

An Exploration of the Path for African American Women to
and the Diversification of the Corporate Boardroom
Don Kirk Beatty

Abstract

Women are the majority in the United States, approaching equal numbers to men in the workforce, and are the breadwinners in over 40% of homes controlling up to 80% of consumer purchasing power (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017; Citrin & Swartz, 2018). Women outperform men in higher educational attainment at all levels (Aud et al., 2012; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Citrin & Swartz, 2018; Klettner, Clarke, & Boersma, 2016). The National Center for Educational Statistics finds women achieve 44% of the accounting and finance degrees (Aud et al., 2012; Fedaseyeu, Linck, & Wagner, 2018; Gray & Nowland, 2013; Nielsen & Huse, 2010, United States Department of Labor [USDOL], 2017). These degrees are among the desired expertise typically sought for the corporate boardroom (Aud et al., 2012; Fedaseyeu, Linck, & Wagner, 2018; Gray & Nowland, 2013; Nielsen & Huse, 2010). Despite these accomplishments, women are well underrepresented on corporate boards of directors, and African American women even more so (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Klettner et al., 2016; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). With the traits of not only male, but also males of European descent, co-constructing the normal of the corporate boardroom, this study posits the European American leader's normal was obstructing the equitable representation of African American women in the traditionally European American male dominated boardroom space (Cook & Glass, 2014). This study investigates the experiences of directors for answers into why corporate boards lack the diversity of African American women. Pursuing phenomenological research, this study highlights how the European androcentric reality influenced and created an inequitable normal for the board environment. The implications are that board pipelines and directorships expand for a more inclusive, intentional selection process realizing equitable ethnic gender diversity on corporate boards.

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