing; Brand management	Generation X

Appendix E: Resistance Areas of Focus, Motifs, and Examples

External Focus	Advocating for others	I am very forthright about representing and advocating, so I try to – for example, I try to make sure that all of the African-Americans I know, I try to mentor and put them in play for positions, I know I’ve got to push a little harder, because there’s not this natural tendency of whoever I’m trying to pitch him with. But I see – I see a lot of people that will pick – they expect, just like the majority population does – expect Black people to be perfect for a position, before they’ll advocate for it.
	Confronting for others	So, sometimes I will laugh at things, and I shouldn’t be laughing, and even in a meeting one time, there was a comment made about – because they always seem to describe women in physical characteristics, and I’ve called – I This person came in to interview; she was short, or she was attractive, or this person we have working at this place, well, you know, she’s got this hair; she’s you know, very attractive. She – you know, is this tall; she’s chubby – you know? And I called – you know, I called him, and the other guy out on it. I said, “You all always describe people with these types of characteristics. I mean, why are you describing them like that? And like it’s not pertinent to…” –
	Coaching and educating others	It’s the awareness, but it’s also having the language in you that makes the conversation you need to have non-threatening. So it’s about how you have, again, take the emotion out of it, “It’s what I’ve seen. Here’s what I’ve noticed as I have looked at examples and tracked and whatever, in our company. And so from that place, I want to give you this feedback.” So you have to have the language in you to do it, and I think it’s worth everybody doing the work.
	Protecting others	He had a godfather at [company name]. Okay. Who was like the Black man that the White people respected –

		<p>and that they kind of focused him to help them recruit a set of African-Americans within the organization –The Godfather looked out for all African-Americans. He brought people into the company and helped Black people manage their careers.</p> <p>He created a sense of community among all AA families</p>
Internal Focus	Advocating for self	<p>So that if you notice that person's not looking at you, then you take it upon yourself to reposition yourself at the table the next time, next to somebody who will pay attention to you, who you know is going to hear you and support you in the room. Because if you're not taking care of you, and nobody else is, you are getting lost in that conversation. That's not made up. That is for real. And you got to take care of you, and the only way to do that is to be able to say, "Okay, got that, keep it, I'm aware of it, and next time, I'm going to do something different to turn it around."</p>
	Confronting for self	<p>You know, I'm going to be honest with you. I think that I always think that I'm going to be treated or looked at differently because I'm Black or because I'm gay or whatever. And the way in which I handle that is, there's a couple of ways. Number one, I'm very direct, and number two, I'm very consistent. I'm just going to be direct with you and open with you about it's this way or that way and all, and I think people appreciate that, and that – that seems to have helped me a whole lot in being able to overcome some of the things, you know, and not being caught</p>
	Performing	<p>And I was like – and I blew the socks off this man, because when I finished, that guy was like, he goes, "Damn, you're a stud," because one thing I'm very good at is presenting things and keeping all kinds of information</p>
	Creating and promoting identity	<p>Where it's either patronizing or it is just borderline rude, you know that kind of thing you know. Yeah. Okay. Okay. But my point is, and obviously you've got to look sort of beyond - - you've got to not let that destroy you.</p>
	Practicing	<p>Relative to experiencing and handling racial discrimination: I'm - - you</p>

		know I am...part of what I got from it was practice.”
	Reconstructing and reshaping reality	And I guess what’s so remarkable as I say these words is – and it’s not even like I always go to the place of could that be? Oh, but no it’s....” It’s just I never think of it. So, I’m not – I just want to be clear. I’m not saying it doesn’t exist [gendered (everyday) racism]. You know what I mean, it’s just perpetual, you know? And it’s probably happened to me throughout my career.
	Relating	You know what, I think it’s still very difficult for Black women in corporate America. I think the only way we’re successful has nothing to do with how bright you are, unfortunately. It has everything to do with who sponsors you and who mentors you, and we still have to have that sponsor to really progress and have impact. It’s still all about who lets you into their circle.
	Strategizing	Just kind of sitting back and watching how someone gets funding approved for certain things, or how they go about getting collaboration or buy in for a particular project that they’re pitching. Right. Wait a minute. It’s like, “Yeah, no, we have to learn that, because you’re playing in this arena.
Trans-Momenta Focus	Leading Servantly	In relation to advancing African-Americans in the organization: “So, I would take ten losses to get that one win.”
	Memorializing and emulating others	Now, and what I say to people is that was very important to me, because I had never thought about it consciously, but when I look back it never was – it seemed impossible to me, never, ever, because I always had somebody higher than me that I could aspire to be.
	Spiritualizing	Another thing I haven’t mentioned, but I think it became stronger for me, and this is probably where my boss and I have bridged our differences, is around faith. Really being led, supported, finding wisdom and strength in the messages in the sermon at church, in the stories of others, and that has supported me, that doing it on my own, I am bound not to be successful, but for me, having a higher power, having an inner reserve that comes from those – all that’s been instilled in me by my parents and my upbringing and my educational training, and all those experiences, with them by my faith,

		and by my belief that I can pray for guidance and strength, and it was granted to me.
Organizational Infrastructure Focus	Influencing organizational system/structure/culture	So when we did not have as strong of a leader at one time or the other, I constantly have to push for recognition that this is important for the organization, and constantly, so we will have this succession planning reviews, and someone who will be in charge of the Engineering Department is going through all his candidates, and there's not a single female, and there's not a single African-American.
	Using positional power	I think the examples of opposing, for me, came through in situations where cases would be brought to my attention for either review or investigation that involved people of Color, and bringing the lens of everyday racism, the sense of a manager who says, "Well, that's not true, and it's my word against that employee," but helping to coach my team, helping to grow myself, to look at an environment or department to see if there were systemic issues that were playing out, and while an individual situation might be as much an overreaction of the employee, to look it seemed. So I think my recollection of my time and experience in that regard throughout my career has been to raise the issue of, "Is there more to that story? Are you looking at it from the lens of that individual? "

Appendix F: Overt and Covert Acts of Resistance with Examples

	<u>Percentage of Covert Acts of Resistance</u> 182 (72%) Covert	
<u>Resistance Motif</u>	<u>Percentage of Covert Acts</u>	<u>Example</u>
Strategizing	23%	I think, some of the obstacles that people are putting front of you, you just kind of work around them. I mean, I've always – I've always kind of been a problem solver, so the problems – I just worked around the problem, until it became evident that it really wasn't – the problem was enforced by somebody else, usually trying to create a problem for me, right?
Relating	23%	And you know what? That's what I realized along the way that – yeah, there's some assholes out there are going to discriminate, just because you're different, but what I found is that for They're just more comfortable being around people who have common thoughts, common experience. You and I are more comfortable around each other than a lot of other people in the organization –Figuring out the common bond. So I think once people figure out what that common bond is, it breaks down a lot of that other stuff. And for me, very quickly, that was the

		common bond. And I think in terms of building relationships over the years, whether it was there , or any other job that I've been in, what I learned from that was to figure out what the common bond is with other people, and make that connection, so that's why I can say, I –
Performing	11%	I respond to race racism through success.
Reconstructing and Reshaping Reality	10%	Oh, I'm not going to do that professor hates Black people. They'll never call on me," that kind of stuff. And I just really had to isolate myself, and just say I'm not going to let that control me going forward, and I really put a lot of energy and effort into that second year of law school, so that I could prove to myself that I could do well, and that I was a smart person, and I can even rationalize how I got grade A's,
Promoting and Creating Identity	9%	They're one way at work, and then at home they're totally different, or around family they can be totally different. I think those folks are the most interesting of us all, and I'm still looking at them, and I'm wondering if they will snap, you know? And they forget where they –
Advocating for Self and Others	7%	you have to publicize your work, like we're so big, I may have a certain set that I'm kind of working in this group, but I need this person, that person, this, her, him, her to know what I've done, so you have to basically be your own PR agent,

		<p>and publicize your work, and in a way that's appropriate given your corporate culture.</p> <p>so that if you notice that person's not looking at you, then you take it upon yourself to reposition yourself at the table the next time, next to somebody who will pay attention to you, who you know is going to hear you and support you in the room. Because if you're not taking care of you, and nobody else is, you are getting lost in that conversation. That's not made up. That is for real. And you got to take care of you, and the only way to do that is to be able to say, "Okay, got that, keep it, I'm aware of it, and next time, I'm going to do something different to turn it around."</p>
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	Percentage of Overt Acts of Resistance 73 Stories or Comments (27%)	
<u>Resistance Motif (s)</u>	<u>Percentage of Overt Act</u>	<u>Example</u>
Confronting (for self and others)	46%	He told me this story later, and I said – I said, "You understand..." – I was like, "You understand that's offensive?" And then he was like – and he just kind of blew it off. I said, "No, you understand that that's an offensive comment?" I was like, "That you would have offended me completely, if you said that to me?" And he just kind of blew it off, and moved on.

		<p>But you have to just be very direct and up front with people so when people do things like that, and even if its not something that is said directly to me, I am gonna call them out. I am just going to call them out. I am going to just tell them that's inappropriate and it's offensive and as you said, another example, would you say that to your wife or your daughter? How would you like it if someone at your daughter's working somewhere and someone says that to them or something?</p>
Organization Infrastructure	46%	<p>We actually began a series of sessions specifically for Asian, Hispanic, Black and Native American women, so that we could talk about issues unique to us and share strategies for addressing, and also start to build a network of resources and support. That, I think, is best practice, that when you can do that, the isolation is mitigated or remediated, because otherwise, you feel, and I have felt, alone in the water</p>
Advocating for Others	8%	<p>We have to be watching the other sister at the table, too, because if she says it and they don't acknowledge it, then I will stop and say, "Just said this five minutes ago. What is different about what she said and what he said?"</p>

Coaching and Educating Others	6%	<p>So I told him; I said, “You know, we have to be careful.” I said, “I can’t correct the CEO,” but I said, “You know, you have that relationship with him, so certain things, you probably – you know, should point out, because when they all get together, I’m sure they say a lot of inappropriate things.</p> <p>I mean, she was a good friend, too, but – see, I would say, “Look, here’s what’s going to happen when you move into this job.” Because that was the other thing I’d do. I’m not just going to like say, “Go figure it out.” “Let me tell you, this is what they’re going to do to you.” Okay?</p>

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