

Exploring the Perceived Barriers that Create a Disadvantage for Black Women to Obtain
Leadership Positions in the Finance and Investment Industry

by

Porscha Baines

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

This study focused on the barriers implied towards Black women when they pursue leadership opportunities in the finance industry, because the demographic is obtaining secondary level degrees at a high level rate, they remain underrepresented in leadership roles. The organizational standards that may disqualify Black women from achieving promotional opportunities in the workplace were explored for insight into the workplace experiences of Black women to determine the barriers present in the work structure that may cause promotional obstacles for the demographic. Through conducting interviews, the experiences of Black women that have been promoted to leadership roles along with those who aspire were analyzed to determine in which ways the demographic encounters in the workplace implies a hindrance. The findings of this study were decoded into a set of recommendations that will be established for the use of Black women in the workplace so that they could manage to break through barricades to inclusion. The conceptual frameworks that worked to organize data into categories of work are the Black feminist theory, the expectation states theory, and the glass ceiling theory. The findings may help to advance the careers of Black women, because the recommendations provided to the demographic and organizational leaders propose strategies to promote inclusion, diversity, and advocacy for Black women in the workplace. The results of the study will contribute to addressing the need for social change within the employers and policy makers to eliminate the exclusion of Black women from leadership positions. Business practices may be improved through the recognition of any unethical strategies within the recruitment, hiring, and promotional standards of corporations that causes the remiss to a large pool of talent.

Key words: Leadership, underrepresentation, barriers, diversity, inclusion

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Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to the Black women that came before me that persisted and became a part of the representation that showed the demographic in a positive light and reminded me of the ability of Black women to recreate and redefine what it means to be Black.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Mark Ellis, who has worked seamlessly to help me reach my full potential and accomplish such a task that was no easy feat. I would like to thank the study participants who agreed to take part of the study and trusted me enough to share their workplace experiences with me, because the study would not have been complete without their account. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends who have listened to me complain and cry in which there were times that I felt like giving up and procrastination got the best of me, but you all pushed me to move forward.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Although there are laws that protect the rights of all individuals to work, to be treated equally, and to eliminate discrimination in the workplace, some organizations are facing crucial issues with increasing diversity amongst their workforce (Ng & Sears, 2018). Ng and Sears (2018) argued that workplace leaders announce their commitments to advance diversity efforts within the corporation; however, their words are not translating into actions, which creates a negative experience for excluded individuals who are a part of a particular group that may be different from the majority. Reports show that currently, men are dominating the management ranks of the financial services sector in which women lack sponsorship, support, and women are experiencing slow advancement within their careers, which typically dissolves the extent of their aspirations (Noback et al., 2016). Researchers have discovered that Black women, in particular, continue to face challenges associated with gender and racial discrimination acts that have created a disadvantage for the demographic to receive equal promotional opportunities that would advance their careers beyond entry to mid-level roles into leadership positions, despite qualifications (Rosette et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher explored the perceived barriers present within corporations that may have resulted in the negative experiences of Black women in the workplace, with the outcome of the disenfranchisement of their pursuit to obtain leadership roles. In this research study, the investigator was committed to identifying the organizational standards that work to disqualify Black women from climbing the corporation ladder, while exploring the differences and similarities in their experiences for the establishment of recommendations.

Background of the Problem

Although Black women are increasing enrollment rates at the collegiate level and obtaining graduate-level degrees at an alarming rate, their advancement into the leadership ranks among business corporations does not align with their qualifications in which Black women make up under 10% of private-sector jobs and only two percent of leadership roles (Holder et al., 2015). There is not a significant amount of Black women working in corporate America who hold a position beyond entry to mid-level roles, and the women who can succeed in these positions may have faced perceived barriers and negative characterizations along the way (Hall et al., 2012). Black women have experienced vocational disadvantages that perhaps initiated from a gender and racial biases (Hall et al., 2012). Black women report higher unemployment rates and maintain support positions for extended periods that present less opportunity for advancement (Hall et al., 2012). Beckwith et al. (2016) reported there are currently no Black women that hold the position of CEO at a Fortune 500 company. In 2009, the first Black woman became CEO of a Fortune 500 company and resigned in 2016 and since then there has not been another African American woman to reach this milestone (Beckwith et al., 2016).

Throughout the labor force organizations are working to increase diversity in the representation of races, genders, ages, and the acceptance of disabilities possessed by workplace members; however, disparities persist for particular groups resulting in a vulnerable work industry (Grissom, 2018). When members work together from different backgrounds, experiences, and talents, the organization's utilize the diverse perspectives to stimulate debates and make critical business decisions (Schmidt et al., 2017). Schmidt et al. (2017) found that diversity is insufficient in the official rankings of most organizations because it introduces an underlying business problem that harms productivity, tarnishes the decision-making process,

creates complaints and legal interventions, and decreases employee engagement and performance. Dhani et al. (2017) found that a lack of diversity within the corporation negatively affects the personal lives of employees as well as the organization's ability to operate under ethical obligations while upholding business integrity. When organizations fail to incorporate diversity, fairness, and inclusion into the guiding principles that align the actions of employees, the structure of operations does not demonstrate the commitment to accept a diverse team for optimal display of its corporate responsibility (Dhani et al., 2017).

Leadership traits are regarded as masculine characteristics (i.e., dominant and decisive), whereas females are associated with characteristics of being caring and emotional (Rovira-Asenjo et al., 2017). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), in 2018 there was a total of 1,573 chief executive positions across industries, while 26.9% of the positions consisted of women. Of that 26.9%, White women held 9.5% of the positions, Asian women held 5.9% of the positions, Latino women held 6.1% of the positions, and Black women held 3.5% of the positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Black women are a part of the marginalized group of women that are affected by gender stereotypes in the workplace; however, they have a double disadvantage due to racial stereotypes imposed (Holder et al., 2015). There is a lot of literature that centers on the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in corporate America in comparison to men. However, there is limited research that exists on the perceived barriers faced by Black women that aspire and hold leadership positions due to negative characterizations and the lack of equality in the workplace. Research suggests that employers can hire more women of color, provide unconscious bias training, sponsorship, coaching, and Black women that hold leadership positions could mentor and network with those that aspire to advance (Stewart, 2016).

Problem Statement

The general business problem to be addressed was the perceived barriers faced by Black women in corporate America, which may remain concealed that affects their likelihood of promotional opportunities in the workplace (Schmidt et al., 2017). The nation has made great strides in the increase of diversity in the workforce; however, the number of Black women that have secured and retained senior-level positions has not ascended, bringing forth the inquiry of workplace equality (Beckwith et al., 2016). Dickens et al. (2018) emphasized that the shared work experiences of Black women compared a "concrete" ceiling in contrast to other females of different races that may experience a "glass" ceiling of workplace advancement in terms of promotional fairness. Implied workplace barriers hinder the growth of the demographic that research shows Black women remain underrepresented in leadership positions. They remain invisible, and when they express emotion, the group is considered angry; as a result, Black women often shift their identities in order to be accepted by their counterparts (Dickens et al., 2018). Results from previous studies suggest that employers are hesitant to promote Black women to senior leadership roles because of the assumption that Black women lack the education, knowledge, skills, and capabilities to perform the job duties successfully (Holder et al., 2015). The specific problem to be addressed was there are perceived barriers in the workplace that generates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership positions in the finance and investment industry.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceived barriers encountered by Black women who aspire to hold a leadership position to shed light on their experiences with promotional obstacles in the workplace. Black women holding a senior

leadership role is the exception that their experiences helped to understand coping strategies and the efforts that attained them furtherance in their careers (Materre, 2018). The identification of perceived barriers that contributes to the disparities implicated on Black women aided in the creation of recommendations for Black women to break through the concrete ceiling that hinders their progression (Williams, 2019). The adverse effects of workplace discrimination and the importance of inclusion are explored in this study to address the issue that is created by the organization, whereas they may need to adapt their recruiting, hiring, and retaining efforts to include all demographics (Grissom, 2018). Organizational norms are of focal point to access the promotional opportunities of other demographics that have presented higher numbers for holding leadership positions and to determine if Black women possess different qualifications (Williams, 2019). The results from this study may increase the awareness of the importance of workplace diversity where corporations are able to adapt strategies, policies, and practices to ensure the elimination of unconscious biases that limit cultural diversity (West, 2017). The researcher intended to provide a voice for Black women while shedding light on their disadvantage so their future experiences in the workplace are uniform to other demographics and their chance to receive a leadership position is equal.

Nature of the Study

The objective of this research study was to understand the experiences of Black women aspirants to hold leadership roles in which there are perceived barriers present in the workplace that may contribute to a disadvantage within their career advancement. The workplace encounters of Black women that hold a leadership role was the focal point for developing strategies and coping skills for the group to exercise when faced with similar workplace challenges so that women whose careers have stunted could readjust appropriately (Williams,

2019). The researcher intended to explore the lived experiences of 16 Black women for analysis and interpretation into coded data that concluded in an array of perceived barriers that are present in the workplace. The data were employed to create a list of recommendations for Black women to face and deal with workplace challenges that will result in a breakthrough in established barriers for the demographic. According to Williams (2019), coping as a mediator against gendered racial macroaggressions can influence disengagement strategies and the individual can avoid triggers to stress and withhold their self-identity.

Discussion of Method

A qualitative method combined with a case study design was the approach adopted for investigation into the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates promotional obstacles for Black women who aspire and possess leadership positions in the finance and investment industry. Qualitative research is the approach used to explore when and how a phenomenon occurs through using terms and open-ended questions for the interpretation of data to contribute to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014; Matta, 2019). The goal of the qualitative method is to understand the behaviors of those affected by the phenomenon in their natural context and to derive the meaning of the sampled individuals lived experiences for inductive analysis (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative method was the ideal approach to explore this research phenomenon because examining the experiences and perceptions of the participants aided in the determination of workplace barriers present and revealed possible coping strategies (Roulston, 2019). The values, perceptions, and feelings of Black women may be understood and translated through the use of this method for the corporation's interpretation of the adverse effects of diversity gaps within their organization and the recognition of the benefits of inclusion in the workplace (Matta, 2019). The result of implementing the qualitative method may include

the improvement of current policies and practices that guides the recruitment, hiring, and promotional norms of the organization due to the feelings, viewpoint, and voice of Black women becoming circulated, which in turn could improve the diversity efforts (Roulston, 2019).

In contrast, the quantitative method is the investigation employed to test theories by measuring variables that will prove or contradict the assumption (Watson, 2015). In quantitative research, there is an independent and dependent variable employed for manipulating previous measured numerical data that is collected from a large group of individuals to decrease the existence of bias results (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). A quantitative research method was not of interest to the intent of this research study because the focus of the study would not benefit from a highly structured method of collecting data, because if closed-ended questions were applied, the individual would not be able to reflect their feelings and experiences candidly. The quantitative research design would propose the development of a hypothesis before conducting the study, which is appropriate for testing a theory; however, the purpose of conducting this study was to emerge new theories as a result of the findings. Mixed methods research is an approach that requires the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data for the research outcome to produce a broader perspective on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The application of mixed methods produces a more comprehensive display of findings, because the researcher may utilize numbers, statistics, narratives, and pictures to depict the generalization of results that could have omitted pertinent data with the use of one method (Plano-Clark, 2017). The mixed methods approach was not selected for utilization for the purpose of this research study because the combination of methods was not necessary to determine a solution to the phenomenon. With proper implementation of the qualitative method, there was a triangulation of data to assure the validity of the results.

Discussion of Design

The researcher adopted a single-case study design for the use of this study to describe the perceptions and opinions of individuals that are affected by the phenomenon that the researcher sought to explore the similarities and differences within the experiences of Black women leaders and aspirants with promotional obstacles. A single-case study design should be considered when the “how” and “why” questions are sought to be answered, along with the review of multiple cases and not a single case, but to allow the analysis across settings (Crowe et al., 2011). The case study design is selected when the researcher isolates one extreme or significant case to examine a single phenomenon that has occurred in the form of a movement, activity, or an individual's encounter through a real-life context (Creswell et al., 2007). Case study as a research design was of proper use for this study due to the conduction of an in-depth investigation into the occurrence of a single event, because the phenomenon was explored through multiple lens that allowed for multiple aspects of the issue to be disclosed and understood (Crowe et al., 2011). The findings from coordinated interviews with study participants aided in the categorization of experienced workplace barriers through analysis into units, whereas, emergent themes were developed and explored for a more in-depth review to establish recommendations for organizations and Black women to overcome perceived workplace barriers. According to Giorgi (2012), the phenomenological design centers on the conscious experiences of subjects in which the researcher conducts a thorough investigation, to develop generalizations of their account. This study design was not of ideal use for the conduction of this research study because the experiences of study participants were not relayed in a story-like arrangement, however the subjects detailed their perceptions, opinions, and experiences with the phenomenon for comparison of similarities and differences.

The narrative research design focuses on an individual person and the researcher intends to rely on the written and spoken words of that individual as they recall a real-life problem they have encountered for the investigator to narrate (Creswell et al., 2007). The narrative study design explores the personal stories and experiences of individuals as they are unfolded over time and recorded in chronological order to configure the events into a story (Creswell et al., 2007). The narrative design was not appropriate for use in this study because the research study does not focus on the lives of Black women through storytelling; however, the intent was to examine the experiences of Black women with perceived workplace barriers to investigate the phenomenon. Researchers apply the grounded theory design for the establishment of theories through examining the perspectives of a large number of participants, for investigation into a phenomenon with the intent to develop an explanation for the continued occurrence of a problem (Howard-Payne, 2016). The aim of the study design was for theory development where the research study in question was not expected to emerge a new theory, but rather certify the similarities amongst Black women's experiences to construct a description of what perceived barriers are present and how Black women may cope with obstacles. In the ethnography design, the researcher immerses into the natural environment of subjects to gain insight into their motivations, challenges, and culture for a better understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell et al., 2007). This research study did not explore in depth the culture of Black women, whereas their beliefs and behavioral patterns was not a topic of examination to align with the reasoning behind why Black women may experience promotional obstacles in the workplace.

Summary of the Nature of the Study

A qualitative case study approach was determined to be the leading proposition to explore perceived workplace barriers, which creates a disadvantage for Black women to obtain

leadership positions within the finance and investment workforce. The qualitative method was selected over the other research methods because of its essential function of being exploratory, because the feelings, perspectives, and lived experiences of Black women brought forth the perceived barriers that are present in the workplace. Other possible qualitative designs were considered; however, the case study design was determined to be most appropriate for evaluating the experiences of perceived workplace barriers encountered by Black women, which may stem from unconscious gender and racial bias that disadvantages them in the workplace. This study centers on detailing the lack of diversity at the leadership rank within the corporation where Black women may experience barriers with advancing in their careers.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the experiences of Black women with possible perceived promotional obstacles in the workplace who aspire to hold leadership positions within the organization?

RQ2. What are the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership positions?

RQ3. What are the perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions within the finance and investment industry, and what strides did they make to achieve career growth?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived barriers that are present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to obtain promotional opportunities into leadership roles. The researcher developed this qualitative case study on the conceptual framework of three disciplines that articulates the hindrance of Black women receiving promotional opportunities into senior leadership roles in the workplace. The theories include (1)

the Black feminist theory, (2) the expectation states theory, and (3) the glass ceiling theory (Bruce, 2018; Donaghy, 2019; Hill, 2019). These theories provided the foundation for the analysis of the experiences faced by Black women that aspire and hold leadership positions in the finance and investment industry.

Discussion of Concept 1

The Black feminist theory argues the discrimination of Black women in the workplace in terms of racism and sexism in which the demographic works in industries that imply an "outsider within" status to their identity (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) reported that Black women are a part of the marginality present in the workplace, whereas they have gained employment into settings where there is a dominant group that has gathered without the inclusion of the demographic; therefore, Black women remain outsiders. The Black feminist theory served as a viable conceptual framework for the study where the theory helps to produce an accurate depiction of Black women's encounters with unjust oppression through the exploration of their personal experiences and perspectives. The Black feminist theory addresses oppression and discrimination of Black women, whereas the research questions align with the foundation of the concept and the workplace barriers were explored through the perspective of the Black women for the decipherment of themes.

Discussion of Concept 2

The expectation states theory examines the general characterizations that concern a particular group through the eyes of society. Characterizations are also known as stereotypes in which assumptions are made about members of a demographic because of an image that portrays their attributes (Seo et al., 2017). When negative stereotypes target the social identity of a demographic there is a high risk of the society judging an individual based on the social,

economic, sex, and racial class they belong to where a conventional belief becomes the standard for interpreting the individual's behavior (Seo et al., 2017). The status differentiation is often implied in the workplace, because leaders allocate tasks to subordinates in alignment with the characterizations that breeds an unconscious bias that suggests the competence level of the individual (Kalish & Luria, 2016).

The expectation states theory indicates performance expectations that involve the likeliness of an individual to contribute to success on a task (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). In contrast, the cultural differences of those on the team will become the deciding factor of their perceived competence (Kalish & Luria, 2016). The workplace experiences of Black women is better understood when microaggressions, unconscious biases, and double standards were brought forth that imply a disadvantage for the group and contribute to blockage for the demographic to advance into leadership roles in the workplace (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). The expectation states theory provides a practical conceptual framework for studying the present study in which the theory assisted with answering the research questions through examining the experiences of black women as they recount instances of characterizations made that may have contributed to their promotional obstacles.

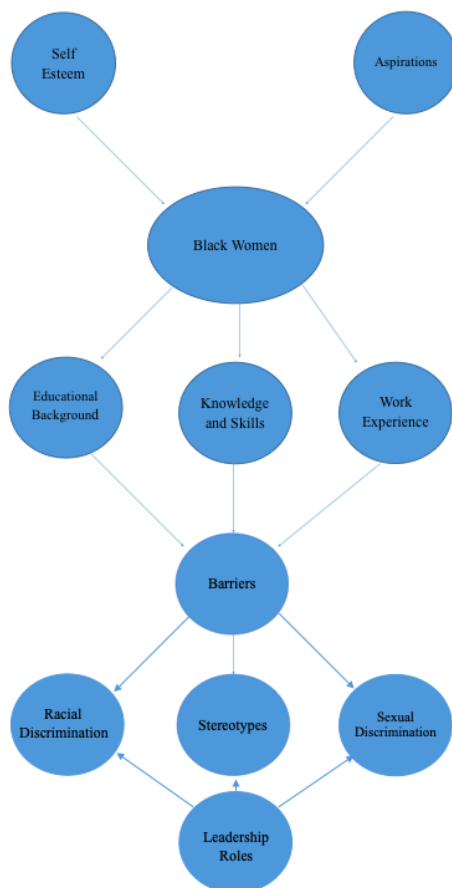
Discussion of Concept 3

The glass ceiling theory refers to unreachable barriers that are present in the structure of some industries that excludes women from obtaining leadership positions within the corporation (Cohen et al., 2018). Women experience a glass ceiling when employed in the workforce in terms of the wage gap between men and women; however, Black women encounter a step further of ostracism which describes a concrete ceiling due to the set of stereotypes that fosters a characteristic bias and racial microaggressions that exist in the workplace (Dickens et al., 2018).

The glass ceiling theory was a feasible conceptual framework for this study because the foundation examines the rejection of women in the workplace and the exploration into the experiences of Black women brought forth any disqualifying standards for the group in comparison to different demographics. The theory was prominent in assisting the researcher with the intent to answer the research questions, whereas the glass ceiling theory set the strategies for understanding the exclusion of all women from leadership positions. At the same time, the approach helped to understand the concrete ceiling experienced by Black women.

Figure 1

Relationships Between Concepts



Discussion of Relationships Between Concepts

The review of the conceptual frameworks provided a foundation for the intended qualitative study to explore the perceived barriers implied in the workplace that hinders the progression of Black women to obtain leadership positions in the finance and investment industry (Owolabi, 2016). The Black feminist theory, expectation states theory, and glass ceiling theory represent subtle roadblocks that hinders the advancement of qualified women and ethnic minorities into top management positions within the United States work force (Beall-Davis, 2017; Branch, 2012). Brown and Segrist (2015) noted that the self-esteem and aspirations of the Black demographic has declined due to the extensive and complex histories of occupational inequality that exists between African Americans and Europeans in the United States. There is a legacy of racial oppression that continues to challenge the advancement of African Americans in the workplace and the perceived barriers implemented may have directly impacted the confidence of Black individuals to believe in their credentials, competence, and ability to perform (2015). There are perceived barriers present in the workplace that are experienced by Black women due to being a part of two marginalized groups, as such being women and African American that reflects in their treatment in corporations that display racism, discrimination, and bases stereotypes on the abilities of those that they believe are inferior (Linnabery et al., 2014; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013).

Although Black women are obtaining bachelor's, master's, and doctorate level degrees at a noteworthy rate, researchers have discovered that in light of their education, experience, and skills, the contributions made by Black women are often times ignored and their exclusion often times bring forth obstacles for those who aspire to advance in their careers (Branch, 2012; Carter-Frye, 2015; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013). The Black feminist theory, glass ceiling

theory, and expectation states theory provided the structure for analysis of the promotional obstacles faced by Black women that may be linked to perceived barriers implied through racism, discrimination, and exclusion (Beall-Davis, 2017). The perspectives of Black women were explored for an understanding into the workplace experiences with the phenomenon and to offer an overview of detailed information that brought forth the opinions and personal feelings of affected individuals. As a result of interviewing aspiring and Black women leaders, there was a desire that a trend would manifest that displays the underlying cause for the reasoning behind Black women experiencing perceived barriers to obtain leadership positions. The emergence of themes as a result of applying the conceptual frameworks brought forth patterns, concepts, and messages that could assist with developing recommendations for Black women that similarly experience obstacles with their aspirations into leadership roles (Linnabery et al., 2014).

Summary of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework diagram provides an overall picture of the phenomenon based on the current literature that maps out the need for the research study. The diagram illustrates the internal execution efforts of Black women to present themselves as suitable for leadership positions, whereas their aspirations and self-esteem will determine the jobs they aim for (Brown & Segist, 2015). Wyatt and Silvester (2015) reported that despite a continuing rise of women and ethnic employees entering the workforce, the representation of Black women in leadership roles remain low in comparison to social groups that show dominant numbers in a variety of industries. This research study intended to explore the perceived barriers that differentiate the promotional obstacles of Black women; therefore, the organization could work to diversify their policies and practices that cause the disadvantage (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). The overview of experiences and perceptions of Black women assisted in developing recommendations for a

breakthrough of blockages for the career advancement of Black women in the finance and investment industry (Owolabi, 2016). Subsequently, the educational background, knowledge, skills, and work experiences of Black women do not always influence the promotional opportunities that are presented to the demographic regardless of meeting qualifications (Hall et al., 2012). The perceived barriers present in the workplace take on many forms ranging from stereotypes, sexual, and racial discrimination, whereas the blocking factors were explored to understand better the promotional obstacles that prevent Black women from obtaining warranted leadership roles (Owolabi, 2016) .

Definition of Terms

Aspirant: refer to those who possess entry to associate level roles in the workplace.

Barrier: Barriers are defined as policies, laws, rules, structures, and boundaries that creates a problem making it difficult for movement, progression, or access to certain features for those experiencing the obstruction (Alsubhi et al., 2018). Alsubhi et al. (2018) described workplace barriers as blockages or hurdles that serves as an impediment that hinders the career advancement of individuals, whereas the performance of those affected will be altered due to the difficulties encountered to complete tasks. Barriers are viewed within the study as taking place within the workplace and are defined as obstacles that hinders the progression of Black women to receive promotional opportunities although they may be qualified (Wells, 2017).

Black: Any person that is a non-Hispanic man or women who identifies as having African descent (Sterling, 2015). Individuals that have exclusively been made up of ethnically mixed decent and have been or currently is regarded to being an associate of African, African American, Negro, or Afro-American descent (Jordan, 2014). Blacks are those who have origins belonging to racial groups of Africa such as Kenya, Nigeria, or Haiti in which the U.S. Census

Bureau describes the Black population to include Latinos with Black African Ancestry and those who have multi-racial of Black (Bell et al., 2014).

Concrete ceiling: An extension of the glass ceiling that describes the workplace barriers experienced by Black women that presents further complications for progression up the career ladder for the demographic (Dickens et al., 2018). The concrete ceiling is even more impossible to reach than the glass ceiling (Wells, 2017). Black women are negatively affected by the implications of the concrete ceiling which puts into question their credibility, authority, and abilities that differs from the experiences of other female demographics that are privy to the glass ceiling (Wells, 2017). The concrete ceiling is viewed within this study as the promotional experiences of Black women that aspire and hold leadership positions within the financial sector.

Glass ceiling: A set of obstacles that describes the advancement of women in the workplace (Dominguez et al., 2019). The glass ceiling is based on the artificial barriers present in the workplace that stems from organizational bias that prevents qualified individuals from advancing beyond entry to midlevel positions in the private or public sector (Norman et al., 2018). Norman et al. (2018) suggested that it prohibits women from advancing to top level positions within the organization, as a result of the obstacles that hinders the advancement of the group due to perceptions of the capabilities of women that coincide with their maternal instinct. The glass ceiling is viewed within the study as the difficulty faced by women when trying to climb up the managerial ladder of the organization.

Leaders: those who have obtained a mid-level to senior management, director, or executive level role in the workplace.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, perceptions, and feelings of Black women who aspire to obtain leadership roles and to discover if there are any perceived barriers present in the workplace that may be causing difficulty for the demographic to receive promotional opportunities. This section describes any restrictions that were realized throughout the conduction of the study with the objective to announce any shortcomings that may have caused a necessary adjustment in the coordination of the study.

Assumptions

Assumptions are described as potential factors accepted as valid by the researchers and peers who engaged with the study and it is of expectation that the study is accurate given the population, research design, delimitations, data collection tools, and analysis that were employed for interpretation (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). While conducting this qualitative case study, there was an underlying assumption that the increase of diversity within the financial sector will continue to be imperative for the emotional and mental wellness of underrepresented individuals that are affected by promotional barriers. Moreover, there was an assumption that the participants were truthful with their interview responses due to the confidentiality that was preserved and since the participants are volunteers they had the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. From the regulation of interviews, there was an assumption that the subjects answered the questions truthfully without coercion and the observations documented the body language, reflections, and behaviors of aspiring and current leaders while they revisit experiences related to the phenomenon where the researcher desired that subjects would not alter their behaviors. The researcher is a Black woman and there was a presumption that opinions would

not persuade any of the findings or themes that have been derived by subjects and there was no display of bias that would affect the reliability and validity of the study results.

Limitations

Limitations are described as weakened influences that are related to decisions made in the study that are difficult to contain due to unconscious choices that are made when designing the study that poses a threat to the validity of the research (Chiles, 2015). Chiles (2015) found that although the researcher acts as the instrument for the analysis of the study, most limitations are out of the control of the researcher due to the insensible interpretations made of the research findings. The researcher's ability to refrain from displaying personal biases during the interview sessions and observations were made while in the presence of participants was a limitation that would be harmful to the credibility and success of the study. The study was limited to explore the detailed testimony of 10 Black women in the field of finance and investment due to an array of positions and career levels of participants that reflected in the extent of the participants experience with the phenomenon.

The researcher chose to utilize a sample size of 16 due to the notion that the size was adequate for analysis and any additional selection of participants would not provide further insight into the phenomenon; therefore the researcher decided to conclude the interview sessions before saturation would occur (Malterud et al., 2015). The time spent to conduct the study is limited due to restrictions that may be implemented by the conditions that occur at the time of interviews because the schedules of participants may be preoccupied (Malterud et al., 2015). The intention is to regulate interviews around the availability of subjects so that the investigator could gather a detailed account of the experiences, perceptions, and feelings of subjects, and not a snapshot of information (Malterud et al., 2015). Since the study examined the personal

experiences and feelings of subjects, there could be perceived bias that encourages exaggeration; therefore, honesty was requested and expected from each subject.

Delimitations

Delimitations are defined as the choices made by the researcher that are within their control to set boundaries for the scope of the study (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). The study was tailored for the concerns of Black women, specifically the interviews were held with 16 Black women purposely, and was not limited to other ethnic minority women, White women, ethnic minority men, and White men. There was a sample size of 16 Black women for the purpose of conducting interviews and observations with the notion that the participants would be able to provide enough information for a full analysis of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, if a larger sample size was utilized it would run the risk of saturating the data. Other possible delimitations are the chosen methodology, the subjects selected to participate in the study, and the research questions that guided the research.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this inquiry was highlighted by a report titled "Black women ready to lead" generated by the Center for Talent Innovation, with the purpose of examining the demographic's aspirations for holding leadership positions (Hewlett & Green, 2015). In the study, Hewlett and Green (2015) surveyed several Black women and found that although they may be qualified and aspire to hold senior leadership roles, they are treated as invisible and are disadvantaged for receiving promotional opportunities in the workplace. Black women have a substantial role in the vitality of the U.S. economy. Although Black women may be qualified for senior-level positions, they are sometimes disenfranchised due to the lack of recognition that they receive in the workplace (Holmes & Frye, 2016). Inclusion in the workplace is imperative

for the representation of equality, but there are business benefits that are remised such as accessing a broad talent pool, the embracement of new competencies, and a higher return on investments when leaders of the organization create obstacles for the demographic (Rattan & Dweck, 2018).

The study was essential to the understanding of diversity in corporate America in which the finance and investment industry is highlighted, since men make up the majority of leadership positions within the field and Black women make up only a small fraction of roles that are occupied by women, suggesting broader business problems (Anderson, 2017). The underrepresentation of Black women in leadership roles due to present workplace barriers is a critical issue that dismays the country's efforts to remove racial and gender discrimination acts that breach the ethical regulations of industry standards. The gap in leadership roles held by Black women is persistent but solvable, and the findings are sought to bring forth a social change by bringing awareness while influencing employers and policymakers to create significant change.

Reduction of Gaps

The study ventures into uncovering the perceived barriers that are present in the workplace that stems from racial and gender discrimination acts that are experienced by Black women, which implements unfavorable circumstances and creates a challenge for the demographic to climb up the managerial ladder of their perspective corporations within the finance industry (Sepand, 2015). Materre (2018) conducted a study that investigated the journey experienced by Black women to become first and succeed in positions of leadership. Materre (2018) suggested for future research that new stories of Black women's experiences with the phenomenon be explored in various demographics and industries to aid in the gap in the

literature surrounding the topic. The objective of the continued investigation into the phenomenon is to discredit the negative stereotypes surrounding Black women and to acquire the coping strategies used by Black women leaders to overcome challenges (Materre, 2018). There is a limited amount of literature that aligns with the experiences of Black women with promotional opportunities in the financial sector due to an abundance of written works that focuses on challenges of women to excel in the industry as a gender, but not many considerations that focused on Black women exclusively. Researchers have targeted the sports industry (Burton, 2015), higher education (Burnette, 2016), STEM (Charleston et al., 2014), and healthcare (Brown, 2015) as fields where Black women are underrepresented. Diversity within the financial sector has become an initiative since the economic downturn of 2008 that could have possibly been avoided if there were an array of perspectives leading the managerial boards of organizations, whereas minority women currently make up three percent of the C-suite (Khemlani, 2016). The study desires to fill gaps within the current literature to understand better the experiences, feelings, and perceptions of Black women within the financial sector who have experienced barriers in the workplace that may be linked to challenges of career advancement (Sepand, 2015).

Implications for Biblical Integration

In Colossians 1:16-17 (English Standard version), the verse describes the reality that God has created all things upon the universe and heaven, regardless of position, status, and power, all things should be held together in unison to serve, develop, and contribute to the sustainment of humanity. Keller (2012) interpreted the biblical worldview prospective on diversity as the responsibility of corporations to provide resources and services that are necessary for the flourishing of mankind while operating under ethical standards. Everyone has been given a set

of gifts that are known as their individual capabilities, skills, and competence levels that when used with positive intentions will prove beneficial as a result of the work they do (Keller, 2012). When organizations are placing barriers that omits the use of talents from a demographic, these actions are unethical and the company is disregarding their chance to draw on the creativity, experiences, education, and skills of a diverse staff (Rattan & Dweck, 2018). Discrimination disregards the direction from God that allows faith to guide the workplace standards which anchors all businessmen and women to be servants and utilize their gifts to improve the earth (Krause & Hayward, 2015). There is no distinction between Jew or Greek, slave or free, and male or female, because everyone is equal in faith and worship to God (Galatians 3:28).

Relationship to Field of Study

The research study investigated the perceived barriers encountered by Black women who aspire to obtain leadership roles in the finance and investment industry, which could be correlated to the experiences that occur when the demographic seeks out leadership opportunities throughout corporate America. The business cognate being studied is leadership which involves the process of workplace members using their talents to guide others in the pursuit of an organizational goal through motivation, inspiration, and a given direction (Silva, 2016). The research study is within the criteria of the leadership function, whereas Black women are often not able to display their talents and ability to lead due to perceived barriers created, therefore the investigation looks into an issue affecting the field of leadership. Leadership studies involve the review of challenges that affects the leadership specialization which in turns contributes to the corporation's ability to hire members that will lead rather than manage other workplace members in order to contribute to outstanding business performance (Silva, 2016). The study details the importance of the organization to focus on the competencies and efforts of workplace members

in order to establish a worthy leadership team rather than discriminating against a demographic that could ultimately provide the team with skills necessary to drive workplace development (Vasconcelos, 2015). The findings that results from the research study produced a different perspective of applied information into the field of business leadership, which in turn will further improve a certain aspect into the leadership field.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

The study was imperative for the determination of perceived barriers present in the workplace towards Black women. Social change could be in the balance, resulting in a decrease of bias and racial and gender discrimination acts that currently create controversy (Jones et al., 2020). The findings were used for the creation of recommendations to assist Black women with dealing with some of the stress they experience when working under certain conditions. The study will influence the ethical practices and policies of organizations in which the guidance developed from the literature review aims to encourage the moral operations of organizations and provide knowledge for leaders who may not be sure of their operational status (Walls, 2017). Black women will benefit from the study because when there is a shift in stereotypical ideas and bias actions within the workplace, there will be an interruption of perceived barriers present that would allow the demographic to be equally qualified for leadership positions as their counterparts (Jones et al., 2020).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Over the past few years the demand for employees with skill and leadership abilities has become a high-priority of interest for organizations that want to ensure they can replace senior talent with business professionals that will contribute to achieving current and future strategic goals (Bisco et al., 2019). As the workforce shifts, organizations must ensure to recognize

individual differences, marginalized groups, and composite their labor force to be racially and ethnically diverse so the workplace environment is inclusive for all individuals to thrive (Grissom, 2018). Aggarwal et al. (2019) found when organizations neglect to utilize the talent, competence levels, skills, and educational backgrounds of all employees, they are at risk for excluding technique, perspectives, and creating a work force of employees that are at a higher risk of leaving. The researcher suggested that career influencers need to work towards transforming the workplace environment to provide every demographic with the chance for growth because it is essential to the productivity, performance, and retaining of employees that will affect the profit, reputation, and success of the corporation. The satisfaction of employees plays a vital role in the efforts, commitment, and the extent of loyalty that will be displayed through the individual's fulfillment of their job duties (Creek et al., 2017). Organizational leaders must ensure to foster diversity, inclusion, equality, fairness, support, and motivation within the operational structure to establish a transparent environment (Creek et al., 2017).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there will be approximately 38 million people in the workforce by 2026; women currently account for 48.9% of the overall wage earners and 20% of those who hold leadership roles within the Fortune 500 companies (Grissom, 2018). Of those numbers, Black women account for a small percentage of women that have advanced beyond a mid-level position and researchers have found Black women to be the least represented demographic in the highest levels of business leadership (Allen & Lewis, 2016). In the industry of financial services, organizations have been striving to increase diversity within the field. However, men are still dominating entry to leadership roles within the sector, indicating the need for immediate action in the recruitment, hiring, and promotional procedures that guide industry standards (Brisco et al., 2019). Dickens and Chavez (2018) discovered that

most organizations have not been successful with making progress in their abilities to increase the number of women and people with diverse backgrounds within their employee ranks and suggest the disadvantage could be related to racial and gender discrimination acts that are present within the workplace. Although Black women have access to jobs, they account for a dual minority in which data have proven that the demographic does not experience the same career barriers as other women but encounter an extended disadvantage because of their African descent (Dickens & Chavez, 2018).

The following literature review consists of published journal articles, dissertations, and books that address the lack of diversity in the workplace, racial and gender discrimination acts, and experiences of Black women who encounter barriers when they pursue leadership roles throughout various industries of corporate America (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Following the review of the historical background of Black women was the display of Black women in leadership, a discussion of the black feminist theory, expectation states theory, and the glass ceiling theory that details some of the perceived barriers that are exhibited towards the demographic. Although multiple perspectives have studied experiences of Black women's navigation throughout the workplace, the written works of these contributions are combined to determine the perceived barriers that create promotional obstacles and explore organizational standards that repeat the phenomenon (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Finally, the reviewed literature emphasized the experiences of the demographic for the construction of coping mechanisms to utilize when faced with the phenomenon. This study attempted to access the background information that pertains to the organizational standards that may disqualify Black women from being acceptable to obtain and achieve in a leadership position. The perceived workplace barriers experienced by Black women are detailed with hopes to influence

organizations and policymakers to enforce the laws of inclusion and equality in the workplace (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

The Work Experiences of Black Women – Historical Background

Since the brutal arrival of Black women on transatlantic slave ships to America, Black women have experienced constant acts of oppression in the United States, particularly in the labor force due to dominant cultural narratives of blackness (Dillard, 2016). Although women have experienced some of the same disadvantages overtime, White womanhood has been set up in opposition to Black womanhood, whereas the work that Black women have contributed to often goes ignored and any strength shown can be misconstrued (Sesma, 2016). With every new generation there is a struggle to rewrite history and to improve the social, political, and economic conditions that continues to affect members of marginalized communities (e.g., the narrative that excludes Black women from being acknowledged as cults of true womanhood; Battle, 2016). Historically, White women have been displayed as the primary focus of femininity and have been socially constructed to equate to the ideology of what true womanhood was, which brings forth the inquiry of the value of Black women (Battle, 2016). The oppression of Black women has been shaped by the dominant population and has fostered the images, stereotypes, and perceptions that maintain the ideology that Black women are subordinates and the notion of what to expect from the Black womanhood (Sesma, 2016). These images have risen during the times of slavery and have followed the emancipation of slavery, whereas the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the characteristics possessed by Black women have contributed to the troubled strides made by the demographic to advance (Battle, 2016).

The experiences of Black women in America have proved to be a ramification of gender and racial discrimination accounts that have generated a disadvantage for the demographics in

comparison to the treatment of men and White women (Reed, 2012). Since the times of slavery, Black women have been viewed as workers (Sesma, 2016). The Black women were exploited for their skills, talents, abilities, sexual capacity, and physical strength to provide free labor that was vital to the slaveholder's interest (Sesma, 2016). During slavery and the Civil War, Black women worked without pay and their work responsibilities ranged from all manners of household duties (Erwin, 2015). Until the ending of slavery, Black women continued to obtain jobs such as domestic servants, seamstresses, and caregivers (Erwin, 2015). Erwin (2015) described racial restrictions that were in place that delayed the progression of Black Americans, beyond the ending of slavery in which Blacks were denied skilled jobs and experienced hurdles when striving for jobs that required special licenses which they could not obtain due to discriminatory labor practices. The researcher informed readers of the endeavors experienced by Black women as they fought against their exploitation and oppression for years. Black women are affected by challenges of the wage gap, which reflects in their ability to secure positions that align with their qualifications.

Although Black women can possess the same skills, education, competence, and capabilities of other groups, the demographic has been positioned to a disadvantage that does not allow them the same privileges of other women (Dillard, 2016). Before the civil rights legislation and equal employment policies were established, Black women fought hard to gain the right to receive an education and obtain leadership positions within their prospective career fields (Allen & Lewis, 2016). Discoveries have been made by researchers suggesting there is still a struggle for Black women to define their lives under their own terms, whereas the magnitude of which the demographic could reach success is perceived as a limit that affects their aspirations for advancement (Dillard, 2016). Nevertheless, Carter-Sowell and Zimmerman (2015) confirmed

that Black women have held higher percentages of participation rates in the labor market since history in comparison to other cultures of women, yet currently, Black women are not receiving uniform benefits such as equal pay, economic stability, and leadership positions within corporations. The dreams of Black women may have been disregarded as a result of the lack of equal opportunity in the workplace (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015). There is a notion that views Black women as not being capable of holding a position of power due to the picture that paints the group as being inferior (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015).

Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity in the workplace assembles people of different cultures, backgrounds, race, gender, and ethnicities, which includes individuals with a different set of characteristics and preferences that brings forth an array of abilities and capabilities to the workforce (Guilluame et al., 2017). Ali and Konrad (2017) found that a diverse set of workers can contribute to organizational performance since the capabilities, skills, experiences, and competence levels of individuals will vary, whereas multiple perspectives can benefit the firm's decision-making, problem-solving, and innovative procedures that drives organizational success. The field of diversity, inclusion, and equality management has argued the effectiveness of individual contributions when isolation practices are decreased within the organizational structure that should connect the goals and efforts of employees to achieve strategic goals and attain organizational success (Ali & Konrad, 2017). Corporations should not leverage diversity to fulfill legal and legitimacy requirements, but should tap into a broader talent force to sell product and services to a diverse set of customers, access a wider range of knowledge, and increase creativity which will provide the company's competitive advantage (Ali & Konrad, 2017).

Variety in the workplace is imperative for pursuing a growth strategy since racial and gender employee diversity is linked to a racial and diverse consumer base (Guillaume et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, Chen and Hamilton (2015) described encounters of employees experiencing exclusion in the workplace that is often related to stereotyping, judgments, and negative perspectives that reflect in the excluded group's acceptance within the corporation. This can negatively affect the processing of information for excluded individuals where the attitudes and behaviors of employees could reflect in their ability to communicate with others due to their feelings of being ignored and their distrust for the company (Chen & Hamilton, 2015). Chen and Hamilton (2015) advocated for the representation of minorities. It is imperative that the smaller group equally feel socially accepted within the workplace, because although the corporation may have a high numeric representation of minorities, the policies and culture could lead to racial minorities feeling alienated (Chen & Hamilton, 2015). When diversity and inclusion are displayed in the workplace, there are expectations that arise, suggesting there is a comprehensive set of solutions and better decision-making processes that are present due to the employee differences (Dezso et al., 2015). Therefore, employees have a sense of belongingness and uniqueness that emerges, whereas they feel accepted as equal members of the corporation and they feel valued for their individual contributions made to project goals (Boekhorst, 2014). Boekhorst (2014) concluded that workplace leaders are instrumental for fostering diversity and inclusion initiatives within the environment, whereas they work to ensure employee involvement, integrating diversity within organizational systems, and creating variability in group efforts.

There is a greater labor force participation in which the career advancement of women is advocated since the need for work is a financial, social, and emotional necessity that generates

growth for the economy and increases economic diversification (Kato & Kodama, 2018).

Women empowerment is a smart move for business operations because there are competitive advantages and business opportunities that are acquired when women and marginalized groups can advance into the leadership ranks of the company (Kato & Kodama, 2018). The corporation can increase its performance when striving for diversity and inclusion due to embracing the differences that are possessed by individuals and acknowledging the contributions that are made (Dezso et al., 2015). The impact of gender and racial diversity on the success and innovativeness of the organization is vital to the workforce, whereas the company would foster a healthy organizational culture and positively influence other functions of the company (Fine & Sojo, 2019). There is value that women bring to the leadership ranks when permitted, because there are different viewpoints in men and women that enables better problem solving, brain-storming, innovation, ideas, market insight and social responsibility that benefits the organization as a result of the collaboration of gender efforts (Fine & Sojo, 2019). The distinction between males and females will be shown in the traits that are possessed that enhances the different leadership styles displayed in the workplace that could range from the exhibition of a stern no-tolerance approach to displaying ease and understanding (Fine & Sojo, 2019).

Organizations' that have adopted a gender and diverse racial board of top managers have performed better due to the increased talent pool and employee and customer satisfaction and it fosters a positive work culture that enhances the company's reputation and utilizing a combination of skills strengthens the decision-making process (Willie et al., 2018). It is necessary for women and ethnic minority groups to be represented on corporate boards because the experiences of a diverse board will bring forth many differences that would benefit boardroom discussions due to the diverse set of perspectives that will aid in identifying and

dealing with risk factors (Willie et al., 2018). Additionally, when there is a combination of different cultures, backgrounds, genders, and life experiences of individual contributions, there is an assortment of research ideas that are generated, and the development of workplace policies will align with a realm of cultures and beliefs (Dezso et al., 2015). There is a growing consensus across corporate America to improve measurements of diversity because it provides equal opportunity for groups that have been previously excluded from positions of power; nevertheless, communities worldwide are demanding that opportunities are available to all (Guillaume et al., 2017).

Workplace Leadership and the Destructive Follower

Leadership consists of an interaction between two or more members of a group, whereas an individual is charged with motivating the competencies of another and influencing the actions of members of the group to exceed the expectations of their role (Silva, 2016). Silva (2016) revealed that leadership occurs when a compelling vision is translated into organizational realities in which the relationship between leaders and followers is imperative to ensure a mutual purpose is understood for real changes to take place. In historical times, leadership was understood as being a personality characteristic, but the definition of the term has morphed into a trend that has nothing to do with personal quality, the ability to influence others to work towards goal achievement through the communication process, and the power held by an individual to develop the thoughts and actions of others (Silva, 2016). There are various types of leadership styles that individuals possess, however, an effective leader must tap into different styles of motivating and influencing subordinates due to everyone having a different perception and understanding of subjects (Nienaber et al., 2015). Effective workplace leadership is dependent upon the relationship between leaders and followers, whereas leaders are tasked with

encouraging the efforts of subordinates to reach one common organizational goal; therefore when the relationship is altered, it can create a critical problem for the leader to influence efforts (Nienaber et al., 2015).

There is a challenge for certain leaders to prove the worthiness of their positions within the workplace, which affects the outlook that is upon their followership and will reflect in the follower's ability to cooperate with the direction of the leader (Walthall & Dent, 2016). Walthall and Dent (2016) claimed that this is due to perceived barriers that are present in the workplace that is implied by authority figures and colleagues often-times subconsciously, whereas the competence level, skills, and experience of the leader are overlooked due to stereotypes and judgments that implies their inability to hold power. When there is a destruction in the relationship amongst the leader and the follower, the trust between the two is lost, and there are consequential business problems that will arise, such as the inability to share knowledge from the top level of management down to subordinates and a disruptive workplace environment (Padilla et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the credibility of a leader is negatively affected by experiencing exclusion in the workplace by other members of the leadership team, which makes it difficult for the leader to obtain the respect and cooperation from their followers (Malangwasira, 2013). There are consequences that could spiral when subordinates witness the exclusion of leaders from other groups of leaders, such as them mimicking negative treatments in the form of rudeness, disrespect, and discourteous (Malangwasira, 2013).

This, in turn, reflects on the respect that is given to leaders of a certain group, whereas the followership does not believe in the value of an individual due to observed treatment of that individual from other authority figures (Babalola et al., 2016). It is imperative that leaders have effective followers, because without followers, there are no leaders and the supportive bond is

diminished, which negatively affects other functions of the organization to succeed (Malangwasira, 2013). Workplace leadership is essential for the willingness and ability of employees to collaborate, communicate, and perform, because the interactive social process that could arise from tensions between two individuals will dismantle the efforts of goal achievement (Babalola et al., 2016). Babalola et al. (2016) declared that when there are divergent interests and values present between leaders and followers, it creates a workplace conflict that increases dissatisfaction and hinders the employee's willingness to work towards the suggested efforts of leaders. The follower must be willing to accept the authority of the leader, and when they choose not to it negatively effects the quality of interactions at work between the two parties, whereas destructive followers tend to rise due to self-interest or repetitive behaviors from witnessing the actions of others (Padilla et al., 2007).

Black Women in Leadership

Standard qualifications are required to enter all professions among the United States' workforce in which the education, skills, experience, and competency level on a topic should qualify an individual for jobs that they are in pursuit of; however, there are conventional discriminatory practices that hinder the advancement of specific groups (Rosette et al., 2016). There are biases against women leaders such as the perception that women do not have the potential to hold positions of power; however, the biases present among women are not comparable for women across racial classifications (Rosette et al., 2016). Black women are a growing demographic, whereas reports show that of the African American population, Black women account for two-thirds of bachelor's degree holders, 70% of master's degree holders, and they hold 60% of all doctorate degrees (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015). Researchers have discovered that regardless of the qualifications possessed by Black women, they experience a

disadvantage in the workplace that impedes the progression of the demographic to climb the ladder of their work corporation into leadership roles (Nettles, 2015). Nettles (2015) suggested that when the demographic ultimately acquire a leadership position, they may experience a new set of perceived workplace barriers that are influenced by their subordinates, equal colleagues, and authority figures in which their contributions can remain hidden in plain sight.

The experiences of Black women differ from other demographics when pursuing and obtaining leadership positions since there is the social realm that gender and racial stereotypes are still present that defines the identity and behaviors of the demographic (Moorosi et al., 2018). While Black women have shared their racial experiences with their male cultural equivalent, they have some different struggles due to sexism (Kaba, 2017). Although Black women experience gender inequalities alongside White women, they also experience anti-Black discrimination efforts, which inhibits their goal attainment (Kaba, 2017). This affects the opportunities of Black women, and although they may succeed in pursuing a position of power, the marginalization of the social group impacts different aspects of their ability to lead within the workplace (Moorosi et al., 2018). There is an underlying challenge that affects the construction of Black women's influence in the workplace, whereas researchers discovered that the group is critically examined at a different scope of ability since their experiences delineate power inequality as a result of race and gender barriers (Liu & Baker, 2016). Black women are associated with being ambitious leaders in which the term attributes assertiveness and forcefulness, whereas the demographic is oftentimes penalized for seeking power and self-promotion (Nettles, 2015).

Previous research has confirmed that Black women have encountered an alarming amount of racial and gender discrimination accounts in the workplace as they work towards obtaining a leadership position, and these challenges can prevent the group from maintaining

their positions after advancing (Reed, 2012). Black women remain underrepresented in leadership positions across industries (Allen & Lewis, 2016). Documented reports show that of the workforce population, 20% of Black women hold positions of management, and only one percent are on executive boards (Allen & Lewis, 2016). Allen and Lewis (2016) stated that when in predominantly White institutions, Black women are perceived as outsiders within the conception of leadership roles which relays in their power dynamics when they secure positions of power. This can create a conflict for their credibility, which will negatively affect their workplace experiences, resulting in Black women leaders to be faced with employees that are resistant, undermining, and surprisingly ignore the demographics authority (Allen & Lewis, 2016). Black women have reported their experiences of negative stereotypes that are present in the workplace that stem from other demographics and often come from women of their same ethnicity as their careers begin to advance (Rosette et al., 2016).

According to Liu and Baker (2016), the leadership approaches of Black women stem from racially charged environments, which stimulates the demographics leadership style to exhibit the embracement of change, the unification of the community, and resisting ideological domination. Despite challenges and barriers that are present within the workplace, Black women's leadership abilities demonstrate the capacity to redefine control of tough situations through offering interactive communication, empowerment of subordinates, and participative decision-making in their leadership approaches (Liu & Baker, 2016). Opie and Roberts (2017) summarized that everyday racism and oppression is experienced by most Black women leaders. Negative images of the demographic are reinforced through multiple viral outlets that bring forth an ideology of the behaviors and performance of Black women which can affect their workplace reputations (Opie & Roberts, 2017). Most minority leaders are under pressure to conform to

Eurocentric cultural norms which translate into them altering their behaviors and standards to fit in with the dominant social group or resist Eurocentric cultural norms while running the risk that happens when individuals do not conform to the dominant culture of the work environment (Opie & Roberts, 2017).

Black Feminist Theory

Throughout history the experiences of women have differed as a result of oppression, which has defined the treatment of individuals' to be dependent on their classified group that differs due to race, class, and ethnic status (Acuff, 2018). Collins (2016) presented the notion that although the body of Black women may be present within a White-dominated space, the demographic is often ignored as part of her contribution to work efforts. This may be due to certain expectations, perceptions, and stereotypes that have historically reflected in the professional experiences of Black women, whereas the demographic has reported encounters in which they lacked a point of view, power, support, and had feelings of deprivation of access to the same information and advancement opportunities as their counterparts (Acuff, 2018). Chepp (2015) acknowledged there is an issue that surrounds the representation of Black women in the workplace, whereas middle-class Black leaders have been positioned as an avenue to racial uplift because of their position amongst the demographic that represented potential. This strategy may have resulted in an unintentional silence that has led to the inability of Black women to express themselves without ramification, due to the cultural elites being held to a standard that articulated a positive Black identity (Chepp, 2015). Sesko and Biernat (2016) conducted research that suggested Black women are the forgotten population. Black women are more likely to go unheard, unseen, and are invisible in social and professional groups due to their intersection between two marginalized groups (Sesko & Biernat, 2016). Invisibility is the struggle to be heard

and seen by others regardless of the contributions that an individual has made, and the absence of representation of oppressed groups within conversations, recognition, and powerful positions (Sesko & Biernat, 2016).

The Black feminist theory is a culturally-based perspective that explores the contextual effects of oppression that has centered on the race, class, gender, and culture of Black women, which has impacted the experiences and perspectives of the demographic (Lindsay-Dennis 2015). Jenrich (2017) argued that the invisibility of Black women has been an ongoing subject researched by investigators since the occurrence of historical events in the United States, corresponding to the absence of the demographic at the forefront of popular movements such as the civil rights and suffragists act which focused on the struggles of Black men and White women. Although Black women share the same universal struggles as other women and Black men, they are often excluded from conversations due to their presumed inferior status to other groups, whereas mainstream outlets and organizations do not always address challenges faced by Black women (Jenrich, 2017). Nevertheless, Allen (2015) found that when Black women attempt to let their voices be heard regarding personal challenges, they are often encouraged to repress their anger, due to the “angry Black women” myth that has dominated the view of society that incites the silence of the demographic which is another instance to invisibility. The negative stereotypes inflicted upon the status of Black women bring forth a complexity among their actions in which they must decide whether to challenge another person’s assumption about their activity due to the consequences that often present when the demographic exercises their voice (Allen, 2017).

According to analysts, African American women may experience discrimination by being ignored rather than being purposely targeted, whereas the demographic has publicized

experiences of social rejection within the workplace, which results in the hindrance of their performance, confidence, aspirations, and motivation (Jenrich, 2017). The equal opportunity act of 1972 was formulated with hopes to eliminate the occurrence of sexual harassment, victimization, and discrimination within the workplace through the enforcement of federal laws that prevented employers from discriminating based on gender, race, sex, ethnicity and religious affiliation (Victor et al., 2017). Organizations must comply with federal laws to diversify and create an environment that is inclusive to different social groups, due to the equality policies that outline the firm's commitment to comply with laws that promote racial and gender equality (Victor et al., 2017). Although there are laws in place that prohibits the discrimination inequalities and disparities among the United States workforce, there are blind spots that are sometimes disregarded by certain industries and organization leaders that continue to marginalize and exclude Black women from conversations of equality (Rankin-Wright et al., 2019). The Black feminist theory describes patterns of invisibility experienced by Black women in which laws are in place to prevent such actions from occurring; however, the demographic is still challenged with discriminatory racialized power processes, while other demographics are advancing (Rankin-Wright et al., 2019).

Promotional Obstacles

According to Madaan and Pradhan (2017), there are promotional obstacles experienced by women that hinders their chance to hold esteemed positions of power, due to the historical allocation of women to be solely responsible for completing household chores and raising the children while they had limitations to handling innate issues on their own. Promotional obstacles are defined as an impediment in the progress or achievement of individuals to reach certain levels within their prospective career fields (Madaan & Pradhan, 2017). The promotional

decisions of assorted leaders are often affected by biases while decisions are based on arbitrary and informal factors (Madaan & Pradhan, 2017). There are different obstacles to women's advancement, which are often difficult to detect, and those inflicting the disparity may be insensible to their actions (McGee, 2018). McGee (2018) uncovered that gender stereotypes is one of the most substantial perceived barriers that create promotional obstacles for women in the workplace. Women have to conform to different perceptions about the way they should behave, speak, and interact while ensuring to keep their feminine mystique in order to be liked (McGee, 2018). Gender stereotypes also project the seriousness that must be displayed by women, it creates a dimension for their leadership abilities, performance strides, and problem-solving capabilities, whereas women continue to struggle for career equality (McGee, 2018).

Besides gender stereotypes being present within the workplace, racial stereotypes create a dual challenge for Black women to receive promotional opportunities due to the intertwined perceptions, generalizations, and restraints displayed on the abilities of the demographic, making it difficult to navigate throughout the workplace (Cheeks, 2018). Many Black women have reported that in the work environment they had to alter their behaviors to match the actions and likings of the dominant culture, which diminished their confidence, comfortability, and aspirations that they would be accepted for being themselves and granted the same opportunities as others (Cheeks, 2018). There are double-bind dilemmas present that disadvantages those qualified for leadership positions such as extreme perceptions that are never satisfying, high competence thresholds for women whereas the demographic faces higher standards than men, and women are often considered likable or competent and rarely both (Dobrin et al., 2016). It has been frequently cited that women may be blocked from promotional opportunities due to prejudicial views that are harbored by top leaders and there are informal networks of male

leaders at the top whereas “who you know” makes a difference in your career successes (Dobrin et al., 2016). When there is an evaluation criterion that is not based on skills and performance, it is assumed that perceptions are instead the basis of the ruling (Madaan & Pradhan, 2017).

Nevertheless, of the women that break through the promotional obstacles and obtain leadership roles, they experience a new set of perceived barriers that range from being ridiculed, outsiders may believe they performed sexual favors in exchange of the promotion, and they were given the promotion as an organizational oblige to fulfill hiring quotas (Dobrin et al., 2016).

Voluntary Employee Turnover

Sun and Wang (2017) discussed the experiences of organizations with involuntary and voluntary turnover amongst employees, whereas the hope is for voluntary turnover to be at a minimum or non-existent within a firm since it occurs when an employee resigns willingly from their position for a variety of reasons that could give the organization a negative repute. To maintain a productive and satisfied workforce is an important task of strategic human resource management since there could be high costs associated with high turnover rates (Sun & Wang, 2017). Strong evidence has shown that excessive turnover is damaging to organizational performance, goals, and effectiveness (Sun & Wang, 2017). Nica (2016) found that high performing employees are the least expected to vacate positions; however, it can occur for many reasons one being a higher compensation being offered by a competitive organization, while another reason for leaving the firm could be to start-up their own business. When low performing employees depart ways with the company on their own behalf, it may be unfortunate, but at the same time the organization may have allocated a lot of resources and efforts into enhancing the abilities of that individual through retraining, refitting, and reassigning the employee to different tasks with no prevail (Nica, 2016). Nevertheless, a great deal of attention has been allocated to

understand the reasons that employees vacate positions so that firms can reduce voluntary turnover rates through understanding each employees' motives, needs, desires, goals, and being able to respond to them (Nica, 2016).

Crawshaw and Game (2015) described common practices that are offered by the management team to assist employees with their career development opportunities, such as providing internal training, promotional opportunities, special assignments, mentorship relationships, and extending education that will lead to qualification development. Businesses can lower turnover rates by creating a company culture that demonstrates trust, diversity, inclusion, and equality within their practices; there is a connection to the retention and the satisfaction levels of employees (Crawshaw & Game, 2015). Despite common hiring and resource management practices that petition for the fair treatment of workers, there are some organizational leaders who allow bias to affect their decision-making skills which negatively affects the recruitment, hiring, and promotional attainment efforts, resulting in the qualifications of individuals to be over-looked (Ballakrishnen et al., 2019). There is a gender gap that suggests the presence of obstacles for women's attainment of leadership roles in which data has shown that male leaders surpass the number of female leaders throughout industries, although there are qualified women to perform job duties because women are obtaining college degrees and participating in the workforce at faster rates than before (Ballakrishnen et al., 2019). There is a pathway problem to leadership positions for women and the status is exclusive to Black women more so, whereas the demographic is considered a "twofer" someone who counts as a female and is a member of a minority race (Mena, 2016).

Despite the efforts made by financial institutions to increase the promotion rates for women through implementing diversity programs and fostering affirmative action policies, there

are a few Black women that have ascended the leadership ladder of corporations, bringing forth low numbers of industry managerial-level participation for the demographic (Maddan & Pradhan, 2017). The financial services sector demonstrates in reports high turnover rates for female employees while men dominate top-level leadership positions within the field (Maddan & Pradhan, 2017). Black women remain underrepresented in managerial roles due to promotional obstacles that affects their ability for career growth (Maddan & Pradhan, 2017). Among the promotional obstacles experienced by the demographic is the presence of bias, stereotypes, and exclusion that brings forth feelings of invisibility, stagnation, and a lack of belongingness resulting in a willingness to vacate positions (Abubakar et al., 2017). Researchers have found a correlation between favoritism and nepotism present among firms that send an undesired and stagnant signal to employees who may not be a part of the dominant group among the work culture, which creates a willingness to withdrawal from work and could produce employee cynicism (Abubakar et al., 2017). Researchers have inquired into the reasons that Black women vacate from positions and there were two factors that suggested turnover influences amongst the demographic which resulted in the following rationales: lack of trust within the company that they had the ability to obtain long-term career goals, and not feeling as if they belonged (Mena, 2016).

Expectation States Theory

The expectation states theory describes the way in which characterizations, stereotypes, and perceptions can affect an individual's expectations of power, prestige, and social worth of individuals that are a part of a social group, whereas the individual is judged based off a notion that describes the quality of their demographic (Walker et al., 2014). Task-specific performance expectations are developed as to how the group works, as a result of the implied

characterizations based off the race, gender, education, and age of an individual which creates a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the skills and worth of the individual prior to their demonstration of efforts (Walker et al., 2014). The theory suggests that knowledge assorted with implicit assumptions provides the basis for which the decision-maker will assess the assumed abilities possessed by an individual that will reflect in their belief of how well they can contribute to a task (Gong et al., 2019). If the combination of assumptions and knowledge is favorable, there will be a positive view of possessed abilities, while in contrast, if there are negative behavioral patterns associated with the individual, the outcome will reflect in the decision (Gong et al., 2019). Walker et al. (2014) confirmed that attributes perceived by decision-makers reflects in their expectations of the performance of others, whereas the assumptions that inform them of task-specific capabilities extend to the subconscious mind where we may rank others of having status and leadership traits. The expectation states theory illuminates' ways in which categorical inequality is reproduced today due to social and cultural beliefs that impact our behaviors and reflects in the way the overseer will evaluate individuals prior to them displaying their capabilities (Walker et al., 2014).

Observed differences between social groups distinguish the types of structures that create the status belief, such as the abilities, performance, and status characterizations, because one group will be attributed as more worthy and competent than another (DeVaro et al., 2018). This brings forth a disadvantage for individuals that belong to the believed subsidiary group. For example, women are oftentimes paid lower wages than men for the same jobs due to the believed value provided by men, whereas their traits are categorized as being more worthy and qualified than women to perform certain tasks (Auspurg et al., 2017). Women are also less likely to hold leadership positions within organizations, because gender-specific roles differentiate

performance expectations due to the stereotypical ideas surrounding assumptions that equate womanhood with being maternal and manhood with being authoritative (Auspurg et al., 2017). Alongside gender role assumptions are presumptions imposed upon an individual based on their racial group (DeVaro et al., 2018). Race has been equated with how members will be divided into categories based on achieved and ascribed traits (DeVaro et al., 2018). The expectation states theory details the gender and race-based standards that predict the competence of individuals in which stereotypes, characterizations, and perceptions that are implied creates inequalities in the pursuit of opportunity (Gong et al., 2019).

Racial and Gender Stereotypes

A significant amount of research has been conducted on the counter-stereotypical behaviors present within the United States workforce that implements biases comparable for women across racial groups covering industries (Skocajic et al., 2019). Descriptive, prescriptive, and proscriptive stereotypes are present within the labor force in which gender stereotypes produce expectations about what women are like, how they should behave, and the prohibition of actions permitted by women (Skocajic et al., 2019). Implied stereotypes result in the devaluation of the abilities possessed by women in which researchers have uncovered that their authority may be undermined, their performance may be belittled, women are often times denied credit for their successes, and they may be penalized for being competent and ambitious (Finnegan et al., 2015). These biases may hinder the progression of women's pursuit of leadership roles (Finnegan et al., 2015). Gender preferences restrict women's entry into managerial levels within the organization, whereas leadership traits and characteristics often correspond with those belonging to masculinity (Finnegan et al., 2015). There are stereotypical beliefs that are widely shared about the attributes of women and men, because men and women differ in many ways;

however, the skills and capabilities of men and women are interchangeable and no trait belongs to only one gender (Skocajic et al., 2019).

Men are associated with characterizations ranging from aggressive, forceful, independent, decisive and direct, whereas women are often associated with characteristics ranging from dependent, emotional, helpful, and gentle (Kahalon et al., 2018). The use of these labels creates an oppositional conception about the capabilities of men and women (Kahalon et al., 2018). Members of the believed dominant group would see the other as lacking what could only be found among the dominant gender (Kahalon et al., 2018). Although women across racial groups may experience gender stereotypes leading to bias within the workplace, Black women encounter gender and racial stereotypes concurrently (Ward, 2016). It is believed that the demographic is at a large-scale disadvantage within their pursuit of leadership roles (Ward, 2016). Women are scarce at upper leadership levels within the organization with an even lower number of Black women that possess powerful positions, due to the racial and gender biases prevalent that influences the impenetrable barriers that may contribute to the derailment of the demographics path to career advancement (Hoyt & Simon, 2016). Researchers have learned that the reason is that Black people are framed as being the opposite to White people (Ward, 2016). Whiteness is valued, it equates to privilege and superiority, which has gained most people's interest to attain it (Ward, 2016).

Nevertheless, historically when other American groups have evolved, they have distanced themselves from the Black demographic by moving to new neighborhoods and pursuing careers in new fields which created the notion that in the United States Black people are considered to belong in a distant and inferior class (Hoyt & Simon, 2016). According to Hoyt and Simon (2016), researchers have discovered there is often a disregard that Black people can possess

positive characteristics, which are often associated with leadership traits due to the same drive, ambitions, aspirations, and competence that pushes them to work towards accomplishments like other racial groups. Racial microaggressions represent covert intentions directed towards racial minority groups (Xie et al., 2018). Everyday exchanges consist of subtle snubs, gestures, tones, and dismissive looks that are of racist belief (Xie et al., 2018). Stereotypes usually guide the interactions that we will hold with others due to what we believe about others and what we assume they believe about us (Babbit et al., 2018). Black people have been prejudged to not have certain qualities and to be inferior to other races which researchers have found to still be prominent within the thoughts of some individuals (Babbit et al., 2018). One common stereotype about white people is that they are prejudice, therefore within White-Black interactions, White people experience anxiety in an attempt to not confirm this stereotype, and Black people are concerned with being targeted by prejudice before encountering it (Babbit et al., 2018). There are race-based stereotypes that also vary by gender, whereas African Americans share an array of stereotypical assumptions; however, depending on other statuses in association, Black women and Black men are affected by stereotypes in different ways (Xie et al., 2018).

Unconscious Bias

Karbelnig (2019) described the unconscious mind as a unique science of mental processes that are shaped by urges, thoughts, and feelings outside of the conscious mind through interpersonal forces, introjections, and projections that are stamped into a person “like a tattoo.” The concept is shaped by innate that drives the behavior of individuals to fit patterns consistent with their emotionalized thoughts, which can be very impactful on what they do and how, due to its control of information that is stored throughout one’s life (Karbelnig, 2019). Information can be processed and evaluated while unconscious, which builds over time and can boost or diminish

the accuracy used in decision making, whereas humans are not rational creatures proving that human behavior is not always predictable (Vlassova et al., 2014). The unconscious mind can influence the decisions of individuals without knowledge because of its function to store and retrieve data and its ability to stay active while the conscious mind becomes dormant to ensure that individuals will respond to encounters in the way that they are programmed to (Vlassova et al., 2014). The insensible awareness of a person can produce implicit bias in which the individual identifies others with assumptions and stereotypes because of their distinct mental constructs that are based on learned behavior, exposure, and memory (Vuletic & Payne, 2019).

According to Vuletic and Payne (2019), implicit bias is the attitudes displayed towards others due to automatic associations about the social group without recognition of the conscious mind in which the nature of the bias may be unintended; however, it has been linked to discriminatory treatment. Different associations are linked to different groups dependent on experiences, media portrayal, cultural and social conditioning, and learned associations that often begin at a young age and develop as the person grows older (Vuletic & Payne, 2019). Everyone possesses implicit bias, rather they have made commitments to withhold impartialities within their careers because within the subconscious, individuals allow their associations to harbor feelings concerning various characteristics such as the race, culture, age, and the appearance of others (Sukhera et al., 2018). Implicit bias can be unlearned gradually; however, one must be aware of their social cognition to change how they interact, treat, and presume specifics about a person (Sukhera et al., 2018). Many tests can measure implicit bias, whereas once a person has identified and then disengage from the biases held, steps can be taken to reduce the occurrences where they allow such to affect their decisions (Himmelstein & Gopalakrishnan, 2017). In order to reduce or eliminate implicit bias, individuals must look at the positive, take initiative, speak

up, review decisions for the presence of bias, and work alongside those who they may have created a bias against; whereas, it has been a proven method to change attitudes drastically by witnessing the individual debunk assumptions through their efforts (Himmelstein & Gopalakrishnan, 2017).

Workplace leaders must be aware of decisions that are made stemming from their unconscious mind, because by trying to make sense of interactions around them, the complexity of unconscious bias could arise to play a role in daily decision making (Karbelnig, 2019). Bias is the tendency to favor or choose a person or group over another in an unfair way that does not provide the opposing group a fair chance to display their natural aptitude (Kagetsu & Gunderman, 2017). This bias is caused by the inability or unwillingness to view matters from an alternate point of view, whereas individuals allow their assumptions regarding various demographics to consume their behaviors towards them (Kagetsu & Gunderman, 2017). Some biases are purposeful and some biases seem to be a part of human nature (Kagetsu & Gunderman, 2017). To display unconscious bias in the workplace means the individual with influence may not be aware of the prejudice exhibited due to the inaccessible part of the mind that affects the behaviors and emotions of the individual (Allen & Garg, 2016). Although the bias displayed could be implicit, Allen and Garg (2016) declared that if shown, it can hurt the firm's hiring, promotions, impressions, team culture, cohesion, and policies that are crucial to the treatment of others. Noon (2018) proposed that the organization culture is based on two concurrent systems that reflect the conscious and unconscious mind of leaders in which the performance drivers must take the culture into account in order to achieve success. Organization leaders should monitor their leadership styles and attempt to make the connections between their

change management approaches so they can learn to make better decisions in the future (Noon, 2018).

Glass Ceiling Theory

The glass ceiling theory describes an undetectable blockage in the work environment that hinders the advancement of women from obtaining top-level leadership positions within multiple industries (King et al., 2017). Researchers have emphasized there is an enclosure within the work environment that makes it almost impossible for women to obtain positions of power, whereas women may have a more difficult time receiving promotions due to preventions that are put in place (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016). The glass ceiling theory is demonstrated in work environments that lack a display of diversity amongst employees, neglect the experiences and skills of qualified individuals, permit biased decision-makers, and conceal inequalities while disregarding the feelings and desires of unhappy employees (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016). Although sexism is an important barrier that causes a disadvantage for women, researchers have provided evidence of various other factors that contribute to gender discrimination that is implemented at work resulting in unfair strides to upper management positions made by women due to the exclusion of the demographic (Wesarat & Mathew, 2017). Wesarat and Mathew (2017) suggested that while neither genders are guaranteed success, there has been an equal amount of male and females that have obtained higher education degrees and have entered the workforce in which numbers that compare each genders obtainment of leadership roles demonstrates a gap among promotional opportunities for women.

Many studies have found that it is more difficult for women to climb managerial ladders than men because the perceived barriers present could be visible and invisible indicating an assembly of negative effects that the glass ceiling theory could have on the lives of women who

experience it (Saleem et al., 2017). Gender inequality negatively impacts the success of organizations (King et al., 2017). Because of the negative impact, the talents and skills of disadvantaged employees will be remised and organizations must display gender fairness within their policies, procedures, and promotional efforts (King et al., 2017). Gender fairness relates to the treatment of men and women according to their respective needs, such as providing equal access to opportunities, supplies, and necessary resources to sustain regardless of gender and economic status (King et al., 2017). Women currently represent half of the United States working population; however, only a small number obtain senior leadership positions within the workplace regardless of their qualifications that may suggest their ability to succeed in an authoritative position (Famiglietti, 2015). Famiglietti (2015) maintained this is due to invisible barriers that are implied towards the group work efforts that hinder their advancement in the workplace. There is an under-utilization of female talent as a consequence of the gender stereotypes and discrimination accounts that prevents women from reaching their full potential (Famiglietti, 2015). The glass ceiling framework refers to the set of social and organizational pressures that are unseen and not reachable that creates perceived barriers to exclude women from leadership positions within the corporation, regardless of their achievements and qualifications (Cohen et al., 2018).

The glass ceiling theory presents a barrier that may affect women at some point within their careers, usually as they reach for positions of power (Saleem et al., 2017). The concept is viewed as being a consequence of gender stereotypes and expectations that drives the thought process of how women should and should not behave (Saleem et al., 2017). Black women, specifically, are believed to experience a concrete ceiling as it relates to being presented with equal opportunities to advance to managerial-level positions within the organization, due to their

intersectionality of being women and of African descent (Barnes, 2017). The concrete ceiling is a unique experience that presents tougher obstacles that women of color face (Barnes, 2017). The glass ceiling is a barrier that could be broken eventually with much effort and work, while in comparison the concrete ceiling is almost impractical to break through and what is to come on the other side is not perceived (Barnes, 2017). Matotoka and Odeku (2018) entailed the concrete ceiling as being similar to the workplace experiences of Black women, whereas they must work twice as hard as other women and men to accomplish similar goals and they have fewer role models like themselves to look up to on their journey. Black women have reported having the inability to feel like themselves in the workplace as they are more likely to express frustration with the promotional opportunities and are discouraged by the gender equality, inclusion, diversity, and opportunity efforts that are demonstrated by their respective employers (Matotoka & Odeku, 2018). Because of experiencing barriers as a result of the glass ceiling or concrete ceiling, women alike are working towards encouraging employers to revamp and take responsibility for the promotional, hiring, and recruitment policies that present obstacles for certain demographics and to demonstrate equality (Saleem et al., 2017).

Default Leader

Throughout much of the United States higher education ranks, women are outnumbering and outperforming men among college representation, which brings forth the assumption that those qualified are prepared to assume leadership positions within their perspective fields (Elias, 2018). Nevertheless, the author asserts there are more women in the workforce today than ever before, yet they are still underrepresented in leadership positions, which brings forth a large gender gap among professional leaders, whereas men leaders outnumber women by wide margins. There are gender inequalities present that purposely prepare men to assume leadership

roles within their discipline and create a stigma that resonates with women holding support positions or not participating in the workforce at all due to the notion that traits of effective leaders are masculine (Badura et al., 2018). According to Patel and Biswas (2016), gender stereotypes reflect in the accepted social roles that are performed by men and women. Men are typically associated with traits of independence and dominance that for centuries has established men as engaging in agentic behaviors that are the essence of obtaining leadership success (Patel & Biswas, 2016). Gender roles reinforce gender stereotypes that challenge the capacity of women when they step into positions of leadership (Patel & Biswas, 2016). Women may never have a fair evaluation of their capabilities due to assumptions of what they are like and how they should behave which creates bias among the decision-makers (Patel & Biswas, 2016).

Researchers have learned that when women hold positions of power they are analyzed based on how they behave and not how well they perform their jobs, and when a good leader is defined, they are described to have masculine traits (Badura et al., 2018).

According to Saint-Michel (2018), it has been discovered that when women present a more masculine approach to their efforts at work, it aligns their abilities with being able to hold a position of power, whereas having a think manager and think male attitude is believed to be needed for women to be successful in leadership positions. Researchers suggests that women are not less effective than men in leadership positions; however, society expects them to be due to the general notion that associates successful leaders with stereotypical traits of masculinity, therefore when women hold positions of authority it no longer conforms with traditional gender roles that are associated with the female demographic (Saint-Michel, 2018). Since historical times, women have been associated with nurturing and support roles, such as being mothers, assistants, baby-sitters, and homemakers, while men were the educated breadwinners of the

household that implied a dominant male society (Badura et al., 2018). Men are considered the default leader since they are believed to be more likely to participate in group discussions and voice their opinions, take risks, and work well under pressure, whereas overall behaviors associated with men are often in line with strong leaders (Gartzia & Knippenberg, 2016). Nevertheless, society should not base the qualities that are assumed to belong to effective leaders with gender roles or gender stereotypes, because no one gender can possess certain attributes (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Researchers have discovered that successful leaders have not displayed only agentic or communal qualities; however, they have demonstrated traits that are a great balance between empathy and assertiveness, which includes a wide range of attributes that are not simply of traditional feminine or masculine characteristics (Gartzia & Knippenberg, 2016).

Although society still evaluates men and women at different standpoints, all leaders should have the ability to influence others; leadership efforts should include goal attainment; transactional events must take place between the leader and followers; and effective leadership takes place in group settings (Ko et al., 2015). Maintaining consistency helps leaders to learn which efforts they utilize that are effective, whereas shared competencies between men and women are incorporated into expectations of the effective leadership standard and translate into the leader-follower dynamics that align with obtaining the goals of the organization (Ko et al., 2015). There are four leadership approaches ranging from transformational, transactional, charismatic, and situational leadership that explores the positive and negative aspects of the leader-follower relationship that is necessary to become effective (Cote, 2017). Cote has asserted that leaders must have the flexibility to adapt any of the leadership styles because they are effective based on the difficulty of the task, the work situation, deadlines, and the development

level of the follower. Since each leadership approach has both negative and positive effects, we can assume that the same goes for basing leadership expectations on the characters that are associated with men and women leaders because one approach does not fit all (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). To be successful in a leadership role, it takes more effort than just being a part of a specific gender to be effective; it takes work ethic, the willingness to take risks, the ability to persuade and influence, negotiate, make decisions, while balancing compassion, empathy, and flexibility (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014).

Dual Minority

Researchers have identified that among various industries across the world, men are much more likely to hold positions of power and succeed as leaders, and to that extent factors such as race, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status, creates unique experiences for women that attempt to advance into leadership (Elias, 2018). Black women have distinctive experiences that are shaped by the actuality of belonging to double minority groups (Borland & Bruening, 2010). The race and gender of the demographics have given rise to discrimination, racism, and prejudice that has influenced Black women to exist as an outsider within (Borland & Bruening, 2010). This double burden of marginality has served as a barrier that creates a negative status and may be linked to the reason for the reports that have demonstrated the high probability of Black women to remain idle in subordinate positions, due to disadvantages that affect their advancement within the labor market (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). Yamaguchi and Burge (2019) discussed stereotypes being linked to the demographic that range from assumptions of hyper-sexualization, declared matriarchs, and when Black women often express themselves, they are categorized as being aggressive and angry. There are many destructive stereotypes about Black women that have been persistent through history, which has led to the presence of the

demographic to be assumed problematic rather it be neighborhoods, social groups, and the workplace, affecting their attempted advancement to expand to other areas that have not always been designated for the group (Yamaguchi & Burge, 2019).

Stockfelt (2018) emphasized the hardships encountered by Black women as they attempt to display their knowledge, skills, and competence throughout their various contributions made to society and have described an extensive encounter with gender inequalities in comparison to White women due to their intersectionality. Black women experience intersectionality due to them belonging to overlapping groups that are prone to being disadvantaged or discriminated against (Stockfelt, 2018). Their experiences differ from the experiences of individuals that belong to one minority group because people with different backgrounds encounter the world through separate lenses (Stockfelt, 2018). The study of the intersectionality approach was developed in response to observations that concluded that previous theories focused on the experiences of White women and Black men only, rather than examining the impact in response to how gender and racial discrimination accounts would have on individuals that were affected by both concurrently (Yamaguchi & Burge, 2019). Black women not only experience the everyday pressures of racism; however, they also experience sexism simultaneously (Rankin-Wright et al., 2019). Racialized myths and stereotypes present the group in a different light than the stereotypes that related to Black men while White women do not experience the phenomenon at all (Rankin-Wright et al., 2019). The literature has sourced the common reason for Black women to be twice looked over to covert and systematic racism, whereas the demographic has experienced a hindrance with gaining support, training, and networks within their respective careers that work to create career advancement (Borland & Bruening, 2010).

Coping With Workplace Challenges

DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016) confirmed that although Black women have been participating in the workforce, the structures and cultures of the United States often fail to acknowledge the value of the contributions made by the demographic, which presents a myriad of personal and professional challenges. Coping is the process of minimizing stress in which a person has learned to effectively deal with difficult situations that have created conflict in their life, which may stem from various environments such as the home, family, finances, and work structures (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). Garcia (2015) found that workplace stressors may cause emotional and physical harm to the individuals affected; however, it also kills the productivity within the organization in which workplace leaders must ensure to help employees mitigate through work demands while promoting diversity and inclusion to make certain that the health and well-being of employees is a focal point of the structure. Work-related stress may arise when there is a conflict between individuals, job demands, threats to job security, constant change, or the treatment of individuals that may cause the person experiencing poor working conditions to believe there is nothing they could do to improve their endurance other than to leave (Garcia, 2015). This stress causes a loss of ambition, confidence, productivity, relationships, and increases the turnover rates at the firm (Hall, 2018). There are coping strategies that could be adopted to improve the stress of employees; however, the ultimate goal is for organizations to prevent causing the stress by transforming policies and procedures that may be the cause (Hall, 2018).

To successfully diversify the leadership ranks of the financial services sector, organizations' must display their skillfulness in succession planning, recruitment, hiring, and retaining practices, whereas contest mobility would allow equal opportunities for promising

leaders (Siemiatycki, 2019). Utilizing adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies will determine the extent to which racism, sexism, and discrimination, would affect the psychological and physiological well-being of individuals in which several studies have found that coping is linked to lowering distress among people (Holton et al., 2016). Despite professional achievements, Black women must apply coping strategies against discrimination, sexism, invisibility, and marginalization in the workplace because the prevalence of a hostile or uncomfortable workplace may place a burden on the individual and their ability to perform (Shrivastava, 2015). Coping with challenges in the workplace is imperative for the mental and emotional wellness of Black women, whereas understanding how to deal with uncomfortable situations and learning how to confront tough topics brings awareness and allows a necessary dialogue between parties to occur which may be the initiation of change (Hall, 2018). Black women often cope with workplace stressors in undesirable ways, such as (a) adopting a masculine face to maneuver through the work environment, (b) shifting their identities and concealing their cultures to be accepted by the dominant group, and (c) not reporting their feelings of stagnation while accepting to remain in a subordinate position which may diminish any aspirations of advancement (Shrivastava, 2015).

Various strategies are suggested to influence the positive spirituality and confidence of individuals who deal with workplace challenges that are based on context and the stress of the event, which will influence the adaptability of strategies (Santiago et al., 2019). Active coping strategies that Black women could adopt when coping with workplace stressors are as follows: (a) securing social support and networking with other individuals who have overcome the same challenges, (b) accepting feedback from leaders on how their skills could be sharpened, and (c) speaking up if they feel as if they have been passed over in favor of a position for any reason other than their qualifications (Santiago et al., 2019). Wingfield (2019) described how Black

women are working to “reclaim their time,” a term which has been coined to suggest the efforts of women to refuse to waste time, energy, or attention on nonsense while standing firm on their existence to be heard and not spoken over by men. Used today, this term highlights the work that Black women have been doing historically to address instances of the divide and notion that views the contributions made by the demographic differently than those not affected by intersectionality (Wingfield, 2019). Researchers anticipate that Black women will continue to inform society about the injustices they experience in the workplace while holding organizations responsible for ensuring that their leadership ranks are free from implementing bias, discrimination, and inequality; during which, leaders are working to promote an inclusive work environment (Hall, 2018).

Summary of the Literature Review

Due to recent oppositions in the United States workforce, such as migration, demographic shifts, and globalization, diversity has become imperative for fostering creativity and innovativeness, which translates into positive outcomes of upper management and a healthy workplace environment (Bader et al., 2018). Yet, the review of the literature highlights the need for organizations to transition from discriminatory institutional firm policies to develop practices that demonstrate equality, diversity, and inclusion of all demographics at the managerial level of corporations (Casad & Bryant, 2016). Despite the benefits of diversity in decision-making and women’s involvement at top levels of the organization, Black women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership positions within the financial services sector (Brisco et al., 2019). Black women continue to be challenged due to their status as a double minority, which has frequently resulted in exclusion from informal and formal networks as described by the Black feminist theory, the glass ceiling theory, and the expectation states theory (Spates et al., 2019).

Although Black women have made great contributions to society and seem to perform efficiently in the workplace, the demographic continuously seek to find new coping strategies for overcoming perceived workplace barriers, disadvantages, and hindrances opposed upon them as they pursue positions of authority (Spates et al., 2019).

Transition and Summary of Section 1

While Black women are excelling through collegiate levels of the education field, the number of women that have remained in subordinate positions throughout their careers are significantly higher than those that have obtained leadership roles, which suggests a hindrance to their advancement in the workplace despite their qualifications (Jefferies et al., 2018). To address this, a case study approach was used so that the researcher could appropriately comprehend and depict the workplace experiences of Black women to capture and deliver their perceptions in an authentic manner (Cypress, 2018). The results from this study serve to influence social change, increase the number of Black women who hold leadership positions, and bring awareness to the importance of diversity in which corporations will be able to adapt strategies, policies, and procedures to ensure equality and inclusion sustains a culturally diverse work environment (Moorosi et al., 2018). Executive leaders can adopt this information within U.S. corporations and human resource managers within the financial sector to eradicate obstacles, eliminate discrimination, and bias while working to ensure that quality is within their promotional practices that enhance equal opportunities for Black women and other minorities (Reynold-Dobbs et al., 2008). Section 2 details the research approach and design used to acquire evidence and analyze it for the objective of answering the research questions and examining foreshadowed questions. A review of the purpose statement, population, sampling, data collection, data

analysis, reliability, and validity are provided in the section to describe in detail how the inquiry was undertaken.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceived barriers that may create a disadvantage for qualified African American women who seek a promotion within the financial services sector. To accomplish this goal, there was an exploration of the workplace experiences of Black women in old times and current of those who aspire and possess leadership positions to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences of their journeys to achieve career growth. The literature review was exhaustive of assessing the workplace experiences of Black women and their encounters with different barriers that may stem from gender and racial stereotypes being implied within the workplace. The review concluded with the development of recommendations that could be adapted by the demographic while speaking out on necessary future efforts to be made by business leaders, policy and lawmakers to ensure the fair treatment, inclusion, and equality of Black women within the workplace. Section 2 of the study discusses the research method and design of the study while detailing the study procedures, data collection process, and analysis plan to ensure the preciseness of the project that helps to answer the research questions. Each step required for the successful execution of the project was described in detail. The data sources, collection tools, population, sample, the role of the researcher and participants are explored further. The reliability and validity of the study design and method are described to assure the quality, consistency, and accuracy of the data produced from the research project.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceived barriers encountered by Black women who aspire to hold a leadership position to shed light on their experiences with promotional obstacles in the workplace. Black women holding a senior

leadership role is the exception in which their experiences helped to understand coping strategies and the efforts that attained them furtherance in their careers (Matterre, 2018). The identification of perceived barriers that contributes to the disparities implicated on Black women have aided in the creation of recommendations for Black women to break through the concrete ceiling that hinders their progression (Williams, 2019). The adverse effects of workplace discrimination and the importance of inclusion are explored in this study, to address the issue that is created by the organization, whereas they may need to adapt their recruiting, hiring, and retaining efforts to include all demographics (Grissom, 2018). Organizational norms are of focal point to access the promotional opportunities of other demographics that have presented higher numbers for holding leadership positions to determine if Black women possess different qualifications (Williams, 2019). The results from this study may increase the awareness of the importance of workplace diversity in which corporations will be able to adapt strategies, policies, and practices to ensure the elimination of unconscious biases that limit cultural diversity (West, 2017). The researcher intended to provide a voice for Black women while shedding light on their disadvantage so their future experiences in the workplace will be uniform to other demographics and their chance to receive a leadership position is equal.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of participants, while protecting their confidentiality and ensuring the validity of data with the purpose to produce new information or refine a previously established theory (Daly et al., 2019). The researcher was primarily responsible for protecting the data and maintaining the comfort of participants because participants were asked to detail and relive personal experiences that may be traumatizing or embarrassing, which may be challenging to do (Daly et al., 2019). The research

project required large amounts of data in which the researcher is tasked with recording the information that was gathered during the data collection process, such as with handwritten notes, video-recording, and transcribing verbatim the particulars regarding the subject that have been obtained (Henderson, 2017). In this study, the researcher conducted open-ended interviews and make observations of participants, while intending to record their behaviors. After the data collection process, the researcher was responsible for decoding the data through identifying and exploring further emergent themes for the development of conclusions about why Black women experience barriers in the workplace that may ultimately lead to their underrepresentation in leadership roles in the financial services sector (West, 2017).

Participants

Participants are targets of observation for an inquiry where they are recruited and selected to engage in a study due to their eligibility and time commitment, while the researcher works with them to establish a rapport to collect data related to the subject matter for analysis (Pickering, 2017). For this study, the scope of the study covered the experiences of Black women who hold leadership positions and those who aspire within the financial services sector, as participants are expected to detail barriers they have encountered in the workplace. The study participants include eight Black women who currently hold leadership positions and eight Black women who aspire to obtain career growth within the financial services sector, because the sample was purposeful as to select individuals to participate that could provide direct insight into the negative barriers experienced by Black women. The study was limited to employees that hold positions ranging from associate to senior management level within companies that offer financial services geographically located in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. The participants were initially recruited through professional contact on LinkedIn and through use of

the snowball sampling technique, which allowed participants to refer additional potential participants that were expected to meet the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for the study included: (a) must be a current or former employee within the financial services sector; (b) must live and be employed in Pennsylvania, Delaware, or New Jersey; and (c) must be a Black woman who has over five years of experience within the finance industry.

Research Method and Design

A qualitative case study was employed to examine the workplace experiences of Black women within the financial services sector, because the investigation detailed barriers encountered that may lead to a disenfranchisement of Black women being equally promoted into leadership roles as their counterparts. The goal of the study was to investigate the barriers imposed within the workplace that places a hindrance on the career growth of Black women while bringing to light the inequalities, inclusion, and stereotypes that are often implied unconsciously that may result in the disregard of contributions made by Black women (Butler, 2017). Black women leaders and aspirants are of subject to compare the differences and similarities in their experiences with hopes to further develop recommendations through examining the Black women leaders' responses regarding how they overcame obstacles that may have stunted their career growth (Walls, 2017). A qualitative case study design was employed to collect data that would best assist with answering the research questions in which the researcher compared all research methods and designs before deciding the best strategy to utilize that aligned with the research goal (Butler, 2017). The following sections discuss further the research method and design that was implemented in the study.

Discussion of Method

Qualitative research methods set out to dive deeper into the perspectives of subjects that are directly affected by the phenomenon, because the avenues of methods utilized are more descriptive so the researcher can decipher the personal meaning held by the participant and will be able to describe their experiences as it relates to the topic (Teherani et al., 2015). The methodological approach of qualitative study is based on the systematic inquiry into a social phenomenon utilizing methods in uniform to narratives, questions, descriptions, and the analysis of emergent themes which provides an in-depth view on the topic, which may lead to a potential new observation (Teherani et al., 2015). According to Austin and Sutton (2014), researcher's utilize qualitative methods with the intent to discover how individuals or groups behave, how organizations function, how specific encounters have a lasting effect on relationships, and how people experience particular circumstances in their lives in which the researcher can gain insight into what it feels like to be the subject affected by the phenomenon. Information is gathered in chronological order with the intent to precisely uncover the events that led to the consequences that created the phenomenon (Austin & Sutton, 2014). The researcher will ensure the approach utilized best suites the purpose of the study, while securing alignment between the reliability and validity of the results by not producing generalized findings; however, through disregarding their own bias or stance on the topic (Austin & Sutton, 2014).

The qualitative research method was selected for this study because the investigation requires factual data to answer the research questions, and questions regarding the workplace experiences of Black women are sought to be answered by those experiencing the phenomenon firsthand. Qualitative methods seek the perspectives of subjects on a focused topic in which the research techniques encourage subjects to describe their perspectives on the event occurrence

(Hammarberg et al., 2016). Qualitative research is exploratory in which the researcher adopts this method when they do not know what to expect from subjects but have intentions to discover the facts surrounding the problem and work to dive deeper into the perspectives of those experiencing the phenomenon (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Quantitative research methods are not of focus for the study because this method works to confirm theories or assumptions about a topic through the use of surveys, questionnaires, and numerical data to test, measure, or replicate a previously established hypothesis (Brunsdon, 2016). The intent of this study, however, was to explore ideas, perceptions, and experiences of those close to the phenomenon to formulate a theory focusing on the workplace experiences of Black women and their paths to promotion into leadership roles for grounds to develop recommendations for the group to overcome imposed obstacles. The quantitative method is more objective than subjective, because researchers utilizing this method examines the effects of a problem through those observing the occurrence while qualitative methods describe the problem from those experiencing the problem (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018).

Discussion of Design

Crowe et al. (2011) described a case study as an approach to qualitative research that focuses on an in-depth investigation into a complex issue in its natural context in which the researcher utilizes this design to understand the commonalities and differences shared between subjects as they detail their lived experiences with the occurrence. The case study design seeks to explore the social and behavioral conditions through the subject's perspective in which the researcher works to understand the human experience through utilizing qualitative methods to present data from the subject's point of view (Yazan, 2015). The study design was developed to arrive at certainty, whereas, for this study, the boundaries between the phenomenon and context

were not understood, therefore, the researcher intended to answer the “how” and “why” as it relates to the issue and for evaluation into the recruitment, hiring, and retention policies that presents a potential occurrence of inequality in the workplace (Yazan, 2015). Unreliable and unsupported intuition is not authorized when utilizing a case study design, whereas conducting a case study requires rigorous efforts in order to arrive at generalized conclusions and the researcher must understand the comparative advantage of the design to avoid confusion (Yin, 2018). Although the case study design has overlapping qualities as other qualitative approaches, this design seeks to narrow down a broad field of inquiry through providing more realistic responses to the issue and it may produce new and unexpected results that may take the research study into a new direction (Yin, 2018).

The researcher adopted a case study design approach for this study because it is useful for an explorative research approach that could restrict the researcher’s personal biases from being revealed through setting aside their own experiences in order to grasp and report solely based on the participant’s experiences and perceptions (Glattfelder, 2019). The researcher set out to uncover the experiences of Black women in the workplace that aspire to be promoted into leadership roles within the financial services sector to accurately describe and understand the gravity to which Black women perceive negative barriers that may in turn place a hindrance on their chances for career growth. The most appropriate design for this purpose was the case study approach, whereas an ethnography design would allow for the point of view of another group to demonstrate how social action affects the lives of another, whereas this study seeks to explore the phenomena from the source (Jamali, 2018). The grounded theory design was not of focus for the study due to its attempt to develop a new theory, whereas the current study examines a pre-existing theory. Researchers who implement an ethnographic research design seek to describe

and interpret a social group or culture through examining the participant's interactions in their everyday environments, which was not suitable for this study (Jamali, 2018). This study aimed to develop emergent themes of the perceived promotional obstacles that are experienced by Black women in the workplace, to describe what and how they experience the phenomena, to bring awareness to the occurrence, and to aid Black women in coping with these situations and push for social change. The case study design was most appropriate for understanding and interpreting the experiences of Black women, while investigating the similarities and differences between the experiences of aspirants and leaders in order to fully understand the meaning of the phenomenon to each participant and what it constitutes to them (Yin, 2018).

Summary of Research Method and Design

The objective of the study was to examine the perceptions, experiences, and beliefs of qualified Black women who aspire to be fairly promoted into leadership roles, to understand their treatment within the workplace, and to uncover the perceived negative barriers that may cause a hindrance in their career growth. The experiences of Black women who hold senior management positions within the workplace was examined to compare the qualifications and experiences with those of the Black women aspirants to determine how Black women have overcome perceived negative barriers to achieve furtherance within their careers (Walls, 2017). A qualitative case study approach was selected as preeminent in comparison to other methods for the intent of this study, whereas the quantitative and research methods do not offer data collection techniques that would align with the intent of this investigation (Jamali, 2018).

Population and Sampling

Purposeful sampling is a non-probability technique used in qualitative research for the identification of individuals that are enlightened about the phenomenon since they are of interest

to the research study in which the researcher was selective about who participates in the study for the most effective use of the small sample size that is typically used in the method (Palinkas et al., 2015). Palinkas et al. (2015) discussed the conditions that are imperative to contemplate when selecting the participants such as the availability, willingness, and ability of the participant to describe their experiences reflectively and expressively because to focus on particular characteristics of individuals will help to answer the research questions. A purposeful sampling method was chosen as suitable for the selection of participants because the intent was to understand the phenomenon through examining the experiences of those who are affected personally and can convey their perspective through first-hand knowledge (Kegler et al., 2018). The type of purposeful sampling used was the maximum variation method since the researcher selected participants from the same population; however, there was a variance in their career levels as to which half of the sample have obtained leadership roles, and the other half aspires (Kegler et al., 2018).

Asiamah et al. (2017) defined the study population as the broad target group of people to which the results of the study will be generalized and applied to because the sample is a subset of the population and is the actual study participants that will detail their experiences for analysis of how Black women are affected by the phenomenon as a whole. The population was well defined in the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study, whereas location, age, sex, and occupation are examples of some of the components that consist of the criterion and are defined based on the research questions that guide the requirements (Asiamah et al., 2017). The snowball sampling technique was also used to recruit a heterogeneous sample in which the women selected were able to refer additional potential participants that are believed to fit the inclusion criteria (Valerio et al., 2016). The snowball sampling technique is a referral method in which a small sample size

assists with recruiting additional participants through their communities and networks who are believed to have the same characteristics (Valerio et al., 2016). A heterogeneous mixture of participants will help the researcher to gain greater insight into the phenomenon and help look at the problem from all angles and determine the differences and similarities among their experiences (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). The researchers found this will help to identify emergent themes that are evident across the sample account with the intent to help answer the research questions and to develop recommendations for the organizations to improve the workplace structure and for Black women that are negatively affected by the phenomenon.

Discussion of Population

The target population for this study was females who identify as African American or Black women who are currently employed at a corporation located within the United States of America with obtained positions ranging from associate to senior management, director, or executive level roles. The target group consisted of Black women who aspire to obtain leadership roles and feel as though they are qualified due to post-secondary education combined with the number of years occupying their current roles and their displayed skills. The target group also consisted of Black women leaders who have obtained management roles for the researcher to understand their journey to goal achievement. Aside from race, gender, education level, and years of experience, other factors such as age, marital status, and career goals vary.

Discussion of Sampling

The sample of the study was Black women currently employed within the financial services sector for the last five years with their perspective corporations located geographically in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or Delaware within the United States of America. The job location of participants helped to ensure that individuals were within travel reach for the researcher in case of a requested meetup in which the interviews were held via Zoom video chat and observations were made as the participants reflected on their past experiences. The career levels of participants ranged from associate, senior management, director, and executive level roles with the intent to gather a difference in perspectives as it relates to perceived barriers experienced by Black women. The target sample size was 16 Black women. Eight of the women currently aspires to hold a leadership role, while the other eight women currently hold a management role or higher.

Summary of Population and Sampling

The objective of the study was to explore the opinions, feelings, and perceptions of Black women through understanding their workplace experiences with perceived negative barriers, which may cause an impediment for those qualified to obtain leadership roles. The purposeful sampling method combined with the snowball sampling technique was used for the selection of participants. Individuals were selected based on their knowledge level of the subject and were given the opportunity to refer additional potential participants who are believed to meet the inclusion criteria (Valerio et al., 2016). The target population for the study was Black women with post-secondary education achievements, currently employed within the United States of America, with obtained positions ranging from associate to executive rankings. The target sample included 16 Black women, eight of which aspire to obtain a leadership role while the remaining eight currently hold management roles or higher. The participants were located throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware, or New Jersey for accessibility and obtained post-secondary education to speak to their qualifications. The sample was selected based on their willingness and availability to detail their experience with perceived workplace barriers and their ability to meet the inclusion criteria.

Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information that is relevant to the interest of the research questions, because for qualitative studies, the methods most common are interviews, case study, focus groups, document analysis, and observations (Paradis et al., 2016). The data collection process was imperative for the study since the information collected was used to generate clarifications on the occurrence of a phenomenon while reporting the negative effects it has caused on the subjects (Paradis et al., 2016). Qualitative data consists of

descriptive information, whereas the researcher gathered data in non-numerical forms with the use of open-ended questions that provided an in-depth view for the researcher to capture the emotions, feelings, perceptions, and opinions of those primarily affected by the issue (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Two or more qualitative collection methods are often combined through data source triangulation which enhances the credibility and validity of the study due to its essence to capture different dimensions on the same phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020).

Instruments

Study instrumentation refers to the tools used by investigators to measure items of interest during the data collection process, whereas the instruments used in this study are descriptive field notes (Appendix B), an interview guide (Appendix A), and the researcher (Paradis et al., 2016). The researcher was the primary instrument in the study, whereas the investigator played a central role in generating, observing, and interpreting data by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with 16 Black women leaders and aspirants (Becker, 2019). The researcher worked to build trusting relationships with participants and discuss topics that are of interest for the research study, whereas the investigator was tasked with taking notes, talking to people, and effectively recording the meanings, wordings, and opinions of research participants verbatim (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). The observations was of study participants for the intent to note reflections, body language, expressions, and behaviors displayed as they revisited past experiences in which observations were made during interviews via video chat (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). To accurately document the observations, the researcher utilized a field note sheet that helped to record as much detail about witnessed encounters as possible in which details about the space, atmosphere, and tone was described as it relates to the issues caused by the phenomenon (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017).

The interview guide did not consist of a list of questions that was similar to a questionnaire; however, it was a guide to ensure the researcher would not forget to mention important issues during the conversation and would allow the researcher to engage better with the participant (Buriro et al., 2017). The interview guide was one page in length in order to maintain the focus of the researcher when in the presence of study participants while demanding the researcher to fully prepare for the data collection process and to speak from the intent of the research questions, problem statement, and the conceptual framework (Buriro et al., 2017). When semi-structured interviews are utilized as the study instrument, study participants are compelled to provide in-depth answers to the interview questions so the researcher can learn the reason behind the responses (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). For example, the suggested opening question to answer research question number one is “You have expressed your aspirations for obtaining a promotion into a leadership role within your current place of employment, could you tell me about your journey to career growth?”

Data Collection Techniques

Unstructured interviews and participant observations was used to collect data for this study, whereas interviews are the most straightforward approach to gathering detailed and rich information due to real-time conversations that are the basis for this method, therefore, the interviews did not follow a prewritten script (Barrett, 2018). The interview guide was developed with the research questions, theme, and topic in mind in which open-ended questions helped to extract relevant information from participants for in-depth assimilation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The questions were designed to allow openness because the participants were to describe challenges, accomplishments, unique experiences, and perceptions that would assist the researcher in answering the research questions and developing adaptable recommendations for

Black women (Barrett, 2018). Additional resources included the cooperation, honesty, reliability, and willingness of participants, whereas the data provided was evaluated for appropriate use in the study, and endorsed or invalidated the need for reorganization amongst state and corporation policies (Maher et al., 2018). The researcher also engaged in making accurate observations while in the presence of participants with the intent to note interactions, reflections, expressions, and body language displayed by participants as they accounted for past experiences.

Data Organization Techniques

The data were organized through reflective journal keeping done by the researcher, whereas the researcher developed notes on how their characteristics and opinions on the phenomenon could influence the results of the study; therefore, any hidden biases was managed for supporting confirmability (Maher et al., 2018). A qualitative data analysis software called MAXQDA was used to organize information, whereas the system enabled the researcher to upload all document files quickly for separation and review of the entire data set (Verbi Software, 2020). MAXQDA allows for investigators to import data from interviews, social media, surveys, focus groups, and other means, while enabling color-coding of information and allows the organization of data based on participant responses and different collection methods (Verbi Software, 2020). The software was used to maintain the data gathered from hosting interviews and making observations for the study, whereas the interview transcripts, memos, notes, and participant quotes were organized for analysis.

Summary of Data Collection

Data source triangulation was utilized for the study in which unstructured interviews along with participant observations are tools utilized to collect information with the intent to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from different avenues of inquiry

(Campbell et al., 2020). The researcher was the principal instrument in the study, due to the responsibility of leading the interviews and making observations through building relationships with participants, documenting and recording in verbatim all verbal and nonverbal actions, while conducting the study without bias or influencing the responses of participants (Becker, 2019). An interview guide and field notes were also instruments used to collect information in which the guide enabled the researcher to inquire about important aspects of the phenomenon and the field notes allowed the researcher to make detailed observations. MAXQDA, a qualitative data organization, and analysis software system was used to organize the data into codes for advanced coding, transcribing, and analysis (Verbi Software, 2020).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a range of processes and procedures taken to transform useful information gathered during the data collection process into a form of explanation that describes the researcher's understanding of the personal experiences described by study participants (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). This study used a case study analysis framework as described by Miles and Huberman (1994), combined with other methods to analyze the data from interviews and observations in which the researcher sought great detail in how participants described their experiences through reading between the lines and defining the terms of meaning the phenomenon has for those experiencing it. There were eight steps used for the case study analysis of data gathered from interviews and observations held with eight Black women leaders, eight Black women aspirants, and non-verbal and verbal interactions among participants in the study. The steps align with the "Codes and Coding" technique due to the ability to link the data back to the research questions for interpretation of the output (Atkinson, 2002). The steps that were taken are listed below:

1. The first step in conducting the analysis was through a method of epoche, whereas the researcher mitigated their preconceptions that could have tainted the analysis process, through identifying and setting aside any personal assumptions they may have had (Sorsa et al., 2015).
2. The second step of the analysis was to organize the data through transcribing and translating all written works in verbatim, in search of relevant information that may provide some understanding of the perceived barriers experienced by Black women aspirants and leaders (Sorsa et al., 2015).
3. The third step of the analysis was member-checking in which the participants were contacted via telephone after the initial interview to validate the interview transcript as being accurate in its content.
4. The fourth step of the analysis involved horizontalization in which the researcher read across the interview transcripts and field notes repeatedly with the intent to identify important statements, quotes, sentences, and reflections to group into themes (Petitmengin et al., 2019).
5. The fifth step of the analysis was to create a data repository to store and sort the data in which MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software that is essential for storing, organizing, sorting and comparing the data for categorizing the information into meaningful units was utilized (Cypress, 2019).
6. The sixth step was to finalize data triangulation, whereas cross-verification of participant responses was completed due to the diversity of the study sample in terms of the various positions held by Black women aspirants and leaders in the financial sector (Petitmengin et al., 2019).

7. The seventh step was to code the data for structural description in which the researcher analyzed participant responses for understanding what the commonalities were amongst participant experiences and how the commonalities were related to each other (Aldahdouh, 2018).
8. The eighth step was to re-arrange the responses by categorizing the data based on similarities amongst the relationships and developing emergent themes that provided a theoretical framework to assist with answering the research questions (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Coding Process

Coding is the analytical process of categorizing data through grouping and comparing similar pieces of information for the structured presentation of findings that represent the majority of participant responses in an effective way without requiring readers to review the complex data scripts or notes (Moser & Krostjens, 2018). The study used open, axial, and selective coding to categorize elements such as behaviors, responses, reactions and activities to assign explicit explanations for similar occurrences (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). The data were categorized into a suitable form for computer-aided analysis which helped to eliminate errors that could have risen if coding was done manually (Aldahdouh, 2018). Coding helped to convey the smallest unit of text that depicted the same meaning throughout different data collection techniques used and participant responses that varied based on personal experiences, because the codes were reorganized into understandable themes (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). Field notes, supporting documents, transcripts, and recordings were transcribed and organized through reading through the data, adding marginal notes and defining codes with the intent to develop a description of themes to describe the lived experience of study participants (Moser & Krostjens,

2018). Member-checking was used to enhance rigor and validity in the research in which the participants were contacted after their initial interview to confirm the accurateness of the interview transcripts and interpretations of the phenomenon. MAXQDA was used for support, to store, retrieve texts, phrases, and organize segments of data into units for the researcher to identify patterns and assign codes based on the responses of participants for interpretation and representation of emergent themes (Cypress, 2019). The emergent themes was used to develop recommendations for Black women who may encounter barriers in the workplace and seek the capacity to continuously pursue their goals.

Summary of Data Analysis

The data analysis process includes reducing data by summarizing, abstracting, and producing codes from the collected information in which the researcher intended to present the findings in a way that modifies the data into themes that are relevant to the essence of participant experiences (Petitmengin et al., 2019). The researcher analyzed the data through following the steps that ranged from epoche, horizontalization, organization, sorting, structural description, triangulation, and coding with the intent to extract relevant information from participant responses and develop emergent themes. MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software was used for sorting, organizing, storing, coding, and comparison of data in which the software increased the efficacy of locating relevant data and discarding data that may not be relevant to the phenomenon (Cypress, 2019). The researcher assumed the same attitude of openness and attentiveness to the study participants while withholding prior knowledge of the phenomenon in order to remain open about the participants detailing of their experience for the reservation of uncertainty of what was to result from the study (Sorsa et al., 2015). Through following the seven defined steps of analysis, the researcher revealed the similarities amongst the lived

experiences of the 16 Black women participants for the purpose of understanding the phenomenon better.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are imperative when conducting a qualitative study in which the researcher committed to experimental procedure while being tasked with controlling all parameters that may be detrimental to the results of the study (Rettke et al., 2018). In essence, the trustworthiness, credibility, and quality of the research process, data collection, and analysis phase is critical, whereas reliability and validity in qualitative studies are complex due to the naturalistic method used to inquire about a topic (Cypress, 2017). Cypress (2017) detailed a naturalistic approach as a difficult task since there is no structure to follow such as a preset design with written methods in place; however, the planning and implementation of a study is simultaneous because there is no control over the design of the study which could change in accordance with emergent discoveries. Trustworthiness was established through the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study procedures, because results from qualitative studies are often scrutinized due to potential researcher bias that could have risen due to the investigators' personal agenda (Krostjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility is the aspect of linking the study's findings with reality to demonstrate truth; transferability is the criterion of transferring details of the study into generalizations for use in a different context; dependability is the aspect of describing the changes in setting to depict how these changes may have affected the approach; and confirmability is the degree to which the results could be corroborated by others (Cypress, 2017; Krostjens & Moser, 2018). These four aspects determine how trustworthiness is established and quality is demonstrated in a qualitative research inquiry, because reliability is measured in qualitative studies through consistency, and validity is

measured through the soundness of the research and the integrity of the conclusions (Cypress, 2017).

Reliability

Reliability relates to the consistency of the procedures undertaken in which the researcher's decision-making abilities are clear, transparent, true in value, and applicable whereas an independent researcher is able to mimic the plan of action and arrive at similar findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). The results of a replicated study will be flexible in comparison of its exactness to the initial findings, however, the data still contain the richness within similar dimensions as the processes and data that were included in the original source (Leung, 2015). For this study, the researcher applied methodological strategies to ensure reliability ranging from record-keeping, demonstrating a decision-trail, describing rich accounts of participant experiences to support findings, and through data triangulation (Boletto, 2018). The details of the data analysis process and interpretation of the findings was clear and concise in which the researcher acknowledged the similarities and differences across participant experiences to ensure multiple perspectives are represented within the study conclusion (Boletto, 2018). The researcher maintained a research journal that detailed the decision-making process employed, to display all challenges that have arisen throughout the course of the study in which any personal biases was addressed to ensure that the findings were not influenced, but consistency and transparency was displayed throughout the study (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Validity

Validity is the idea of the study being relevant and meaningful, through consisting of facts, actuality, evidence, and accuracy while accounting for the study procedures and decision-making measures to be justifiable and well-founded for the purpose of the research study

(Hayashi et al., 2019). To validate the study results, the researcher was sure to investigate and question the participant account of their experiences as it related to the topic and clarified any responses that was unclear in order to theorize recommendations for individuals affected by the phenomenon (Hayashi et al., 2019). Recommendations was finalized through fully gaining knowledge and understanding the characteristics and experiences of participants while detailing the effect the phenomenon may have caused on their journey for career growth. To ensure credibility and internal validation, data triangulation was used for organization of the results obtained from hosting interviews with participants and making observations of individuals, whereas the Black feminist theory, glass ceiling theory, and expectation states theory aided the investigator in making use of corroborating evidence through multiple data sources (Maher et al., 2018). To confirm external validity, the researcher provided adaptable recommendations for Black women that may experience hinders in the workplace in which the data were analyzed to reveal the perceived barriers experienced by the interviewed population (Maher et al., 2018).

Summary of Reliability and Validity

The concepts of reliability and validity are overarching constructs which are often criticized for being used within qualitative studies due to the challenge that arises when demonstrating rigor since there is no accepted agreement of the standards used to judge the findings (Jordan, 2018). Nevertheless, the researcher aimed to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study through adopting strategies that demonstrated honest efforts. Reliability and validity were applied within the research study to ensure the quality of procedures taken, fairness in the selection of participants, awareness of any personal or research biases, and displaying a clear decision-trail of conducting the procedures and interpreting data (Leung, 2015). The overall display of trustworthiness within a qualitative study is through ensuring

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability which is extensively used and deemed essential to qualitative inquiry as they determine rigor and quality within a study (Morse, 2015). The soundness and integrity of the study conclusion was established through displaying the responsible conduction of study procedures through clearly listing the steps taken and presenting the decision-trail while acknowledging the institutional standard of intellectual honesty and excellence (Jordan, 2018).

Transition and Summary of Section 2

The researcher set out to uncover the experiences of Black women in the workplace that aspire to be promoted into leadership roles within the financial services sector to accurately describe and understand the gravity to which Black women perceive negative barriers that may place a hindrance on their chances for career growth. The role of the researcher was to investigate the phenomenon while not displaying bias in the selection of participants within the interpretation of findings and through the ability to create realistic recommendations for Black women to adapt (West, 2017). The study utilized a purposeful sample of 16 Black women, eight are aspirants and eight who currently possess a leadership position within the finance industry. The inclusion criteria for the study included Black women: (a) employed (or have been) at a company that offers financial services located in Pennsylvania, Delaware, or New Jersey; (b) who have five years of experience in a position ranging from associate to executive level roles; and (c) have an MBA in finance or accounting, and must aspire to or currently possess a leadership position. The exclusion criteria included: (a) persons under the age of 18, (b) men, (c) women who are not of African descent, (d) Black women who do not have an MBA in finance or accounting, and (e) Black women who do not have five years of experience within the finance industry. Participants were recruited through email communication on the professional

networking site, LinkedIn. The researcher was able to confirm the education and experience levels of individuals before initial contact. Seven steps were clearly outlined in the data analysis section that was followed to reveal the similarities amongst the lived experiences of the 16 Black women participants to understand the phenomenon better. MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software, was used for sorting, organizing, storing, coding, and comparison of data in which the software increased the efficacy of locating relevant data and discarding data that may not be relevant to the phenomenon (Cypress, 2019). Section 3 details the themes that have surfaced from the conduction of the study procedures and analysis of the results. This section details each emergent theme and describes how it relates to the research questions. A summary of the findings are made comprehensive and the section concludes with recommendations for action and further study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of the study was to examine the workplace experiences of Black women who work in the financial sector and to learn if there are any perceived barriers present that indicates a hindrance on their ability to receive promotional opportunities into leadership roles. This section details the participant responses as themes in which the commonalities among participant experiences were identified, analyzed, and interpreted to present the findings. Section 3 is a final reflection on how the study was conducted, the meaning and implications of the results as it relates to the research questions, and a discussion of any unexpected or expected outcomes from participant interviews. Recommendations for future research is given, a reflection on the researcher's experiences with the research process are explored, and recommendations are provided to Black women who aspire to achieve career growth but feel stagnant. The study concludes with an answer to the research questions with hopes to leave the reader with a clear understanding of the phenomenon, the effects, the researcher's argument, and course of actions to be taken for the dismantling of potential workplace barriers that may be present for Black women.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the workplace experiences of Black women who aspire to obtain leadership positions within the financial sector to understand the journey to career growth for the demographic. Sixteen (16) Black women who possess a minimum of a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree in finance or accounting and have a minimum of five years of experience in financial services were interviewed. The participants were asked a separate set of interview questions dependent on which interview group they were a part of, because eight of the participants currently aspire to hold a management role and the

remaining eight women currently hold mid to senior management, director, or executive level roles. The experiences of Black women aspirants were explored to detail what factors have negatively and positively affected their strides to career growth to develop a set of strategies that could be used by organizations and policy makers to prevent the existence of potential barriers that are implied towards the group. The experiences of Black women leaders were explored to determine the strides they made that resulted in the achievement of career growth and the experiences of Black women aspirants were explored to determine the perceived obstacles they encounter when working towards a promotion. The research questions examine the perceived obstacles of Black women who aspire to hold leadership positions and meet the educational and experience based qualifications at their place of employment to no prevail after persistent strides. The research questions that guide the study are as follow:

RQ1. What are the experiences of Black women with possible perceived promotional obstacles in the workplace who aspire to hold leadership positions within the organization?

RQ2. What are the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership positions?

RQ3. What are the perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions within the finance and investment industry, and what strides did they make to achieve career growth?

The negative and positive contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions were explored to gain a better understanding of their path to promotion and the strides they made that were successful to produce a set of recommendations for women who are still in pursuit. Potential barriers that may create a disadvantage for Black women in the workplace were explored to discover any disadvantages that may be present within the policies,

practices, and workplace culture that may contribute to a dormant progression of Black women receiving promotional opportunities in the finance industry. The data suggest there are potential perceived barriers present in the workplace that are experienced by Black women when pursuing a leadership opportunity, whereas the interviewed leader's detailed similar challenges as the aspirants when pursuing a promotion. The potential perceived barriers include: (a) a lack of diversity within the organization; (b) the underrepresentation of Black women in management, director, or executive level roles; (c) the lack of support; (d) feeling stagnant; (e) feeling ignored; and (f) addressing stereotype threats. Finally, participants from the leader group offered advice to Black women aspirants to overcome workplace challenges which were noted to include: (a) having patience; (b) remaining persistent; (c) researching the company to which you are applying to; (d) building a team of support; (e) working to diversify work skills; and (f) looking for external opportunities if promotional opportunities are consistently delayed or avoided.

Themes/Perceptions

This qualitative investigation explored the potential barriers present in the workplace for Black women that may place a hindrance on their pursuit of promotional opportunities that study participants were interviewed for the identification of regularities among their experiences. Participants identified potential barriers present in the workplace which were then analyzed and coded with the outcome of emergent themes that work to facilitate a connection between the participant responses and the data (Rintala et al., 2014). The themes identified were emerged from the account of study participants including the perception of stagnation, the underrepresentation of Black women, and addressing stereotype threats. Key words were recognized due to repetition and assembled to establish a relationship that helped to develop the thematic categories that are used to answer the research questions.

Presentation of the Findings

For qualitative studies, Vaismoradi et al. (2016) recommended analyzing the interview responses of study participants and assembling commonalities into themes that have repeatedly come up to answer the research questions. Based on Vaismoradi et al.'s (2016) suggestion, textual verbatim quotations were taken from transcribed interviews and detailed along with thematic categories that relate to each research question to demonstrate the rate of repetition and the similarity among the participant experiences. The interview questions were open-ended in an attempt to intercept the participants from providing yes or no responses, but to encourage a story like dialogue as to which the participants would retell their experiences in detail that would paint a picture for the researcher (Woods et al., 2016). The interview began with a set of demographic questions and proceeded with a set of open-ended questions that were asked dependent on if the participant was to be grouped with the leaders or aspirants. As stated in the definition of terms, leader refers to women who have obtained a mid to senior management, director, or executive level role with aspirants being referred to as women who hold entry to associate level roles in the workplace . The participants are listed below as Leader A, Leader B, and so on to keep the identities of participants anonymous. The demographic characteristics of the interview participants are listed to include the age, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, and years of experience as follow:

- Leader A: 33 years old; African-American woman; Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; 10 years of experience
- Leader B: 46 years old; African-American woman; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 15 years of experience

- Leader C: 32 years old; African-American woman; Morristown, New Jersey; 6 years of experience
- Leader D: 36 years old; African-American woman; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 17 years of experience
- Leader E: 40 years old; African-American woman; Cherry Hill, New Jersey; 18 years of experience
- Leader F: 49 years old; African-American woman; Wilmington, Delaware; 12 years of experience
- Leader G: 36 years old; African-American woman; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 15 years of experience
- Leader H: 29 years old; African-American woman; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 6 years of experience
- Aspirant A: 27 years old; African-American woman; Trenton, New Jersey; 6 years of experience
- Aspirant B: 30 years old; African-American woman; Princeton, New Jersey; 5 years of experience
- Aspirant C: 33 years old; African-American woman; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 10 years of experience
- Aspirant D: 27 years old; African-American woman; Newark, New Jersey; 7 years of experience
- Aspirant E: 35 years old; African-American woman; Bear, Delaware; 12 years of experience

- Aspirant F: 32 years old; African-American woman; Reading, PA; 10 years of experience
- Aspirant G: 28 years old; African-American woman; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 6 years of experience
- Aspirant H: 27 years old; African-American woman; Claymont Delaware, 6 years of experience

Of the 16 participants, one held a PhD in a field other than finance, while all participants possessed a MBA in finance or accounting. The range of experience between the leaders and aspirants were between 5 and 18 years in which the participants provided great insight into their workplace experiences with obtaining leadership positions in the workplace at different phases in their careers. The common themes identified are perceptions of stagnation, the underrepresentation of Black women, and addressing stereotype threats to describe the perceived promotional obstacles that Black women who aspire and hold leadership roles have experienced within their perspective organizations.

Perception of Stagnation / Relationship to Research Question 1

What are the experiences of Black women with possible perceived promotional obstacles in the workplace who aspire to hold leadership positions within the organization?

The first thematic category derived from coded participant responses was stagnation, which demonstrate the experiences of Black women with possible perceived promotional obstacles in the workplace who aspire to obtain leadership positions within the organization. The attributes that helped to generate the thematic category are (1) lack of information provided about developmental programs, (2) not being granted an interview, (3) unaware of job opportunities, (4) external hiring, (5) ineffective mentorship, (6) and pay inequality. All of the

constituents are related to stagnation. The participants have listed them as examples or reasons why they felt they were having a difficult time achieving career growth. The interview responses described instances that the participants felt like there was minimum room for growth within their careers and as a result they often times resigned from positions in search of a promotional opportunity elsewhere. These findings reflect existing results from literature in the field of business in which studies have shown that Black women are more likely to possess administrative, associate or mid-level management positions in the workplace and have a slow incline of obtained high ranking leadership positions (Roberts et al., 2020). The glass ceiling theory describes an invisible barrier that is in place for women and other minorities which makes it difficult to achieve career growth, and furthermore, Black women's pursuit of advanced positions is equivalent to a concrete ceiling which is harder to break (McGirt, 2017). Interviewed participants have described instances where they are assigned responsibilities of a managerial role. However, they were not considered for an interview when (a) a vacant position was available; (b) being considered a threat as their skills advanced; (c) not being granted an interview, although qualified while external candidates are hired for roles; and (d) leaving the company due to impeded developmental opportunities. Participants of both the aspirant and leadership group detailed feelings of slow growth within their companies, despite the years of experience or level of degree they possess at some time in their careers. The theme was used to answer research question 1.

Aspirant A has expressed opinions of the chance for Black women to receive a promotion to be stagnant, although they are already completing the work duties of the position:

My journey so far has been stagnant. There has been only two African American women that are at the company and in the finance department, with me being one of them. We

currently have a role open that I feel we are both qualified for, to become the finance manager but I feel like it has kinda been on the hush in which we found out from someone else already in the position that they are looking to hire someone externally, where I feel like they can hire within the company and just promote one of us because we already do the work that the manager would be doing.

Aspirant B declared thoughts of stagnant growth for Black women in which a resignation was the result of being told that a promotion would not come. The participant noted:

There are two other Black women that were on my team that left the company. They quit on the same day because they knew that they were not going to be able to progress on that team and they were actually verbally told that they were not going to be promoted. So their options was to stay stagnant within the same role or quit.

Aspirant C reiterated thoughts of stagnant growth in her career, which resulted in a lack of motivation and confidence in her achievements due to feelings of being overlooked for several years. The participant described:

I feel like in my career I have become more complacent, especially due to the fact that when I was at my previous company I had been there for 7-8 years and so when you see someone straight outta college getting complex assignments, and I would be asked to mail or file stuff. I was like I been here for 8 years and you're asking me to mail something? But I feel like I was complacent after a while, so I think that if I had decided that I wanted to stay at that company, I would have been more aggressive. I would have asked for more opportunities but I think that when you keep being overlooked, after a while you become totally unmotivated.

Aspirant D backed up the same notion of stagnant growth, whereas she detailed feeling like a threat once she became more experienced in her role which prompted a resignation from her current position in search of promotional opportunities elsewhere:

Second challenge that I found in my career is that I was in a position that I was growing and thriving in, and I felt like when I was young holding the position everything was good. You're learning and growing, but once I gained more experience I felt like I was viewed as a threat. So because I was viewed that way and I was not getting the opportunities that I deserved I knew that I had to do what was best for me and so I made a move elsewhere to another department so that I could continue my career growth because it had been stunted.

Aspirant E also detailed the feeling of stagnation within the careers of Black women, which may later result in the decision to change the company in which they work for or the industry of their profession:

I feel like chances are very slim, that a promotion will happen at this company to be honest, unless I move out of finance. In the past every Black women that I was close to at previous companies who was at the management level felt as though they should have been promoted to the senior manager level or partner. They ended up leaving the company because they were not given the growth opportunities to be on senior manager or the partner track after years of working at the company.

Aspirant F addressed compensation along with feelings of stagnation in which she currently completes the role responsibilities for the management position, interviewed for it twice, however, to no prevail she has not received the actual title. This has resulted in her search for new employment. The participant noted:

If I could change anything, I would have not stayed at the company the first time I was not offered the position, I should have just moved on prior to sitting for a second interview and being let down again. I should have left at the first sign that the company was not going to promote me into a management position, because at this point, I feel like my time was wasted and I wasn't properly compensated for that wasted time. I have been working in dual roles while earning one check. It makes no sense to me that they trust me enough to carry out the management responsibilities on a day to day, but don't trust me enough to make it official.

Leader A described the challenges she experienced when attempting to climb the ladder as an aspirant, and mimicked the feelings of stagnation as other participants did, because in order to gain movement in her career she took a pay cut. The participant noted:

I had challenges when I was trying to get into a different role when coming from the collections role in the beginning, so I had to take a really big pay cut to get into a better career track. That was really difficult and it's unfortunate that recruiters look where you were before, despite what your skillset is. So even with me having a MBA at the time, it still took some time for me to get to where I am now. As a company, I feel like we do have plans in place as far as developmental programs, but I don't feel like they are spreading awareness enough and then the people that are in those roles to help as a mentor are not willing enough. I feel like big organizations focus on action planning a lot, but when it comes time to actually put it into action. Nothing happens.

Leader B introduced the notion of pay inequality in which White males were hired straight from college and was paid more money than she was in her position. The participant noted:

When I first started managing branches, I wasn't assigned large offices which effected my payout and my incentives, and ultimately it prevented me from achieving. I also knew that when they brought White males in that recently graduated they were getting paid more money than I was and I was at the company for far longer so it was never fair. Even with us as African Americans they didn't take into account our education. When I first got my masters, they told me well you don't need a masters for this job.

Leader C reiterated feelings of stagnant growth when discussing her journey as an aspirant in which she reflected upon being a double minority which could have played a factor.

The participant noted:

When I tried to apply for a chief position at my old job I felt like I was ready to move up but at that place they didn't even give me an interview even though I was a senior analyst. Instead, they brought a man in from the outside and I feel like since the people in power were all white that wasn't going to work out in my favor. Even though I was ready and my bosses and team encouraged me to apply, but upper management didn't even grant me an interview.

Leader D noted inequality in her pay when she was working in an associate level role in which she may have been low balled as far as compensation while regarding to herself as "cheap labor." The participant described:

I feel like they hired me because I was cheaper labor. I wasn't making what I should have been making at the time. However, I was still pretty young at this point in my career so my needs didn't require so much money due to me still being in school and living at home, so I just accepted it.

Leader F described challenges faced during her career in which she felt like she was overlooked for opportunities while being paid unfairly in comparison to colleagues at the same grade level. The participant noted:

The challenges that I faced were being continuously passed over for positions and not being fairly paid. It has been proven that employees with the same title as me make more money. I was initially employed in a leadership role on a temporary basis, but ultimately the transformation role shifted. Once I obtained permanent status, after one year I was able to take the promotional exam which led me to my current position today.

Leader G discussed not being made aware of company initiatives that resulted in some of her male colleagues to receive sign on money that was out of her reach when she was hired at the company around the same time. The participant noted:

I don't think that the same opportunities are given to Black women. I have spoken to males whom received ridiculous sign on bonuses that they got when they came to the company that I wasn't even aware of and it made me frustrated because I feel like money was being handed out in comparison to what I was offered.

This barrier is consistent with literature of Mena (2016), who found that Black women have remained stagnant in the workplace, which often times may relate to reasons of resignations for the demographic. Furthermore, Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey (2019) found there is a disadvantage for African Americans in the workplace through investigating the managerial representation of different demographics with Black women being one of the demographics evaluated, and concluded that stagnation is in the majority of organizations for the population. The study concluded that the careers of Black women are slow-moving in smaller organizations when compared to larger institutions when reviewing corporate America in totality (Shams &

Tomaskovic-Devey, 2019). Through the lens of the glass ceiling theory stagnation is implied as a barrier that is invisible but places a hindrance on women from advancing their careers in the workplace (Subhawral, 2015). The glass ceiling theory describes a hierarchical impediment implied towards women and minorities that prevents professional growth, because the careers of the disadvantaged are held stagnate at associate to mid-level management roles regardless of further education or experience that is obtained (Klea et al., 2017). Although some women break through the hindrance, Sabharwal (2015) found that women who are able to obtain leadership positions still experience a glass ceiling in which they may be placed on failing teams and projects, in an attempt to set them up for failure or to test their leadership abilities.

Black women are challenged by a significantly tougher barrier when pursuing leadership roles, because a concrete ceiling is termed to describe the discrepancy in their experiences when pursuing an elevated position (McGirt, 2017). The pursuit of upper-level positions in the workplace for Black women reflects a concrete ceiling due to belonging to a double minority group in which the ceiling feels impractical to break because the implication of potential barriers still persist (Norman et al., 2018). It is imperative for working professionals to have a sense of certainty that a promotion is tangible because if employees perceive a delay in their career growth, it will reflect negatively on their engagement, confidence, and outlook of the company (Klea et al., 2017). As displayed by the study participants the result of feeling stagnant in the workplace, often leads to a resignation from roles, departments, companies, or industries, because organizations must ensure proper succession planning in order to foster the talent, creativity, skills, and competency of their employees (Bleich, 2019). Through succession planning employers are able to encourage, stimulate, educate, identify, and develop leaders who will one day replace previous leaders when they retire from positions, therefore, organizational

leaders must consider the capabilities of all employees regardless of race or gender (Bleich, 2019). To improve the work experiences of employees, organizations can work to ensure (a) individuals are informed about performance developmental programs; (b) internal job candidates are given the opportunity to apply and interview for positions as they qualify; (c) employees are recognized for their contributions; and (d) mentors are invested in the growth of individuals. After all the progress of the individuals, strides towards personal career growth will determine the motivation, productivity, and willingness of their commitment to the success of the organization (Kunasegaran et al., 2016).

Underrepresentation of Black women / Relationship to Research Question 2

What are the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership positions?

The second thematic category discovered from coded participant responses was underrepresentation, which is used to describe the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership roles. The crucial constituents that helped to generate this thematic category are (1) lack of support, (2) lack of diversity, (3) feeling ignored, and (4) there is a lack of Black women as mentors. The participants discussed the lack of Black women who hold leadership positions within their current or previous organizations, and detailed the personal affects it has on their outlook for their careers. These findings reflect existing results from literature in the field of business in which studies have shown that Black women are more underrepresented at every level in corporate America, however, the group is considered the most educated in the United States (Roberts et al., 2020). The underrepresentation of Black women in the workplace is due to the low number of the demographic that possesses leadership roles, which in turn equates to

there not being many Black women leaders to mentor Black women who aspire (Pietri et al., 2018). The theme was viewed through the Black feminist theory whereas the contributions of Black women are often times ignored due to being structurally positioned differently than White women in the society (Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Interviewed participants have described instances that they did not believe career advancement was tangible due to their demographic not being represented at the top ranks of the corporation and they reported feeling unsupported and discouraged due to the small number of colleagues that resemble them. All of the key attributes relate to the underrepresentation of Black women in the workplace in which the lack of support, lack of diversity, unacknowledged contributions, and lack of Black women mentors create a disadvantage for the group to observe equal representation, consideration, understanding, and inclusion by their respective employers (Pietri et al., 2018). The theme was used to answer research question 2.

Aspirant B shed light on the underrepresentation of Black women in the workplace in which it has resulted in the discouragement of aspirations for obtaining a promotion. The participant stated:

Within my team at work, I am currently the only Black person, Black women, and person of color, and that was very discouraging for me, because I now feel like I have to be the representation for the culture on a daily basis. So, that is discouraging to me because I realized that there is not much representation within the teams, departments and at the top of the organization so when it comes to my career it's like what hope is there. Why should I have to bear the burden to figure it out when it hasn't been paved?

Aspirant D acknowledged that there is an underrepresentation of Black women within the finance department of the organization, with the majority of the demographic holding

administrative roles, and for those who hold at least MBA degrees there are not many in leadership roles. The participant noted:

So, I feel like there is an issue as far as the number of Black women that are leaders on the finance side. The organization that I work with is mainly advertising, marketing, and public relations, there are more Black women that hold HR positions, but as far as finance there are so few. The majority of the Black women I see on the finance side are within admin. For Black women who have CPA, MBAs etc., there are few within leadership roles. But that's within my company.

Aspirant E addressed the affects that representation has on the outlook of which job candidates may have on their promotional chances within the organization in which the vision of the company can be interpreted if no diversity is shown. The participant described:

The issue with the lack of diversity is that when you see what the leaders of the organization look like, it gives you an inside look into what the future of the company is going to look like. If those that are coming in do not represent the leadership, it is not a good look, they may not find something to connect with, and it interrupts the vision. It interrupts the future growth, it will make it feel like there is a longer route that must be taken in order to achieve career growth, whereas in contrast if there is someone who looks like you in a higher position, it makes promotions feel more tangible.

Aspirant G mimicked a similar thought in which her confidence levels have declined in which she feels intimidated to ask for a promotional opportunity due to the low representation of Black women in leadership roles. The participant noted:

The reason I left my previous job is because I became intimidated and less confident to speak with management about promotional opportunities because I did not see equal

representation of Black women, and honestly, I don't see representation at my current company either. There are not any managers within my department who share my demographics.

Leader A mimicked the viewpoint that Black women are underrepresented in leadership roles within her company; however, she did note that there are Black women in high positions within her organization, but in comparison to other demographics there is a decreased number.

The participant detailed:

In my department there is me and then there is like 1 or 2 other people that are younger and there may be 1 other person of color and that's a man, and he's way older. So I think it's safe to say that Black women are underrepresented. Especially when it comes to employee business resource groups, now I don't know if you are familiar with those, but they typically will have business employee resource groups and a lot of the times they will have some dedicated to some marginalized groups. There is always one for women, there is always one for different races or ethnicities, so there is an African American EBRG, there is the Asian American and so on, so when I see all of the people that come together for the African American Business resource group, there aren't that many of us. There aren't that many in executive roles. There are a couple and they are in high positions which is amazing, but obviously there is a way smaller demographic than of our counterparts.

Leader B described instances in which she felt unsupported due to the underrepresentation of Black women who could have acted as a support system or mentor throughout the challenging times she faced in her career.

The downfall was that I wasn't supported like some of my other counterparts, like my male counterparts or people of other ethnicities, and in some instances I was put in situations to fail, or I had to turn situations around. Generally, I would go into situations that were negative such as failing branches, and I would have to totally turn it around. It was hard because I didn't have mentorship, or people that looked like me that supported me.

Leader C restated the idea of underrepresentation of Black women in leadership roles in which she discussed being discouraged when interviewing and there is no representation of her demographic.

The company I'm at now, there is only one other Black person that I know to be in a leadership role, so you know it's just sad because you don't see a lot of black women in those roles, you just don't. So, it's pretty hard when you are interviewing to have the thought in the back of your mind like what are they saying and thinking about me because you don't normally see people in the position who look like you so it's like will they really give me a chance.

Leader D detailed her experience with obtaining a management position, which indicates the underrepresentation of Black women in leadership roles within the finance industry. The participant responded:

Unfortunately, with the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009 my company moved to another firm which then downsized and I was without a job. So I went to a really small bank that did not have any African Americans in leadership. Once I finally got a branch manager position, I was the only African American in my district and the youngest.

Leader E mimicked the same experience as other participants in which there is a very small number of Black women who hold leadership positions at her organization. The participant noted:

I am currently 1 of 4 Black people out of 80 branches and I'm not even going to specify people of color, I'm talking about Black people and I am the only one that is among the most affluent branch in New Jersey and that comes with a lot of pressure. I'm disappointed because in the next district there are no Black managers at all.

The finding which examines the underrepresentation of Black women is consistent with previous studies which reviewed the effects on the organization when women are not included at high ranking positions, because a diverse and inclusive environment will lead to high recruitment, more effective solutions, and different perspectives which will drive innovation (Sims & Carter, 2019). Nevertheless, women face a number of obstacles when pursuing leadership opportunities in the workplace due to gender stereotypes that creates potential barriers for the group, whereas there is a significant underrepresentation of women in senior level roles than men (Orbach, 2017). Black women, however, face intersectionality due to also being African American which adds racial stereotypes to their workplace experiences in which the representation of the demographic in senior-level roles is less likely than their female counterparts (Sims & Carter, 2019). This finding is well acknowledged in the field in which the representation of Black women in senior management or higher level positions are relatively low in comparison to other demographics, such as white males who are perceived as fit for leadership (Roberts et al., 2020). Researchers have found there are positive outcomes when corporate board positions are occupied by women in which a diverse set of views will alter the risk mitigation

plans, dialogue will be enhanced, the board will operate in a more orderly way, and better decision-making will transpire (Cao et al., 2019).

When corporations fail to grant equal opportunity to all employees regardless of their ethnicity or gender, they remiss the opportunity to maximize the competency, talent, creativity, skills, knowledge, and capabilities of employees that could be useful to drive organizational success (Orbach, 2017). Barron (2019) suggested that organizational leaders have recognized the importance of diversity in the workplace and made progress, because through implementing recruitment, hiring, and promotion initiatives, further improvements could be made to diversify the highest ranks of the company. The underrepresentation of Black women in leadership roles is a barrier that implies an outsider within perspective to the treatment and acceptance of the demographic in the workplace (Bazen, 2018). The Black feminist theory is characterized by the double minority group that Black women are a part of. Black women's social identities depict them as dealing with intersectionality that leads to discrimination for being African American and a woman (Davis & Brown, 2017). Black women are often times ignored and are automatically discounted by their counterparts in which their ability to lead, their credibility, credentials, and contributions are undermined in the workplace, resulting in the groups further underrepresentation (Davis & Brown, 2017).

Addressing Stereotype Threats /Relationship to Research Question 3

What are the perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions within the finance and investment industry, and what strides did they make to achieve career growth?

The final thematic category developed from coded participant responses was stereotyping, which is used to demonstrate the perceived negative contemporary encounters of

Black women who have obtained leadership roles in the finance and investment industry. The attributes that helped to generate this thematic category are (1) conforming identities to fit in, (2) being judged, (3) work contributions are undermined, and (4) hair discrimination. All of the key constituents relate to the presence of stereotyping in the workplace which could be implied unconsciously towards Black women in which the lack of cultural diversity does not imply a safe space for Black women to feel like they can be themselves in the workplace and will be accepted for it (West et al., 2016). These findings reflect existing results from literature in the field of business in which studies have shown that Black women are judged by their counterparts as a reflection of conscious and unconscious thoughts that reflect in the opinions, expectations, and treatment, of the group (Donovan & West, 2015). The study participants reflected upon instances where they were (a) made to feel uncomfortable due to changing their hairstyle often, (b) called the name of another Black female colleague, (c) not being considered a professional, and (d) assumptions being applied about the neighborhood as to which they were raised. Although the actions of individuals can reflect their unconscious bias, Black women are negatively affected when they are stereotyped instead of being judged fairly based off their capabilities, knowledge, skills, and accomplishments (Remedios & Snyder, 2018). The theme was used to answer research question 3.

Aspirant B addressed stereotyping in the workplace in which Black women are grouped together, perceived as acting and thinking alike, and there is no real effort made in individualizing Black women from one another. The participant described:

People believe that all Black women are the same, and that could be broken down into how we perceive certain situations, how we think, how we interact as far as our names, and our hair. I remember my first week being at a company, I got so many questions

about my hair because another Black girl had braids as well but she had a different style. We looked nothing alike, however, we were constantly compared and there was literally no separation, no matter if you were at different levels, or in different departments. I have received emails that were directed towards the senior manager when I am only an associate and she and I have two different names, but it's like they don't take the time out to make the separation. I feel like that is very disrespectful. Just this last Thursday I was on a call with someone who I worked with for a year and they still called me the other Black girls name, someone who had left the company back in October.

Aspirant B also addressed stereotyping based on the background and family dynamics that people believe Black women are conditioned to in which a colleague assumed she was from a low income area. The participant demonstrated:

Our counterparts don't look at us like professionals either, we have gotten comments like why don't you go hang out with your home girl, it's like they don't take us as serious professionals, but it's like we are just casual friends having a conversation and we just so happen to work at the company. I don't feel we are looked at as colleagues. I also have gotten comments about where I grew up, and having people come up with ideas of what that means and how they should interact with you. One time I was at a work happy hour which I don't normally like to go to because I'm the only Black person there. And someone asked me where am I from. Usually, when someone asks you that it's because they are trying to piece your background together, and so I said New Jersey and they asked was it Camden. And everyone knows that Camden is a low income area, so when he asked was I from Camden I knew what he was trying to say. I said no that's not where

I grew up, I was just shaking my head like why would you say that of all places. It's just that preconceived idea of where they think that black people should come from.

Aspirant C described instances of being judged by the demographic group you are a part of in which the stereotypes associated with African Americans or Black women may be negative; therefore, Black women in leadership roles may feel the need to conform their identities in order to be accepted.

At my company there are only two Black women that are managers and I feel like they fit a certain standard. Now I wanna be correct, one I feel like she comes off as very racial ambiguous and even though she is a dark Caribbean women, you can't really tell what she is by looking at her. So because of that, I feel like she tries not to play into the whole I'm a Black women stereotype. For the other Black women, although she acknowledged and definitely talks to the Black people, there is a fine line she wouldn't cross. Some of the men use to say the same thing, like oh not too many Black people can be talking to each other in the office. Obviously, I think they were like of course they are Black women but they wanted to disassociate themselves from other Black people. I feel like they were safe Black women.

Aspirant C also noted that although she has been with her company for years, she has been asked to complete administrative tasks that fit the role of the secretary in which she is not judged by her work contributions or credentials but stereotyped by the Black women's duty to "hold the office together." The participant noted:

I always feel like the Black women in my experience always had to hold the office together and do a lot of the grunt work. So again, I have my master's degree and I've been at the company for years and my manager would still ask me to mail something. I'm

like we have a secretary, why would you ask me to mail something. And I didn't even know how to use the mail machine so it was like can you just go and mail or file something. Even in my current role I feel like my boss asks me to do a lot of small tasks that could be for the secretary, so I am still finding this today.

Aspirant D recognized that since her culture is different than the majority of her colleagues, it may cause a hindrance in which she does not feel like she can form a connection, due to fear of being judged by her background. The participant detailed:

I am a black women of Caribbean decent, born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, my culture does not always match a majority of those that I work with, so because of that there is not much mingling or socializing going on. Sometimes I'll attend the company's happy hour or I won't. Sometimes when I'm engaged in a conversation or it could be a little light chat, I feel like there is a lack of person to person skills and since there is a difference in backgrounds it could be a hindrance because people tend to look out for those who they are connected with.

Aspirant G described her awareness for stereotypes imposed upon Black women and detailed how she works towards dismantling them. The participant noted:

It is a possibility that my coworkers believe the stereotypes expected from Black women despite the fact that they don't voice it. I always have that in mind and it has led to me being a bit uncomfortable in conversations and interactions with members of a different demographic, therefore, I make it a point to remain professional and steer clear of any behaviors that would perpetuate the typical stereotypes of black women.

Aspirant H equated her pay inequality to being a double minority in which she learned the salaries of her friends that belong to different demographic groups and although they do not possess a secondary degree as she does, they make more money than her. The participant noted:

When I see people that I am friends with who are of other races and in spite of them not having a doctorate or master's degree, their salary ranges are higher than mine and also they may not have been at the bank as long as me. So I have to assume that being Black plays a role in the pay difference and being a women may play a role too, because my male counterparts also make significantly more money than I do.

Leader B described being stereotyped due to being a women, a Black women, and due to her physical appearance in which it was difficult to get the opportunity to lead due to being judged by your demographic. The participant noted:

Since I was a Black women we were looked at like work horses in which we was expected to make sure that the company was operating smoothly, but they wouldn't give us the opportunity to lead or be in the forefront. Because I was a women, they believed that I was highly emotional and I couldn't make solid leadership decisions. Also when I would go into a room, leaders were more concerned about what I looked like and not what I was saying. Or if you didn't have a beautiful physical appearance you wouldn't get an opportunity to get in front of people. Because beauty played a part as well.

Leader C described instances of stereotyping in which her boss made her feel uncomfortable due to his actions of acknowledging the different hair styles she would wear to work, while acting as if she was unrecognizable. The participant noted:

Right now I'm at a cross roads with my boss because at the very beginning when I first interviewed for the job I had my natural hair in a bun and when I started the job I had

dread locks in my hair and he got such a bad impression. He was taken a back, he was like omg you look like such a different person, I didn't recognize you and that made me feel bad because I was just trying a new hair style for a new job and he had that reaction. I wear a lot of wigs so it was nothing extreme and I wear them because I like to wear them, but for the first couple of months he would comment every time I would change my hair, so it made me so uncomfortable and feel so bad that I'm just like wow. He never said anything bad about it but he was so shocked and it made me feel bad, and so I have never came back from that with him. I just can't get over it.

Leader D detailed not being able to express a difference in opinion in the workplace out of fear of being stereotyped as the angry Black women. The participant demonstrated:

I feel like if I expressed any professional pushback it was viewed as if I was coming from a defiant or rebellious place, or that I was angry. To this day I don't make it my business to become friends with people at work and people really struggle with that if that is your stance, because you get labeled as not genuine or mean. I already have seen what can happen if you choose to have a conversation with someone and their intent is ill so I'm just not going to create the opportunity for that to happen. We can talk about the business all day, but outside of that I'm not really a person that engages and I'm still working through that but I have my own way.

Leader D also described unfair treatment in the workplace, which have not always come from colleagues or members of the organization, but from customers in which she has been stereotyped and assumed to hold a subordinate position.

Honestly, I feel like I have become very numb to a lot of the treatment that I got from over the years. For example, when I worked at a bank I used to handle business loans and

I remember when we could do everything over email and phone. I remember this deal in particular that was worth a million dollars and when I showed up to do the deal, the man was so disappointed that it was me on the other side, that the disappointment was very obvious. I also had a customer call me colored and even up to very recently because, where I work they are expecting the branch manager's to look a certain way, so when I walk out they are looking past me to see if there is someone else coming possibly a White male. So they always say oh you're so young when I know it's really oh you're so Black. I voiced to my manager that I'm at the place where I'm not going to water down who I am.

Leader E mimicked the presence of stereotyping in the workplace in which her employer created an acceptable standard of what employees should look like, which made her alter her personal comfort in her appearance. The participant noted:

I would say that I was held to a completely different standard. My previous employer was a bank and there was a right way to do things. They were very conservative about how you should look, dress, wear your hair, conduct yourself, and because I was still so young I actually molded myself to be what they expected. I became a very conservative version of myself. I was very mindful of my hair, when I got a tattoo I always covered it because I always thought it was unprofessional. And my tattoos are really small, but it did shape me to think that I had to adapt or change myself.

Leader F described feeling judged based off general stereotypes that are assigned to women of color in which she detailed being classified based off misconceptions about the group she belonged to. The participant described:

I think there were a few misconceptions in my career that followed. Many women of color did not have higher degrees, were not married, and raised many children on their own. With some colored women fitting this definition, I think all colored women were classified in that way.

Leader H mimicked thoughts of being judged and being undermined for her contributions in which she obtained a supervisor position at a young age and faced challenges because of it along with being a women having to supervise men. The participant noted challenges that aroused due to her gender and age, but did not mention race. She stated the following:

A positive factor is that I was able to build my team up the way I wanted them to be. A negative factor is supervising men have been different from supervising women. The men I supervise seem as if they don't like a woman in a position higher than them and being able to give them orders. Some of the men I supervise challenged me by giving me a hard time but once I set ground rules and let them know what wouldn't be tolerated, we were able to come to a better understanding. The challenges that I faced did not influence my career choice but instead it made me go harder. I also feel like my age has affected my job. Since I am younger than the people I supervise, my knowledge about the job was called into question. The leadership ranks of my company are pretty diverse in which there is a balance of races that are in management, including Black women being in high places. My previous supervisor was a Black woman and although I would expect for her to want to mentor me and see me grow, she actually didn't want me to interview for the management position because she wanted me to continue to make her team look good in regards to stats and documentation. I felt discouraged by that because she put her own selfish needs before my future.

Stereotyping is a barrier that has been long studied and has been proven to currently persist at an implicit level in which underrepresented minority groups all work to overcome negative characterizations that are believed to represent every person apart of the demographic (Latu et al., 2015). Black women, in particular, have widely-spread stereotypes associated with them that labels the group as angry, bad tempered, hostile, masculine, the help, and aggressive, which has played a huge role in shaping the attitudes and treatment towards African American women (Donovan & West, 2015). Stereotyping can be viewed through the lens of the expectation states theory which examines the relationship between performance and competence expectations based on status and social hierarchies (Webster & Walker, 2017). The expectation states theory indicates there are implicit biases that influence the decisions of those in power because they evaluate the behaviors, abilities, skills, and value of an individual by placing judgement on their characteristics (Webster & Walker, 2017). Stereotypes are created, utilized, and maintained by dominant groups in which African Americans are stigmatized due to being regarded to as less worthy, whereas the racial group experience different perceived barriers depending on gender identities but are united by systems and structures that subjugate their individuality (Remedios & Snyder, 2018).

Black women are underrepresented in leadership roles due to stereotype threats, whereas the group is perceived based on the social identity of the group rather than their skills, capabilities, knowledge, performance, and work contributions (Latu et al., 2015). Stereotypes threaten the opportunities and career growth of Black women, because when implied they are held to a different standard than their counterparts and their potential will less likely be fairly evaluated (Latu et al., 2015). The organization will remiss opportunities if stereotypes influence the cognitive process of organizational leaders in which decision makers will draw status and

other pertinent details from the workplace environment and reorganize silently their assumptions and expectations of individuals which will reflect in the interactions amongst those with a status difference (Donovan & West, 2015). The interactions amongst managers to direct reports, colleagues, and team members in the workplace will be negatively affected when stereotypes are utilized to assume the capabilities of others in which effective relationships in the workplace are based off communication, respect, understanding, and encouragement (Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Stereotype threats create an uncomfortable work environment for Black women in which study participants have described a fearfulness of having a professional disagreement, discussing being uncomfortable, changing parts of one's identity to fit in with the dominant group, and wanting equal reward for work contributions.

Summary of the Findings

Rintala et al. (2014) suggested when detailing the accounts, perceptions, experiences, and opinions of the study participants to reread the interview transcripts several times in order to create labels for portions of the participant responses that are specific to their experiences. Based on Rintala et al.'s (2014) recommendation, interview transcripts were reexamined thoroughly for theme development in which during axial coding, units were organized into broader themes to consolidate the open codes. In the last stage of analysis selective codes were assigned to portray a central message and the commonalities amongst the experiences of Black women leaders and aspirants when pursuing promotional opportunities. The codes that were identified to describe the promotional obstacles experienced by Black women aspirants are (1) lack of information provided about developmental programs, (2) not being granted an interview, (3) unaware of job opportunities, (4) external hiring, (5) ineffective mentorship, and (6) pay inequality, which aided in the development of the first thematic category, perceptions of stagnation. This theme was used

to answer research question 1. What are the experiences of Black women with possible perceived promotional obstacles in the workplace who aspire to hold leadership positions within the organization?

The codes that were identified to describe the perceived barriers experienced by Black women that causes a disadvantage are (1) lack of support, (2) lack of diversity, (3) feeling ignored, and (4) there is a lack of Black women as mentors, which aided in the development of the second thematic category, the underrepresentation of Black women. This theme was used to answer research question 2. What are the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership positions? Lastly, the codes that were identified to describe the perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions are (1) conforming identities to fit in, (2) being judged, (3) work contributions are undermined, and (4) hair discrimination, which aided in the development of the final thematic category, addressing stereotype threats. The theme was used to answer research question 3. What are the perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions within the finance and investment industry, and what strides did they make to achieve career growth? The participants' were asked to offer advice to Black women aspirants to overcome workplace challenges. This will be detailed under the recommendations for action section. The relationship amongst the codes was related to the results of previous conducted studies, the conceptual frameworks, literature, and the research questions.

Applications to Professional Practice

The study findings conclude that there are several critical perceived barriers in the workplace implied towards Black women when pursuing promotional opportunities into

leadership roles because there is a lack of representation, diversity, and opportunities awarded to the group which tend to stem from gender and racial discrimination acts (Pietri et al., 2018). The potential perceived barriers have negative effects on the careers of Black women and the success of the organization, rather the treatment is intended or due to unconscious bias held by organizational leaders, because Black women have reported feeling as if promotions are intangible and when obtained there are still challenges faced (Wodtke, 2015). Implications of the study findings might support the need for corporations to adapt the recruitment, hiring, and promotional standards that guides the selection and retaining efforts of talent in the workplace, because diversity, inclusion, and equal treatment should align with the mission and values of the organization and its leaders. In order for corporations to change the negative experiences of Black women in the workplace, organizational leaders must work to understand the experiences of groups that are disadvantaged in which there is work that can be done to change the career outlook for the demographic (Wodtke, 2015). The findings are relevant to the professional practice of business and the sub-section of leadership due to the benefits organizations remiss when they do not cultivate the top talent, creativity, and knowledge due to identity characteristics and not qualifications. Effective leadership among organizations is central to the successful operations of corporations in which the ability to grow, develop, and innovate, will reflect in the leaders ability to fairly lead a group of people towards executing the vision of the company (Vilkinas et al., 2019).

In order to satisfy the needs of the business industry in regards to the phenomenon, leaders can work to increase diversity amongst high-ranking positions within the organizational structure, host implicit bias workshops to bring awareness to stereotype threats in the workplace, fund and promote employee resource groups to foster inclusion, and develop talent through

providing training, mentors, and support learning from experience. Keller (2012) revealed that our work is a reflection of the image of God in which individuals have been tasked with caring for and sustaining the world through utilizing talents, fostering creativity, and working together towards the conditioning of mankind. Humans are called to live in the image of God through who we are and what we do, because organizational leaders are expected to move operations towards fair, equal, and resourceful operations that will produce goods that are fruitful, multiple, and will subdue the physical and social needs to sustain God's creation (Sandelands, 2017). Individuals' are purposely given a separate set of gifts which can be used towards their personal contribution to society; however, if organizational leaders are not allowing the full use of individual skills the full potential of employees and the success of the organization will not be discovered (Sandelands, 2017). Improved business practice in leadership requires organizational leaders to listen and understand the perspectives of their employees that are Black women while ensuring that personal bias, discrimination, and stereotype threats are not hindering the group's chance for promotion and the future growth of the corporation (Adams & Kirchmaier, 2016).

Recommendations for Action

The results indicate the potential need for change within the policies, practices, work culture, and standards of organizations who have an insufficient number of a diverse representation of leaders and create potential barriers for Black women to achieve career growth. Through the process of data analysis a set of recommendations were developed from the lived experiences of Black women that were interviewed in which meaning was derived from their opinions, perceptions, and work encounters. The intentions of these recommendations was to provide support for organizations in order to reanalyze their diversity and inclusion efforts and to offer coping mechanism to Black women who may be affected by the phenomenon. The

recommendations will be separated into different sets of guidance in which one group of recommendations are offered to organization officials and the second set of advice was offered to Black women who aspire to possess a leadership role in the future.

Set of Recommendations for Organization Officials

Recommendation One: To Create Synergized Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives.

Organization's must recognize that women and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented within the top rankings of the finance industry, and more specifically, Black women represent a small percent of leaders in the workplace, introducing speculations for the cause (Adams & Kirchmaier, 2016). As corporations are responsible for ensuring a diverse work culture, the recommendation is to combine the efforts of Black women employees and organizational leaders for a cooperative action that examines the disadvantages that are implied towards the group and to discuss corrective and preventative actions. To adapt synergy as a method to test the effects of workplace diversity and inclusion strategies, leaders must gain insight into the experiences, perspectives, opinions, and knowledge of Black women employees with the goal to utilize the feedback to improve the workplace culture and policies (Moran et al., 2014). If the organization is able to work alongside the underrepresented group, there are benefits that would arise that display their commitment to equal opportunity that is often recognized as one of the core values that shape the work culture (Moran et al., 2014). The benefits range from diversity and inclusion resources that would consider the first hand experiences of Black women; created policies that take on an intersectional approach to identify the perceived barriers that arise when you belong to a double minority group; and engagement levels will increase for Black women which leads to satisfied employees and increased productivity levels (Mor Barak, 2018).

Recommendation Two: Organization to Host Unconscious Bias Trainings for Managers and Employees. Individuals allow unconscious bias to influence their daily decision making, whereas, the societal environment and personal experiences to which we are accustomed to, triggers actions that reflect upon our thoughts and feelings towards others in which we may pass judgment (Oberai & Anand, 2018). While unconscious bias are within all of us, when they are displayed by hiring managers or organizational leaders it may result in decisions of favor towards a certain group and separate consequences for another, which negatively impacts workplace equality, policies, diversity, and inclusion efforts (Skov, 2020). When unconscious bias are displayed by employees it may reflect in their perspective of experiencing unfair treatment, discrimination, and delayed career growth which could be due to other underlying reasons (Skov, 2020). The recommendation is for employees to become aware of and manage their unconscious bias by participating in awareness trainings, taking the implicit association test, and attending awareness workshops offered by the organization (Oberai & Anand, 2018). When individuals confront their unconscious biases, they become aware of how they appear within their decision making and what problems or disadvantages they may have caused, and they can discover strategies to overcome them (Self et al., 2015). The organization has the responsibility to realign the recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, evaluation, development, and retention systems to ensure biases do not affect the assessments of individuals (Self et al., 2015). Strategies that could be adapted by organizations are the removal of questions on job applications that request demographic information such as the race, age, and gender of applicants, host phone interviews versus in-person, allow collaborative decision-making for promotions and retention efforts, and also removing names from performance evaluations.

Recommendation Three: Commit to Funding Employee Resource Groups for Minorities. The recommendation is for organizations to create, fund, promote, and support employee resource groups (ERGs) to ensure that minority groups have support systems in place and resources that represent who they are and may experience the same issues as them. Employee resource groups are organized with the purpose to foster diversity in the workplace in which this employee led group is composed of volunteers that share certain attributes such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or interests (Welbourne et al., 2017). Employee resource groups have been demonstrated to add value to organizations, whereas there is a need for individuals to feel socially accepted and understood in the workplace, because ERGs could be used to address cultural challenges within the corporation (Green, 2018). The benefits of providing resources for ERGs is to foster a sense of belonging, organizations can scout upcoming leaders, the group creates an open forum for problem solving and brainstorming among employees, and it encourages employee engagement, happiness, and retention (Welbourne et al., 2017).

Set of Recommendations for Black Women Aspirants

Recommendation One: Black Women Should Advocate for Themselves in the Workplace. There is a perception that women are incapable of advocating effectively for themselves and others, because women are not seen as equal to men when in the role of a negotiator and are often times judged based on stereotypes that imply incompetence, weakness, and women are believed to be less agentic (Kray & Kennedy, 2017). Black women may experience greater discrimination due to belonging to a double minority group in which the demographic may be judged more harshly for failure than White women, and are deemed as inferior to their female counterparts (Brown, 2018). The data from the study shows that often

times when Black women professionally communicate their perspective or opinion in the workplace, the group may be perceived or judged as being angry, hostile, and an agitator which negatively effects their encounters in the workplace (Thomas, 2019). This has initiated a halt to Black women advocating for themselves in the workplace out of fear in which the group believes consequences may follow if the topic they are speaking up about is controversial such as pay, promotions, and support (Brown, 2018). The recommendation is for Black women to advocate for themselves without hesitation due to the importance of demanding equality in treatment, speaking up if made to feel uncomfortable, and demanding the respect of their counterparts (Brown, 2018). The benefits that would arise if more Black women advocated for themselves range from setting the standard for how other Black women employees will be treated in the future, influencing change among the work culture, learning how to have effective crucial conversations, and effectively negotiating fair employment terms (Thomas, 2019).

Recommendation Two: Develop a Support System Composed of Black Women and Allies in the Workplace Through Networking. The recommendation is for Black women to network with individuals who possess an array of skills and job positions in which the study findings have shown that in some instances Black women would rather keep to themselves in the workplace rather than build relationships with colleagues. The reason of this is due to not feeling accepted, understood, wanting to be taken serious as a professional, or due to assumed issues that may arise when the personal relationship ends, but the work relationship must continue (Wu et al., 2016). The benefits that would arise should Black women network and build a support system range from the opportunity to advance your career, gain access to more knowledge, obtain career advice and support, gain a mentorship with someone who currently possess the position they aspire to, and to gain an interconnected relationship to contacts within the finance

field (Huang, 2016). Networking has been proven to positively influence career outcomes in which sustaining positive relationships with business contacts, participating in professional activities, and demonstrating the determination to grow within your career is linked to goal achievement and promotability (Huang, 2016).

Recommendations for Further Study

The research intended to do the following:

1. Understand the experiences of Black women with possible perceived promotional obstacles in the workplace who aspire to hold leadership positions.
2. Determine the perceived barriers present in the workplace that creates a disadvantage for Black women to receive promotional opportunities into leadership positions.
3. Understand the previously perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions within the finance and investment industry.
4. Inspire organizations' to adapt the policies, practices, and standards that may negatively impact the retention, promotional, hiring, and recruitment strategies that does not reflect equal representation, diversity, and inclusion.
5. Provide advice to Black women aspirants on how to achieve career growth despite potential challenges that may be in place.

This study should help to fill the literature gap which examines the experiences of Black women to better understand the experiences, feelings, and perceptions of Black women within the financial sector who have experienced potential barriers in the workplace that may be linked to challenges of career advancement. Further research on the topic is recommended to replicate the study, while interviewing women in different regions of the country to understand their work

experiences in relation to perceived barriers and/or to address the underrepresentation of Black women in leadership roles among other industries. The study participants provided insight into the perceived challenges they have experienced in the industry of finance, however, this was a miniature viewpoint into a larger phenomenon that may persist in other industries that fail to reflect Black women being equally represented in leadership roles as their counterparts.

Reflections

Open-ended questions were asked to interview participants in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon in which three questions were asked to Black women leaders, and four questions were asked to Black women aspirants. Different interview questions were asked dependent on if the participant belonged to the aspirant or leader group with the purpose to learn the story behind the interviewees based on their specific career levels. The aspirants were to convey their workplace experience while working towards a promotion and leaders were to reflect on their journey of pursuing a promotion along with the encounters and steps taken in obtaining career growth. Participants were recruited using LinkedIn in which there were several factors that delayed the conclusion of the interviews, whereas some women did not accept the friend request to connect, messages were ignored, individuals did not meet all of the inclusion criteria, or individuals declined. The participants selected to participate were able to indicate the specific date and time the interview was to be held, and the researcher moved obligations around to accommodate their availability. The interviews were conducted via Zoom, as well as participants were contacted via telephone for a follow-up call to clarify any statements and to confirm the accurateness of the transcript. The participants did not recommend any additional potential participants as expected in which the conclusion of recruitment and interviews ended after seven weeks.

As a Black women professional with experience working towards a promotion in the workplace, in order to eliminate any pre-conceived ideas of the potential barriers experienced by Black women, the researcher chose to investigate the financial industry which is outside of the area of personal expertise. Statistics, however, demonstrated the importance of the phenomenon in which there is a small number of Black women who possess a leadership role, a smaller number who are among the executive ranks, and none with the role of CEO in the finance industry among the Fortune 500 companies (Butler, 2017). The literature review was utilized to produce expectations that would arise due to conducting interviews in which the researchers' of previously conducted studies found there is a disadvantage in the workplace experiences of Black women, because they encounter perceived barriers often in the form of discrimination. During data analysis, the interview transcripts were read multiple times in which participant responses were used to reflect the experiences of Black women in relation to the phenomenon. The participants were also asked to verify personal statements with the purpose to eliminate bias in the interpretation of findings, while alternative explanations were considered for the reasons behind what the data shows.

In Luke 6:37-38 (English Standard version), the verse describes judgement in which individuals shall not do to others that they do not wish done to them, and they shall treat others as an equal in which God has made us all in good measure. The bible scripture demonstrates how judgement we imply towards others will be implied back towards thyself in the eyes of the lord, because no man was made as superior to another in which we all lack in certain areas (Deifelt, 2016). There is no man perfect and no one shall judge another for not possessing the same skills or abilities as them but individual differences should be used to bring us together for a common cause (Deifelt, 2016). The results of the study found that some of the potential barriers implied

towards Black women in the workplace are due to discrimination or stereotyping in which the group reported not being understood, being ignored, and judged based on being a double minority and not their work competency. Organizational leaders must ensure to eliminate bias in the recruitment, hiring, promotional, and retention strategies that align with unfair treatment of individuals, because it does not reflect the principles of God in which everyone should be given equal opportunity to prove themselves (Sandelands, 2017). As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone else (Galatians 6:10).

Summary and Study Conclusions

A qualitative case study approach was used to conduct the study in which an in-depth investigation into the perceptions of 16 Black women was examined for analysis and interpretation into themes, which demonstrated the perceived barriers implied towards the group. The study participants were exclusively Black women in which eight currently possess a leadership position and eight are aspirants that are working towards career growth. This study found that Black women experience potential workplace barriers that hinders their progression into leadership roles within the finance and investment industry, lessens their determination in achieving career growth, and undermines their work contributions which creates a disadvantage for the demographic and negatively impacts the organization. By understanding the lived experiences of Black women who aspire to and hold leadership roles in the financial sector, the results convey a necessity of change that will improve the outlook that the group has for their chance of receiving a promotion in the workplace. The codes that were identified to describe the promotional obstacles experienced by Black women aspirants are (1) lack of information provided about developmental programs, (2) not being granted an interview, (3) unaware of job opportunities, (4) external hiring, (5) ineffective mentorship, and (6) pay inequality, which aided

in the development of the first thematic category, perceptions of stagnation. This theme is used to answer research question 1.

The codes that were identified to describe the perceived barriers experienced by Black women that causes a disadvantage are (1) lack of support, (2) lack of diversity, (3) feeling ignored, and (4) there is a lack of Black women as mentors, which aided in the development of the second thematic category, the underrepresentation of Black women. This theme was used to answer research question 2. Lastly, the codes that were identified to describe the perceived negative contemporary encounters of Black women who have obtained leadership positions are (1) conforming identities to fit in, (2) being judged, (3) work contributions are undermined, and (4) hair discrimination, which aided in the development of the final thematic category, addressing stereotype threats. This theme was used to answer research question 3. The findings of this study were connected to required involvement for professional practice that support the need of synergized diversity and inclusion initiatives. The findings also provided important information for hiring managers to become aware of their unconscious bias, the funding and promotion of employee resource groups, for Black women advocating for themselves without fear of being judged, and for Black women networking with the purpose of developing a support system in the workplace. Human resource managers along with organizational leaders can use the findings of this study to reflect on the policies, practices, and work culture of their corporation that could be adapted to address the concerns of Black women while ensuring to represent a diverse group of leaders among their rankings. Black women can benefit from the results of the study by implying the recommendations to their journey toward promotion, and remaining persistent in their strides.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Demographic Information

1. Please list your age.
2. Please list your ethnicity.
3. Please list the geographic location of your job.
4. Please list the number of years you have experience in the finance industry.
5. Please list your secondary education experience.
6. Please list your career aspirations.

Black Women Leaders:

1. You have obtained a leadership role within your career path, could you describe the path to promotion?
2. Could you describe the positive and negative factors that contributed to your career growth?
3. If you could offer advice to Black women that aspire to obtain a leadership role, what would it be?

Black Women Aspirants:

4. You have expressed your aspirations for obtaining a promotion into a leadership role within your current place of employment, could you tell me about your journey to career growth?
5. Please help me better understand your experience with aspiring for a leadership role, could you describe positive and negative aspects that may have impacted your strides?
6. If you could change anything about the strides made so far what would it be?
7. Have we missed anything that you would like to further discuss?

Appendix B: Field Notes

Details	Reflections