

**Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Strategies of Black Women Entrepreneurs to Overcome  
Barriers Across Disciplines in Higher Education**

**A**

**Digital Doctoral Proposal**

**By**

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**5/4/2025**

## Acknowledgements

*I would especially like to thank my family and friends for their unwavering support during my doctoral journey, my seven participants for sharing their priceless stories, and Drs. Lee-Johnson, Amy Pouncy, and Leslie Franklin for their advice and encouragement. Above all, I thank the Lord for seeing me through to the finish line.*

*—Monica S.*

## Table of Contents

### Acknowledgements

### Abstract

### Chapter 1: Introduction

- Statement of Problem
- Research Questions
- Theoretical Framing

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

- Entrepreneurship
- Black Women Entrepreneurs in Educational Settings
- Overcoming Barriers: Systemic Barriers
- Mentorship and Allyship
- From Glass Ceilings to Paper Ceilings: Intersectional Barriers for Black Women Entrepreneurs

### Chapter 3: Methodology

- Research Questions
- Research Design and Data Collection
- Individual Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Artifacts
- Sampling
- Data Analysis
- Transcription
- Thematic Analysis
- Ethical Considerations
- Potential Limitations
- Theoretical Advancements

### Chapter 4: DDP Findings

- Theme 1: Intersectional Double Jeopardy
- Theme 2: Systemic Barriers
- Theme 3: Educational Foundations
- Theme 4: Social Media Support
- Theme 5: Resilience
- Advice for Younger Black Women Entrepreneurs
- Conclusion
- Looking Ahead

### References

### Glossary, Appendix, and Artifacts

## Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study investigates the intersectional challenges Black women entrepreneurs face due to their race, gender, and educational backgrounds, using Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality framework. Through semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and artifacts from seven Black women entrepreneurs across industries, this study explores systemic barriers and resilience strategies.

Findings reveal that race and gender create "double jeopardy," amplifying obstacles like limited access to capital, exclusion from networks, and undervalued credentials. Participants leveraged education, mentorship, social media, and spirituality to navigate these challenges, with education as both a barrier (due to non-inclusive curricula) and a tool for credibility. The study contributes to entrepreneurship literature by highlighting tailored strategies and advocating for policy reforms, such as specialized mentorship programs and equitable funding, to foster an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Future research should examine additional identity factors and sectors using mixed methods designs to deepen understanding of Black women's diverse experiences.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Entrepreneurship is opportunities, taking calculated risks, and creating ventures that generate economic and social value (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). It is increasingly recognized for its diversity. Black women entrepreneurs, leading over 2 million businesses in the United States, are the fastest-growing entrepreneurial group, contributing significant economic and social impact (Porter, 2025). However, they face unique challenges at the intersection of race, gender, and education, which create compounded barriers to success. This study employs Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality framework to examine these barriers and the strategies Black women use to overcome them, particularly within educational contexts.

Intersectionality, a theoretical framework, analyzes how social identities such as race, gender, and class intersect to produce compounded forms of oppression or privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw's concept of "double jeopardy" highlights how racism and sexism converge to create distinct challenges for Black women, unlike those faced by White women or Black men (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). For example, a Black woman entrepreneur in technology may face gender biases in a male-dominated field and racial stereotypes questioning her competence, requiring her to navigate both simultaneously.

Despite their contributions, Black women encounter systemic barriers, including limited access to venture capital, exclusion from influential networks, and microaggressions that exacerbate burnout (Johnson, 2019; Williams, 2022). Educational programs often fail to address their cultural and socioeconomic contexts, leaving them underprepared for entrepreneurship's complexities (Brown & Davis, 2020). This study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring how

Black women leverage education and resilience to succeed, informing policies for an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Systemic inequities, defined as obstacles embedded in institutional policies and practices that disproportionately affect marginalized groups (Patton, 2015), significantly hinder Black women entrepreneurs. These include limited access to financial resources, with Black women receiving less than 1% of venture capital (Smith, 2021), and exclusion from mentorship and networks, which are often White- and male-dominated (Johnson, 2019). Educational systems exacerbate these challenges by failing to provide culturally responsive curricula, perpetuating disparities in entrepreneurial preparedness (Brown & Davis, 2020). For instance, a Black woman entrepreneur like Nia Carter, who developed a digital platform for financial literacy, noted the absence of Black women's narratives in her HBCU coursework, limiting its relevance (Collins, 2000).

Black women-owned businesses close at higher rates and grow more slowly than others, often relying on personal savings due to funding disparities (Bakker & McMullen, 2023; Vorobeva, 2022). These challenges are compounded by societal biases, such as microaggressions—subtle, derogatory slights targeting marginalized groups—that undermine confidence (Williams, 2022). This study addresses these issues by examining intersectional barriers and resilience strategies, focusing on education's role in entrepreneurial success.

## Research Questions

Guided by Crenshaw's intersectionality framework, this study explores the following research questions:

1. How do race and gender create double jeopardy for Black women entrepreneurs across educational disciplines?
2. What barriers do Black women entrepreneurs face in educational disciplines, and how do these impact their success?
3. How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

## Theoretical Framing

Intersectionality provides a robust lens for understanding the compounded disadvantages Black women entrepreneurs face. Crenshaw's (1989) *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex* critiques single-axis frameworks that overlook Black women's experiences, while *Mapping the Margins* (1991) advocates for policies addressing overlapping oppressions. Double jeopardy, a core concept, illustrates how race and gender amplify barriers, such as when a Black woman entrepreneur is denied funding due to both racial stereotypes and gender biases (Crenshaw, 1989).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature supporting the study on how racial and gendered identities shape Black women entrepreneurs' confidence in educational contexts. The research examines their unique intersectional challenges in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. Research often overlooks these experiences, prioritizing general or male-centric perspectives (Ahl, 2006). The scarcity of research on culturally responsive educational frameworks limits understanding of how Black women develop entrepreneurial skills and confidence (Howard & Navarro, 2016). This gap hinders institutions' ability to provide targeted mentorship, resources, or curricula to support Black women entrepreneurs.

The literature is organized into five areas: (1) Entrepreneurship, (2) Black Women Entrepreneurs, (3) Overcoming Barriers, (4) Mentorship and Allyship, and (5) Glass to Paper Ceilings. These sections analyze structural, cultural, and psychological factors influencing Black women's entrepreneurial success.

### Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a journey of vision, resilience, and transformation. It begins with recognizing opportunities—seeing potential where others see obstacles. Entrepreneurs embrace calculated risks, stepping into uncertainty with innovation as their guide (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

“Harnessing creativity and adaptability, they navigate challenges, shaping ventures that generate economic value while inspiring broader change (Hisrich et al., 2017).”

For Black women, entrepreneurship extends beyond business ownership—it is a powerful vehicle for empowerment and social transformation. Confronted with systemic inequities, they

carve out pathways that uplift communities, fostering economic mobility and increasing representation (Collins, 2000). Their leadership style, deeply rooted in innovation and collaboration, reflects the essence of transformational leadership (Parker, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996).

However, their entrepreneurial confidence is shaped by the intersection of race, gender, and socioeconomic status, which simultaneously presents barriers and unlocks opportunities (Mozahem, 2021). Discriminatory lending practices and exclusion from key networks often restrict access to resources, making the road to success steeper (Carter et al., 2015). Despite these challenges, overcoming barriers fosters resilience and sharpens ingenuity, reinforcing the dynamic critical thinking skills that propel their ventures forward (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016).

Education is a critical factor in fostering entrepreneurial success among Black women, and it plays a pivotal role in shaping confidence and skill development. Learning environments can either perpetuate systemic challenges or serve as incubators for empowerment. Culturally responsive programs affirm Black women's identities while equipping them with essential tools to navigate the complexities of business landscapes (Howard & Navarro, 2016). Some notable programs include,

- **Operation Time Reclaim**—This initiative offers Black women entrepreneurs strategic support, mentorship, and wellness resources to help them thrive professionally and personally. Integrating business growth strategies with culturally responsive tools provides a foundation for sustained success.
- **Black Girl Ventures**— Designed to support Black women founders, this program offers funding, coaching, and networking opportunities through pitch competitions. It creates

pathways for early-stage businesses to secure financial backing and entrepreneurial guidance.

- **Start.coop Accelerator**—A 12-week program dedicated to supporting Black-led cooperatives by providing funding, business coaching, and access to essential tools for long-term sustainability.
- **HBCU Founders Initiative & United Negro College Fund—Better Futures Pitch Competition**— This initiative is an annual competition highlighting startups founded by HBCU students and alumni, providing mentorship and funding to scale their businesses.
- **Technical Assistance Programs**—Black entrepreneurs receive culturally competent education and guidance, facilitating access to financial resources, mentorship, and business development strategies.

By viewing entrepreneurship through an intersectional lens, we understand how Black women transform barriers into stepping stones for success. Despite systemic inequities, they continue to shape, uplift, and redefine leadership. Their resilience and collaborative spirit ensure that entrepreneurship remains a pursuit of economic gain and a force for social progress.

### **Black Women Entrepreneurs in Educational Settings**

Nia Carter pitched her Empowerment Hub, a digital platform for Black women entrepreneurs offering mentorship and financial literacy, at an HBCU classroom to combat community economic marginalization (Collins, 2000). Her vision reflects the intersectional challenges Black women face. This included limited capital and network access, aligning with this study's focus on entrepreneurial confidence in educational contexts (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016).

Nia identified a gap in her coursework at an HBCU, which lacked narratives of Black women, as noted by Byrd (2009) and Mozahem (2021). Her community-oriented leadership, inspired by Parker and Ogilvie (1996), embodies the transformative approaches emphasized in this study. Facing funding rejections due to systemic biases, she secured grants and crowdfunding, displaying resilience (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016).

Howard and Navarro's (2016) culturally responsive pedagogy boosted Nia's confidence. Mentors helped her navigate exclusionary networks, supporting this study's focus on inclusive education (Accion Opportunity Fund, 2025). Nia's pitch, addressing low business survival rates, fostered collaboration, reflecting transformational leadership (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996).

Despite ongoing funding challenges, Nia's developing hub mirrors this study's findings: Black women leverage resilience and education to overcome barriers. Her journey underscores the need for inclusive educational practices to empower entrepreneurial success.

### **Overcoming Barriers: Systemic Barriers**

Black women entrepreneurs face systemic barriers, including discriminatory lending, limited capital access, and exclusion from professional networks, rooted in race and gender biases (Carter et al., 2015). These intersectional challenges undermine confidence, a key focus of this study exploring educational contexts (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). High loan rejection rates and scarce venture capital force reliance on personal savings, restricting business growth (Stengel, 2024). Network exclusion isolates them from mentorship and industry connections, limiting opportunities (Accion Opportunity Fund, 2025).

To navigate these obstacles, Black women demonstrate resilience through community-based solutions. The BOW Collective, founded by Nicole Cober-Johnson, fosters resource-sharing

and mentorship, reducing dependence on traditional financing (Bellamy, 2024). Crowdfunding platforms like IFundWomen enable capital raising through community support (Mozahem, 2021).

Education empowers Black women with critical skills. Culturally responsive programs offering financial literacy and investor pitching training enhance confidence and counter isolation (Howard & Navarro, 2016). These initiatives, reflecting Black women's experiences, align with this study's emphasis on inclusive education to drive entrepreneurial success.

### **Mentorship and Allyship**

**Mentorship** is a professional relationship where a more experienced individual (the mentor) provides guidance, knowledge, resources, and support to a less experienced person (the mentee) to foster their personal and professional growth. In the context of Black women entrepreneurs, mentorship involves sharing business acumen and navigating racial and gender barriers within entrepreneurial ecosystems. Effective mentorship is culturally responsive, addressing unique challenges Black women face, such as exclusion from networks or limited access to capital (Beverly, 2021; Grant, 2012).

**Allyship** refers to active, intentional support from individuals or institutions, particularly those in positions of power or privilege, to advocate for and uplift marginalized groups. For Black women, allyship might involve amplifying their voices, creating equitable opportunities, or challenging systemic biases in workplaces or industries (Stanley, 2009). Institutional allyship, such as university sponsorship or corporate advocacy, can provide structural support to counteract exclusionary practices (Traub, 2011).

While mentorship is often a one-on-one relationship focused on personal development, allyship operates at individual and systemic levels, emphasizing advocacy and structural change. Together, they create a robust support system for Black women entrepreneurs, addressing personal growth and systemic inequities.

### **Mentorship for Black Women Entrepreneurs**

This study underscores mentorship as a critical driver of entrepreneurial success for Black women, who often face exclusion from traditional business networks (Linehan, 2001; Catalyst, 2005). Male and White-dominated networks control access to funding, partnerships, and industry knowledge, resources essential for entrepreneurial ventures. Mentorship bridges this gap by providing:

1. **Access to Resources and Networks:** Mentors can connect Black women to funding opportunities, industry contacts, and strategic advice, countering the exclusion noted by Linehan (2001). For instance, a mentor might introduce a mentee to venture capitalists or provide insights on pitching to investors.
2. **Cultural and Contextual Guidance:** According to Grant (2012), it emphasizes mentorship that addresses racial and gender marginalization. Black women face unique challenges, such as stereotypes about leadership or credibility in business settings. Culturally responsive mentorship, as supported by Beverly (2021), validates these experiences and offers tailored strategies to overcome them.
3. **Career Advancement:** Often, data shows that mentored Black women are 25% more likely to achieve promotions, a statistic relevant to entrepreneurship, where leadership roles (e.g.,

securing board positions or leading larger ventures) are critical. Mentorship equips Black women with the skills and confidence to navigate these spaces.

However, access to mentorship remains unequal. According to Hewlett et al. (2019), only 7% of Black women have senior mentors compared to 12% of White women. This disparity reflects systemic barriers, such as fewer Black women in senior positions to serve as mentors and caution from potential mentors to engage (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

### **Allyship for Black Women Entrepreneurs**

Allyship complements mentorship by addressing systemic barriers at institutional and societal levels. Stanley (2009) highlights institutional allyships' visibility and opportunities for Black women, who often face “invisibility” in professional spaces due to intersecting racial and gender biases. Allyship can be expressed in several ways:

1. **Advocacy and Visibility:** Allies in leadership roles can amplify Black women's contributions, ensuring their ideas and ventures gain recognition. For example, a corporate ally might nominate a Black woman entrepreneur for an industry award or feature her business in a high-profile initiative.
2. **Creating Equitable Opportunities:** According to McKinsey & Company (2021), Black women's limited access to advocacy restricts their ability to secure funding, partnerships, or leadership roles. Institutional allies—such as universities, corporations, or incubators—can create targeted programs, like pitch competitions or accelerator programs, to level the playing field.
3. **Challenging Systemic Bias:** Effective allyship involves confronting biases within organizations or industries. For instance, an ally might push for equitable funding practices

in venture capital, where Black women receive less than 1% of investment dollars (Stacker, 2025).

Building on the critical role of mentorship and allyship in navigating systemic inequities, Black women entrepreneurs face persistent intersectional barriers shaped by race, gender, and socioeconomic disparities (Vorobeve, 2022; Bakker & McMullen, 2023). The glass ceiling—systemic discrimination blocking advancement—has evolved into the paper ceiling, where lack of formal credentials further restricts opportunities (STARs, 2023). This section examines this shift, its impact on Black women entrepreneurs, and its alignment with this study's focus on systemic barriers, resilience, and the transformative potential of culturally responsive education.

### **From Glass to Paper Ceilings: Intersectional Barriers for Black Women Entrepreneurs**

Building on mentorship's role in navigating inequities, Black women entrepreneurs face intersectional barriers shaped by race, gender, and socioeconomic disparities (Vorobeve, 2022; Bakker & McMullen, 2023). The glass ceiling—systemic discrimination limiting advancement—shifts to the paper ceiling, where lack of formal credentials restricts opportunities (STARs, 2023). This section examines this transition and its alignment with this study's focus on resilience and culturally responsive education.

Entrepreneurial success for Black women is frequently obstructed by structural biases favoring formal credentials over practical expertise—a phenomenon recently termed the "paper ceiling." This concept refers to institutional barriers where excessive emphasis on academic qualifications systematically disadvantages entrepreneurs whose knowledge is largely experiential and practical (SBA, 2024). In 2024, an initiative by the Small Business Administration (SBA) mandated formalized training certifications for accessing certain funding

and support resources. While seemingly aimed at standardizing entrepreneurial competence, the policy inadvertently marginalized many Black women entrepreneurs, whose considerable practical experience and informal training often surpassed their formally credentialed counterparts (SBA, 2024).

The implications of credentialism disproportionately affect Black women due to existing systemic barriers to higher education and credential attainment, creating yet another intersectional challenge (Crenshaw, 1991). Black women entrepreneurs, who may have acquired valuable skills through nontraditional routes such as mentorship, apprenticeships, or community-based learning, find their expertise undervalued. This devaluation limits their eligibility for critical support systems, intensifying inequities and perpetuating the cycle of economic disenfranchisement (Bakker & McMullen, 2023).

Education and mentorship counter these ceilings. Culturally responsive programs, like Black Girl Ventures, foster resilience through tailored support (Otake-Ebede et al., 2022). This study advocates for inclusive curricula that validate diverse pathways, empowering Black women to navigate intersectional barriers and build equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems.

## **Conclusion**

This literature review underscores the multifaceted barriers Black women entrepreneurs face, from systemic discrimination and limited capital access to evolving glass and paper ceilings. Intersectional frameworks reveal how race, gender, and socioeconomic factors shape their entrepreneurial confidence, while resilience, mentorship, and culturally responsive education emerge as critical strategies for success. Programs like the HBCU Founders Initiative and Operation Time Reclaim illustrate the transformative potential of targeted support, yet

persistent inequities highlight the need for further exploration. This study responds by investigating how educational contexts can foster entrepreneurial confidence among Black women, offering insights to inform policy and practice. The methodology chapter outlines the qualitative approach used to explore Black women entrepreneurs' lived experiences, building on the literature to examine their intersectional challenges and strategies.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach to examine how education shapes the entrepreneurial journeys of Black women, focusing on intersectional experiences of race, gender, and professional identity. Qualitative research is ideal for exploring complex social phenomena, offering in-depth insights into individual experiences and systemic contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach illuminates how education influences entrepreneurial strategies, the barriers Black women face, and their perceptions of education's role in business success.

Qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and artifacts, generate rich data to explore these dynamics (Patton, 2015). By engaging directly with participants, the study captures nuanced challenges and opportunities. It also situates individual narratives within systemic factors, such as racial and gender biases, enhancing the understanding of how Black women navigate entrepreneurial landscapes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

#### **Research Questions**

To address the challenges faced by Black women entrepreneurs and explore education's role in their entrepreneurial journeys, the following research questions guide the study:

1. How do race and gender create double jeopardy for Black women entrepreneurs in educational disciplines?
2. What barriers do Black women entrepreneurs face in educational disciplines, and how do these impact their success?

3. How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

### **Research Design and Data Collection**

Following Creswell (2013), this study adopts a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of Black women entrepreneurs at the intersection of education and entrepreneurship. Three data collection methods—individual interviews, focus groups, and artifacts—ensure triangulation, enhancing credibility and depth.

#### **Individual Interviews**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven Black women entrepreneurs. An interview guide with open-ended questions (e.g., “How has education influenced your entrepreneurial journey?”) and probes (e.g., “How did your identity as a Black woman shape this experience?”) allowed flexibility to explore emergent themes. Oltmann (2016) emphasizes qualitative interviews’ ability to capture complex interactions, while Opdenakker (2006) highlights their effectiveness in revealing personal contexts. Member checking validated transcripts for accuracy. For example, one participant described how a mentorship program provided skills to launch her startup, underscoring education’s role in overcoming barriers.

#### **Focus Groups**

A focus group with five of the seven participants gathered collective perspectives. Discussion prompts (e.g., “How does mentoring help navigate race- and gender-based barriers?”) fostered dynamic interactions, revealing shared strategies. Facilitation ensured equitable

participation. This method illuminated the interplay of race, gender, and professional identity, showing how community resilience counters systemic barriers. For instance, participants discussed using peer networks to access resources, highlighting mentoring's collective impact.

### **Artifacts**

Artifacts, such as business merchandise, educational certificates, event advertisements, and workspace photographs, were collected from all seven participants. Each provided 2–3 items representing their entrepreneurial journey, explained during interviews. Artifacts triangulate findings, offering tangible evidence of professional identity (e.g., a certificate from a business workshop). Analysis involved coding artifacts with interview and focus group data using NVivo to identify themes like empowerment through education.

Data from interviews, the focus group, and artifacts were coded and compared using NVivo, ensuring methodological rigor. This approach captures individual and collective experiences, validating findings through triangulation and providing a comprehensive understanding of Black women entrepreneurs' challenges and successes.

### **Sampling**

Purposive sampling involves intentionally selecting participants who meet specific criteria, prioritizing relevance over generalizability (Patton, 2015). In this study, seven Black women entrepreneurs were chosen for their active engagement in entrepreneurship, with diversity in industries (e.g., health and beauty, real estate, therapy), educational backgrounds (associate's degree to PhD), and business stages (startup to established). This heterogeneous approach captured varied perspectives on Black women's entrepreneurial experiences.

Purposive sampling also targets participants who provide rich data, enabling in-depth exploration (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is efficient for small samples but lacks generalizability and risks researcher bias (Patton, 2015). Here, it ensured a diverse sample reflecting unique entrepreneurial contexts. The seven Black women entrepreneurs were selected to represent diverse industries, educational backgrounds, and business stages.

### **Industries**

Each participant operated in a distinct industry. This range highlights unique challenges, from client acquisition in therapy to creative expression in photography. Participants' educational backgrounds ranged from an Associate's degree to a PhD:

### **Industry Representation of Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Industries</b>
AM	Health & Beauty, Personal Training
LM	Real Estate, Cosmetology
IU	Real Estate, Mentoring
MM	Author, Clergy, Family Therapist
Dr. D	Relationship Therapy
QE	Nursing, Makeup Artistry, Photography
TRT	Trauma Therapy, Counseling, Author

These backgrounds reflect diverse pathways, from practical training to advanced degrees, shaping entrepreneurial success.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Degree Level</b>	<b>Field of Study</b>
AM	Associate's	Exercise Science
LM	Bachelor's	Business Administration
QE	Bachelor's (BSN)	Nursing
IU	Master's	Real Estate Management
TRT	Master's	Counseling
MM	Master's	Divinity
Dr. D	Doctorate (PhD)	Psychology

### **Business Stages**

The seven participants' businesses span distinct phases, highlighting challenges like establishing credibility and sustaining growth.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Business Stage</b>	<b>Business Focus</b>
QE	Startup (0–5 years)	Makeup & Photography
AM	Growth (3–5 years)	Health & Beauty
LM & IU	Established (5+ years)	Real Estate & Cosmetology
MM, TRT & Dr D	Social Enterprise	Therapy, Clergy & Community Work

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process involved three key steps: transcription, thematic analysis, and interpretation through an intersectionality lens, ensuring rigorous exploration of the participants' experiences.

### **Transcription**

Interview recordings and artifact data (e.g., written works, business materials) were transcribed verbatim to capture the participants' exact words and preserve the integrity of their narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcriptions were checked for accuracy by reviewing

audio recordings and documents against the text. This process ensured a reliable dataset for analysis, reflecting the participants' voices in industries like therapy, real estate, and creative arts.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to identify recurring themes across the dataset. The process followed these steps:

1. Familiarization: Transcripts and artifacts were read multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the data, noting initial patterns related to entrepreneurship.
2. Coding: Data were systematically coded using descriptive labels (e.g., “educational influence,” “systemic barriers”). Codes were applied to segments of text reflecting participants' experiences, such as AM's discussion of fitness industry challenges or Dr. D's insights on therapy practice.
3. Theme Development: Codes were grouped into potential themes. For example, codes like “degree credibility” and “self-taught skills” formed the theme “education's impact,” while “funding access” and “racial bias” contributed to “strategies for overcoming barriers.”
4. Theme Review: Themes were refined by ensuring they accurately represented the data and were distinct. For instance, “education's impact” captured how QE's BSN and MM's master's degree shaped business credibility, while “strategies for overcoming barriers” included IU's mentorship networks and TRT's community advocacy.
5. Theme Definition: Final themes were named and defined, supported by illustrative quotes. Examples included education's role in building confidence (e.g., Dr. D's PhD) and strategies like leveraging cultural networks (e.g., LM's cosmetology client base).

This iterative process ensured themes were grounded in the data, reflecting the diverse experiences of the seven entrepreneurs.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations, defined as principles guiding the protection of participants' rights and well-being in research (Creswell & Poth, 2018), are essential for study integrity. This section outlines the ethical standards upheld in a study of seven Black women entrepreneurs, deliberately sampled across diverse industries (e.g., health and beauty, real estate, therapy) and educational backgrounds (associate's degree to PhD). The study used thematic analysis of interview and artifact data. Ethical measures included Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, confidentiality and anonymity, the right to withdraw, and minimizing harm, reported per APA 7th edition guidelines. The study adhered to ethical protocols to safeguard participant rights and well-being.

#### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

IRB approval was obtained to ensure compliance with ethical research standards (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The IRB reviewed the study protocol, which involved interviews and artifact analysis with seven Black women entrepreneurs in industries such as personal training, cosmetology, therapy, and educational backgrounds ranging from an associate's degree to a PhD. Informed consent forms were provided detailing the study's purpose, procedures, and participant rights, ensuring voluntary participation and transparency.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

To protect participant identities, pseudonyms (e.g., AM, LM, Dr. D) were assigned, concealing personal information (Patton, 2015). Data from interviews and artifacts (e.g., business documents, published works) were securely stored in encrypted digital files accessible only to the research team. This safeguarded sensitive information.

### **Right to Withdraw**

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This right was communicated during the consent process and restated before interviews, ensuring autonomy. No participants withdrew, but the option supported ethical engagement with entrepreneurs discussing firsthand experiences in their field.

### **Minimizing Harm**

Sensitive topics, such as systemic barriers, were managed with care to avoid emotional distress (Patton, 2015). Culturally responsive methods, including building rapport and using empathetic interviewing techniques, encouraged trust with participants. For example, discussions about racial bias in real estate or therapy were approached respectfully, acknowledging the participants' lived experiences as Black women. Follow-up resources, such as counseling referrals, were available, though none were requested.

## **Potential Limitations**

### **Sample Size**

The deliberate sample of seven Black women entrepreneurs, designed for in-depth qualitative analysis, restricts generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The small sample, spanning industries like personal training, therapy, and photography, captured nuanced experiences but may not reflect the broader population of Black women entrepreneurs. This sample size is typical in qualitative studies prioritizing depth (Patton, 2015).

### **Subjectivity**

Subjectivity, inherent in qualitative analysis with an intersectionality lens, challenges full objectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity, through the researcher's bias acknowledgment and member checking, where participants verified findings, reduced bias. Nonetheless, subjective interpretation of themes like education's impact or barrier-navigation strategies may influence results (Patton, 2015).

### **Self-Reported Data**

Findings relied on self-reported interviews and artifact data (e.g., business documents, published works) are susceptible to recall bias (Patton, 2015). Participants' stories of experiences in cosmetology or relationship therapy may emphasize certain details over others, affecting accuracy. Triangulation with artifacts strengthened validity but could not fully address this limitation.

## **Contextual Variability**

Participants' experiences varied by region and industry, limiting the study's scope (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For instance, barriers in real estate (LM, IU) differ by geographic market, while challenges in creative fields like makeup artistry (QE) are industry-specific. This variability narrows the applicability of findings, though the diverse sample enhanced the intersectional focus.

## **Theoretical Advancements**

According to Bakker and McMullen (2023), this study advances entrepreneurial theory by centering intersectional identities—race, gender, and education—in Black women's experiences. It challenges traditional success metrics, advocating for expanded definitions that include social impact and resilience. This redefinition calls for ecosystems that value community building and systemic navigation as entrepreneurial excellence.

## **Intersectional Barriers**

Traditional research assumes universal entrepreneurial barriers. Using Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) double jeopardy framework from Chapter 1, this study shows how race, gender, and education create unique obstacles. For example, a participant with a college degree faced skepticism from white, male investors, requiring crowdfunding to fund her retail business, unlike her white counterparts (Smith, 2023). This barrier highlights the need for tailored strategies like mentorship (Kaba, 2008; Sobande & Wells, 2023).

### **Understudied Group Focus**

Entrepreneurship research often marginalizes Black women. This study examines how education shapes their journeys, exploring three pathways: (a) formal education (e.g., degrees) enhances credibility, though biases limit impact; (b) informal education (e.g., workshops) builds skills and networks; and (c) self-directed learning fosters resilience (Smith, 2023). For instance, a participant used online courses to develop marketing skills.

### **Effectiveness of Traditional Business Support**

Standard business support models often fail Black women. Tailored mentoring and funding programs, informed by intersectional realities, are more effective (Smith, 2023). One participant found generic workshops unhelpful for addressing biased loan denials, but a Black women-focused mentorship program offered strategies to secure grants.

### **Educational Innovation**

Educational programs must center Black women's experiences, as their challenges are overlooked in traditional curricula, limiting skill and network access. Initiatives like Black Girl Ventures and culturally responsive pedagogy (Howard & Navarro, 2016) provide models. For example, a participant's case study in a curriculum could teach how mentorship aided her beauty business, inspiring future entrepreneurs.

### **Policy Reform and Community Collaboration**

Policy reforms should address Black women's challenges through targeted grants, intersectional mentorship networks, and advocacy training (Smith, 2023). For example, a grant

program could bypass discriminatory loans, as one participant experienced. Robust community networks, like Black Girl Ventures, provide support (Jones et al., 2012; Walker, 2016). A participant credited a local network for resource sharing, enabling her business launch.

### **Advancing Inclusive Entrepreneurship**

This study empowers Black women through education and advocacy, informing equitable policies (Bakker & McMullen, 2023). Per Chance (2022) and Gaudiano (2019), advocacy campaigns amplifying contributions via media enhance visibility. Policies funding programs like Black Girl Ventures address funding gaps, as seen in a participant's mentorship success (Smith, 2023; Kaba, 2008; Sobande & Wells, 2023).

Chapter 4 presents the detailed findings, revealing how Black women leverage education and resilience to overcome systemic challenges. The findings chapter presents thematic results, addressing the research questions with detailed participant narratives and artifact analyses to illuminate Black women entrepreneurs' challenges and strategies.

## Chapter 4: DDP Findings

This chapter presents findings from a qualitative phenomenological study of seven Black women entrepreneurs. Exploring how education shapes their entrepreneurial journeys through an intersectional lens of race, gender, and professional identity, data from semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and artifacts were used to ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Artifacts used were coded in NVivo for themes like cultural authenticity and community engagement. L.M.'s beauty shop photos reflected her narrative of creating a welcoming space for Black clients, corroborating her interview data on overcoming gendered expectations.

Findings address the three research questions:

1. How do race and gender create double jeopardy for Black women entrepreneurs in educational disciplines?
2. What barriers do Black women entrepreneurs face in educational disciplines, and how do these impact their success?
3. How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

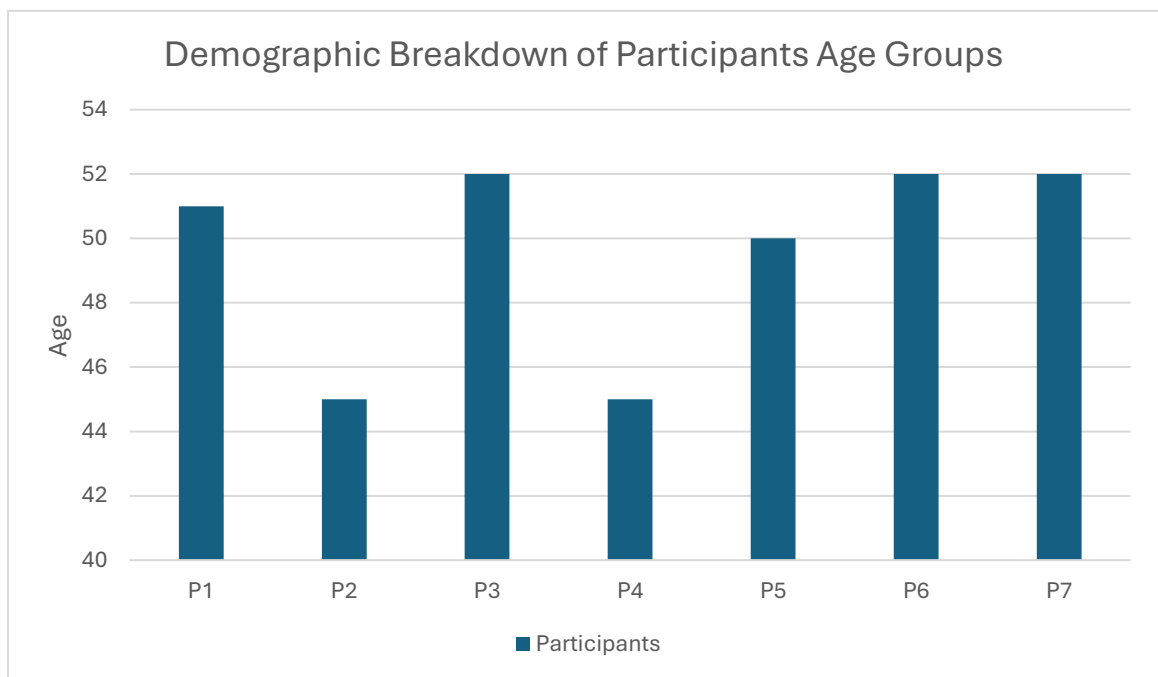
Participants were selected via purposive sampling for diverse industries, educational backgrounds, and business stages, ensuring rich insights (Patton, 2015). Pseudonyms protect identities, per ethical guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2020):

- A.M.: Health, Beauty, Personal Training
- Dr. D.: Relationship Therapy, Counseling, Author
- M.M.: Author, Pastor, Chaplain, Family Counseling, Therapy

- T.R.T.: Author, Trauma Therapy, Counseling
- Q.E.: Makeup Artist, Photography, Registered Nurse
- I.U.: Business, Real Estate, Mentor
- L.M.: Cosmetologist, Educator, Real Estate

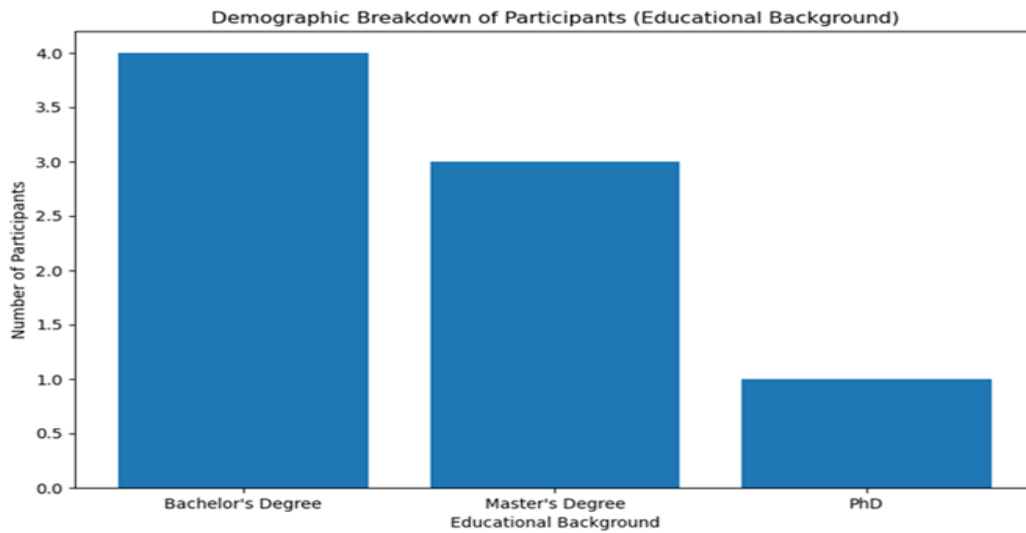
Demographic figures provide context:

**Figure 1**

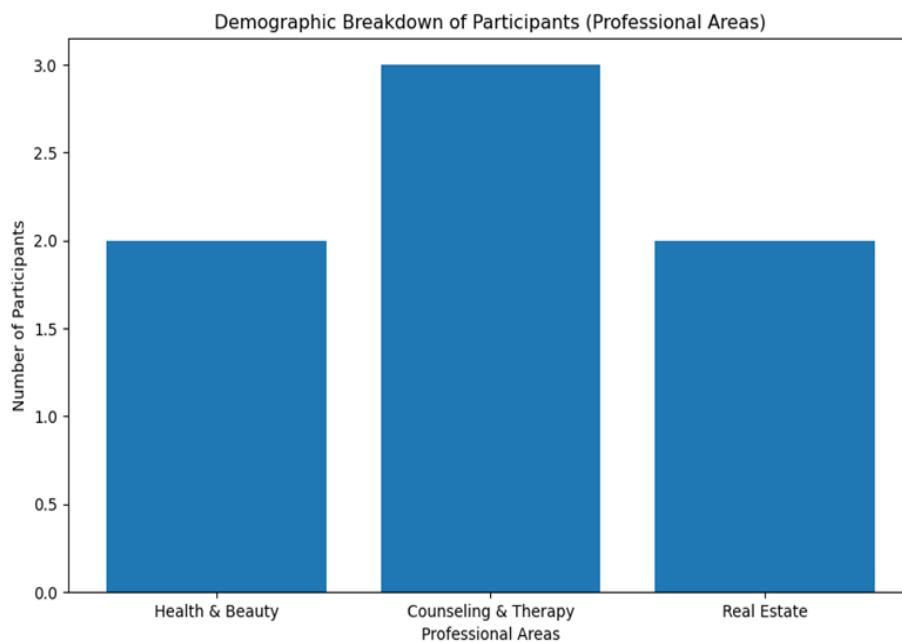


**Figure 1: Demographic Breakdown of Participants (Age Group)**

Note: The chart displays the ages of seven Black women entrepreneurs (P1 to P7) interviewed in the study: P1 (51 years), P2 (45 years), P3 (52 years), P4 (45 years), P5 (50 years), P6 (52 years), and P7 (52 years). Data was derived from interviews and focus group discussions with Black women entrepreneurs, specifically participants identified as TRT (P1), QE (P2), MM (P3), LM (P4), IU (P5), Dr. D (P6), and AM (P7).

**Figure 2**

*Figure 2: Demographic Breakdown of Participants by Educational Background. This figure illustrates the distribution of educational attainment among the study's participants, highlighting that the majority hold a Bachelor's degree ( $n=3$ ), followed by a Master's degree ( $n=3$ ), and a smaller representation holding a PhD ( $n = 1$ ). This visual representation underscores the varying levels of academic credentials among Black women entrepreneurs who participated in the research, offering context for analyzing how educational experiences impact entrepreneurial pathways.*

**Figure 3**

***Figure 3: Demographic Breakdown of Participants by Professional Areas.** This figure illustrates the distribution of study participants across three primary professional sectors: health & beauty, counseling & therapy, and real estate. Most participants were from Counseling & Therapy (n = 3), followed by Health & Beauty (n = 2) and Real Estate (n = 2). This distribution highlights the diverse professional backgrounds among the entrepreneurial women who contributed their experiences to this study.*

Thematic analysis, conducted using NVivo, revealed five themes: Intersectional Double Jeopardy, Systemic Barriers, Educational Foundations, Social Media Support, and Resilience Strategies. These themes directly address the research questions, illuminating challenges and strategies.

### **Theme 1: Intersectional Double Jeopardy**

Research Question 1: How do race and gender create double jeopardy for Black women entrepreneurs in educational disciplines?

As established in Chapter 1, Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality framework illuminates how race and gender create double jeopardy, amplifying barriers for Black women entrepreneurs in educational and entrepreneurial contexts (Johnson, 2019). These findings confirm Chapter 1's assertion that systemic inequities, such as limited access to capital and networks, hinder entrepreneurial success (Brown & Davis, 2020).

Participants described compounded barriers rooted in race and gender, directly addressing Research Question 1 on double jeopardy's impact across educational disciplines. For example, M.M. faced skepticism in her counseling practice despite her Master's degree, requiring her to prove competence beyond male or white peers (M.M., personal communication, December 13, 2024). Similarly, L.M. encountered gendered expectations in her cosmetology training, undermining her credibility (L.M., personal communication, November 27, 2024). Q.E. navigated societal stereotypes in her nursing education, being perceived as "too assertive" or

“not authoritative enough” as a Black woman entrepreneur (Q.E., personal communication, December 6, 2024).

Focus group discussions highlighted performative DEI initiatives, such as tokenistic pitch competitions, which failed to address biases in venture capital access, reinforcing exclusion from professional networks (Focus Group Meeting #1, January 25, 2025). Q.E.’s Instagram posts coded for cultural authenticity in NVivo, countered stereotypes of Black women as unprofessional, aligning with Chapter 1’s research (Williams, 2022). These experiences underscore the need for culturally responsive educational programs, as advocated in Chapter 1, to mitigate double jeopardy and foster equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems (Brown & Davis, 2020).

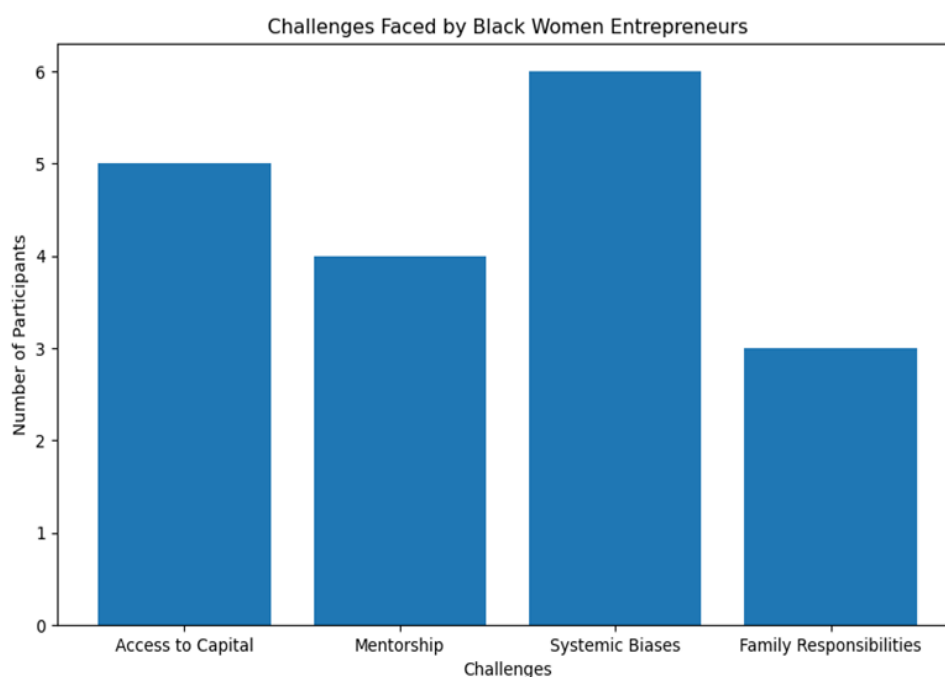
## **Theme 2: Systemic Barriers**

Research Question 2: What barriers do Black women entrepreneurs face in educational disciplines, and how do these impact their success?

Systemic barriers like financial exclusion, limited mentorship, and undervalued credentials hinder entrepreneurial success. I.U. and T.R.T. struggled to secure loans, with I.U. noting banks viewed her as high-risk despite her Master’s degree (I.U., personal communication, December 11, 2024; T.R.T., personal communication, December 19, 2024). Focus group discussions emphasized bootstrapping or community funding as alternatives (Focus Group Meeting #1, January 25, 2025). A.M. and Q.E. faced challenges finding mentors who understood their intersectional experiences, delaying professional growth (A.M., personal communication, November 25, 2024; Q.E., personal communication, December 6, 2024). Dr. D. reported her

PhD was questioned in corporate settings, undermining credibility (Dr. D., personal communication, December 16, 2024). These barriers, rooted in educational and systemic inequities, slowed business development and confidence (Smith, 2023). Figure 4 shows systemic biases (n=6) and access to capital (n=5) as primary challenges.

**Figure 4**



*Figure 4: Primary challenges reported by Black women entrepreneurs who participated in this study. Six participants cited systemic biases as a significant barrier. Access to capital was closely followed, reported by five participants as a major challenge. Mentorship, or the lack thereof, was identified by four participants, highlighting a critical gap in professional guidance and support networks. Family responsibilities were also noted, underscoring the dual pressure many Black women entrepreneurs face in balancing business and family commitments.*

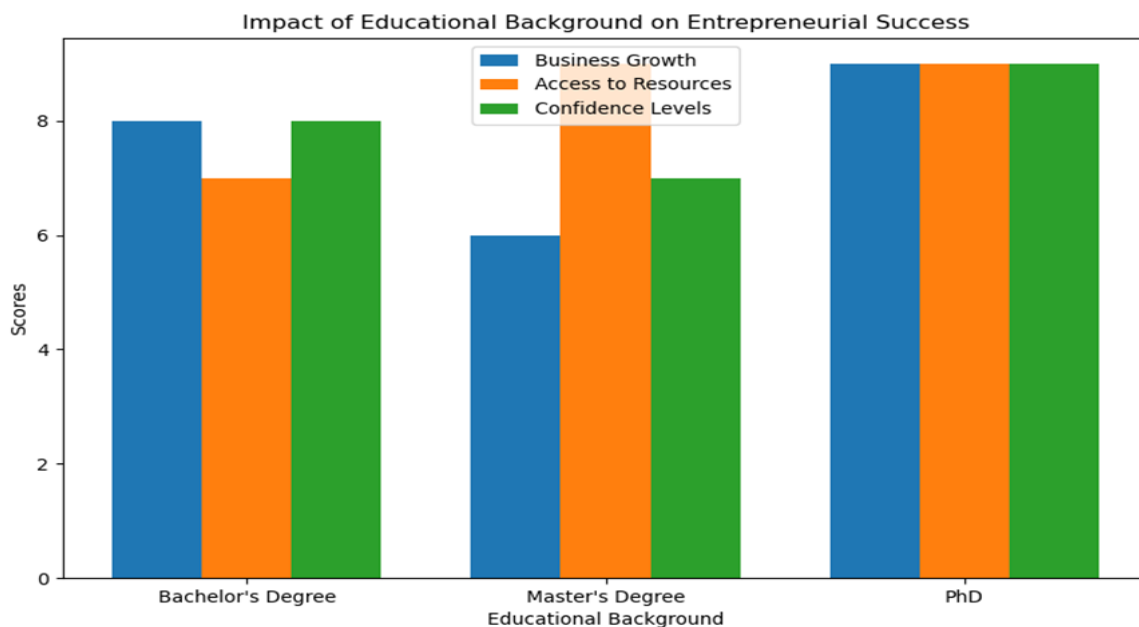
### **Theme 3: Educational Foundations**

Research Question 2: What barriers do Black women entrepreneurs face in educational disciplines, and how do these impact their success?

Research Question 3: How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

Education was both a barrier and a foundation. Participants noted that traditional curricula often ignored intersectional challenges, limiting applicability (Question 2). M.M. found her seminary education lacked business skills relevant to her counseling practice (M.M., personal communication, December 13, 2024). However, education provided critical skills (Question 3). L.M. and I.U. used business degrees for financial literacy, aiding strategic planning (L.M., personal communication, November 27, 2024; I.U., personal communication, December 11, 2024). T.R.T. leveraged her counseling degree to build her trauma therapy practice (T.R.T., personal communication, December 19, 2024). Figure 5 shows that PhD holders scored highest in business growth and confidence, while Master's degree holders accessed more resources. Artifacts, like L.M.'s cosmetology certificate, reflected educational investments that supported entrepreneurial credibility (Smith, 2023).

**Figure 5**



*Figure 5: This bar chart illustrates the relationship between educational attainment and entrepreneurial success across three metrics: business growth (blue), access to resources (orange), and confidence levels (green). The x-axis represents educational levels (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, PhD), while the y-axis shows scores on a scale from 0 to 10. The chart indicates that PhD holders report the highest scores in business growth and confidence levels, while Master's degree holders score highest in access to resources. Bachelor's degree holders show balanced performance across all metrics.*

#### **Theme 4: Social Media Support**

Research Question 2: What barriers do Black women entrepreneurs face in educational disciplines, and how do these impact their success?

Research Question 3: How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

Social media networks addressed barriers (Question 2) and served as strategies (Question 3). Limited mentorship and network access prompted participants to use Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook groups for guidance and brand-building. A.M. relied on “Therapy for Black Girls” for peer support, compensating for absent formal mentors (A.M., personal communication, November 25, 2024). Q.E. used Instagram to market her makeup artistry, leveraging her nursing education’s communication skills to attract clients, bypassing traditional barriers (Q.E., personal communication, December 6, 2024). Focus group discussions highlighted platforms like “My Therapist is Black” as virtual mentorship hubs (Focus Group Meeting #2, January 25, 2025).

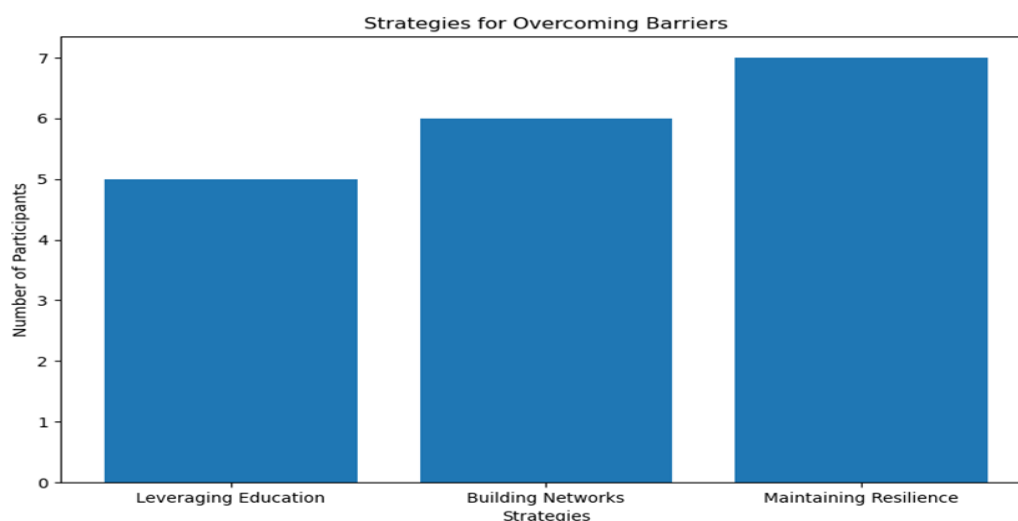
#### **Theme 5: Resilience**

Research Question 3: How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

Resilience strategies included mentorship, self-care, and spirituality, often leveraging education. L.M. joined Black Girl Ventures, gaining grant-writing skills to secure funding for her salon (L.M., personal communication, November 27, 2024). Dr. D. used her PhD and informal

workshops to build a therapy practice, adapting academic skills (Dr. D., personal communication, December 16, 2024). A.M. and Q.E. prioritized therapy to manage stress, preventing burnout (A.M., personal communication, November 25, 2024; Q.E., personal communication, December 6, 2024). I.U. and Dr. D. drew on spirituality for motivation (I.U., personal communication, December 11, 2024; Dr. D., personal communication, December 16, 2024). Figure 6 shows that all participants used education, networks, and resilience. Artifacts, such as T.R.T.'s event advertisement, reflected community engagement as a resilience strategy (Smith, 2023).

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6:** This bar chart displays the number of participants who adopted specific strategies to overcome entrepreneurial barriers. The x-axis lists the strategies (Leveraging Education, Building Networks, Maintaining Resilience), and the y-axis shows the number of participants on a scale from 0 to 7.

### **Advice for Younger Black Women Entrepreneurs**

Research Question 3: How do Black women entrepreneurs overcome barriers in educational disciplines, and what strategies leverage their education for success?

Participants offered targeted advice for younger Black women entrepreneurs, emphasizing continuous learning, mentorship, resilience, mental health, and strategic planning. This guidance, rooted in their lived experiences and intersectional challenges, provides actionable insights for navigating systemic barriers and leveraging education for entrepreneurial success. The advice aligns with Research Question 3 by highlighting strategies that counter double jeopardy and systemic inequities, contributing to the study's practical implications for future entrepreneurs and policymakers.

**Continuous Learning:** A.M. and Dr. D. stressed the importance of lifelong learning to adapt to evolving business landscapes. A.M. recommended taking online courses to stay informed about industry trends, citing her use of product development webinars to enhance her health and beauty brand (personal communication, November 25, 2024). Dr. D. advised pursuing advanced education, noting that her PhD provided expertise and confidence to transition to full-time entrepreneurship (personal communication, December 16, 2024). This aligns with Smith's (2023) findings on education's role in building self-efficacy, defined as belief in one's ability to succeed (Mozahem, 2021).

**Diverse Mentorship:** M.M. and T.R.T. recommended seeking diverse mentors for broader perspectives. M.M. credited mentors from African American, Latina, and White backgrounds for offering unique insights into her counseling and clergy work, helping her navigate exclusionary networks (personal communication, December 13, 2024). T.R.T. emphasized collaborative, non-gatekeeping relationships with clinicians via social media groups like "My Therapist is Black," which guided client acquisition (personal communication, December 19, 2024). This supports Grant's (2012) research on culturally responsive mentorship for Black women.

**Resilience and Reframing Setbacks:** Q.E. and L.M. advised viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth. Q.E. shared how societal stereotypes in her nursing program motivated her to market her makeup artistry on Instagram, turning exclusion into a creative outlet (personal communication, December 6, 2024). L.M. recounted a loan denial that led her to Black Girl Ventures, where she secured a grant for her salon, demonstrating adaptability (personal communication, November 27, 2024). These strategies reflect Jones and Shorter-Gooden's (2003) concept of "shifting," where Black women adapt to oppressive systems.

**Mental Health and Self-Care:** I.U. highlighted therapy as essential for sustaining resilience, managing stress from misconceptions about her real estate success (personal communication, December 11, 2024). A.M. echoed this, noting that therapy helped her balance entrepreneurship and motherhood, preventing burnout in her personal training business (personal communication, November 25, 2024). This aligns with Woods-Giscombé's (2010) research on the "superwoman schema," where Black women prioritize strength but benefit from self-care to thrive.

**Strategic Planning:** L.M. and I.U. emphasized financial stability and leveraging prior experience. L.M. advised maintaining a job or savings before launching a business, reflecting on her abrupt transition from teaching to entrepreneurship (personal communication, November 27, 2024). I.U. encouraged treating corporate jobs as training, using her Blue Cross Blue Shield experience to learn business operations before entering real estate (personal communication, December 11, 2024). These insights underscore the need for practical preparation, as noted by Smith (2023).

Participants' advice was grounded in their resilience strategies, such as T.R.T.'s use of community funding after loan rejections and Q.E.'s Instagram marketing to bypass gatekeepers.

Focus group discussions reinforced these recommendations, with participants advocating for teachability and collaboration (Focus Group Meeting #2, January 25, 2025). For example, T.R.T. urged younger entrepreneurs to “stay teachable” and learn from others, citing her growth through clinician networks (personal communication, December 19, 2024). This advice addresses Research Question 3 and offers a forward-looking contribution to the literature, empowering the next generation of Black women entrepreneurs to navigate intersectional barriers with confidence and resourcefulness.

## Conclusion

This study explored the intersectional experiences of seven Black women entrepreneurs—A.M. (Health, Beauty, Personal Training), Dr. D. (Relationship Therapy, Counseling, Author), M.M. (Author, Pastor, Chaplain, Family Counseling, Therapy), T.R.T. (Author, Trauma Therapy, Counseling), Q.E. (Makeup Artist, Photography, Registered Nurse), I.U. (Business, Real Estate, Mentor), and L.M. (Cosmetologist, Educator, Real Estate). It highlighted their resilience in navigating challenges rooted in race, gender, and educational disparities, offering insights into their strategies for overcoming systemic barriers.

The findings from Chapter 4 revealed five key themes—Intersectional Double Jeopardy, Systemic Barriers, Educational Foundations, Social Media, and Resilience—that directly address the research questions. These themes underscore how race and gender create compounded obstacles, how educational systems often fail to support Black women entrepreneurs, and how they leverage education, networks, and resilience to thrive. This chapter synthesizes these findings, connecting them to transformative education, policy implications, and future research to foster an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Using Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) intersectionality framework, the research illuminated double jeopardy, where race and gender amplify entrepreneurial obstacles. Participants demonstrated resilience through innovative strategies, such as M.M.’s community networks to counter exclusion and Q.E.’s diversified income streams via social media marketing. These align with Jones and Shorter-Gooden’s (2003) concept of adaptive “shifting,” where Black women strategically navigate systemic inequities to achieve success.

Family support and mentorship were pivotal. Dr. D. and T.R.T. credited professional mentorship for providing critical guidance, while I.U. leveraged informal mentorship and her educational background to navigate real estate challenges (Grant, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2006). Education was a double-edged tool: it fostered legitimacy for A.M. and L.M., enhancing their credibility, yet it often lacked tailored frameworks to address Black women's unique needs (Al-Lawati et al., 2022; Bakker & McMullen, 2023). Participants' self-efficacy, built through education and practical experience, was critical, as noted by Mozahem (2021).

This study contributes to transformative education by empowering Black women entrepreneurs through resilience strategies that align with emancipatory pedagogy. For instance, L.M.'s use of Black Girl Ventures for grant-writing skills and Q.E.'s social media networking reflects community-driven learning that challenges systemic inequities. These strategies enable Black women to redefine success beyond traditional metrics, fostering agency and collective empowerment in educational and entrepreneurial contexts. Integrating culturally responsive curricula, as advocated in the findings, learning institutions can support transformative learning that uplifts marginalized groups.

The study's innovation lies in its redefinition of entrepreneurial success, emphasizing resilience and social impact over conventional financial metrics. Unlike Smith (2023), which focuses on funding gaps, this research highlights social media as a critical resilience strategy, offering a new lens on how Black women bypass traditional barriers. Centering intersectional experiences, it extends Abbas et al.'s (2019) work on resilience by demonstrating how education and community networks uniquely empower Black women, challenging entrepreneurship paradigms that marginalize their contributions.

Policy implications advocate for tailored educational programs, mentorship networks, and equitable funding to address intersectional inequities. Learning institutions should implement inclusive curricula that combine practical skills and resilience-building, while policymakers should prioritize grants and advocacy training to bypass discriminatory lending practices. These reforms can create supportive ecosystems that empower Black women entrepreneurs to thrive.

Future research should explore additional identity factors, such as age, geographic location, and sectors like technology and healthcare, using mixed methods designs to quantify intersectional impacts. Longitudinal studies tracking entrepreneurial trajectories will further enhance understanding of diverse experiences, building on this study's qualitative insights.

This study advances equity in entrepreneurship by amplifying Black women's resilience and ingenuity, shifting broader paradigms to value community impact and systemic navigation as entrepreneurial excellence. Their journeys highlight pathways to success through adaptability and community support, fostering an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that recognizes, and uplifts marginalized voices.

### **Looking Ahead**

Future research should develop methodological tools to capture intersectional complexities, combining qualitative narratives with quantitative impact assessments. Longitudinal studies examining long-term entrepreneurial outcomes will provide deeper insights, guiding policies and practices for an inclusive entrepreneurial landscape. Engaging directly with

diverse entrepreneurs will ensure grounded perspectives that enhance theoretical and practical understandings.

To advance intersectionality's utility in entrepreneurship, researchers should create tools for analyzing multiple identities, integrating deep narrative dives with large-scale data patterns. This approach will enrich the theoretical landscape and inform practical, policy, and educational reforms that address the varied needs of entrepreneurs at identity intersections. By embedding intersectionality in research and practice, we can foster a comprehensive understanding of Black women entrepreneurs' challenges, guiding effective policies that support their success in an evolving entrepreneurial climate.

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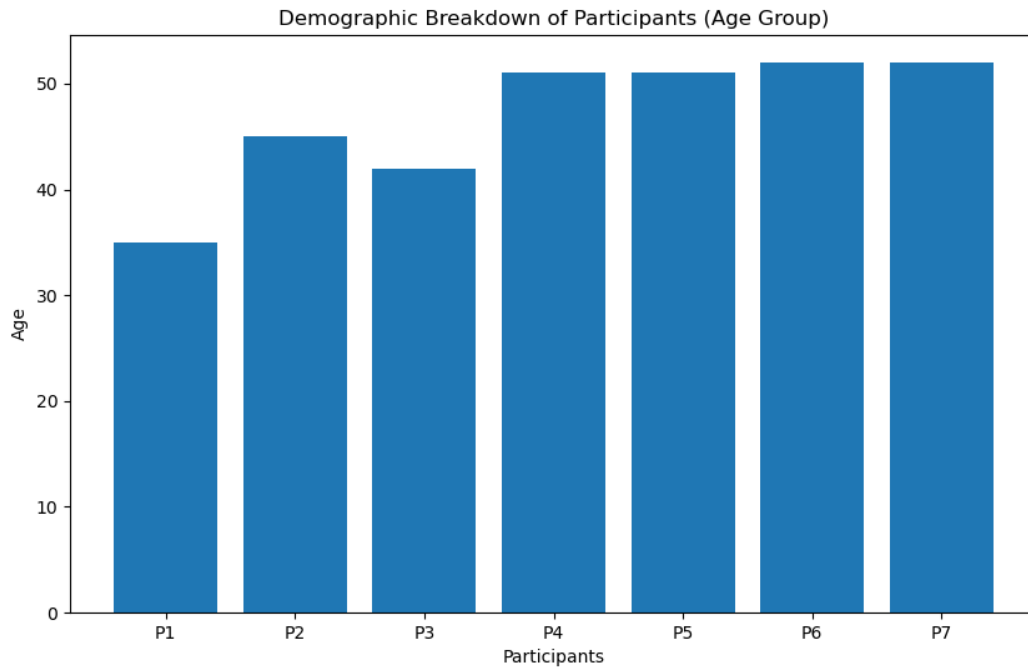
### Glossary, Appendix, and Artifacts

1. **Intersectionality:** A theoretical framework that examines how various forms of social stratification, such as race, gender, and class, intersect and interact on multiple levels, shaping the experiences of individuals in complex ways.
2. **Entrepreneurship:** The process of designing, launching, and running a new business, typically starting as a small business, offering a product, process, or service for sale or hire.
3. **Mentorship:** A relationship in which a more experienced or knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or knowledgeable person, often in a professional or educational context.
4. **Systemic Barriers:** Obstacles that are embedded within the policies, practices, and structures of institutions, which disproportionately affect certain groups based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other factors.
5. **Resilience:** The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. In the context of entrepreneurship, it refers to the ability to adapt and thrive despite facing challenges and setbacks.
6. **Double Jeopardy:** The compounded disadvantages faced by individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups, such as Black women, who experience discrimination based on both race and gender.
7. **Qualitative Research:** A research method that focuses on understanding the meaning and experiences of participants through methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observations.
8. **Phenomenological Approach:** A qualitative research approach that aims to understand and describe the lived experiences of individuals from their own perspectives.
9. **Critical Race Theory:** An academic framework that examines the relationship between race, law, and power, emphasizing the social construction of race and the impact of systemic racism.
10. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Policies and practices that promote the representation and participation of diverse groups of people, ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all.
11. **Socioeconomic Status:** An individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure, which is often determined by factors such as income, education, occupation, and wealth.
12. **Microaggressions:** Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based on their marginalized group membership.

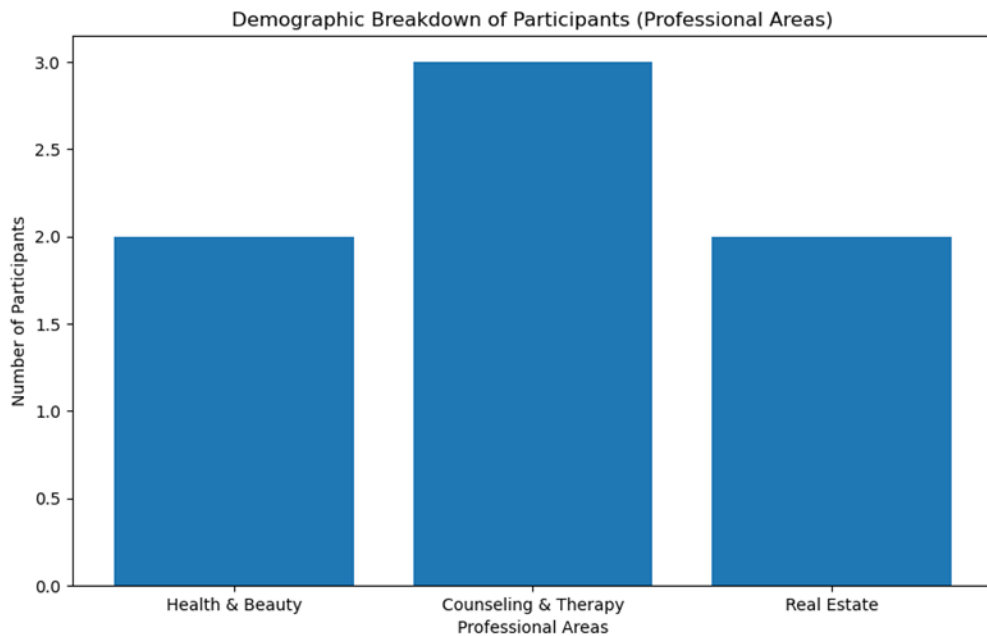
13. **Empirical Studies:** Research studies that collect and analyze data to generate findings based on observation or experimentation.
14. **Educational Policies:** Guidelines and rules that govern educational systems and institutions, shaping the experiences and outcomes of students and educators.
15. **Social Movements:** Collective efforts by groups of people to bring about social change, often focused on issues such as civil rights, gender equality, and environmental justice.
16. **Networking:** The process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts, often crucial for business growth and career advancement.
17. **Self-Efficacy:** An individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task can influence their approach to challenges and goals.
18. **Inclusive Entrepreneurship** is an approach to entrepreneurship that recognizes and supports the diverse identities and experiences of all entrepreneurs, promoting equity and inclusion in business practices.
19. **Leadership Resilience:** The ability of leaders to navigate and overcome adversity, maintaining effectiveness and inspiring others despite challenges.
20. **Artifacts:** Physical items or documents collected during research that provide additional context and evidence, such as business plans, educational certificates, and personal journals.

\*All figures and artifacts have obtained release permissions where applicable. \*

## Data Charts

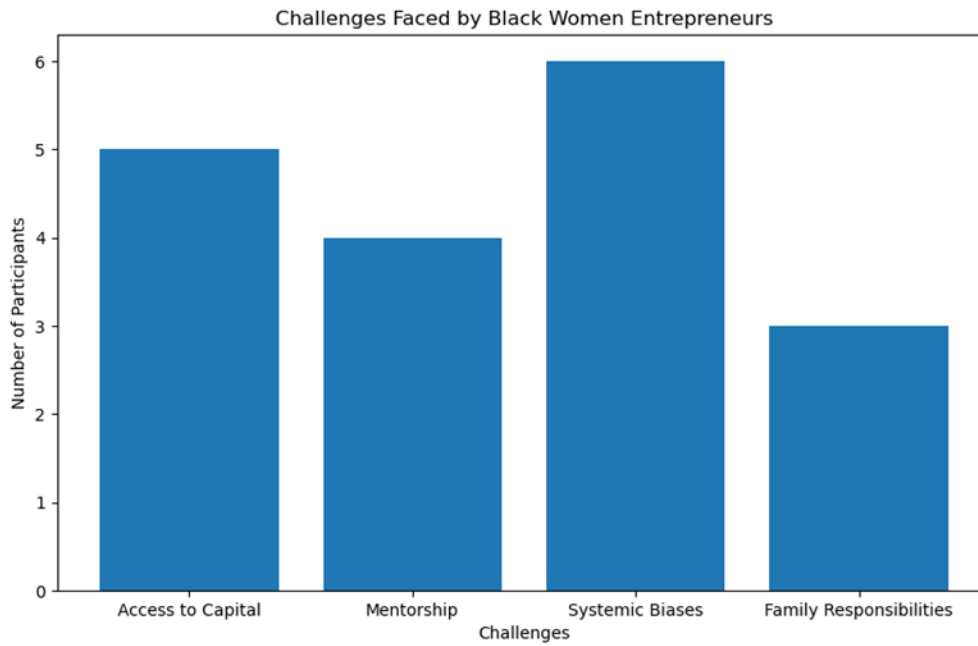


**Figure 1:** The chart illustrates the number of Black women entrepreneurs employing three strategies to overcome barriers: leveraging education (5 entrepreneurs), building mentorship networks (6 entrepreneurs), and maintaining resilience (7 entrepreneurs). The data is derived from interviews and focus group discussions with Black women entrepreneurs that highlight their reliance on education, mentorship networks, and resilience to navigate systemic challenges.

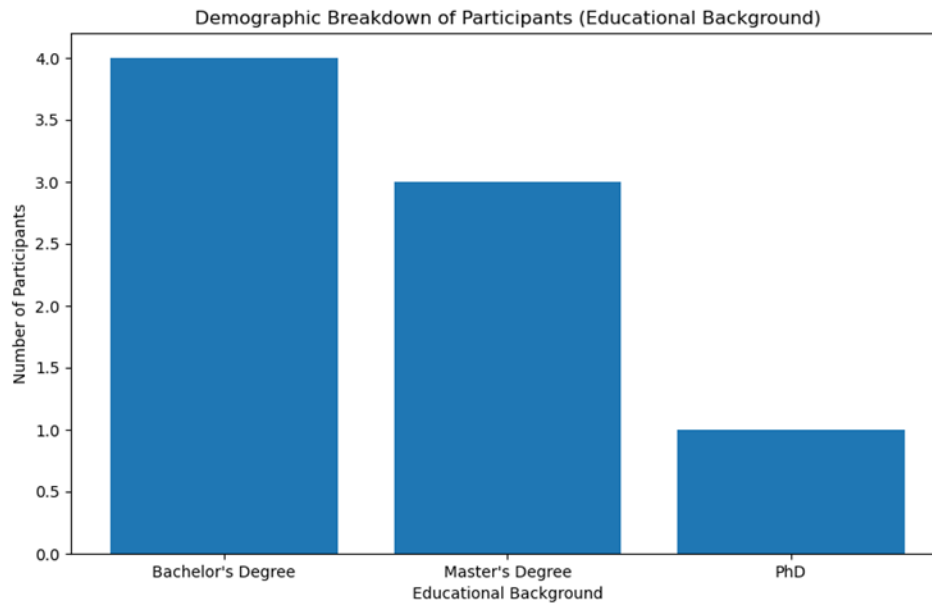


**Figure 2:** *Demographic Breakdown of Participants (Age Group)*

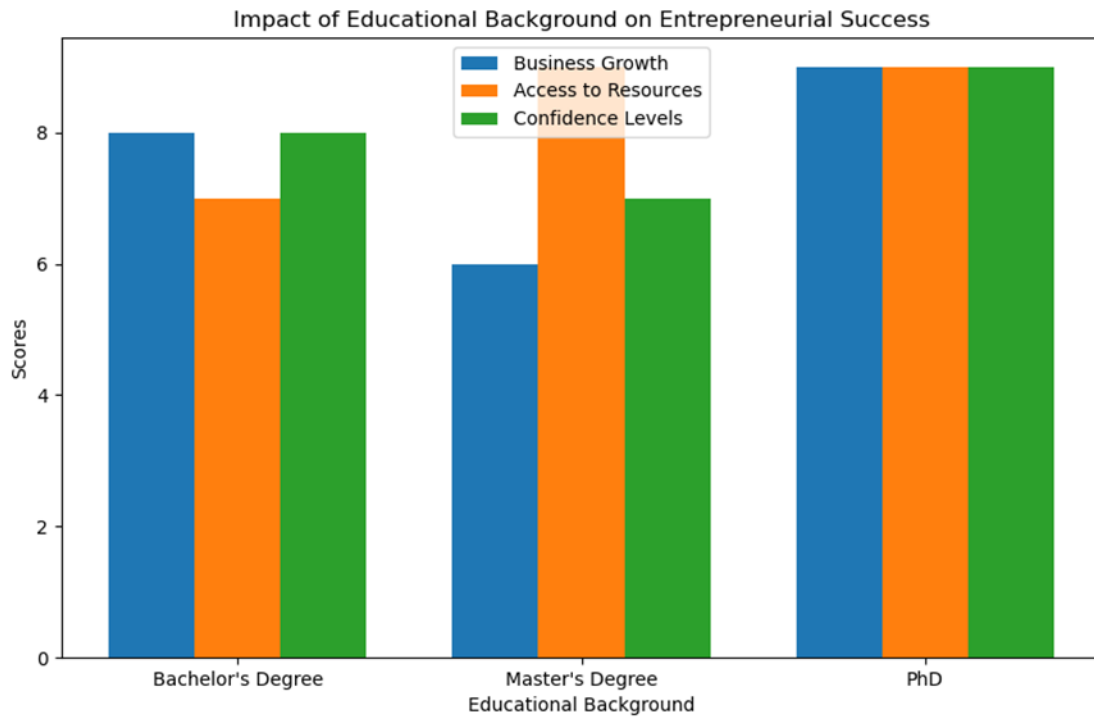
Note: The chart displays the ages of seven Black women entrepreneurs (P1 to P7) interviewed in the study: P1 (51 years), P2 (45 years), P3 (52 years), P4 (45 years), P5 (50 years), P6 (52 years), and P7 (52 years). Data were derived from interviews and focus group discussions with Black women entrepreneurs, specifically participants identified as TRT (P1), QE (P2), MM (P3), LM (P4), I U (P5), Dr. D (P6), and A M (P7).



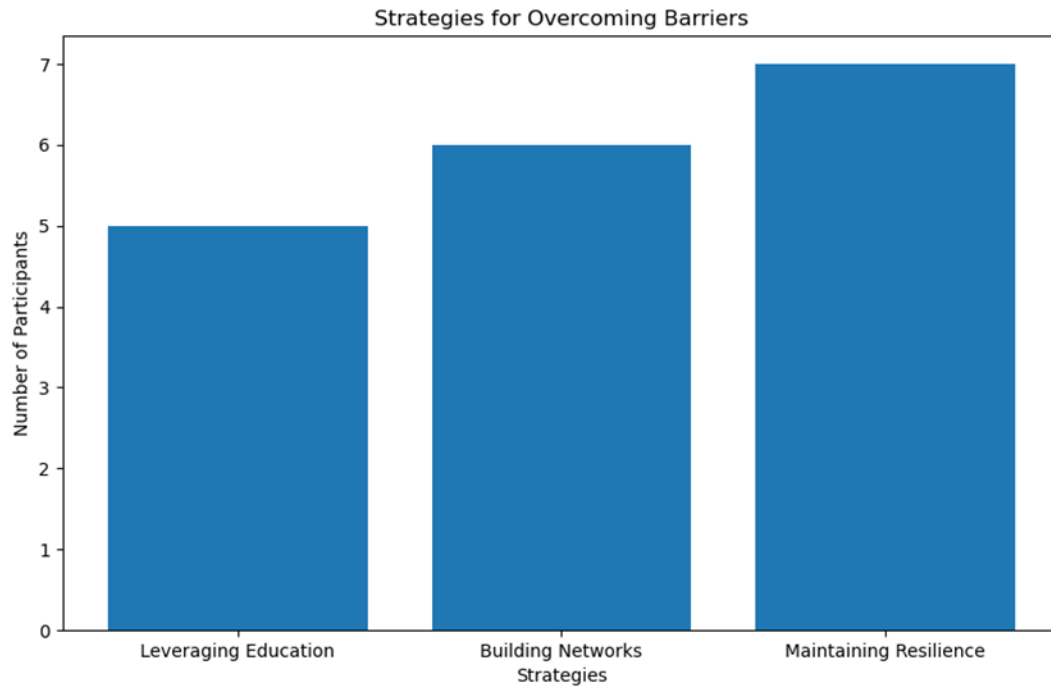
**Figure 3:** Illustrates the primary challenges reported by Black women entrepreneurs who participated in this study. Six participants cited systemic biases as a significant barrier. Access to capital was closely followed, reported by five participants as a major challenge. Mentorship, or the lack thereof, was identified by four participants, highlighting a critical gap in professional guidance and support networks. Family responsibilities were also noted, underscoring the dual pressure many Black women entrepreneurs face in balancing business and family commitments



**Figure 4:** Demographic Breakdown of Participants by Educational Background. This figure illustrates the distribution of educational attainment among the study's participants, highlighting that the majority hold a Bachelor's degree ( $n=4$ ), followed by a Master's degree ( $n=3$ ), and a smaller representation holding a PhD ( $n=1$ ). This visual representation underscores the varying levels of academic credentials among Black women entrepreneurs who participated in the research, offering context for analyzing how educational experiences impact entrepreneurial pathways.

**Figure 5**

**Figure 5:** This bar chart illustrates the relationship between educational attainment and entrepreneurial success across three metrics: Business Growth (blue), Access to Resources (orange), and Confidence Levels (green). The x-axis represents educational levels (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, PhD), while the y-axis shows scores on a scale from 0 to 10. The chart indicates that PhD holders report the highest scores in Business Growth and Confidence Levels, while Master's degree holders score highest in Access to Resources. Bachelor's degree holders show balanced performance across all metrics.

**Figure 6**

**Figure 6:** This bar chart displays the number of participants who adopted specific strategies to overcome entrepreneurial barriers. The x-axis lists the strategies (Leveraging Education, Building Networks, Maintaining Resilience), and the y-axis shows the number of participants on a scale from 0 to 7.

## Appendix

### IRB Consent

Hello. My name is Monica Stacker, and I am a Doctoral Candidate from Webster University. I am researching **“Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Strategies of Black Women Entrepreneurs to Overcome Barriers Across Disciplines in Higher Education.”**

I am investigating this because the central problem my research will address is the impact of education on the success and barriers faced by Black entrepreneurial women. This includes exploring how an educational background influences their journey in breaking traditional obstacles in the business world and how it contributes to their strategies, challenges, and achievements for shattering the ever-present glass ceiling. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to do interviews and videos, which I will use to make a mini-documentary and a focus group. The estimated time required for your participation will be between 60 and 90 minutes.

If you participate in this project, minimal risks are involved, such as potential discomfort in discussing sensitive topics. Taking part in this project is entirely up to you; no one will hold it against you if you decide not to do it. If you do take part, you may stop at any time without penalty. In addition, you may ask to have your data withdrawn from the study after the research has been conducted. The benefits of participating in this study include contributing to the understanding of challenges faced by black women entrepreneurially and educationally, which may lead to positive changes and support systems in the future.

Your confidentiality and privacy are of utmost importance. All information collected during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and identifying information will not be disclosed in any reports or publications resulting from this research. Data will be stored securely and accessible only to the research team. Your participation will be identified only by a unique code. The data will be retained for six months and then securely destroyed.

Your insights will be invaluable in understanding how an educational background influences their journey in breaking traditional obstacles in the business world and how it contributes to their strategies, challenges, and achievements for shattering the ever-present glass ceiling.

If you want to know more about this research project, please contact me at 618-709-6698 or [mrs\\_stack@msn.com](mailto:mrs_stack@msn.com). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Webster University Institutional Review Board at [irb@webster.edu](mailto:irb@webster.edu).

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

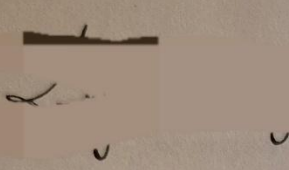
Monica Stacker

B. Audio Videotape and Transcription Consent Addition

I agree to audiotaping at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

I agree to videotaping at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

I agree to both audio and videotaping at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.



n) 12/19/21

Signature

Date

I have been told that I have the right to (hear)/(see) and (read) the (audio)/(video) transcription before they are used. I have decided that I:

want to (hear)/(see) the tapes

do not want to (hear)/(see) the tapes

want to (read) the transcription

do not want to (read) the transcription

Sign below to avoid hearing, seeing, or reading the tapes and transcription. If you want to (hear)/(see)/(read) the recordings and transcription, you will be asked to sign after (hearing)/(seeing)/ (reading) them.

[Redacted Signature]

12/19/24

Signature

Date

Monica Stacker and other researchers approved by Webster University may use the tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for (check all that apply):

This research project

Teacher Education

Presentation at professional meetings

Transcription of the recordings (video and audio)

All of the above

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Signature

Date

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## Interview Notes:

### TRT Journey: Family Support, Informal Mentorship, and Entrepreneurial Insights

TRT's strong family support system played a crucial role in shaping her educational and entrepreneurial journey. As a first-generation college student, she benefited from her parents' unwavering encouragement—both emotional and financial—from preschool through graduate school. Despite not having extensive higher education backgrounds themselves, her parents nurtured her academic aspirations, allowing her to focus on her studies and cultivate a passion for education. Inspired by her achievements, TRT's brothers also pursued college degrees, demonstrating the far-reaching impact of familial encouragement on educational success.

While TRT did not have formal mentors, she built a network of informal allies and support systems:

- **Early Career Guidance:** She had an informal mentor who worked as a liaison for the Department of Children and Family Services. Recognizing her potential, this mentor encouraged her to push beyond her current role.
- **Professional Network:** TRT actively engages with a broad network of seasoned clinicians, both locally and across different states, exchanging ideas, information, and support. She values these collaborative, non-gatekeeping relationships.
- **Online Communities:** She stays connected with various social media groups specific to her profession, such as *My Therapist is Black* and *Therapy for Black Girls*, which provide valuable resources and community support.

Despite the absence of traditional mentorship, TRT has cultivated a strong informal support system that offers guidance, collaboration, and professional growth.

### Advice for Black Women Entrepreneurs:

1. **Entrepreneurship is not for everyone.** Even if you are skilled in your profession, running a business requires discipline, self-awareness, and a willingness to learn.
2. **I have a genuine passion for entrepreneurship.** It is not just about prestige or being flashy—true success requires sacrifice and hard work.
3. **Develop self-discipline and a solid support system.** Do not be afraid to ask for help or admit when you do not know something.
4. **Stay teachable.** No matter how experienced you are, remain open to learning from others in your field.

5. **Recognize both the challenges and opportunities.** While obstacles exist, resilience, knowledge, and resources can help Black women entrepreneurs navigate the landscape successfully.

TRT emphasizes that entrepreneurship demands more than just technical expertise; it requires the right mindset, discipline, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

### **The Role of DEI in TRT's Career:**

TRT did not perceive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives as a significant factor in her entrepreneurial success. Key points from the conversation include:

- She intentionally positioned herself beyond being labeled as the “Black lady therapist,” striving for a diverse clientele.
- She did not encounter major barriers in entering the mental health field, attributing her success to strategic planning and execution rather than external support.
- She believes there are increasing opportunities for Black women in entrepreneurship and education without a perceived “glass ceiling.”
- Her achievements stem from resilience, skills, and continuous learning rather than reliance on DEI efforts.

Overall, TRT's journey highlights the importance of expertise, strong relationships, and a measured approach to business. She attributes broader shifts in mental health awareness as more impactful than DEI initiatives.

### **Reflection on Her Entrepreneurial Path:**

TRT expressed unwavering enthusiasm for her entrepreneurial journey, stating she would do it again. She remains enthusiastic about her work and enjoys the autonomy and fulfillment it provides. The only change she might make would be transitioning to full-time private practice earlier. However, she has no regrets and values the path she has taken.

## **II. Q E's Journey: Authenticity, Support Systems, and Entrepreneurial Resilience**

Q E's greatest challenge has been to stay true to herself and resist societal expectations. She advises other Black women entrepreneurs to follow their passions, even if they do not align with conventional norms. Authenticity, she emphasizes, is a key asset in business.

### **The Role of Support Systems:**

- **Spousal Support:** QE credits her husband as a driving force behind her entrepreneurial success. He encouraged her through nursing school and later supported her transition into makeup artistry, recognizing her natural talent.
- **Mentorship from Antoinette:** A relative and public speaker, Antoinette has been a mentor and cheerleader, ensuring that QE stays true to her vision.

- **Friendship and Accountability:** Several close friends provide ongoing encouragement and accountability, reinforcing the importance of having a supportive circle.

### **Overcoming Societal Pressures:**

Q E stresses the importance of disregarding external expectations and embracing one's unique path. The pressure to conform—whether to industry trends or societal norms—can be a significant obstacle. She encourages Black women entrepreneurs to confidently pursue their passions and put themselves out there, even when others may not fully understand their vision.

### **DEI Considerations:**

The conversation did not explicitly address the impact of DEI on QE's career. However, her emphasis on authenticity and self-determination aligns with the broader goal of creating inclusive spaces for diverse entrepreneurs.

### **Reflection on Her Entrepreneurial Path:**

QE would undoubtedly choose this journey again. She believes every experience, challenge, and mistake has contributed to her growth, shaping her into the person she is today. She values the lessons learned along the way and embraces her path without regret.

## **III. M M's Journey: Family Influence, Mentorship, and Purpose-Driven Entrepreneurship**

M M's educational journey was deeply influenced by her family, particularly her grandparents and mother. Their support, along with her full academic scholarship, enabled her to pursue higher education, leading to her work in ministry and seminary studies.

### **Key Mentors and Allies:**

- Two African American women and one Latina woman have served as significant mentors.
- A white woman mentor, with whom she initially disagreed, later became a trusted advisor after MM reached out for clarity.
- Lifelong friends from diverse backgrounds provide both professional guidance and personal support.

MM emphasizes the value of mentorship from individuals across different ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds, as they provide unique perspectives and meaningful encouragement.

### **Transition to Entrepreneurship:**

MM's shift from a traditional 9-to-5 career to entrepreneurship was driven by a blend of necessity, calling, and personal fulfillment:

1. **Survival:** A difficult divorce forced her to explore new career paths to support herself and her children.

2. **Purpose:** She felt a deep calling to serve others through ministry, chaplaincy, and therapy, which entrepreneurship allowed her to pursue more freely.
3. **Control & Fulfillment:** She desired more autonomy over her time and work-life balance, especially in later years.

#### **Lessons for Entrepreneurs:**

- Engage in **self-reflection** beyond just academic or technical knowledge.
- Seek **diverse mentors and allies** who offer different perspectives.
- **Reframe challenges as opportunities** for growth.
- Align your work with **purpose and calling**.
- Embrace **resilience and adaptability** when facing obstacles.

#### **Reflection on Her Path:**

While MM did not explicitly state whether she would choose this path again, her narrative suggests she finds deep meaning and purpose in her journey. She views entrepreneurship as a vehicle for fulfilling her calling, demonstrating resilience and adaptability along the way.

### **IV. Key Insights from L M's Entrepreneurial Journey**

#### **Challenges and Growth:**

L M shared that she faced opposition from ex-partners and business associates who were against her success and prosperity. However, attending therapy this year has helped shift her mindset, improving both her personal and professional life. While the conversation does not specify mentors or allies who supported her entrepreneurial journey, it highlights that her mother was the most supportive figure during her education, assisting with childcare while LM pursued her degree.

#### **Career Transition:**

Initially, LM worked as a teacher in the school district but felt restricted despite financial stability. After experiencing entrepreneurship, she found it difficult to return to a structured work environment. Her transition to entrepreneurship was primarily driven by her desire for greater freedom and control over her work.

#### **Challenges as a Black Woman Entrepreneur:**

1. **Financial Barriers** – Repeatedly turned down for loans and grants despite meeting all criteria, attributing these rejections to her race and gender.
2. **Personal Opposition** – facing resistance from former partners and associates, leading to emotional trauma and professional setbacks.
3. **Gendered Expectations** – Encountering societal perceptions of male superiority, which contributed to her ex-partner pushing her out of a business she had built.

4. **Systemic Barriers** – Facing discriminatory policies and "loopholes" in government contracting that favored other demographics over minority women-owned businesses.

#### **Advice for Black Women Entrepreneurs:**

1. **Ensure Financial Stability** – Don't start a business without a solid income source; maintain a job or savings before launching a venture.
2. **Balance Work and Business** – If possible, keep a traditional job while starting a business to maintain financial security.
3. **Prioritize Education** – Lynn advises completing a degree before becoming an entrepreneur, as she believes this would have better positioned her for success.

#### **Reflecting on Her Journey:**

LM would choose entrepreneurship again but would approach it differently:

1. **Finish her degree first** before launching a business.
2. **Secure a higher-paying job first** and transition gradually rather than leaving a stable job abruptly.

### **V. Key Insights from I U's Entrepreneurial Journey**

#### **Mentorship and Support System:**

- Relies on motivational speakers, podcasts, and videos for guidance rather than in-person mentors.
- She has a supportive network of family and friends, with her spouse being her strongest ally.

#### **Support in Education:**

- Her husband played a crucial role, taking on household responsibilities while she completed her bachelor's and master's degrees.
- Although he does not prioritize formal education himself, he respected and supported her decision to pursue higher education.

#### **Transition to Entrepreneurship:**

- Initially, she thrived in her corporate job at Blue Cross Blue Shield but transitioned to support her husband's dream of investing in real estate.
- Her master's degree provided valuable knowledge in markets, finance, and business operations, unexpectedly benefiting their entrepreneurial journey.
- Though hesitant at first, she fully committed to entrepreneurship alongside her husband.

#### **Challenges as a Black Woman Entrepreneur:**

1. **Navigating Her Husband's Criminal Record** – Took on a larger role in the business because his record created obstacles.
2. **Misconceptions About Success** – Faced assumptions that their success was easy or aided by external help, despite financial struggles and setbacks.
3. **Maintaining a Positive Mindset** – Overcoming doubts from others and staying resilient.

#### **Advice for Black Women Entrepreneurs:**

1. **Leverage Corporate Experience** – Treat corporate jobs as training for entrepreneurship rather than just a paycheck.
2. **Utilize Retirement Funds Strategically** – Consider using a 401(k) as an investment in your business.
3. **Network and Support Each Other** – Encourage mentorship and collaboration among Black women entrepreneurs.

#### **Reflecting on Her Journey:**

- Would choose entrepreneurship again but would have pursued a real estate license earlier.
- Recognizes the importance of balancing risk-taking with preparation.

## **VI. Key Insights from Dr. D's Entrepreneurial Journey**

#### **Mentorship and Support System:**

- **Dr. Charice Johnson** – Best friend and PhD peer, provided mutual accountability.
- **Dissertation Chair** – Served as both a mentor and supporter.
- **Jessica** – Offered valuable business advice and encouragement.

#### **Family Support:**

- Received quiet, non-verbal support from her family, particularly her mother.
- Though they did not explicitly express encouragement, they respected her journey and gave her space to succeed.

#### **Educational Background and Entrepreneurship:**

1. **Expanded Mindset** – Her PhD program broadened her perspectives and opened new opportunities.
2. **Credibility and Confidence** – Gained expertise that enabled her to transition into full-time entrepreneurship.
3. **Desire for Global Impact** – This led her to become a relationship coach, allowing her to collaborate with clients worldwide.

4. **Strategic Transition** – Quit her traditional job in the final stages of her PhD to start her private practice.

### **Challenges as a Black Woman Entrepreneur:**

1. **Being a Single Mother** – Faced judgment on her ability to balance entrepreneurship and motherhood.
2. **Financial Barriers** – Limited access to investors and funding restricted her ability to execute extensive ideas.
3. **External Judgment** – She had to navigate societal pressures and opinions about her entrepreneurial path.

### **Reflecting on Her Journey:**

- It would not change her decision to become an entrepreneur, but she acknowledges the need for strong financial backing and resilience.
- Recognizes that completing her PhD gave her the confidence and expertise to succeed independently.

### **Insights from the Conversation with A. M**

#### **Entrepreneurial Journey & Support System**

A. M shared that she did not have anyone in her immediate circle pursuing entrepreneurship in the same way she was. However, she sought mentorship through social media, connecting with women, including a former classmate, Paula, who provided guidance. Paula played a crucial role in helping her navigate practical business aspects such as setting up PayPal and managing shipping.

Despite her family lacking a business background, they fully supported her educational journey and entrepreneurial aspirations. She noted that her family valued higher education and self-improvement, encouraging her to pursue her goals, even if entrepreneurship was unfamiliar to them.

AM's entrepreneurial journey began around 2010, but she became more focused on product creation and client acquisition for her personal training business in 2013. With a background in social work, she found a natural connection between her education and her business, integrating mental health and self-care into her offerings, which included hair and body care products alongside personal training services.

#### **Motivations for Entrepreneurship**

A M identified two primary reasons for transitioning from social work to entrepreneurship:

1. **Freedom** – She wanted to create her own schedule and avoid the constraints of a traditional 9-to-5 job.

2. **Flexibility** – As a personal trainer and product creator, she needed control over her schedule, particularly after having a child later in life.

For her, entrepreneurship provided the independence and adaptability that a traditional work environment could not offer.

### **Challenges as a Black Woman Entrepreneur**

A.M highlighted key obstacles she faced in her entrepreneurial journey:

1. **Lack of family business experience** – Without relatives who had owned businesses, she lacked a built-in support system or prior knowledge to draw from.
2. **Beginning from nothing** – With no immediate mentors, she had to learn every aspect of business operations on her own, including logistics like shipping and packaging.

She emphasized that not having role models within her close network made the learning curve steeper.

### **Advice for Other Black Women Entrepreneurs**

AM offered the following key insights for aspiring entrepreneurs:

1. **Seek multiple mentors** – Having guidance in different areas, such as finance and marketing, is invaluable.
2. **Be persistent** – Do not accept "no" as a definitive answer; determination is crucial to success.
3. **Continuously educate yourself** – staying informed about industry trends and best practices is essential.
4. **Diversify mentorship** – Learning from both Black and non-Black mentors can provide a broader range of perspectives and insights.

Her overarching message was to take the initiative in seeking support and remain resolute in achieving entrepreneurial goals.

### **Reflections & Lessons Learned**

When asked if she would embark on this journey again, AM responded with enthusiasm, "Yes." However, she identified two things she would do differently:

1. **Pursue a business degree** – She recognized the value of understanding financials, marketing, and operations more comprehensively.
2. **Develop web and digital skills** – A stronger foundation in web design and online business management would have better positioned her in today's digital marketplace.

AM's experience underscores the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and initiative-taking networking in entrepreneurship.

### Interview Questions

1. How would you identify your intersectionality (race, class, gender, sexual orientation?)
2. How would you define an entrepreneur in a higher educational setting?
3. How did your family influence or support your educational journey?
4. What motivated you to transition from your educational background to entrepreneurship instead of pursuing traditional employment?
5. Tell me about your mentors or allies on your journey.
6. Does your educational journey tie into your entrepreneurial journey?
  - a. Did you attend an HBCU or a PWI?
  - b. Do you currently work for an HBCU or a PWI?
7. How do perceptions within the broader community, particularly among men, influence your experiences as an entrepreneur and student?
8. What challenges or barriers do/did you face in becoming an entrepreneur as a Black woman?
  - a. What progress do you think has been made by Black women in entrepreneurship and education?
9. What advice do you have for other Black women entrepreneurs?
10. Would you go on your journey again or not?
  - a. What would you do differently?
  - b. What more education would you/have you pursued?

### Refined Focus Group Questions

1. What (do you think) are the common challenges you have faced as Black women entrepreneurs in your respective industries, and how has your education or mentorship helped you overcome them?  
(Encourages discussion of shared barriers and solutions across professions.)
2. How do diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives—or the lack thereof—impact opportunities and challenges for Black women entrepreneurs in your fields?  
(Focuses on systemic barriers and DEI's role in entrepreneurship.)
3. How has your educational background shaped the way you approach entrepreneurship, and do you see any unique advantages it provides in your industry?  
(Encourages exploration of how education intersects with their professional context.)
4. What role has collaboration or networking with other Black women entrepreneurs played in your success, and are there ways this could be strengthened?  
(Centers on the power of community and professional connections.)
5. What advice or insights would you share with younger Black women who want to enter entrepreneurship in different fields? How can they better prepare for challenges you have faced?  
(A forward-looking question that inspires actionable insights for the next generation.)

### Focus Group Meeting #1

#### Transcript

<https://otter.ai/u/Awr5tC2nXf5drbLZx-Di19GuxoQ?view=transcript>

The meeting focused on the challenges and strategies of Black women entrepreneurs. Key issues discussed included the stigma around mental health services, the impact of DEI initiatives, and the importance of formal education and mentorship. TRT highlighted the growing demand for mental health services and the need for formal training. Dr. D. emphasized the value of a doctorate in gaining recognition and opportunities. M.M. discussed the gender bias in religious institutions. A.M. shared her journey from social work to entrepreneurship. The group also stressed the importance of collaboration and networking, with TRT advocating for a supportive, non-competitive approach.

**Action Items**

- Provide mentorship and support to new clinicians entering the mental health field.
- Explore opportunities for licensure reciprocity to expand professional reach.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting to continue the discussion.

**Focus Group Meeting #2****Transcript**

[https://otter.ai/u/1mSxfx-bxqpk2B\\_uXpi6MsQawZ8?view=transcript](https://otter.ai/u/1mSxfx-bxqpk2B_uXpi6MsQawZ8?view=transcript)

Monica Stacker and her colleagues discussed the challenges and advice for younger Black women entering entrepreneurship. Monica emphasized the importance of life experience and continuous learning, urging them to avoid relying on social media and to seek mentors aligned with their values. TRT and LM highlighted the significance of being teachable, investing in continuous education, and seeking therapy to address personal issues. They shared personal anecdotes about how therapy transformed their lives and businesses. Monica concluded by expressing gratitude for the insights and support from her colleagues, noting the importance of surrounding oneself with intelligent people.

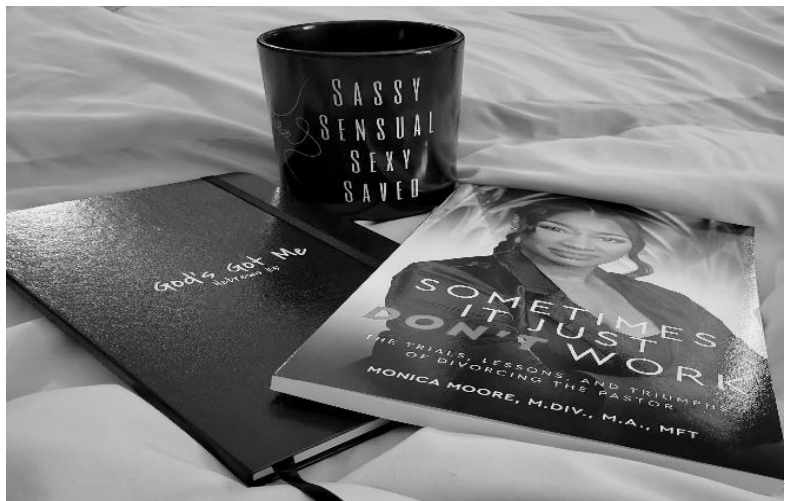
**Action Items**

- Challenges faced
- Monica to email the book link to the group.
- Participants to read Monica's book "Divorcing a Pastor" and provide feedback.
- Participants to stay connected and continue supporting each other's entrepreneurial journeys.

Artifacts

LM's beauty shop





MM's merchandise

“She remembered who she was and the game changed.”  
— Lalah Deliah  
@ElyseSantilli



CEO AM-SweetBodyCrush



**TRT-Optimum Wellness**

# Come Sit With Me, Sis

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Opening Prayer

Antwoinette Ayers, Moderator

### Visual Presentation

Lisa Cowley

### Welcome AGAIN & Introduction

Tyler Roy Thurman, LCPC

### "It's Your Pruning Season, Sis!"

Aundrea Johnson, MA, PLPC

### \*Brief Intermission\*

### Keynote Speaker

Tyler Roy Thurman, LCPC

### \*Meal Break\*

### Q&A Segment

Mental Health Panelists

### Wrap Up & Closing

Antwoinette Ayers

Special *thank you* to

#### Event Coordinators:

Journee Davis  
Annette Nolden  
Tashawndia Ward,  
Monique Manning  
Dr. Tammy Moore



A Tyler Roy Thurman  
Presentation



00:07:00 Dr D

There are many individuals and I've seen this mostly with women who will say you don't need to get a PhD to go out and do what you want to do.

00:07:05

Mm.

00:07:10 Dr D

Don't need a degree to go out there and make your money, and that is true.

00:07:16

Yes.

00:07:17 Dr D

There are in so in the counseling world, there are several counselors who never go on to get their PhD.

00:07:23 Dr D

That's totally fine.

00:07:26 Dr D

But from experience, now that I have my PhD and knowing the process, it has shaped me into a different therapist.

00:07:31 **Monica S**

Mm.

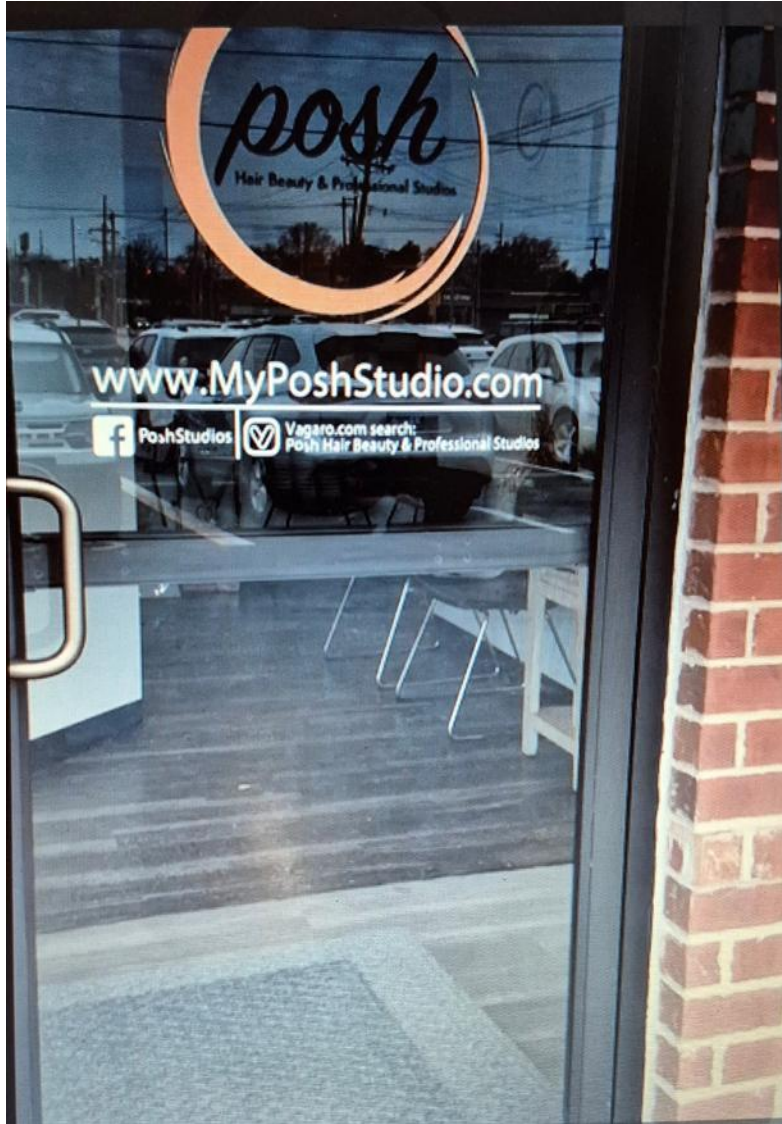
00:07:34 Dr D

It has grown my mindset and I've been able to use the education I received in different ways.

## Interview with Dr. D



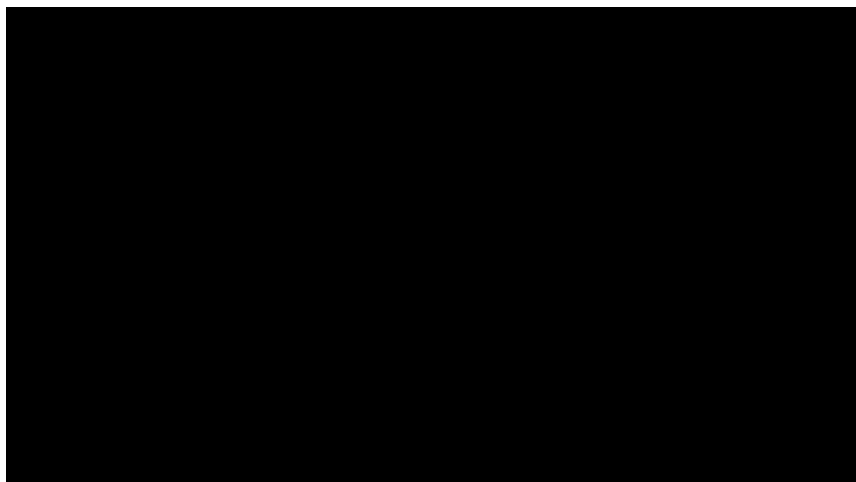
**Q E's Space**



L.M.'s Beauty Shop



I. U. Events at the U



**Dr. D's Interview**