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Movin' On Up: The Lived Experience of Women of Color in Leadership and the Supports that Helped Them Make it to the Top

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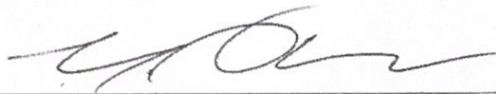
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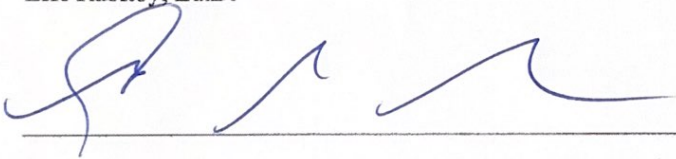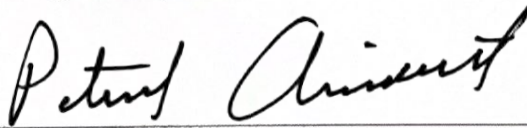This labor of love has created many lifelong friendships; however, it has almost cost me many as well. I would like to simultaneously thank and apologize for the people who have had to endure me and my attitude for the last couple of years.

To my parents, my Jaans: I am not sure there are strong enough words to express my gratitude and love for you both. You have sacrificed so much for me to become Dr. Kapadia; you both came to a country, not knowing the language, to create opportunities for your children to go to college and achieve their greatest dreams. This degree is yours as much as it is mine, if not more. I love you both so much and appreciate you both so, so much.

To my friends who are my family: Thank you all for supporting me through conversations, positive reinforcements, food, chocolate, editing, and constant reminders that I am not my imposter syndrome. Without you all loving on me, I am not sure I would have been able to do this. And for that I thank you.

To Dr. Guzman: Thank you for believing in me and supporting me. You came along when I was about to quit and it's because of you that I am crossing the finish line.

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To my co-authors Potato, Coconut, and Cheddar. You all light my life and shed like crazy.

To the women in my study and ALL women of color who have struggled to climb the ladder of advancement, ones who have had to carry the burden of others' expectations and realities:

I see you. And I love you.

This dissertation is dedicated to my brother, my soulmate, and guardian Angel. Without you I would not exist as I am. I miss you tremendously and love you eternally.

I dedicate this dissertation to my nieces, Ariella and Emaan, and all the young girls of color, everywhere. I will be your greatest cheerleader and advocate and try my best to create a world in which you do not have to shrink yourself to fit.

I love you.

ABSTRACT

Movin' On Up: The Lived Experience of Women of Color in Leadership and the

Supports that Helped Them Make it to the Top.

By Rozina Kapadia

Purpose: The number of women of color in leadership continues to be significantly

lower than the number of men. The lack of opportunity combined with the lack of support

results in less women of color in leadership. The purpose of this phenomenological study

was to explore the lived experiences of women of color in their roles as leaders in

corporate environments with respect to the support (personal supports, organizational

supports, cultural supports, and stereotypical supports) received. Specifically, the

research examined the stories of female leaders of color to understand how their

experiences have supported or hindered their growth in leadership.

Methodology: For this study, a qualitative design was used to conduct research.

Particularly, the researcher chose to do individual semi-structured virtual interviews with

the participants to gather data.

Findings: The findings of this research on the experiences of women of color in

leadership show that women of color in leadership positions face many challenges

including microaggressions, imposter syndrome, and having to work twice as hard to

prove themselves. The study also found that supports such as mentoring, representation,

and safe spaces create a positive environment and increase the likelihood of promotion

within an organization.

Conclusion: The findings and literature support that women of color who are in

leadership and attempting to move into leadership benefit from supports such as

mentoring, coaching, and networking. By providing supports, women of color have a better chance of not only advancing into leadership roles but remaining in these positions longer.

Recommendations: The researcher recommends a myriad of supports for organizations attempting to recruit and retain women of color in leadership. These include, equity committees and equity training for ***all*** staff on the topics of bias and microaggressions. Additionally, interviews with Human Resources and former staff would help understand some of the issues within the organization and how they can be addressed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), 57.4 % of all women participated in the labor force which is up from 57.1% who participated in 2018, but 2.6 percentage points below the peak of 60.0% in 1999. However, despite seemingly equal representation in the overall labor force, the proportion of women in senior management positions is much lower on average than the proportion of men in the same positions (McDaniel, 2016). Ursula Burns, CEO of Xerox became the first African American woman Chief Executive Officer CEO in the U.S in 2009. Considering the number of women in the workforce is over 50%, this indicates that women, particularly women of color, are not holding leadership positions when they are in the workforce. Male leadership tends to be the prototype; as such, even if not accepted verbally, organizations may unintentionally communicate that leadership within their organization is male dominated due to the low number of women represented (Thompson, 2017). So, if women have been recognized as being strong and competent leaders and there have been several women in leadership positions who have left a valuable and lasting contribution to society, why is there a lower number of women than men?

Women of color makeup 39% of the female population, represent 38% of the female labor force, and yet only take up 4.7% of executive roles in S&P 500 companies (Boesch et al., 2018). The number of female CEOs reached its highest number in 2020, at 37, however, out of 37, only three of them were women of color (Hinchliffe, 2020). While Asian and White women in managerial and professional roles accounted for 46% and 41% respectively, Black, and Hispanic women were more prevalent in sales and

office occupations comprising 32% and 33% of these jobs (dol.gov). Women leaders must show they are agents of change and can bring about productive and effective results within their domains (Lattimore, 2014). The data indicates that having women leaders benefits so many, however, even with this information, there are fewer in leadership, and even fewer women of color. Diversity and inclusion amongst the leadership of an organization can provide better understanding of stakeholders, which ultimately benefits the organization and its members (Thompson, 2017).

The data clearly indicate that women, particularly, women of color remain under-represented in senior management positions. There is a need to understand why women, particularly women of color, struggle to climb the ladder of leadership when they have shown to be successful in leadership roles. To understand why this continues to be the case, there needs to be an understanding of struggles that women face, as well as the identification of the supports that are needed and how to incorporate them into the organizations that struggle to support women leaders.

Background

Women's rights have been a hot topic of discussion throughout history. Susan B. Anthony, a women's rights activist, was a leader during the women's suffrage movement. Her leadership is the reason why women can vote in elections today (Wright, 2019). Most women's rights have only been around for a century, and yet most women did not enter the workforce until the 1960's to support their families. Yet, to this day, women must prove themselves in their roles where it is assumed that men are naturally competent as discussed in a study done by Madera et al. (2009) when people were asked to describe men and women. The study found that the description of both were positive, men were

often labeled with words such as assertive, confident, ambitious, and independent whereas, women were frequently described with communal words such as supportive, compassionate, nurturing and kind. It is interesting that when women are described as the men are, assertive or confident, it tends to indicate a negative connotation and one where women are considered 'out of place' (Madera et al., 2009),

Questioning the competency of women is only one of the barriers to the number of women in leadership. Some elements that contribute to the increase in the number of perceived barriers such as childcare stress, dual responsibility strain, conflict in their roles, as well as role expectations, most of which impact primarily women (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 2012). Women are considered natural caregivers and having a job outside of the home is still considered unconventional to some, ultimately creating additional stress as well as some murkiness in their roles and responsibilities (Wright, 2019).

The current literature indicates that women, particularly women of color, continue to struggle to be represented in leadership positions throughout various professions (Wright, 2019; Heim & Murphy, 2001; Eagly 2003). In some instances, women have had to work twice as hard to accomplish the same status as their male counterparts. Sanchez-Hucles & Davis (2010) recommended additional research around the idea that women possess leadership skills but are disadvantaged when attempting to secure and maintain leadership roles. Women of color, specifically black women, are obtaining degrees but do not have access to leadership roles and are underrepresented in senior-level leadership capacities in higher education (Wright, 2019). There is a consensus in the literature that there are not enough women in leadership positions and there is work that needs to be done to help women get into these positions (Clare, 2004, Eagly, 2003, Torres, 2022).

The 2002 Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) report indicated that many women continue to be marginalized and under-represented as leaders and senior managers (Clare, 2004). One of the reasons for this is that women of color tend to receive less feedback and other forms of support that lead to career advancement (Advisor, 2019).

Alice Eagly and colleagues have been pioneers in researching leadership styles to understand why there are fewer women leaders. Traditional views about gender, as well as the organization's practices, and patterns of upward mobility inherently favor men and thus create and perpetuate invisible barriers to women's advancement (Eagly, 2003). Gender is one of the ways that society organizes and ranks men above women and influences how structures work and authority is legitimized (Lorber, 1991). When examining gender biases, men are more often associated with leadership because leaders are depicted as possessing masculine and assertive traits, while women are less likely to be identified as leaders because they are more likely to show relational traits (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Such expectations can lead women to strive for leadership roles by displaying more assertive behaviors to fit into the sex-role stereotype that leadership is for men (Thompson, 2017). When having different expectations for men and women, it not only impacts the leader but also their constituents as their expectations change as well. This could potentially lead to more women leaving certain leadership positions. In Jennifer Pierce's book, *Gender trials: Emotional lives in contemporary law firms*, she discusses how, "recognizing these barriers may allow for structures, policies, and hiring processes to become more inclusive and support women in leadership" (p. 135). Pierce's research validates the studies done by Eagly and stresses the importance of inclusivity in

organizations. To this end, providing women of color with support, such as mentoring, coaching, and sponsorship would not only help women of color be more successful but allow other women to move into leadership with support.

<div align="center">**Benefits of Supports**</div>

There are benefits to women supporting women at work. According to Sandberg and Grant (2016), when women support other women, it has the potential to boost their own salaries. Not only does it increase salary, but this can also support the mental health of the women who are mentoring each other. When women come together and abandon negative behaviors and destructive ways of relating to each other, they can become a powerful source of change (Heim & Murphy, 2001). Heim and Murphy (2001) contend that groups of committed women, dubbed girl gangs, can act as agents of change, power bases, and sources of protection for each other, and these female alliances work to keep females autonomous. There are various types of support that can help women be more successful in leadership roles. These types of supports can be broken down into cultural, organizational, personal, and stereotypical.

Cultural Supports

Cultural supports are ones that create social and community networks that positively influence and support an individual's self-identity, as well as the various cultural influences that show up in personal and professional spaces (Packer-Williams & Evans, 2011). Torres suggests that women of color who are part of networks increase their access to other professional women of color and can benefit from each other's experiences even if they are at the same career stage. Networking can be an extension of mentoring or a complimentary strategy to effectively engage women who are high

achievers by creating a network of support (Torres, 2022). Women who are part of a community where they are affirmed and validated are more likely to have professional and personal success. Upward career mobility and opportunities are some of the benefits of organizational supports such as mentoring and coaching.

Organizational Supports

Organizational supports are referred to as supports that include practices that focus on diversity and inclusion, as well as, efficient communication, access to the organization's professional opportunities, upward career mobility, as well as coaching and mentoring programs and workplace (Delany & Rogers, 2004). Mentoring is a concept that encompasses developing the whole person and is fundamentally rooted in moral tutoring (Thompson, 2017). Having a group of women encouraging and supporting could potentially encourage more women to apply for leadership positions. For many women, being able to move up the ladder means forming a community of advocates and supporters who help aid in their advancement (Thompson, 2017).

"Mentorship has proven to be beneficial in areas of career advancement to both the mentee and the mentor" (Wright, 2018, p. 52). White women are more likely to report access to mentorship and support in moving into leadership positions then their non-White female counterparts; therefore, it is important to hear from these women of color and make a conscious effort to provide them with mentorships as well as to hire them into leadership positions (Thompson, 2017). Mentors generally provide career support through sponsorship, coaching, exposure, and development opportunities that lead to professional advancement (Torres, 2022). These types of organizational supports encourage more women to take risks in their leadership endeavors as they have safety

nets within these supports. Providing personal supports, such as coaching and mentoring to focus on acceptance and personal growth can be a great benefit for women of color in advancing into leadership.

Personal Supports

Personal supports are networks that support individual growth and development through coaching and mentoring, which focus on acceptance and inclusion in certain social circles (Combs, 2003). Siniva Tuileto'a Mann's 2021 study on the impact of Women's Leadership Programs (WLP) on the advancement of women into leadership roles found that the most successful programs are the ones which include coaching and networking. When executive leaders do partake in mentorship programs or networking opportunities, they tend to connect with others who are like them (Torres, 2022). Having a coach who has had similar experiences and has overcome challenges is validating to the mentee as it provides insight and supports which can ensure the same mistakes are not made. Mentoring creates a circle of women who support each other through their professional struggles (Klotz, 2014, p.26) which can in turn create a reservoir of women ready to support others. By creating social connections ar

Stereotypical Supports

Stereotypical support is when social connections are formed around similarities such as race, sex, and gender that can encourage positive outcomes (Riley, 2010). "People naturally move to mentor those with whom they most closely identify… in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc." (Wilson & Elman, 1990, p. 90). Men and women can benefit from mentoring, but it can be more essential for women's leadership development (Thomas, 2014). The Advisor (2019) found that women of color are often

overlooked for certain positions, provide little to no mentoring support, and do not receive performance evaluations that support their professional growth. Both supports have been shown to help improve work performance and winning the attention of higher-ups when it comes time for filling leadership or board positions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a dissertation is the structure of the study, which is made up of the definitions, terms, concepts, and theories of the specific research (Anfara & Mertz, 2014). For this study, the researcher used the Social Exchange theory which is when there is an exchange of an activity between two people in which both parties gain a reward (Emerson, 1987). In this framework, the social exchanges being used are the various types of supports, including cultural, organizational, personal, and stereotypical, which are used to help bring forth an understanding of what these supports are and how they are used to benefit women of color current in leadership positions, as well as those who are attempting to move into leadership roles. The social exchange happens on multiple levels as shown in Figure 1. There are many benefits to support, particularly mentoring, which supports not only the mentee but the mentor, as well (Webb, 2014).
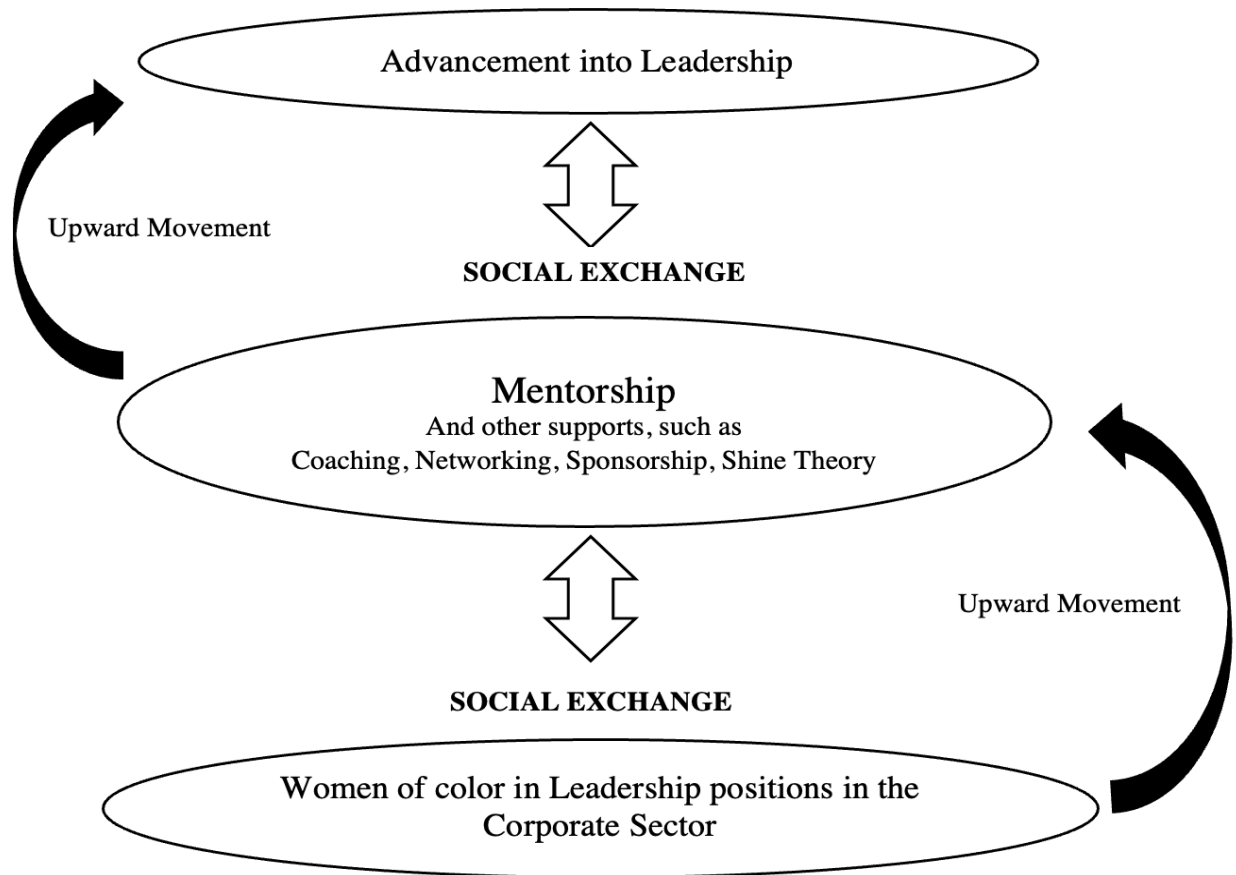
Figure 1 Depiction of women of color in leadership's upward movement and social exchange. Adapted from the work of Dr. Pamela Webb (2014)

Statement of the Research Problem

In many organizations, women comprise more than 50% of the staff, yet fewer than 2% of those organizations are led by a woman (Catalyst, 2002). The low number of women in leadership can be challenging for the leaders of the organizations. Organizations are missing out on the opportunity to take advantage of the talent and skills of a substantial part of their workforce by not promoting women into senior leadership roles (Hideg, 2019, p. 287). Mentoring has shown to have many benefits, according to Wilson and Elman (1990), such as a system for strengthening of organizational culture,

which supports the employee's knowledge base about the organization's vision and expectation.

The lack of opportunity and support seem to be the most noticeable barriers women of color face when attempting to move up in leadership. "When it comes to promotions or being hired into roles on the board or in executive leadership, women of color are passed up more often than white men or men of color, as well as their white female counterparts" (Advisor, 2019, p.5). There are noticeable supports that are lacking, such as coaching and mentoring which have been proven to support women in their advancement in male dominated industries (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). When women come together and abandon negative behaviors and destructive ways of relating to each other, they can become a powerful source of change (Heim & Murphy, 2001). The goal of mentoring is aimed to develop protégés and is considered a great role-modeling behavior which focuses on in-depth developmental relationships (Jandeska & Kraimer, 2005). Webb (2014) discusses how obtaining your first management position, the need for mentoring is important.

Whether male or female, mentoring relationships have been found to have a positive effect on helping less seasoned employees navigate the politics of an organization, so they can advance their careers (Pigeon et al., 2012). Providing women of color opportunity and support can ensure more women in leadership and pave the way for future leaders to overcome the barriers that are currently present. Due to the varying levels of reasoning for gender and racial gaps in leadership, one of the best resources for understanding the career journeys and experiences of women leaders of color are women of color leaders themselves (Wright, 2019). The problem this study will address is

understanding why there are such few women of color in leadership. There is limited research discussing the impact of mentoring on women of color in leadership and in an effort to close this gap in literature and hear various perspectives from women of color in leadership, the researcher has chosen to examine the impact that mentoring and other supports has on women of color in leadership.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of women of color in their roles as leaders in corporate environments with respect to the support (personal supports, organizational supports, cultural supports, and stereotypical supports) received. Specifically, the research will examine the stories of female leaders of color to understand how their experiences have supported or hindered their growth in leadership.

Research Questions

1. How have supports such as personal, organizational, cultural, and stereotypical influenced the experience of women of color in their roles as leaders?
2. What are the lived experiences of women of color in leadership positions in the corporate sector?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to hear the experiences of women of color in leadership as it pertains to the support they receive when moving into their leadership positions. The researcher also hopes to support future women of color attempting to advance in leadership positions by providing insight into the struggles and strategies from current leaders to help with the growth of future leaders. In addition to the existing

literature on the barriers that women of color face in leadership, this study will identify supports that encourage minority women to attain leadership positions. The results will or may provide organizations with added knowledge and insight on how important support is for women when they attempt to move into leadership.

The study investigates the various supports that can provide women of color opportunity for advancement. For women, mentoring may help them develop career plans and acquire self-identity (Noe, 1988). The career and social benefits derived from a mentoring relationship increased the chances of women receiving support and cooperation from peers and subordinates that would help women become successful (Doucet & Hooks, 1999). Among the factors related to women climbing the leadership ranks, mentorship may be particularly effective in contributing to women's ascent to senior leadership positions because it can provide insight to unwritten rules, a space to be vulnerable, and an objective opinion among other things (Helms, Arfken, & Bellar, 2016; McDonald & Westphal, 2013).

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2009) less than 25% of chief executive positions of all public and private organizations are held by women. There has been research done by Eagly (2003) and Wright (2018) to identify why there are few women in leadership and how this impacts the current climate in business leadership, however, understanding of how support can help women leaders can shed light on the presented research problem. By interviewing women of color in leadership and understanding what supports they have access to and have been given, can provide more insight into how others can emulate this. As a result, organizations can better understand how to recruit and retain women of color.

Definitions

Stereotype. Stereotypes are motivated by various external sources, including media, family, community and often based on oversimplified beliefs about a group of people that are based on information that may be inaccurate or incomplete.

Stereotype Threat. "The threat of being at risk of confirming, as being true of oneself, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Bergeron et al., 2006, pg.1).

Supports, cultural. These are social and community networks that positively support and influence individual's self-identity, cultural influences, in both their personal and professional environments (Packer-Williams & Evans, 2011, p 6).

Supports, organizational. Organizational supports help people advance in their careers through communication, coaching, and mentoring programs as well as practices that include inclusion and diversity training (Delany & Rogers, 2004)

Supports, personal. Personal supports provide various types of formal and informal connections, such as mentoring and coaching but helping create a social network (Combs, 2003).

Supports, stereotypical. Stereotypical supports are ones that support group dynamics around characteristics of race, gender, and sex which support positive outcomes for everyone involved (Riley, 2010).

Tokenism. A term that indicates the placing and hiring of a person based on their marginalized status, primarily a person of color, to indicate the appearance of diversity within the organization (Lewis, 2016).

Delimitations

Delimitations in research are the margins that the researcher has set for the study. In this study, the delimitations are the women of color in leadership positions in companies in Northern California. The women of color in this study are ones who work in leadership positions that oversee or manage 10 more people and support the advancement and growth of employees under their supervision. The criterion for these women is to be in a position where they can hire and fire, as well as evaluate subordinates who they manage. The goal is to recruit women who have the ability to support others' advancement in their organization. The researcher has chosen not to interview women of color who are not in the academic sector as there has been ample research done within that sphere.

Organization of the Study

This study explored the women of color in leadership positions in companies in Northern California. The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction, purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter II is a review of the literature, which includes research on women of color in leadership as well as supports that could encourage growth for themselves and others. The methodology section, in Chapter III, includes the research design, population, sample, data collection method, and instrumentation. Chapter IV includes the data and provides an analysis of the data to understand the impact of the study. Chapter V provides recommendations for future studies, including key findings, conclusions, and implications for action.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on the topic of the underrepresentation of women of color in leadership is limited and therefore should be researched. The research that has been done around women leaders primarily focuses on women in education, thus creating a lack of research around women in the corporate world. The primary source for this research was Doctoral dissertations due to the lack of relevant published books or journals on this topic. The literature review includes the works surrounding this study and the most recent research studies. Chapter 2 is organized into the following sections: historical impact, variables that influence the lower number of women in leadership, and benefits of support for women of color when attempting to move into leadership. Current literature does discuss the underrepresentation of women of color in leadership roles, primarily in academia, however there is far less research done around the underrepresentation of women of color in corporate America and any supports that have helped these women advance in their careers.

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing research on barriers experienced by women of color, including career-related gender, and racial barriers. It begins with a discussion of the historical impact women of color have had on history, including gender bias and stereotypes that women currently face in the workplace. The body of the literature review is devoted to factors influencing challenges faced by women of color when attempting to move into leadership as well as the lack of support they receive. These factors include the lack of opportunity and the different expectations for women of color. This literature review will also discuss the benefits of support for

women of color in the workplace, including mentoring, networking, sponsorship, and shine theory.

Historical Impact of Women in Leadership

Kristof, a writer for the New York Times once said, "While no woman has been president of the United States—yet—the world does have several thousand years' worth of experience with female leaders" (p.2). With the experience of leaders, there are also the negative bias and stereotypes that come along with that. History has documented successful women rulers throughout the world as queens, pharaohs, and presidents (Fletcher, 2004) dating back to the time of Cleopatra. Cleopatra ruled Egypt during a time when Alexander the Great was in power. She was one of the few women who were considered for leadership, due to her ability to speak multiple languages and her wit. Cleopatra was skilled in communication and diplomacy and her theory of models in public relations is still considered a strategic use of communication today due to the advanced style of communication (Bowen, 2016). However, like many women of color, she has rarely been acknowledged in a positive light. The exclusion and marginalization of women and people of color are woven into the fabric of our country's history (Wright, 2019). Cleopatra wouldn't be the first woman of color to be looked over as a progressive leader, nor would she be the last.

Cleopatra was an influential woman in Roman politics and proved herself to be a strong leader, however, her leadership skills were questioned by men throughout time. Cleopatra is blamed for Egypt's political changes due to the shift in leadership of the Roman Empire (Moore, 2015). Women have made tremendous change and broken barriers throughout history to overcome inequities, yet they continue to struggle with

obtaining positions of leadership within organizations (Ndekugri & Pryor, 2018).

Cleopatra was not the first woman of color to be challenged by men, nor would she be the

last.

Leading the Suffrage

After Cleopatra, many other women leaders have made history, the most

noticeable being the women who led the suffrage movement, which is when women

joined forces to get additional rights (Wright, 2019). The suffrage leaders shaped the

future for women's rights dating back to the 1800s due to a few heroic women who were

willing to speak up about the injustice that plagued women (Baker, 2006). Harriet

Tubman and Susan B. Anthony are just two of the women who led the women's suffrage

movement and supported the rise of women in leadership roles. Harriet Tubman, an

escaped slave, helped slaves flee to freedom through her development of the

Underground Railroad and because of her as many as 70 slaves were able to find safety

(Brown, 2012).

As a Black woman and an escaped slave, Harriet faced criticism along with

threats against her life for helping other Blacks escape slavery, however this did not stop

her from helping people and using her voice to lift others. Harriet became one of the

greatest leaders in the United States due to her dedication to serve first and then lead

others (Brown, 2012). She was a leader who spoke out in favor of women's voting rights

and shared her experiences during the Civil Rights Movement. Even though few women

served in official leadership positions in the civil rights movement, scholars have

suggested that women were, in fact, leaders—just not with titles and positions (Robnett &

Anderson, 2017). As an outspoken abolitionist, Harriet Tubman was considered defiant

and many people tried to break her, yet she persevered and became one of the most revered female leaders. Harriet Tubman is one of the greatest leaders in US History (Brown, 2012). Like Cleopatra, Tubman was also judged harshly for being a female leader of color and to this day, the narrative continues to diminish her accomplishments. Another female leader who also supported this movement was Susan B. Anthony, who followed in Harriet Tubman's footsteps to help women earn their fundamental rights.

Susan B. Anthony spent most of her life fighting for the rights of women to vote and was known for leading the National American Women's Suffrage Association (Hayward, 2018). Some successes of the women's movements included (a) access to more jobs for women across various industries, (b) employer accountability for increasing the number of women employees, and (c) eliminating discrimination against pregnant women and women with families (Wright, 2019). Women leaders in the civil rights movement were described as "bridge leaders" which meant they were the connection between the people and the organization (Wright 2019). The "bridge leader" concept is considered a form of micro-mobilization that connects the movement to the constituents, ideas to the strategy, potential leaders to existing members of the movement (Robnett & Anderson, 2017). This allowed all people to be part of the transference of information, so everyone knew what was going to happen, including people of color, who were typically not privy to this type of information.

Since women of color were not seen as equals during this time, many disenfranchising practices targeted people of color who tried to register to vote (Wright, 2019). Susan B Anthony helped lead many of these movements to support not only women but also women of color who were being singled out. She was a successful leader

due to her discipline, energy, and ability to organize (Hayward, 2018). Although she is known for her work for Woman Suffrage, she also fought against many of the same issues impacting women in the current climate including sexual harassment in the workplace, the battle for equal pay, domestic violence, and the value of female friendship (Sherr, 1995).

The lack of attention to Susan B. Anthony as a strong contributor to the growth of American democracy is due in part to the reluctance of society to distinguish individual women as part of the historical narrative (Gouldin, 2020). We notice how many women are missing from the narrative when we incorporate not only gender into the resistance but color. It took two different constitutional amendments to secure Black women's right to vote which indicates that for women of color, race and gender are significant issues (Wingfield, 2020). Women of color face unique struggles that come with the intersectionality of their race and gender identity that can create various uphill battles that may not otherwise exist (Torres, 2022). These challenges not only prevent many of these women from moving up the corporate ladder but also cause them to be snubbed when there is an opening in upper management.

In the past, noticeably female political figures in monarchies have done well as opposed to women in current roles where they must prove themselves and overcome certain stereotypes regarding their gender and ability, which essentially makes democratic politics more challenging for women than for men (Kristof, 2018). The concept of men being more competent leaders is deeply woven into the fabric of our society. This idea might explain the slow, sometimes stagnant progress toward gender equality and the marginalization of the experiences and leadership qualities of women,

especially women of color (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Prejudice against women shows up in many ways, including gender bias, stereotyping, and other forms of oppression.

Gender Bias

According to a study by Beaman et al. (2012), domestic chores occupied most of the time for young females while young males spent significantly less time on domestic chores. This study examines the roles of women and men and how much of the women's role is spent doing work within the home, whereas men are working outside the home. Beaman et al. (2012) suggest that due to how females and males are raised in childhood in various cultures throughout the world, they are primed for different realities in adulthood. The roles of women have been to conduct household chores and offer support to their families, rarely pursuing their own careers (Jackson, 2021). This is gender bias. Gender bias exists in all facets of life, but what is it exactly and where did it come from?

Gender bias is tied closely to prejudice, stereotypes, and gender roles and it is important that all of these are considered (Alfaro, 2017). Eagly and Carli (2007) define prejudice as an unfair stereotype of a group of people based on negative views of the group rather than the behavior or credentials of its individual members. Eagly and Carli (2007) go on to explain that prejudices are born from a difference between positive social aspects and individuals belonging to groups that are stereotypically not expected to hold such attributes. Gender bias continues to be a widespread phenomenon in all aspects of life, but especially in the workforce. The degree of bias may vary by society and culture, but there does seem to be a preference for male leaders over female leaders (Alfaro, 2017). The belief that women are meant to be homemakers and men are to work outside the house reinforces this bias. Beaman et al. (2012) note young males are prepared from

an early age to pursue roles beyond domestic chores. While men are being encouraged to take on roles outside of the house, women are asked how they plan to balance work and home responsibilities.

Women of color not only deal with bias regarding their gender but also racial discrimination when they are considered for positions of leadership. According to research done by Barnes (2017), gender bias was one of the main reasons women were often overlooked for promotions (2017). Similarly, Jones & Shorter-Gooden (2003) in their book, *Shifting: The double lives of Black women in America,* also identified gender bias as a form of discrimination. According to Jones & Shorter-Gooden,

> Women have endured racial and gender discrimination throughout history and continue to be discriminated against by both gender and race. Even though it's been 150 years since slavery was abolished, more than 80 years since women won the right to vote, and over 40 years since the March on Washington, women continue to struggle to be provided equitable opportunities that their male counterparts receive (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 38).

Women of color are often the target of various types of bias and thus are overlooked when it comes to advancement in leadership. There are many people who cannot fathom the idea of women leaders because they do not consider them to be as successful as men (Barnes 2017). Even when women leaders have the opportunity for advancement, particularly women of color, the media tends to be hyper focused on gender and race when telling their stories, rather than the accomplishments of these women. For example, when the current Vice-President, Kamala Harris, was running for office, many of the headlines associated with her had to do with race. According to a

Times Up Now report (2020), the racist and sexist "angry Black woman" trope was the

most prevalent stereotype in "mainstream U.S. top-tier media coverage" (Times Up Now)

of Harris at 13%, once the announcement of her being named Joe Biden's Vice-

President. According to the report, Sen. Harris' ancestry overshadowed her professional

background and achievements with over one-third (36%) of media coverage focused on

Harris' identities as a woman of color and the child of immigrants. Women have become

accustomed to structural intersectionality, where the focus is on employment and

workforce considerations, however, the political intersectionality is more supported by

passionate grassroots movements, which connects many women of color (Crenshaw,

1991). Women of color, particularly Black women, are usually caught in the middle of

anti-racist and anti-feminist issues and have been for years.

Gender bias has been an issue and has been a part of many Civil Rights cases,

specifically Title VII, which prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, religion, etc.

One example of this is the Ida Phillips' case from 1966. Ida Phillips was deprived of any

opportunity to apply for a position on the assembly line at Martin-Marietta Corporation

because she had young children. She was rightfully justified when the United States

Supreme Court ruled that Title VII required that "persons of like qualifications be given

employment opportunities irrespective of sex" (Dunham, 2017, p.73). Cases like this

became historical to ensure women were not discriminated against for just being women,

however progress still needs to be made in this area. *The Pricewater House v. Hopkins*

case also highlights not only discrimination against women, but also expectations that

men have regarding what women should be like. Hopkins was denied a partnership in a

prestigious accounting firm and ended up suing her employer under Title VII. Hopkins

was counseled by her mentor to be more feminine by changing her walk and talk as well as her appearance, including how she dressed, accessorized, and presented herself when her partnership application was put on hold (Dunham, 2017, p. 21). Hopkins claims were found to be true discrimination and the judge in the case ruled in her favor. According to research done by Spence and Buckner (2000), the presence of stereotypes still exists, despite a change in mentality by current society which shows that laws can be put into place, however, that may not necessarily change the mentality. For every case like this taken to court, how many are not? Bias, including stereotyping are not only dangerous for women but also prevents them from being taken seriously when it comes to being a leader.

Gender-related barriers to obtaining leadership positions are ones that women typically experience and when they do finally obtain these roles, they are often resented by their colleagues and subordinates for not being a male leader (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). This is due to the association that people in power positions should be aggressive and tough which contradicts the stereotype of the female leaders but aligns with the idea of male leaders (Beckwith et al., 2016). Due to this, there are women who feel the need to be more masculine and assertive to move into leadership positions and when they do show these traits, they can be judged unfairly for them. Men who exhibit these behaviors are positively viewed as dominant and strong, however, female leaders may experience criticism for similar behaviors (Beckwith et al., 2016). Minority women are required to be resilient to gender and race stereotypes to have success in their career (Taylor, 2022). Women are required to do so much additional work to even be considered equal to men when it comes to leadership as shown in a study done by Eagly and Carli (2007), where

the researchers explored the attributes of leaders based on gender, observing that gender preconception aligns with social ideas of masculine and feminine based on various thoughts including cultural perceptions and influences. Women are often linked with qualities such as compassion, affection, and gentleness, and men are associated with qualities of assertion, self-confidence, and dominance (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These types of associations create stereotypes that impact how women are perceived as well as the confidence people have in their ability to lead.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are oversimplified beliefs or beliefs about a group of people in correlation with their personal attributes, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, and gender (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979). Some stereotypes faced by women of color in leadership are that they are unable to be as strong a male leader or that they are too emotional to be leaders. Women of color face many stereotypes that continue to act as hurdles to career development and keep them from opportunities that can open doors to advancement (Jeffcoat, 2008). Women and men possess different skill sets when it comes to leadership, specifically work-related behaviors, attitudes, and skills (Jogulu, et.al, 2006). A large-scale meta-analytical review by Eagly and Johnson (1990) showed gender and leadership style compared the leadership styles of women and men and concluded that some differences existed. The findings from this study show that males and females performed equally in both relationship building and task-oriented styles in studies which indicates that both would be deserving leaders. Ironically, though these results indicate that males and females perform equally well, the number of women in leadership shows

otherwise (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Much of this has to do with how women are perceived as opposed to their male counterparts.

In a study done by Madera et al. (2009), people were asked to describe men and women and the qualities they embody. The participants in the study described both men and women in a positive light; women were described with words such as kind, nurturing, and supportive whereas men were described as confident, assertive, and independent indicating that women and men are separated by their personalities (D. Dean, 2010). The findings in study were like the one done by Eagly and Carli in 2007. These stereotypes indicate that men would be better leaders because they have qualities that are needed for leaders, such as confidence and ambition, as opposed to women who would be better support staff because of how nurturing and compassionate they are. One of the major disadvantages of stereotyping is that the individuals who are associated with a group that is negatively stereotyped will not be provided the same opportunity and access as others (Hoeritz, 2013). There are so many negative impacts of stereotyping, according to Campbell (1967) such as segregation, oppression, lack of opportunity for growth within the organization, and even exclusion from part of society. This can result in stereotype threat, which impacts certain groups, in this case women of color, based on certain stereotypes.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat can be described as "whenever there is a negative group stereotype, a person to whom it could be applied, and a performance that can confirm the applicability of the one to the other" (Steele et al., 2009, p. 387). For women, this can be demonstrated in their own belief of their leadership abilities, which can be compromising

and impact a female leader's performance (Lipka, 2008). Stereotype threat can be daunting for groups who are often stereotyped, such as women of color, because it can cause them to be judged or looked down upon which may end up confirming the stereotype (Spencer et al., 1999). The negative impacts of stereotype threat can be detrimental for all who are impacted by it, especially women of color, and can show up in various ways. This has led to discrimination against women impacting their ability to be promoted into supervisory positions, which is evidenced in the underrepresentation of women in positions of authority in various organizations (Lipka, 2008). One noticeable effect of this is that less than 5% of senior executives are women even though they make up about half of the workforce in many developed countries (Tharenou, 1999). This shows that if people have certain beliefs about women leaders, they are less likely to choose them to lead.

The response to stereotype threat for many groups, particularly women of color, is avoidance, specifically behavioral avoidance which can impact their ability to show up in the workplace (Davies et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2001). There is no specific reasoning for this, however, it can be inferred that this is due to stereotype threat being referenced to both positive and negative identities. According to Jackman (1994), the findings indicate that though women have an easier time quelling stereotyped thoughts that are negative, they are more prone than other groups to validate the stereotypes that apply to them. The most detrimental consequences of stereotype threats to women in leadership are the decreases in motivation and engagement (Hoyt, 2016). If one is worried about people wrongfully categorizing them, there is a greater likelihood that they will not be showing their authentic selves. Another detrimental impact of stereotype threat is that it

can also emasculate a women's sense of belonging and their motivation and desire to

move up within the organization (Cheryan et al., 2009). The lack of inspiration and

motivation can impact the number of women attempting to pursue higher level positions.

The feeling of belonging comes from being represented and at a young age, women are

shown commercials where they are teachers, cooks, and homemakers, while men are

builders, creators, and inventors. According to the 2019 Census, only 13% of all

engineers are women, yet 76% of teachers are women, which supports the theory that

women are more nurturing than men but also that men are better at STEM. This type of

thinking only perpetuates the idea that women can teach future leaders but are too soft to

be one.

Women have been known to modify their professional personas when faced with

stereotype threat to help them fit in (Kalokerinos, von Hippel, & Zacher, 2014). Making a

clear division between their identity and the one of the stereotyped groups is a strategy

that people, including women of color, can use to stick to the course of work rather than

focus on the group membership of the stereotyped group (Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004).

Women can emphasize their roles as a model employee by separating their identity as a

female from their identity as an employee even when such skills are beyond the norm for

women (Von Hippel, 2011). This manifests in one having a 'work self' and a 'female

self' and ensuring that both identities are mutually exclusive, and the female self doesn't

impact the work self.

In multiple studies done by Von Hippel et.al, the researchers looked at the

consequences of stereotype threat on females. Study 1 indicated that women did separate

their work and female self. Study 2 indicated no relationship emerged between stereotype

threat and career aspirations, however women who experienced stereotypes had lower

confidence than those who were not exposed to such threat (Von Hippel, 2011). Study 3

demonstrates that stereotype threat influences the attitude and intention of job seekers due

to lack of belonging and being overlooked for positions they are qualified for (Von

Hippel, 2011). The findings show that stereotype threat has a real impact on women in

the workforce and their opportunities to advance into leadership.

Figure 2 below by Hoyt and Murphy (2016) shows an outline for understanding

the impact of expectations on women in leadership when they are stereotype-based,

including the consequences that arise from stereotype threat.
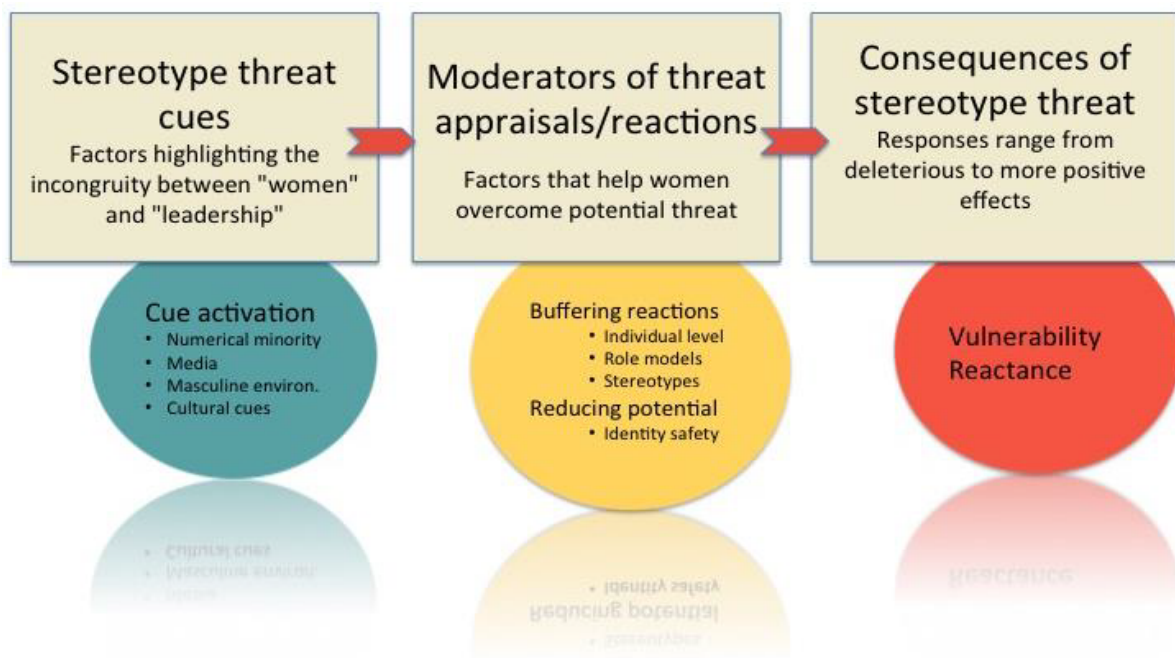
Figure 2. A model of stereotype threat in leadership contexts. Managing to clear the air:
Stereotype threat, women, and leadership Used with permission.
Hoyt, C. L., & Murphy, S. E. (2016). Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat,
women, and leadership.
The Leadership Quarterly, 27(3), 387-399.

The framework breaks down the model of stereotype threat in leadership context, specifically, stereotype threat cues, moderators of threat appraisals/reactions, and consequences of stereotype threat. Stereotype threat has a range of how it can be used, from subtle forms, such as asking a person from a certain group to perform a stereotypical act to more blatant forms such as interactions with someone openly sexist, all of which can be harmful to those experiencing them (Adams et al., 2006; Logel et al., 2009). Stereotype threat can also manifest in ways that impact a woman's ability to advance in their leadership positions or being the only woman in a space or considered a 'token' hire. This can be exhibited as the woman being asked to take notes during a meeting or asking to get coffee and other tasks that are considered more submissive.

During their research, Hoyt and Murphy (2016) found stereotype threat has been shown to have consequences, ranging from someone's performance being negatively impacted to putting in less effort or withdrawing in the field of work completely. Having a sense of social belonging and connectedness is incredibly important for motivation and achievement within any industry (Hoyt & Murphy2016). Without this, there is a sense of loneliness and being undervalued which can show up in the working environment. Women have been known to continuously try to separate their sense of self-worth from their performance in their space often by detaching themselves from the devalued group when faced with stereotype threat (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). This can cause a fraction within groups of women attempting to support each other or even worse, turning against those attempting to support. It can also manifest as imposter syndrome, which can cause a host of other challenges that prevent women from advancing their careers.

Imposter Syndrome

The term imposter syndrome has been around for decades; it was coined in 1970s by Dr. Pauline Rose Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes, to describe feeling of being a fraud despite having academic or professional honors. Women with imposter syndrome perceive their achievements as overestimations of their gifts and talents, rather than acknowledge their hard work as something they have earned (Edwards, 2019). Due to this, many women compare themselves to their counterparts as more talented and valuable, rather than see themselves as equals, particularly women of color, and this can cause many issues. According to Edwards (2019), "Both the imposter syndrome and stereotype threat underscore the anxiety that some marginalized groups, such as women and people of color, experience based on how they interpret and internalize the perceptions of others" (p.19). There are marginalized groups that are aware of how they are othered by different groups, whether it is that they have to prove they belong (stereotype threat) or feel like they don't belong (imposter syndrome) and this can determine how they move through certain situations (Edwards, 2019). The feeling of imposter syndrome can cost many women opportunities because of how they perceive themselves as well as connections with others based on how they feel others identify them.

Variables That Influence the Low Number of Women in Leadership

Leadership is an inherently social process which relies on "influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts" to accomplish organizational goals (Yukl, 2012, p. 66). In a study done by Louise Roth (2004), she explored Wall Street securities firms and how individual strategies and organizational procedures may affect cognitive

inclination to discriminate in the way in which status expectations and similar preferences

produce gender inequality. Roth was trying to understand why there are a low number of

women in leadership and whether it was a result of gender inequalities. Her research

takes a deeper look into the homophily preferences and status expectations through a

qualitative study that interviewed 76 wall street professionals. The data collected found

that there were many barriers that impacted women when attempting to move into

leadership positions. See Figure 3.

Barriers to Success by Gender

Barrier	Men	Women	Total[a]
Lack of access to accounts	2 (6.3%)	15 (34.1%)	17 (22.4%)
Lack of mentor	2 (6.3%)	6 (13.6%)	8 (10.5%)
No collegial network	5 (15.6%)	19 (43.2%)	24 (34.6%)
Harassment	1 (3.1%)	18 (41.9%)	19 (25.3%)
Stereotyping	5 (15.6%)	27 (61.4%)	32 (42.1%)
Total	15	85	100

[a] The total number of accounts was 100 because respondents could indicate experiences with no barriers or with multiple barriers in their careers. Percentages reflect the percentage of men, women, or all respondents describing each barrier. Column percentages also do not add to 100 because respondents could indicate multiple barriers.

Figure 3: Barriers to Success by Gender
Roth, L. M. (2004). The social psychology of tokenism: Status and homophily processes on Wall
Street. *Sociological Perspectives*, *47*(2), 189-214.

According to the data collected by Ross, 61% of women interviewed reported

stereotyping as being the main barrier for them when attempting to be successful in the

workforce, while a lack of networking came in second. This is also what the men who

were interviewed reported as a barrier, however at a considerably lower percentage, at

only 15%. It is evident that both genders struggle with being stereotyped but the

percentage for women is more than four times what is for men. There are many variables

that can impede a woman's ability to be successful and this section will discuss a few of the main ones that really impact women of color at a higher rate than others.

Research has shown that women leaders can have a significant positive impact on individuals, teams, and organizations (DeChurch et al., 2010; Kaiser et al., 2008). Women are associated mostly with transformational leadership, which is linked to effectiveness, but women are still not advancing to leadership positions as frequently as their male counterparts (Hill et al., 2016; Jogulu & Wood, 2006). Women embody qualities such as investing their energy into the development of people within their organizations which allows women to be known as selfless leaders, thus understanding how they can foster relationships and trust amongst their staff (Mann, 2021). However, even though women have proven themselves to be successful and competent leaders, there are many reasons they are still passing on leadership positions, including the pay disparity, lack of opportunity, tokenism, different expectations for males and females, and the lack of support available to women.

Pay Disparity

Gender and pay inequalities in the workplace are a universal experience that all women have (Gray, 2021). Across all industries, women are compensated less than men for similar work (Miller, 2009). In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the *Equal Pay Act* which prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between women and men (Burgess, 2021), however the discrepancy in pay continues to be an issue. The Equal Pay Act was supposed to be the "first step" in what should have been a large overhaul in identifying the reasons women are being underpaid and solutions to help correct it. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (2011) the law has been

consistently deteriorating due to inadequate remedies, unfavorable court rulings, resulting in far less impactful law than originally planned by Congress.

The wage gap between men and women is an ongoing problem, especially for women of color, which shows just how economic inequality exists. According to Bleiweis et al. (2019) at National Partnership for Women and Families women earn 80% of what men earn. Figure 4 shows this recent report and how far women have come in achieving equal pay and how much further there is to go.

The gender wage gap is much wider for most women of color

Comparing 2020 median earnings of full-time, year-round workers by race/ethnicity and sex

White, non-Hispanic women ($0.79)   White, non-Hispanic men ($1.00)

Black women	$0.64
Multiracial Black women	$0.63
Asian women	$1.01
Multiracial Asian women	$0.98
Hispanic women, any race	$0.57
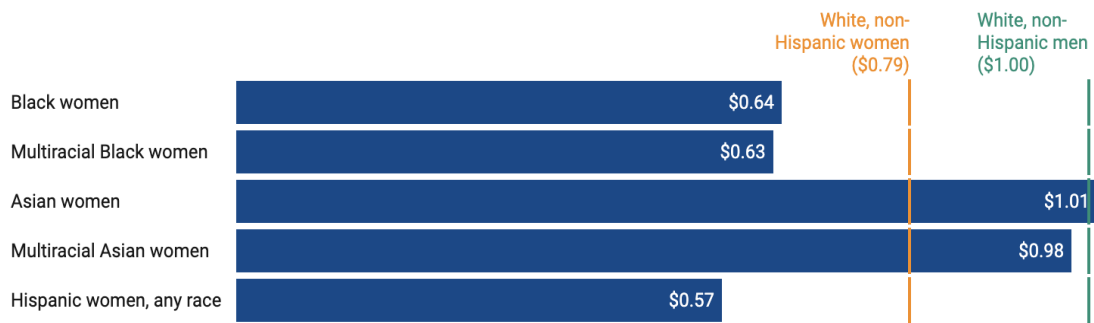
Note: The gender wage gap is calculated by finding the ratio of women's and men's median earnings for full-time, year-round workers and then taking the difference. People who have identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.

Source: For all groups, authors calculated the gender wage gap using data from U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey: PINC-05. Work Experience-People 15 Years Old and Over, by Total Money Earnings, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status: 2020," available at https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html (last accessed September 2021).

Figure 4. The Gender Wage Gap graph from Women of Color and the Wage Gap from Center for American Progress (CAP), published November 17, 2021.

Gray (2021) in her research, *Factors in the career advancement of women leaders of color in IT: Mentorship, leadership, and career sponsorship* found a similar conclusion. Women, specifically women of color, are at an economic disadvantage when it comes to the wage gap (Gray, 2021). Women of color have been fighting and continue to fight for pay equity with very little success. According to the graph, the lowest earners are Hispanic women, with Black women close behind even though according to National

Center for Educational Statistic (NCES), Black women are attending college at a higher percentage than white women (Hussar et al., 2020). Women of color are obtaining higher education degrees (Lennon et al., 2013) to increase their earnings, however, this has not been as successful as many have hoped. Research has shown this gender-pay gap to be stagnant for almost two decades (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017). J. Nelson (2011) discusses pay disparity in his article by noting the differences.

> In 1979, the median weekly earnings of full-time female workers in the U.S were $182 compared to $292 for men which means women earn at 62.3 percent of men's earnings. In 2009, men earned $873, and women's median weekly earnings were $687, which meant women earned 78.7 percent of what men were. Though this shows that women's earnings did increase at 377 percent while men's earnings only increased 299 percent, women continue to earn less than women for the same role (Nelson, 2011, p. 3).

Nelson's report discusses the increase in pay, there is still a discrepancy between men and women, and even a larger one for women of color, validating the research done by Gray (2021). There are theories as to why such a disparity exists, such as gender differences or discrimination. According to Sumati Srinivas (2007), there are five factors related to the gender pay gap in the United States, "education, age, job experience, gender and race" (p. 273). Srinivas believes that these factors are the main reasons women are paid less than men. The idea that men are the primary source of income could be attributed to the higher wage for men. Pay disparities and the guidelines for pay management in various organizations are often attributed to the presence of unconscious

discrimination based on gender and age (Green, 2006). Compensating women for their worth and addressing the pay disparity can promote the growth of women leaders.

Lack of Opportunity

Women, especially women of color, have struggled to gain leadership positions for many years. Women are considered capable of doing entry level work, however when it comes to moving up into leadership, women are disproportionately passed up for many of these higher positions. Women earn more than 50% of college degrees and PhDs (Detweiler et al. 2017), but are not close to providing half the leadership in the workforce. Women of color are passed up more often than white men or men of color, as well as their white female counterparts when it comes to promotions or being hired into roles on the board or in executive leadership (Advisor, 2019). This is not due to the lack of education or credentials but rather lack of opportunity for women. Women of color have experienced being ignored, as well as being overly scrutinized and thus not given equal opportunity for advancement. Less than 3% of the board of directors of the top 500 companies in the United States are Asian, Black, or Hispanic women (Wright, 2019). Women are continuously attempting, and most of the time failing, at obtaining to advance in their careers in comparison to their male counterpart due to the proverbial glass ceiling being unattainable (Johnson, 2015).

Women's Leadership Development survey conducted by Mercer in 2011, in collaboration with the Human Capital Media Advisory Group noted that most global organizations, 71% of them, are not prepared for women in leadership and do not have strategies to support their growth (O'Neill, 2011). The Mercer survey collected responses from various countries, including Africa, Middle East, Europe, and North America,

regarding support for women's leadership. The survey attempted to identify the organizations' approaches to the development of women leaders as shown in Figure 5.

Organizations' Approaches to The Development of Women Leaders

Approach	Percentage
Do not offer any activities or programs specifically targeted to the needs of women leaders	46.7%
Track and monitor the development of women leaders through workforce diversity metrics, but do not offer any activities or programs specifically targeted to the needs of women leaders	18.1%
Currently offer some activities or programs specifically targeted to the needs of women leaders	21.1%
Currently offer a very robust program specifically targeted to the needs of women leaders	3.5%
Plan to soon offer some activities or programs specifically targeted to the needs of women leaders	5.9%
Don't know	4.7%

Figure 5: Leadership challenges for women at work. Chief Learning Officer, 10(6), 76.

The responses showed almost half of the women indicated that their organization does not have any activities or programs targeted to support the needs of women leaders which could explain the low number of women who advance in their careers in certain organizations. The respondents indicated that the greatest challenges women face in their development as leaders apply primarily to work-life balance, lack of opportunities for career advancement, lack of role models, and a lack of support from upper management (O'Neill, 2011). In the US, 279 companies employ more than 13 million people, including a high population of women according to a report published by McKinsey and Company in 2018. The survey results showed that women reported that they faced sexual harassment and discrimination, received less support from their managers than their male

peers, and feel left behind when opportunities for promotions arose. Many women struggle with the balancing of home and work and the idea of promotion can be daunting and unappealing because of the extra work with minimal support. Without proper support and opportunities, the number of women in leadership will continue to be low, though there is much data to show that women make a great impact in leadership positions. Lack of opportunity also manifests as other microaggressions, such as tokenism.

Tokenism

Kanter in his book *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), explained the idea of tokenism as the effects of being a minority in one's work environment and chosen specifically because of the minority status. The term token has been derived by the dominant narrative to identify people (usually women or minorities) who are hired specifically for their differences to show that the organization is inclusive and does not discriminate against such people (Roth, 2004). Typically, the experiences of "tokens" (those who comprise less than 15% of a group's total) are a myriad of hardships in the workplace, including feelings of being in the spotlight, or feeling isolated, as well as limited opportunities for promotion (Stroshine & Brandl, 2011). Kanter (1977) explains that tokenism can result in lack of opportunity and access creating a disparity for women of color. Being a woman of color makes the imbalance even greater thus amplifying the consequences.

Some of the consequences of tokenism can manifest as the feelings of isolation, a higher level of stress, and pressure to prove competency in their field (Jackson et. al, 1995). These would increase the level of discomfort and loneliness in the workplace, which can cause unneeded stress on the woman. The pressure of being the only woman in

a work environment can trigger a negative response to tokenism and the consequences that come with them (Cohen & Swim, 1995). Women who identify as 'token' hires anticipated the different types of stereotypes, including negative evaluations from their peers as well as a greater desire to leave the organization when they were the only female in a work environment (Cohen & Swim, 1995). It is important for there to be a diverse representation because it allows everyone to feel like they belong rather than being the only representation, which could feel like tokenism (Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991).

Tokenism can impede a woman's ability to perform successfully on the job and can be psychologically damaging to women (Zimmer, 1988). It is important for allies to speak up for women in the organization to provide support and play a role in lowering negative outcomes such as feelings of isolation or pressure from others (Moser, 2019). It is important for there to be support in place for women who are struggling in leadership.

Kanter (1977) recognized three common themes that women who identified as 'token' in male-dominated jobs experienced, including increased pressure around their experiences of higher visibility in the organization, the overwhelming feeling of isolated in their various networks, including professional and social, which causes them to create impenetrable boundaries that may not be easily removed. Perhaps the most notable theme is that they experience role restriction and find themselves being constricted to roles that fit the stereotype of their token group.

Being coined the workplace token causes detriment to women of color, including

decreasing the number of women who apply for leadership roles as well as other

consequences.

Increased pressure to perform well due to being the only member of the

stereotyped group as well as an increase in received attention are a few of the

consequences of tokenism for women in leadership positions that can cause many women

to struggle (Yoder, 1991). This, paired with the lack of opportunity and access can lead to

demotivation, lower levels of performance, and diminished aspiration for the future

(Martin, 1980). The pressure to perform in a certain way can be exhausting and be

another reason for many women to refuse to join certain workforces. Additionally, the

pressure for women to perform highlights the different expectations that exist for men

and women in the workforce.

Different Expectations for Males vs. Females

Pew Research did a study in 2008 asking the participants to identify who would

make a better leader, men or women, and the findings showed that women were rated

higher than men, five to one in the characteristics of leadership. Women's leadership

styles have been found to be more inclusive and transformational than the leadership

styles of their male counterparts (Bennis, 2007). Even with this evidence, many times

women in these positions leave because of the toxic environment. Women who were in

high-paying careers in primarily male-dominated areas reported a hostile work

environment and many were pushed out by discrimination when they were reviewed or

when interacting with clients (Roth, 2004). Due to the double standard that women are

less competent than white men, women have had to work twice as hard to be considered equally competent (Foschi 1996, 2000; Foschi, Lai, and Sigerson 1994; Pierce 1995).

In a study done by Vinnicombe and Singh (2003), the findings showed that women prefer a more equal, transformational leadership style leading from within, and supporting and nurturing others, as opposed to their male counterparts who prefer a transactional view of leadership, using situational power to lead from the front. Gender roles continue to be an issue for women due to the lack of expectations but also the lack of support from their male counterparts. Such expectations can lead women to strive for leadership roles by displaying more assertive behaviors to fit into the sex-role stereotype that leadership is for men (Thompson, 2017). The idea of women leaders can be uncomfortable for men and can manifest in the workplace as minimal support for them. Certain male leaders do not support female leaders within the organization because of the traditional societal gender roles and the thought of losing face in their 'boys club' as well as being ostracized (Eagly et al., 1992). According to research done by Lorri Sulpizio (2014), she finds that when a woman attempts to be more assertive, she may be seen as arrogant, yet when a woman shows her caring side, she may be identified as soft. Traditional leadership is still masculinized so behaviors such as confidence, directedness, and strong decision-making skills are connected to leadership roles that are traditionally associated with men and masculinity rather than the typical female leader (Sulpizio, 2014). Torres agrees with this finding and says, as leaders, women must balance their confidence and assertiveness to avoid coming off arrogant (2022). Even when women take on the roles of their counterparts, they have the chance of being seen as inauthentic

or too much to handle. Due to this, many women would rather leave than stay in an environment that does not appreciate or support them.

Recruitment and Retention

When women are not supported or are overlooked for promotions, there is greater chance of them leaving their positions to find one that offers more of an inclusive environment. A high-quality culturally transforming mentorship program can positively impact employee recruitment, retention, engagement, as well as organizational learning, and diversity, which are challenges that many organizations currently face (Ragins, 2016). When employees are provided support, there is a greater likelihood of staying at a job longer and building stronger relationships. Diversity initiatives influence job expectations in organizations and in turn encourage the recruitment and retention of women of color. Recruitment of women of color requires an understanding of how diversity initiatives are perceived in the organization (Cundiff et al., 2018). In their book, *Implementing Mentoring Schemes: A Practical Guide to Successful Programs,* Klasen and Clutterbuck (2001) provide a framework around the benefits of support, specifically mentorship and how this supports the hiring and retention of women of color. Higher turnover rates for women in leadership roles can be attributed to often being paid less and given more precarious work assignments (Ryan et al., 2016). Women of color struggled with hostile work environments, unfair workloads, and a lack of support and resources (Aguirre, 2000; Hannum et al., 2015; Hinton, 2001). Women of color were pressured to work twice as hard as their male and white colleagues which created burnout and a high turnover of women of color due to the hostile work environment conditions (Wright,

2019). With less pay and more work, there is no surprise that women of color leave their positions.

In a study done by Cicily A. McCrimmon (2022), she identified the goal of her research was to promote the importance of mentorship and sponsorship to improve the rates of retention, recruitment, and promotion for underrepresented women in education. Through her interviews and data collection, McCrimmon found that without certain support that woman, particularly women of color, will leave an organization. She emphasizes the need for support such as mentorship and sponsorship to help retain women of color in leadership. Her study noted that "limited networking opportunities and mentorship often lead to an increased sense of isolation and, sadly, higher attrition rates in terms of longevity for African American superintendents and senior-level executives, especially those who are the first or are new to their positions" (McCrimmon, 2022). This can be translated to women who are outside of academia such as women in the corporate environment.

Similarly, in a study conducted by LaQuilla Jordan (2021), the data showed that women of color reported feeling undervalued and underrepresented, as well as continuously passed up for promotions. The findings in this study supports that men and Caucasian women are promoted to leadership positions before women of color (Jordan, 2021). One participant reported, "in lesser impactful positions within an organization are women of color and as you go up into higher positions, there are males (p.83)." All the participants identified the need to create a sense of urgency and improve the practices of recruitment and promotion to address the inequalities of gender and race (Jordan, 2021). Providing support to women of color through mentorship, sponsorship, and networking

not only retains them in organization but also allows them to grow successfully within the company.

Benefits of Supports for Women of Color

Currently, organizations are being intentional in their quest to not only remove barriers but also provide opportunity and access for women of color that include advocacy, networking, and even social media (Gray, 2021). Women are often unwilling to compete for top-level positions because they do not want to encounter the discrimination inherent in leadership assignments (Colbert, 2009). By creating supports, such as mentorship, networking, and sponsorship, women of color can be more successful and can advance their careers. There is evidence that these supports provide women of color with opportunities and help from those who have been through similar experiences and challenges.

The benefit of supporting women of color in leadership does not just help those being supported, it can help the organization itself become more successful by being more inclusive, which can in turn attract stronger female candidates. When employees feel valued and heard, they participate more freely, as well as become more inclusive, which encourages innovation, creativity, and employee participation (Mann, 2021). Successful organizations are ones that invest in the long-term success of their companies by encouraging gender diversity as part of their organizations' growth value for their employees (Mann, 2021). Creating a space for women of color to be their authentic self with support is the best kind of environment for employee success. Creating a space is not enough, however, it is incredibly important to fill these spaces with people who are wanting to support, such as mentors and coaches.

Mentorship

There has been extensive research done around mentoring and its benefits and challenges. Mentoring is primarily used to help individuals with their job performance as well as to be able to obtain higher leadership positions within the organization (Jordan, 2021). The impact and benefit of the relationship between mentor and mentee has been positive, thus continuing to be a research interest by many within literature (Jeffcoat, 2008). Mentoring was described by Crawford and Smith (2005), as a positive influence that supports an important aspect of an organization and their career development. Mentorship is not only beneficial for the success of women in leadership, but also imperative for increasing the advancement of additional women of color to higher positions. Mentorship is vital in addressing the need for positive self-concept, which succinctly means the ability, knowledge, and skills that are critical to one's success (McCrimmon, 2022). The research indicates that there are quite a few benefits of mentoring, including better performance, advancement in their career, including leadership opportunities, higher income, and overall satisfaction in their career (Bova, 2000; Farrow, 2008). Formal mentoring programs are being implemented in many organizations due to the benefit for both the mentor and mentee (Dixon & Welsh, 2016).

Women and minorities have benefited significantly from mentoring, particularly in degree completion and advancement in their careers (Dawson et. al, 2015). When done well, mentoring can also support mentees in strengthening their self-efficacy, identifying their own strengths and challenges, setting practical and attainable goals, and recognizing opportunities for professional growth (Paglis et al., 2006). Mentoring has been shown to significantly support women of color in advancement, however, there is a lack of women

in mentoring programs so it can be challenging to find representation when looking for a mentor. Management positions reflect the lack of women of color in leadership, specifically in male dominated occupations (Roe, 1998). Males tend to hold more centralized, precarious positions that allow them access to valuable information regarding the organization's openings, upcoming projects, as well as managerial decisions often shared through the "old boy network" which could be another contributing factor inhibiting the use of female mentors. (Bamier, 1982; Smith & Grenier, 1982).

In studies conducted by Ilgen and Youtz (1986) and Martinko and Gardner (1982), they found that reduced job effectiveness is associated with the lack of female mentorship. Women may become frustrated with the lack of support which may result in poor performance. The lack of role models and female mentors continues to be perpetuated by fewer women being promoted to supervisory positions (Roe, 1988). Roe goes on to explain that,

> Mentors can advance their mentee's career by recommending him or her for open leadership positions (sponsorship), by giving opportunities for the mentee to demonstrate their proficiency and particular set of skills (exposure and visibility), by suggesting ideas for creating and obtaining work goals (coaching), by reducing the chances that the mentee will be involved in complicated situations (protection), and by challenging them to think outside the box (Roe, 1988).

Jean-Marie (2011) studied the advancement of women of color and found that minority women were not likely to advance because of race, gender, and cultural barriers. Mentorship for women of color is beneficial in oppressive situations described in previous sections regarding workplace inequities and advancement in higher education

(Brown, 2005; Diehl, 2014). The relationship between a mentor and mentee is a collaborative approach where one is supporting the other to identify and live up to their fullest potential by encouraging them to aim for higher leadership positions (Jordan, 2021). However, finding mentors that shared the same experiences and background as women of color was challenging in higher education due to the small number of women of color who had achieved senior leadership (Hannum et al., 2015). This indicates that there is a need for more mentors who are women of color so they can support the future generation of leaders. Another support that can benefit women of color is coaching which can be used in conjunction with mentoring or as an individual support.

Coaching

Coaching has been around for over 1,000 years and has been successful in many aspects, such as the development and retention of women in various professions (Harmeier, 2016). In a study done by Velma Wallace (2016), she found the mentor contribute most to women's career advancement by providing acceptance and confirmation, providing challenging assignments, coaching, counseling, providing exposure and visibility, friendship, protection, role modeling, and sponsorship. It is important to match the leader with someone who is versed in their job so that they can offer appropriate levels of support. The senior manager works completely differently in a coaching role by providing support and advice, rather than direct contact (Kram & Ragins, 2008). Ennis et al. describe coaching as,

> A development process that creates a leader who builds a mentee's confidence to

achieve organizational goals (both short and long term) by meeting individually

or as a team and encouraging the use of data driven perspectives with mutual trust

and respect.

The idea would be to have an organization, a high-ranking executive, and a coach

work collaboratively to achieve maximum impact on all stakeholders (Ennis et al.,

2012).

Over the last couple of decades, various types of coaching including, career coaching,

performance coaching, relationship coaching have become popular in mainstream society

(Harmeier, 2016). The type of coaching depends on the person who is being coached and

the types of support they need to be successful. Ideally, the coach will identify their

individual's areas of need so they can direct their effort to support them where they need

it the most (Steinhoff, 2015, p.25). Coaching provides support to women as well as the

opportunity to engage with someone who has also gone through similar circumstances. In

their book, Co-Active Coaching, Kimsey-House, et al. (2011), explains how coaching has

proven to be effective on various levels, including personal, relational, and

organizational. Coaching has been something that has proven to be successful for various

types of employment, including education, and corporate. However, coaching along with

other forms of support really help create an environment of support that benefits all. For

example, networking is a type of support that helps women find like-minded

communities and it can be self-facilitated.

Networking

Morrisette and Oberman (2013) noted that mentoring and networking are essential

for improving women's aptitude for leadership and creating new endeavors. Networking

allows for women to connect with those who have similar interests and career paths. Whitley, Dougherty, and Dreher (1991) found career mentoring included coaching, protection, challenging assignments, sponsorship, and providing networking opportunities for career advancement. Building a solid network can not only support a woman in career advancement, but it can also provide emotional and personal support. In a study done by Garavan, Hogan, and Cahir-O'Donnell (2003) they noted that if an individual is successful at networking with others, she is more likely to advance in their careers as opposed to those who do not. According to Linehan and Scullion (2008) there are several advantages of networking including collaboration, relationship development, visibility, and support. These advantages could not only support the advancement of women of color in the workplace but could encourage workplace connections for everyone.

   Many organizations lack access and opportunity to networking, which can be observed in the lack of women in the top ranks of the company (Bartol & Zhang, 2007). This can be rectified by providing networking with the purpose of helping individuals develop their professional relationships that have a direct positive impact on career outcomes (Wang, 2009). Networking is an excellent way for women of color to not only connect with each other but provide specific information that could be beneficial for future female leaders. In a study done by Siniva Tuileto'a Mann (2021), women shared that networking supported them by providing the relationship with others who can encourage them and afford them opportunities for personal and professional growth and development. This study addresses the positive impacts of networking and how women have benefited from it. The participants attributed preparation and promotion into their

current roles as some of the main benefits of networking (Mann, 2021). Networking is more than just connection to other people; it is the connection to a person who has gone through similar challenges and/or has experience that may directly support other people.

Sponsorship

According to Chow (2021), sponsorship can be identified as a form of a person who controls how another is viewed by society by acting as a manager and publicists for their apprentice. By providing women of color sponsorship, they not only get support but their very own cheerleader who is always their biggest fan. According to H. Ibarra (2019), the difference between a mentor and a sponsor is that a mentor is a person who possesses a certain type of knowledge that they share with you, while a sponsor is someone who has authority and will use it for your benefit (2019). This does not mean that the sponsor just directs their protégé, they are invested in the relationship and truly want to support them. Sponsorship is not just a one-way relationship, it requires a reciprocation from both the sponsor and the individual to ensure success (Klotz, 2014). In Figure 6, Ibarra discusses how sponsorship can support women but also how it is on a spectrum that discusses the level of sponsorship. As noted in the figure below, mentoring is a form of sponsorship that can support a person in more of a private form than advocacy, which is identified as a public type of support.

Private relationship →

Public relationship ↓

① **Mentor**
Provide advice, support, or coaching.

② **Strategizer**
Share "insider information" about advancing; strategize getting ahead.

③ **Connector**
Make introductions to influential people; talk her up with your peers.

④ **Opportunity giver**
Provide a high-visibility opportunity.

⑤ **Advocate**
Publicly advocate a promotion; fight for her in settings where she can't fight for herself.

Figure 6: A lack of sponsorship is keeping women from advancing into leadership. Harvard Business Review, (August 19), 2019.

This figure shows the various levels of sponsorship and the benefits to women, as well as the delineation of the public and private relationship one has with their sponsor. Providing support to women, particularly, women of color, promotes an environment of opportunity and access that may not happen organically. Creating and expanding a network of sponsors can support women of color aspiring to be leaders with career advancement and access to organizations that are typically guarded, however without these networks the opportunity window becomes smaller and less attainable (Gray, 2020). There are a lot of benefits for women of color to pursue sponsorship in their career. Laquilla Jordan's research findings suggested that women of color be exposed to a sponsorship, someone who will sponsor them and help get them in the hands of the right people that will support promotion into corporate leadership positions (2022).

Sponsorship is just one form of women supporting women, like shine theory which can help promote a more collaborative environment.

Shine Theory

Shine theory is a relatively new term that encourages women to support each other rather than compete. Ann Friedman coined the term "shine theory" which suggests that women stop seeing other women as a threat and embrace them to support each other's growth (Sow & Friedman, 2020). Friedman theorizes that it's easy to hate other women who seem happier and more confident than us but it's something we should refrain from doing (Friedman, 2013, p.2). Friedman's solution is to befriend them and to work with them, rather than to work against them. Friedman claims that finding and having the woman you feel is happiest and strongest on your team is the way to build yourself up; one who tells you the truth and calls you out on your decisions in a kind and supportive way (Friedman, 2013).

In a qualitative study done by Dr. Ebru Tolay (2020), she looks at the experiences of women to determine whether they have been impacted by shine theory with positive female manager behavior. Tolay's study asked 40 women employees from 20 different sectors to recall their most impactful female leaders and findings indicate that women managers who support and develop their female subordinates rather than competing will have more positive results for both parties as well as the organization. Ceken (2020) also found that women managers expressed undesirable behaviors such as, gender discrimination among subordinates, and lack of trust. Participants also mentioned some leaders forcing employees to work outside of work hours, displaying behaviors that are considered unprofessional and unethical. Women competing against other women does

nothing but harm to each other. The underrepresentation of women of color in leadership positions may result in more competition, due to the few opportunities available. If women can support and collaborate with each other, the likelihood of increasing the number of women in leadership positions could be possible.

Summary

Women, particularly women of color have struggled with climbing the ladder of leadership for many years, and this continues to be an uphill battle. Research has shown that women do well in leadership roles and are successful and yet there continue to be less women leaders. There has been research done regarding the various organizations that have supported women with mentorship, as well as, identified barriers. It seems like women in leadership is becoming a 'hot topic' in research as more women are coming into leadership. It would be in our best interest to support these upcoming leaders with the support such as mentorship and sponsorship. The best way to benefit and understand how to support women of color is to hear from them and to understand their experiences as well as being deliberate in creating an action plan to create change in policies and practices (Travis & Thorpe, 2019).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter I provided an introduction and background to help understand the focus of the research. The purpose of studying is to hear about the lived experience of women of color in leadership and the supports that have helped them become successful. Chapter II evaluated studies within the scope of literature and shined a light on the gap in the literature to understand the need for this specific study. This chapter will focus on the purpose and the research questions of the study as well as describe the research design, population, sample, and data collection.

This is a phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of women of color in leadership and the supports that helped them be successful. A phenomenological study is a qualitative method that is used with a smaller population sample and a variety of data collection can be used, such as surveys, interviews, and observations to name a few (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher will include details of their background in attempts to help the participants understand their point of view and purpose behind this study, which will hopefully mitigate any issues of bias that may infiltrate the interview (Patton, 2015). For the purpose of reflection and analysis, the study attempts to understand the meaning of the participant's experiences and turn them into characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Additionally, phenomenology creates a readiness to understand experiences in an unobstructed manner (Patton, 2015). This study is a correlation design that attempts to learn the lived experiences of women in leadership, as well as the support women have received that have helped them move into leadership.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of the women of color in their roles as leaders in corporate environments with the respect to the support (personal, organizational, cultural, and stereotypical supports) received. This includes hearing their challenges, biases they have faced, and how the different supports they have received have helped them advance into leadership roles.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of women of color in their roles as leaders with respect to personal supports, organizational supports, cultural supports, and stereotypical supports?

2. What are the experiences/perceptions of women of color in leadership positions?

Research Design

The researcher chose the phenomenological method of research to be able to connect with the participants to hear their lived experiences, rather than quantify their experience to percentages, which aligns with the purpose and goal of this study. This encouraged the participants to describe and interpret their experiences within the scope of their work (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010) which helps the researcher understand how this impacts how they show up at work. This is a qualitative research method which allows researchers to collect input from the participants, by asking depth questions to understand their lived experiences. According to Patton (2015), using this method allows the researcher to understand the complex relationships that occur which allows for meaningful engagement which can create additional conversation. Adams and Van Manen (2008) describe the phenomenological experience as something that tries to show

us how our language, concepts, and theories always create and give structure to our experiences as we are processing them. The voices of the participants will allow the researcher to tell their stories to support the future generation of women leaders, specifically, women of color.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research because qualitative research encourages the voice of the participants and their personal experience as opposed to quantitative methods, which are assumed when objective information is required to resolve the research problem (Querios et al., 2017). Qualitative data relies heavily on interviews as opposed to qualitative, which focuses on counts and percentages and can be less intimate. As this study's purpose and focus was to gather personal experiences of women of color in leadership, a qualitative study is the best approach to ensure this is done.

Population

When a researcher decides the type of data they want to collect, they choose a population which is a group that meets a certain set of standards which the researcher intends to generalize (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this case, the researcher chose women of color who are currently in leadership positions at companies in Northern California as the population. The women of color in this study are ones who work in leadership positions that oversee or manage 10 more people and support the advancement and growth of employees under their supervision. The criterion for these women is to be in a position where they can hire and fire, as well as evaluate subordinates who they manage.

Target Population

The target population is a smaller set of people from the larger population, which is chosen when doing research as it is difficult to access an entire group of people. Ramones (2017) identifies a target population for a study as the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population for which the study data are to be used to make interpretations. As there are women of color in leadership in Northern California in various fields, the research chose women of color who are specifically in the corporate world, as opposed to academia, where there are a higher number of women of color in leadership. There are many factors such as cost or time constraints that impact a researcher's ability to interview a whole group of people, which in this case is the number of women of color in leadership positions and the location.

Sample

Choosing a sample population is important as researchers are unable to gather data from the entire population. A sample, according to Patton (2015) and Creswell (2003) is the subset of the target population which exemplifies the whole population. The sample population for this study was 12 women of color in leadership located in Northern California, specifically the Bay Area. To participate in this study, the participants should have the follow qualifications:

- women of color who are currently in leadership positions.
- work in companies located in the Bay Area, Ca with 50 or more employees.
- hold titles such as Director, CEO, COO, Vice President, etc.
- be in a position where they can hire and fire employees.
- should evaluate subordinates who they manage.

This sample will provide insight into the experience of women of color in leadership in the Bay Area, where there are many corporations and leaders but few who are women of color. This sample can show researchers a snapshot of a larger population to draw conclusions or inferences based on the experiences of the participants. The researcher believes this sample of women will help better understand why there are fewer women of color in leadership and support to help others.

Instrumentation

The researcher will be the instrument in this qualitative study. As the instrument is a human, there is a higher chance of researcher bias, personality clashing, and potential influences that may not be present if the instrument was not human. As the researcher herself is a woman of color in leadership, there is also the chance that she has brought in her own bias into the interview process as she has faced similar experiences and challenges. The researcher has asked her peers to review the interview questions to limit the bias and ensure the research questions were being answered.

The researcher interviewed the participants over zoom and utilized the zoom transcription feature. The researcher then went over the transcript and followed up with the participants, if needed. The interview questions were adapted from work done by Dr. Ann Marie Klotz with permission, as well as themes collected from recent literature to ensure the gap in literature was being addressed. The researcher received permission from Dr. Klotz to use her interview questions to adapt to this research via email (see Appendix A) and then had her peers review them to identify any bias based on her own experiences. The duration of the interviews was an hour, with follow-ups if needed, however some of the interviews went over an hour. The researcher chose this collection

method over surveys because it provided more in-depth responses that would focus on the participants' experiences and stories.

Validity

The validity of a study discusses how the results of the study with the participants represent the similar individuals outside of the study (Patten, 2005). It is also known as the trustworthiness of the study. Validity in quantitative research can be easier to identify, however, as Patten (2017) discusses, validity is elusive due to some of the qualitative responses that are difficult to measure, such as experiences and emotions. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are two types of validity that researchers need to be aware of, internal and external. Internal validity can be identified as the consistency in the results of the assessment when given. To ensure this, the researcher asked a team of her peers to check the interview questions for potential bias, feedback for changes, and recommendations for any modifications. The team included peers who are also in a doctoral program, who are also doing research. The researcher asked her team to also ensure the interview questions aligned with the research questions to ensure internal validity. External validity according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is the generalization of the assessment over multiple trials with consistency.

Validity is never perfect and due to that; it is impossible to ensure that the research instruments will have no flaws, but they are tested for their degree of validity (Patten, 2009). The researcher will be following specific guidelines to ensure validity. These guidelines include, utilizing the questions that were peer reviewed, conducting the interview using only the questions provided, transcribing all the conversations to ensure nothing is missed and there is no confusion. The researcher utilized her team of peers to

help ensure that the themes were appropriate and correct when the data was disaggregated.

Reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) call reliability a "precondition for validity" (p 292). To ensure reliability, the researcher did trial interviews with a team of peers to ensure the questions were clear and concise, as well as to gather the appropriate information to ensure the data collected is useful. The people chosen to interview are fellow doctoral candidates who are also in the process of collecting data for their own studies. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the concept of reliability in qualitative research is closely tied to the concept of dependability in quantitative research. Patten (2017) identifies something as reliable if the results of the tests are consistent. To ensure consistency, the researcher planned to conduct multiple rounds of interviews with the team participants, rather than a single interview. This also allowed the researcher to gain some insight into how reliable the questions were and to confirm that the researcher's biases were not present in the process or questions.

According to Patten (2017), "a measure must be both reasonably valid and reasonably reliable" to be considered useful (p.137). There are many factors that can threaten the reliability of a study, including researcher's carelessness, issues with the instruments, and other ambiguities that can come up (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To combat these factors, the researcher asked her fellow doctoral colleagues as reliable resources to ensure the data collected with fidelity and the instruments used will be free of bias. The researcher also had her colleagues' support when disaggregating the data and finding themes.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were the data collection method for this study. The prerequisite approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted prior to data collection. Data, including transcripts, are kept on a password-protected computer. Data collection was done after the researcher obtained approval from UMass Global's Institutional Review Board and after completing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Protecting Human Research Participants Certification. The rights and privacy of all participants are protected throughout the duration of the study and the participants are kept abreast of all decisions and issues. The researcher sent the Informed Consent documents to each participant and collect the signed documents prior to any data collection.

To find participants, the researcher reached out to her connections to find women of color in the corporate sector to interview. The researcher shared her topic and a brief description of the study with the participants who showed interest in being interviewed. The data collection method for this study were in-depth interviews, as well a semi-structured interview survey with open ended questions. Evoking an all-inclusive account of the participants' experience is the main purpose for the interview (Patton, 2015). The goal of this particular technique was to ensure reliability in the process and to ensure that the participant is comfortable to engage in the conversation, as well as enable the researcher to ask questions as needed for follow up (Patten & Newhart, 2018). This process brought a level of comfort to both interviewer and interviewee that will allow the conversation to be as authentic and organic as possible.

The interview consisted of ten interview questions to understand the participants current experience, as well as questions regarding the support they've received to support

their current role. The researcher utilized the snowballing method of data collection to find additional participants, which is where the researcher invited the participants to provide additional candidates who fit the criteria for the researcher to interview (Patton, 2015). This allowed the researcher to find additional participants who may not be directly connected to the researcher in a way to gather additional data. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher looked over the transcripts to determine if the transcript is incomplete or if the researcher needs additional information. The researcher sent the transcript to each participant to ensure the participant had an opportunity to read their responses and add or clarify anything that was said.

Data Analysis

The data was collected and analyzed from qualitative interviews over Zoom to understand the phenomenological lived experiences of women of color in positions of leadership in Northern California. Transcripts were created by Zoom and once the interviews were completed, the researcher gave them to the participants to ensure they felt they were accurate. The researcher then scanned the transcript and with data was able to identify the main themes. The researcher used NVIVO and excel to track the frequency and themes for each interview. The researcher created two main codes, which were experiences and supports and then created themes under those codes. The themes were refined, and the researcher created meaningful theme names to ensure understanding for all. The researcher utilized the help of peers to find themes and support reliability (Creswell, 2013) and lower the chances of bias.

Limitations

Phenomenological studies have been known to have limitations. A limitation is defined as features within a study that the researcher cannot control and can affect the results of the study in a negative way (Roberts, 2010). Creswell (2013) identified these considerations as limited time with participants, structured interview approach, the careful nature of selecting participants, and the researcher's personal bias. In this research study, there are a few limitations that could impact the results of the research, such as bias, small sample size, and participant bias.

The researcher built upon the research of Dr. Ann Marie Klotz and modify her interview questions to ensure alignment to the research questions. To ensure there was limited bias in the questions, the researcher utilized her peers to help determine whether the questions were appropriate and not leading to get the responses that the researcher would like. The researcher did realize that a bias could impact the findings of the data and has kept an open mind throughout the process and has been self-aware of how she has delivered the questions.

The third limitation is participation bias. The study is asking about the participant's lived experiences, however there could be some bias towards their employer which could come up in the interviews. The participant's will be asked to be objective when responding, however experiences are life stories and that are infiltrated with subjectivity.

The researcher ensured the limitations were addressed prior to the data collection, which included a plan to conduct follow up interviews to ensure validity. The researcher

also provided participants with the Zoom transcript to ensure their reliability and hold space for a follow up conversation.

Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of this study, including the research design, methodology, and data collection, as well as the validity and reliability of a phenomenological study. The methodology section discusses the reasoning behind the decision to use a phenomenological study and the benefits of it. Finally, this chapter stresses the significance of collecting meaningful data to examine the experiences of women of color in leadership and the supports that have helped them advance in their positions.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of women of color in leadership positions in Northern California. This study focused on the experiences of women of color leaders as well as the support they have received to promote their advancement into leadership. In this chapter, data are presented and analyzed from zoom interviews with 10 women of color who are currently in leadership positions in Northern California. This chapter will present the major findings from the data collected.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of women of color in their roles as leaders in corporate environments with respect to the support (personal supports, organizational supports, cultural supports, and stereotypical supports) received. Specifically, the research examined the stories of female leaders of color to understand how their experiences have supported or hindered their growth in leadership.

Research Questions

1. How have supports such as personal, organizational, cultural, and stereotypical influenced the experience of women of color in their roles as leaders?

2. What are the lived experiences of women of color in leadership positions in the corporate sector?

Research Method and Data Collection

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research because qualitative research encourages the voice of the participants and their personal experience as opposed to

quantitative methods, which are assumed when objective information is required to resolve the research problem (Querios et al., 2017). Qualitative data relies heavily on interviews as opposed to quantitative, which focuses on counts and percentages and can be less intimate. As this study's purpose and focus is to gather personal experiences of women of color in leadership, a qualitative study is the best approach to ensure this is done.

The data collection method for this study was in-depth interviews, as well a semi-structured interview survey with open ended questions. The interview consisted of ten interview questions to understand the participants current experience, as well as questions regarding the support they've received to support their current role. The researcher utilized the snowballing method of data collection, which is where the researcher invites the participants to provide additional candidates who fit the criteria for the researcher to interview (Patton, 2015). This allowed the researcher to find additional participants who may not be directly connected to the researcher in a way to gather additional data. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher looked over the transcripts to determine if the transcript is incomplete or if the researcher needed additional information. The researcher then scanned the data and identified the main themes. The researcher used NVIVO and excel to track the frequency and themes for each interview. The researcher created two main codes, which were experiences and supports and then created themes under those codes. The themes were refined, and the researcher created meaningful theme names to ensure understanding for all.

<center>**Population**</center>

When a researcher decides the type of data they want to collect, they choose a population which is a group that meets a certain set of standards which the researcher intends to generalize (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this case, the researcher has chosen women of color currently in leadership positions at companies in Northern California as the population. The women of color in this study are ones who work in leadership positions that oversee or manage 10 more people and support the advancement and growth of employees under their supervision.

Target Population

The target population is a smaller set of people from the larger population, which is chosen when doing research as it is difficult to access an entire group of people. Ramones (2017) identifies a target population for a study as the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population for which the study data are to be used to make interpretations. There are many factors such as cost or time constraints that impact a researcher's ability to interview a whole group of people, which in this case is the number of women of color in leadership positions within Northern California. Due to this, the target population in this case were women of color who work in a corporate setting within the Bay Area.

Sample

Choosing a sample population is important as researchers are unable to gather date from the entire population. A sample, according to Patton (2015) and Creswell (2003) is the subset of the target population which exemplifies the whole population. To participate in this study, the participants should have the follow qualifications:

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- women of color who are currently in leadership positions.

- work in companies located in the Bay Area, Ca with 50 or more employees.

- hold titles such as Director, CEO, COO, Vice President, etc.

- be in a position where they can hire and fire employees.

- should evaluate subordinates who they manage.

This sample will provide insight into the experience of women of color in leadership in the Bay Area. This sample can show researchers a snapshot of a larger population to draw conclusions or inferences based on the experiences of the participants. The researcher believes this sample of women gave insight into why there are fewer women of color in leadership and support to help others.

Demographic Data

This study included 12 participants who met the eligibility to participate in the study. To be a part of the study, the participants were required to sign a consent form (Appendix B), which informed them of the purpose of the study, including the role they will play. All the participants in this study identified as women of color in leadership positions. They all hold positions where they have subordinates and are ones to evaluate them. Table 1 provides information regarding demographic information.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Information

Participant Pseudonyms	Ethnicity	Age
Sapphire	Asian Indian	45-61
Rose	Asian Indian	50-55
Diamond	African American	40-60
Amber	Asian Indian	40-60
Amethyst	Asian Indian	45-61
Emerald	Asian Indian	45-61

Pearl	African American	50-55
Opal	African American	45-61
Jade	Asian Indian	45-61
Ruby	Asian Indian	45-61
Topaz	Asian Indian	45-61
Onyx	Filipina	40-60

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The findings presented in this chapter describe the lived experiences of women of color in leadership through virtual interviews. The findings in this chapter are reported based on their alignment with the two research questions. The interview transcripts were reviewed, analyzed, and coded for common themes by the researchers, as well as through Nvivo.

The researcher interviewed a total of 12 women, which resulted in 12 interviews, with each interview lasting between 45 to 120 minutes for a total of approximately 14 hours. The interviews were conducted to answer the following two research questions: How have supports such as personal, organizational, cultural, and stereotypical influences the experience of women of color in their roles as leaders? What are the lived experiences of women of color in leadership positions in the corporate sector? Once the researcher gathered the data, it was analyzed, and the following six themes were found:

1. Facing Microaggressions.

2. Women of color must prove themselves.

3. The Importance of Mentoring

4. Imposter Syndrome.

5. Immigrant Representation matters.

6. The Importance of Community Support and Spaces.

Data Analysis

The data collected and analyzed from qualitative interviews over Zoom, gathered the phenomenological lived experiences of women of color in positions of leadership in Northern California. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcripts, as well as had the participants review the transcripts to ensure they were accurate and reflected their thoughts. The researcher then identified two main codes and then found themes that aligned with those codes from the interview transcript. The researcher counted on the help of peers to find themes and support reliability (Creswell, 2013) and lower the chances of bias. The researcher had colleagues review the interview transcript without any participant information and had them identify themes that came up frequently. This was done without the researchers input and once they found themes, the researcher shared hers to see if there were any that overlapped.

Table 2

Data Coding Results: Highest to Lowest Frequency

Theme	Frequency
1. Facing Microaggressions.	14
2. Women of color must prove themselves.	12
3. The Importance of Mentoring	8
4. Imposter Syndrome.	7
5. Immigrant Representation matters.	5
6. The importance of Community Support and Spaces	4

Description of Findings and Themes

This study investigated the lived experiences of women of color in leadership and strategies to support their growth. Many participants of the study were open, honest, and vulnerable about their experiences and the impact it has had on their lives and career. A

few of them were concerned about the anonymity of the study. The researcher clarified that they would be anonymous and the names of any organizations they provide will be redacted. This made it more comfortable, and the conversation flowed well after that. During the interviews, a few of the participants became emotional recalling their experiences and all of them were happy to participate in the study. Several themes emerged from this study (see Table 2), which are discussed below.

Facing Microaggressions

The dominant theme in this study was the amount of microaggression women of color in leadership face daily. Microaggressions are defined as insults or slights that are directed at certain marginalized groups that result in intentional or unintentional discrimination. (Nordmarken, 2014). Half the women who were interviewed mentioned how they faced some form of microaggressions daily. One participant, Opal, spoke about the microaggressions she faced, "The microaggressions, such as, coming to a meeting and not being acknowledged, but everyone else is being questioned about the work, not being included in certain spaces." She goes on by telling an experience where she was questioned about her schedule, yet the others who were doing similar work were not. She explains that she was the only woman of color in the position, and the others were Caucasian, but all were salary-based employees.

Rose and Jade, both who worked as Directors at one point, mentioned they found out there were pay disparities amongst themselves and others in similar positions. They were the only women of color and getting paid the least within the department. Jade spoke about how she had access to everyone's pay when she noticed the discrepancy. "I have the same position as everybody else, right? We were all director levels. Least paid,

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and more than probably 2/3rds of them did not have MBAs or master's degrees and at the time I had an MBA. So that really hit me and really pissed me off." People were coming in with less experience and less qualifications but making more money, particularly their white male counterparts. Rose had a very similar experience and mentioned that this was the reason she left her that job, "So in my previous job, I was the lowest paid executive team member, and I was the most educated and I was the most experienced." Being paid less can be interpreted as being of lesser value, which is another microaggression that people of color face (Nordmarken, 2014). As mentioned in Chapter two of this study, women of color are continuously paid less than men even though many of them hold higher degrees. Both women did not feel as if their leaders would support them if they brought this up so neither one did.

A few women also mentioned people making comments about their looks. Sapphire, who is currently in a position as a VP shared how people comment on her looks and assume that is how she became a leader. She shared, "I've heard of other things like, oh, you're cute. So that's why you are a leader. Like you make it to the top because you're pretty. Or, most often it's like you're super smart and you're super pretty. But like I have heard, you are pretty, that's why you get to be at the top." This impacts how she shows up because she must worry about someone making a comment or assumption about her abilities based on her appearance.

Opal mentioned how she currently works at an organization that does recruitment and she is in a leadership position that allows her to prioritize the organization's needs. She is proud that now she not only identifies microaggressions but calls them out, and talks about them, "We're now at a point where we are addressing those issues around

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microaggressions and being overlooked right for a position." She spoke about how she wanted women of color coming into Leadership positions to not have to deal with the same challenges she did. "When I was trying to climb the professional ladder, I was always getting overlooked." and that is something she is working hard to ensure others don't need to go through. Several participants mentioned wanting to make the lives of other women of color moving into management easier than theirs.

Onyx mentioned being promoted into a director level position and learning that one of her subordinates, a white male, had applied for her job. She learned this from him during their first 1:1. She goes on to say, "I wondered why he was telling me. Until he said, oh, you got the position because you're a woman of color, because they were looking for an, you know, the affirmative action hire." She went to human resources (HR) to discuss this, only to be told, "So that's interesting. I don't think he's racist." By the white lady in charge of HR. Another participant, Amethyst, spoke about moving into a leadership position and during her first director's meeting, where she was the only woman, all the men in the meeting looked at her and one said, "you know how to make coffee, right?" She spoke about how shocked she was and managed to say, "no, I don't." She clarifies by saying, "Now, of course I know how to make coffee, but it's like I start feigning like ignorance." Mainly because she did not feel it was fair for them to assume the woman would do this but also because she knew if she made coffee even once, the expectation would be there for her to do it.

Women of Color Must Prove Themselves

The second most prevalent theme in this study is women of color must prove themselves constantly within their organization. The participants felt that they had to do

more than their male counterparts for an equal amount of footing. This was something they thought about regularly. Amethyst, who works in the health field said, "I think on a daily basis it seems like in every meeting, I have to constantly prove myself." She continues by saying, "And in anything that is happening I have to prove myself that's what I feel like when it comes easily to others." Where she indicates that others do not have the same struggle as she does. Another participant, Amber, who has made it to a director role, spoke about her experience and mentioned that she spends a lot of time, "Working really hard, working twice as hard, proving myself looking at tangible results and then getting noticed and going, oh, she's awesome." This participant mentioned that she took on additional responsibilities to show that she was serious about her position, which she feels has helped her climb the corporate ladder. Ruby mentioned in her experience, "to prove your credibility, you have to show and demonstrate this excellence." Her experience was not usual and was repeated by four other participants.

Opal, who currently works as a CEO, became passionate about retelling her experience said:

> You constantly have to go above and beyond your call of duty, if you will. To really self-promote, to really fight for it, to have some kind of…I don't want to say evil plans but some kind of plan to say okay how am I going to hold these cards and reveal them when the right time comes? So, you always stay scheming.

She talked about how vigilant she needed to be when doing her work as she is aware that people are going to expect something different from her, which was similar to what others mentioned. When asked about the motivation to move into leadership, a few

participants said they did it to prove to themselves that they could and to show their own families that this was possible. One participant, Jade, said:

> I wanted to prove to myself that, hey, you know what, I am, you know, I'm better than this. I need to build the confidence and there's a goal that I want to accomplish, and I do want to move up. I think a lot of the motivation came from having a child and being that role model or that someone that he could be proud of or someone that he could look up to.

This seemed to be a reason for a few of the participants to work harder. Many of the women of color who came from an East Asian background spoke about not having a role model, as the women in their families' played roles that were opposite of leadership ones. A few mentioned having mothers who told them to stay quiet when they had an issue as that is what they were taught.

When asked about whether men and women were held to a different standard, Amethyst mentioned, "I think women of color also have to like not only do they often have to feel like they have to like to prove themselves at work." The participants felt that they were held to different standards than their male counterparts in the workplace much of the time due to the gender roles that exist. Opal spoke how even cleaning up after a meeting was an issue at her workplace. She mentioned, "I like to clean stuff up. I don't even do that anymore. I get up just like all the white men do and I get up and I walk out just like them." A few of the participants mentioned being mistaken for the support staff or someone in a lower position because of the way they look. Many of them mentioned being asked to take notes in meetings, even though they were in leadership positions, an assumption made by their male colleagues. This continues to be a struggle that women,

particularly women of color face. This is something the researcher is familiar with as she

has been mistaken for a janitorial staff before. It is difficult to process without support

and having someone to listen to, like a mentor, could help processing such events.

The Importance of Mentoring

"Having a mentor is important as there is no roadmap or blueprint for women of

color facing certain workplace challenges." This was a statement made by Opal when

asked whether they felt women of color should have mentors as one of their supports

within their organization. Many participants mentioned how it would have been helpful

to have a woman of color help to understand the landscape or ecosystem to better

navigate certain situations in the workplace. For some, like Jade, it was related to not

having anyone within their own family to follow. "It wasn't like I had mentors in my

family or anything like that, right? So, it was sort of figuring it out here and then also

kind of learning the nuances and the and the culture of the companies as well." Having a

mentor that looks like you or has gone through similar experiences provides a lens and a

level of empathy that may not be easily available with someone who doesn't look like

you. Sapphire recalled her experiences of having a mentor, but ones that did not look like

her. "I've had mainly white male mentors that could not relate to me and I realized how

important it was to see people in leadership that looked like you." Amber shared her

thoughts on the importance of mentoring for women of color;

> Not having mentors to be able to give you personal advice, I think, is what is
>
> detrimental to people of color is that information, and that network is so lacking
>
> because of the concept of oppression. It's been lacking in our experiences as a

people, having mentors to give you that advice and to be able to look out for you

and really genuinely care about you.

She emphasizes that women of color are the ones who must struggle the most because of the lack of representation of women of color. As indicated in the literature review, the number of women of color in leadership positions in corporations is low and the chances of finding someone who is able to support and mentor them is equally low. Onyx, who is a CEO, confirmed this, "I had a lot of white men who were my mentors. I actually didn't have a single person of color, probably my first 25 years." While white male leaders can be a great wealth of knowledge, they do not share the nuances of being a woman of color in leadership including the struggle faced by them.

Rose, who is now a director in her organization, credits her climb to her mentors. She recalls the support she received. "There have been mentors that I've had who have put my name in the hat when it came to opportunity or leadership, or you know projects and things like that." She spoke about how without these people she would not have been able to join the ranks of leadership as she would not have known about the positions or felt confident enough to apply on her own. Onyx spoke about the importance of having someone there to hear you and support you,

It's so valuable to find people like that who are your friends and your mentors

who can really say those words that make you feel differently about something.

Because I spend a lot of my time, thinking you know, how do I approach this? So,

I don't get pissed when they think I'm the admin assistant.

Having someone to share this experience with would not only help calm a person down but also brainstorm responses to address these microaggressions. Microaggressions can cause various challenges, one of the most harmful being imposter syndrome.

Imposter Syndrome

Imposter Syndrome is the feeling that one does not deserve to be in certain positions or deserving of certain accolades due to the anxiety they feel (Edwards, 2019). The feeling of being an imposter came up during the interviews as some of the participants mentioned feeling as if they don't belong in their positions or questioned whether they were qualified enough for it. During the interviews, a few of the women were genuinely uncomfortable speaking about their accolades and their successes. Amber mentioned feeling it when asked about whether she believed women are held to a different standard, she responded with, "Yeah, I would say 100%. You know, you already feel like an imposter in your own self, right? Like do I belong? Do I have a mentor? Do I have someone that I can look up to, you know?" whereas her male counterparts never hesitated when it comes to taking up space.

Opal spoke about how being a woman of color required "constant internal conversation" on a daily basis, which can range from wondering about if you belong to what others are thinking about you. This extra emotional baggage is something only certain people have to consider and for women of color it can be exhausting and prevent them from taking on certain roles. Ruby admitted that for much of her professional journey she felt she "wasn't ready for this", this being a leadership role. Due to these experiences, the participants either did not feel like they could speak up or do certain roles.

Jade mentioned that the imposter syndrome was strong at the beginning of her career. "I felt fake and I had this syndrome of, you know, do I really, can I really do this? Am I qualified to do this? Do I even understand this? Confidence was definitely one part of it. Can I really fit into this because again, you know, being in sales and you know working with your typical, you know, a white male." There was the idea that the people to emulate were white people because that was what was shown. In many organizations, this is still the case, however for this particular participant, as she found other women of color to support her, she gained the confidence she needed to become a better leader.

Diamond mentioned that when she finally had a chance to be surrounded by other people of a similar race, she *still* felt imposter syndrome. She said:

I ended up going through this 3-month coaching with this high-end coach and having this experience with 30 black leaders, which I've never been in a room with 30 black leaders ever. And actually, felt like you know, a little bit of an imposter in that space. Like I know I'm doing some good shit, but then I'm looking around and you know she's an advisor for Obama and you know there you know all these people are doing all this stuff and feeling like Wow, like we've got some powerhouses in here. You know, do I fit in, you know, do that?

Imposter syndrome impacts people in various ways and it seems to show up when women of color are up for promotion or asked to discuss their successes. Adding the layer of being a first-generation immigrant can make this worse for some women of color.

Immigrant Representation Matters

More than half the women of color who participated in this study were first generation immigrants. All of these women come from Asian cultures, primarily East

Asian and Southeast Asian. It is important to note that in these cultures, gender roles are clearly delineated, and women are expected to be in more submissive roles, rather than in dominant ones, such as leadership. This meant that the advice provided by the elders were ones they were used to following. Pearl recalled her parents giving her advice as she started her career. "Growing up, I was taught to assimilate. It was known that I would be facing discrimination like my parents said, look, you're gonna face a lot of hurdles because of the way that you look and we're in this country. But that just means you have to work twice as hard. So don't complain, put your head down." Jade also spoke about what her mother did teach her, and it was the opposite of what she does in leadership. This led to her and others having no role model or blueprint based on the advice provided. "I remember hearing, "don't raise your voice" or look down when you're spoken to. So yeah, it was like I didn't have a role model, right?" The participants affirmed that seeing other people who looked like them is important not only to provide them with validation and give them permission to raise their voice for opportunities, but to have someone who can lead by example.

The topic of code switching came up during the interviews, which is alternating between two different languages within a conversation or in this case, a workspace (Nilep, 2006). The participants felt that they had to put on a certain persona at work, which was different from the one they shared at home. Onyx mentioned this experience.

> I didn't know it was code switching at the time, but I had one personality at work, and I had a different personality at home or with my friends or family. It got to the point where my brother would constantly tease me and say, how come every time I call you at work you talk white? And I'm like what are you talking about and

he's just like no he was you pick up the phone and you're like hello this is

participant, and he would just make fun of me.

A few participants mentioned having to be a certain person at work that fit into the environment. People who come from immigrant backgrounds code switch in various ways, and not necessarily two different languages. Some struggle with multiple languages, while others code switch within the culture. Sounding white is a form of colorism that is prevalent in various cultures, particularly in immigrant cultures. Amethyst, who speaks multiple languages, mentioned having a male leader who picked apart her language when she spoke. She emphasized that English was not her first language. She said:

I come from an immigrant background, where word choices are different and, some may sound harsh, some may not be accurate, something like it's because like I had to like I had to learn these words that you all probably grew up with. That every time I speak, I might say the wrong thing and then I'll get asked more questions and then I'll say the wrong thing and this is like a negative spiral of like so you have got anxiety reporting into him.

She felt stressed every time she needed to speak to him because she was unsure of what he would choose to focus on. Jade touched upon this when she mentioned not being able to relate to some people in her organization, "I always felt that I couldn't relate to people and when it comes to stories about sports and stories about golf because I didn't grow up here. A lot of the cultural nuances were not as familiar to me, even pop culture references." Ideally, having leaders who have faced similar challenges would be helpful, however, having leaders who are sensitive to the unique needs of people who come from

diverse backgrounds would also be helpful. Along with having supportive leaders, creating spaces that promote community would be helpful for women of color transitioning into leadership.

Importance of Community Support and Spaces

Being part of a community is something many people long for; it tends to be why people choose certain jobs or organizations to be a part of. However, it can also be a reason that people leave their jobs. During the interviews, a few of the women stressed the importance of community when joining an organization and what that entails. Topaz spoke about her experience of building a community, "Building that community, even early on in your career with other women that are also either are, you know, that are things that look like you or have that, you know, or have that shared kind of like an experience, right, is so important" Having someone who has shared experience provides a sense of belonging helps feel like what one is going through is normal. The idea of shared experience is one where someone from similar circumstances, racial, economic, ethnic, can understand another on a level others cannot because of the connection of experience. Opal mentioned that having a community space and support allows for more conversation. "For me personally as a person trying to climb the ranks, I've learned that we need our safe spaces and with people that understand us." When asked to provide more information about what she meant about having people who understood her, she continued by saying, "It would just be so different. I wouldn't have had I wouldn't have to work hard. I wouldn't. You know that a lot of that load would be taken off of my shoulders." Having support and community experiences would allow women of color to not have to worry about issues that may come up and focus on the job.

Only a few women spoke about coaching and networking as the support they received within their organizations. These were part of the same religious community that spoke about networking within their community. Amethyst spoke about having a network that looked like her. "The networking is big. I tell a lot of folks that regardless of how they feel, and what they can see, they need to have a network of how they feel, and what they can see, they need to have a network and invest in people's networks" She spoke about how this connect her to other people but also opportunities she may not know about otherwise. The other participants did not feel they had access to a network within their organization but since LinkedIn has become a social media platform, they have found network communities there. Onyx mentioned one she found on her own.

> There's a network called Chief. It is a women's network of VP level and C level. Leaders who are all women and it was started, I think about a year before the pandemic. And they're now all over the United States and they have an office in the UK. So, there are 20,000 women. In that network and that's the network I was talking about. And that has been valuable.

Topaz spoke about her receiving support in the form of a coach. She explained that she was given a coach as part of an onboarding at one of her first jobs.

> My coach wasn't even in this part of the world. Like, I mean, they were like in New York or somewhere, they were very practical. I thought, they're just getting paid to help me and I thought that was really helpful and I wish more organizations did that. I wish my current organization did that. I think it would be really helpful. To provide growth.

She was only one of two who mentioned getting a coach when joining an organization and the only one who found it helpful. She did mention still keeping in touch with her coach as it was a relationship, they both had spent time nurturing.

Summary

This chapter illustrates the experiences of the participants in deeper detail, connecting it to the purpose of the study and research questions. The data collection process, population, and sample were also revisited, along with the analysis of the findings from the 12 participants interviewed for this study. The purpose of this study was to hear the lived experiences of women of color in leadership as well as understand how support benefits their advancement. The two research questions were answered through the 10 interview questions and themes were found by disaggregating the data. Chapter V will present the major findings of this study, as well as, unexpected findings, implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to hear the experiences of women of color in corporate leadership within Northern California, as well as understand the various supports that have supported these women in their advancement. This study was guided by two central research questions, which are:

1. How have supports such as personal, organizational, cultural, and stereotypical influenced the experience of women of color in their roles as leaders?

2. What are the lived experiences of women of color in leadership positions in the corporate sector?

A total of 12 women of color who currently work in leadership positions participated in the study. All of the women were 1) in roles where they are able to evaluate their subordinates, 2) are in a position where they can hire and fire employees, 3) hold titles such as Director, CEO, COO, Vice President, etc., and 4) work in companies located in the Bay Area, Ca with 50 or more employees.

This chapter will summarize the key findings discovered, as well as unexpected findings. This chapter also includes the conclusions, recommendations, and implications for future studies.

Methodology Review

The research method chosen for this study was a qualitative approach because the researcher wanted to hear the voices of the participants and their personal experiences. The data collection method for this study was in depth interviews, as well a semi-structured interview survey with open ended questions. The interview consists of ten

interview questions to understand the participants current experience, as well as questions regarding the support they've received to support their current role.

The researcher chose women of color currently in leadership positions at companies in Northern California as the population for this study due to the lack of literature that exist around this topic. The criterion for these women were the following: a) women of color who are currently in leadership positions, b) work in companies located in the Bay Area, Ca with 50 or more employees, c) hold titles such as Director, CEO, COO, Vice President, etc., d) be in a position where they can hire and fire employees, e) should evaluate subordinates who they manage. This search netted 12 women who fit the criteria and were willing to participate in the study.

Major Findings

The major findings in this study were:

1. Women of color face Microaggressions regularly. Most of the participants in this study faced some form of microaggression, some daily. These microaggressions have shown up in the form of verbal statements, low payment, as well as implicit and explicit biases. The participants have been subjected to degrading comments that have forced them to go to human resources and in some cases even change jobs.

2. Women of color must prove themselves more than others. The women in this study spoke about having to work harder than others in their organization to gain similar recognition. They have had to take on additional responsibilities and, in many cases, have had to have more education and experience to obtain the same respect as others in their field.

3. Mentoring is important for women of color to be successful. This study found that women who have some form of mentoring felt more comfortable and confident as leaders. These women also had more knowledge of the inner workings of the organization, as well as opportunities that were present due to the support of their mentors.

4. Imposter Syndrome impacts so many women of color. Many of the participants mentioned they had moments where they questioned their abilities to do their jobs and if they belonged in the positions of leadership.

5. Immigrant Representation matters in the workplace to support women of color who are first generation leaders. Being an immigrant adds another layer of complexity on top of being a woman of color. It requires additional learning about not only the workspace but the nuances of language and behaviors that occur within the organizations that may be foreign concepts.

6. Community Support and Spaces are important for women of color to feel like they belong. This can include people, spaces, or culture within an organization. Providing support and spaces for women of color allows them to show up more authentically.

Finding 1: Facing Microaggressions

The data collected from the interviews indicated that a high number of women endure microaggressions on a regular basis. These microaggressions include verbal slights to implicit and explicit biases. One participant's statement expressed just how problematic microaggressions can be for women of color moving into leadership, "When I was trying to climb the professional ladder, I was always getting overlooked." Getting overlooked is troublesome in itself, however, there are even harsher consequences for

other women. For instance, in a few cases, the participants endured such extreme disparaging remarks and/or inequitable pay, that the only resolution was to leave the job altogether.

Perhaps the most noticeable issue identified during the interviews is how the participants were hesitant to go to human resources (HR) due to a previous instance or facing microaggressions from HR. One participant mentioned an incident with her HR when she wanted support about an issue. She felt dismissed by the people who were supposed to be helping her. "I have to tell you, being a woman of color, I felt that in this incident the HR didn't believe me." The ending to her story is one similar to others, she ended up leaving the organization to find a place where people would believe her. This is consistent with the research, specifically, stereotype threat. This is the idea according to Steele et al., (2009) that when a group stereotype (negative) can be applied, then it will be. This is indicated in the findings where the participants mention having to take on certain roles within the organization due to stereotypes around gender. Hoyt (2016) found that the impact of stereotype threat is great and can contribute to the lack of motivation to move into leadership positions. Dealing with microaggressions coupled with the fact that women of color need to work harder to prove themselves, it is no surprise that there are less women of color in leadership.

Finding 2: Women of color must prove themselves.

The data collected from the interviews determined that women of color in leadership positions and one attempting to move into leadership positions must work harder to prove themselves within the organizations. When asked what this looks like, a participant who works as a Senior Director summarized with, "Wake up at 4 a.m. It's a 14-to-16-hour day. It's working on the weekends. It's working in the middle of the night.

There's less tolerance for women of color or women in leadership roles." Most of the women felt the need to work longer hours, more days, and take on additional responsibility to have equal footing in the workplace.

The participants who are mothers felt they had to work even harder because there was a low tolerance for mothers in leadership. A participant who is now a CEO, spoke about her early years. "I had the mom load. I wish I didn't have to work so hard. So, I just wish that there was more understanding of the flexible work arrangements that we have now." Another participant summarized how her organization felt about mothers, "The inner ecosystems aren't supportive; they're primarily male so they are not compassionate to the fact that I also am a mom." Being a mother is not seen as a strength in the business world.

This finding is similar to what Eagly and Carli's (2007) research, where they found that women must work harder than men when it comes to leadership. The participant's experiences of having to work long hours or taken on additional responsibilities corroborate the findings in Eagly and Carli's research. Their research also found that minority women fit into certain stereotypes, such as being support staff, which was also something that came up during the interviews in this study. Their experiences could be less traumatic if they had someone, like a mentor, to support them as they were advancing in their career.

Finding 3: The Importance of Mentoring

The findings from the data collected indicated that mentoring is important for many of the women who were interviewed. Many of the women who had some form of mentorship in their career felt that it was beneficial for numerous reasons, including growth within the organization, learning about the nuances of a new job, and having a

support system. One participant said, "One of the key parts to one's success is having someone who's either within the company or outside of the company for your career Is really helpful to be able to share some of the challenges you're facing." Having someone to share your load and journey is helpful in so many ways. Those who did not have a mentor felt like they missed out on opportunities and the chance at growth. The findings also indicated that it wasn't only about having a mentor, but one that looks like them.

One participant mentioned, "I've had mainly white male mentors that could not relate to me and how important it was to see people in leadership that looked like you." Having a mentor is a start but finding one who has been on a similar journey would be even more beneficial. Ilgen and Youtz (1986) and Martinko and Gardner (1982) both conducted studies that yielded similar findings; women of color who have women mentors are more effective at their jobs. In a study done by Raymond Noe (1988), he found that women who had female mentors had more self-confidence and awareness. Having women of color who have more self-confidence could reduce the imposter syndrome felt by these women.

Finding 4: Imposter Syndrome

The data collected from the study found that imposter syndrome is prevalent amongst women of color in leadership. Some of the participants spoke about how this manifested in different ways, such as questioning their abilities, questioning whether they belong, and feeling like they weren't ready for certain roles. All of the participants who spoke about imposter syndrome are currently in leadership roles and still have moments where imposter syndrome creeps in. A participant who is currently in a CEO position spoke about how she is confident in her abilities until someone makes comments questioning her qualifications and ability. "Direct bullshit at us is what makes us feel like

imposters. I'm smart. Confident I can do all things, right? And then someone calls you an affirmative action hire or that's what they're talking about."

The findings in this study are in line with the research done by Dr. Pauline Rose Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes around the theory of imposter syndrome. The participants in this study felt the weight of imposter syndrome when they were asked to speak about their achievement, which is what Dr. Pauline Rose Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes identify as the definition of imposter syndrome. In the study done by Edwards (2019), he found that people who suffer from imposter syndrome are hyperaware of their surroundings, which is what the participants in the study also claimed. The findings were similar to a study done by Avila (2020) where the participants also struggled with imposter syndrome and how much it impacted their ability to show up authentically. It is important to support the women of color with imposter syndrome to help alleviate some of the pressure and this can be done through various forms of representation.

Finding 5: Immigrant Representation Matters

This study and other research have found that being a woman of color can be challenging in its own way but the women of color who came here from other countries, either as first-generation immigrants or later in their lives, had an additional layer of challenges. Many of the women who participated in this study felt the pressures of being an immigrant, carried into their jobs. From not understanding the cultural nuances to having to break free from the cultural expectations, the challenges of coming from a different country set a different expectation. A participant who came to the US in her early twenties said, "There were a lot of challenges at the same time, learning the culture of the organization, of the country, and learning the language." She felt this struggle was not understood by people who didn't have similar backgrounds.

Another participant mentioned how she was brought by her parents, "I'm a Filipino American. My parents were immigrants from the Philippines. I was born in San Francisco. And growing up, I was taught to assimilate." She realized that assimilating would not help her in her climb to leadership and how challenging it was for her to do the opposite of what her parents taught her. Another participant who came to the US when she was a teenager spoke about what it was like to assimilate here and have a child who was born here who didn't have the same struggles. "Going for drinking parties and going to Vegas or going to sporting events and stuff, which are things that don't come naturally to my immigrant generation. I feel like my son's generation is more attuned to this. They were born here. They, this is their culture. I feel like I'm that sandwich generation that goes back and forth." Being caught between two cultures can be challenging itself, and when you are trying to figure out how to acclimate within both, it can add another layer of anxiety.

The findings in this study corroborates a study done by Jackson et.al. (1995) which found that women of color who were only one of a few in their organizations found it lonely, which brought upon unnecessary stress. The women of color in this study had similar responses to Kanter's (1977) study in which the participants felt the pressure to remain in certain roles due to the stereotypes of their community and the challenges they face trying to break free from this. Change like this cannot happen in a silo; community support and spaces can help women of color find others who are going through similar challenges and who can help them build their confidence.

Finding 6: The Importance of Community Support and Spaces

This study found that most of the women of color who participated felt that community support and spaces can be beneficial to all women, particularly women of

color. Community supports can be having a coach or being part of a network but can also be having someone who has gone through similar experiences. Building a community of like-minded people, who have also had similar experiences is helpful for collaboration and belonging. The study found that women who have shared experiences with people similar to them feel connected and make them want to stay with their organization.

These findings in this study are consistent with studies done by Tolay (2020), Gray (2020), and Ibarra (2019). All studies found that women who were given support had stronger relationships, positive behavior supports, and higher confidence. Participants in this study also felt that having support allowed them to be more comfortable within the organization which translated to them being more invested in the organization.

Finding 7: Cultural, Organizational, Personal, and Stereotypical Supports are Given but Not Nearly Enough.

This study found that many of the participants had access to these four supports, however, all of them feel they could have used more.

Cultural supports are social and community networks that positively support and influence individual's self-identity, cultural influences, in both their personal and professional environments (Packer-Williams & Evans, 2011, p 6). The findings in this study indicated that two of the participants belonged to community networks that they felt positively supported them. One participant mentioned that she was a part of a networking group, however she did not find it helpful when the groups were rigid. "What I have not found helpful is very self-prescribed women groups or women" She wanted a network where she had the opportunity to voice her needs and get help for the issues she was struggling with. The other participant found her positive community later in her

career. "For me like personally as a person trying to climb the ranks, but the lessons learned are that we need our safe spaces and with people that understand us." Getting positive supports at the beginning of their careers would be the most beneficial for all women.

Organizational supports help people advance in their careers through communication, coaching, and mentoring programs as well as practices that include inclusion and diversity training (Delany & Rogers, 2004). These are the supports that all participants agree they needed the most, particularly coaching and mentoring. This study did find that many of the women did have access to mentors, who did have positive influences on them. Most of the participants felt like that if they had mentors who looked like them, they would have learned more and connected more to their mentors.

Personal Supports provide various types of formal and informal connections, such as mentoring and coaching by helping create a social network (Combs, 2003). The findings in this study showed that out of the participants who did have mentoring and coaching, none of them mentioned being able to create a social network. When the participants were asked about whether they felt this was something needed, the participants did believe this could benefit women joining the ranks of leadership.

Stereotypical supports are ones that support group dynamics around characteristics of race, gender, and sex which support positive outcomes for everyone involved (Riley, 2010). The findings in this study indicated that all the participants did not have support around race and very few had support around gender. One participant mentioned her experience around being not only the only woman of color but the only Muslim on her team and how difficult she found it.

I do have a lot of you know, Caucasians on my team, for example. And, you

know, where I'm probably the only Muslim person I really know very well and

probably the only, you know, South Asian that they know well. But it was not

because of the color but because of the gender inequality for the leadership. And

it was hard. So not only just the color, but also the religious difference because I

was the only Muslim in the room with the leadership position.

There seems to be a unanimous agreement that there is a need for cultural, organizational,

personal, and stereotypical supports to help women of color be successful in leadership.

The findings of this study confirmed this. Ironically, there were some unexpected

findings that surprised the researcher from the participants of this study.

Unexpected Findings

This study yielded a few unexpected findings that the researcher did not anticipate

when creating the study. The first one was that one of the women in the study did not feel

like being a woman of color impacted them negatively. She was one of the women who

had migrated to the US in her teenage years. When the researcher asked this participant,

who is founder and president of a company, what it was like being a woman of color, she

responded by saying,

I have not had any issues per se, but I'm also very insensitive. To, you know, the

fact that I'm a woman, the fact that I'm not, you know, I'm a woman of color.

Those have never been mental barriers in my mind at all. So, I don't notice it. I

don't notice these things. I just feel that. I'm capable. I know I'm capable. I behave

that way. And I've never had to.

This was the opposite of what the others had said. The other women spoke about how being women of color was part of their identity and something they thought about regularly, yet this participant felt like this was not something that impacted how she showed up. A study done by Alyssa Avila (2020) showed similar findings. A participant in her study spoke about being a Black woman and how she knew that was her identity and she considered herself 'unique' and celebrated what she brought to her organization. Similar to this study, there were only a couple of participants who felt this while most of the others had experiences that were negative.

Another unexpected finding was that a few women working in the Bay Area feel like being in the Bay Area affords them less issues regarding their gender and race than other places. One participant, who started her own company, spoke about her experience here.

Living in the time that we do, and the city that we do really change the game for me as a woman of color I don't think that I would have been able to do this if you know if I didn't live in the city that I live in, I think, for the most part I've had very positive experiences with people.

Her experiences being a woman of color has been overall positive however, she is aware that not everyone has the same experience as her. In the study done by Avila (2020), she also found women who had positive experiences; however, all the women were in academia. There is more research done around women leaders in academia, which is one of the reasons the researcher chose to focus on the corporate sector.

The last unexpected finding that came up was how many women were excited about this research being done. All the participants who were interviewed happily

participated in the research and mentioned how happy they were that this was being done. The consensus was that they were hoping for the future young girls and women of color would not struggle as much as they had. Ramones (2017) did a study around the experiences of Asian American women leaders in education, and he also found that the women in the study were grateful to not only be a part of the study but also that the study was being done. They also felt there was a need for this research as there are still few women of color in leadership. The participants in this study hoped that their experiences would help even one young woman of color be more confident in her journey into leadership. The researcher anticipated finding participants to be a challenge but in fact, the opposite happened. There were many women who volunteered to tell their story and to be part of the research.

Conclusions

The key findings in this study resulted in the following conclusions on what can help women of color in leadership. The conclusions have supporting evidence from the qualitative data pulled from the study, as well as the literature.

Conclusion 1:

Almost all of the women of color in this study experienced some form of microaggression within their organization. Microaggressions show up in various forms, such as verbal slights and implicit and explicit biases as well as more outwardly discriminatory such as lower pay for similar roles, being asked to take notes in a meeting, or not being promoted even though they had higher education or more experience. This is consistent with the literature, which reports the experiences of "tokens" (those who comprise less than 15% of a group's total) are a myriad of hardships in the workplace,

including feelings of being in the spotlight, or feeling isolated, as well as limited opportunities for promotion. (Stroshine & Brandl, 2011). The stereotype of women of color being in roles that are support rather than leadership is a recurring theme in literature, even studies done decades ago.

The impact of microaggressions can be detrimental and therefore providing training to all staff, including upper leadership and support staff is important for any organization that would like support their staff. Providing equity trainings and creating an equity team would create a proactive environment for all staff and ensure everyone is on the same page regarding how the organization handles inequities. The equity committee can also monitor issues that come up within the organization so they can be addressed immediately, rather than once it becomes a larger issue. Whether it is dealing with the microaggressions or the additional responsibilities, women of color need to be hyper vigilant and this is not fair to them.

Conclusion 2:

Providing a robust onboarding for new employees, which includes pairing with a mentor or coach, and the opportunity for networking would help new staff acclimate to their new environment. Having a mentor, particularly one who has a similar background would help the employees understand how to manage certain challenges within the organizations. Mentors have been known to help learn about opportunities within the organization, supported their professional growth, and provided a shoulder to lean on when facing challenges. Mentors help others become stronger leaders and give them a sense of self confidence. In Ramones' (2017) study, he also found that the participants who had mentors were more confident and successful in advancing into their leadership

roles. Having a mentor would be incredibly helpful but having a mentor that was also a woman of color would be even more beneficial as it could combat some of the issues faced by women of color such as imposter syndrome.

Providing onboarding supports would also help women of color combat the feeling of imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome impacts women of color on the daily, which can manifest in various ways, including lack of confidence, which can impact opportunities. Women who hold master's degrees or higher and those in high positions often feel like they are frauds and do not deserve the accolades they receive. Due to this, women of color may have a harder time fitting into their organizations, which may create some challenges. Women of color often hide, disguise, or alter themselves to fit in with the majority group (Edwards, 2019). These women are trying to fit into what is societally accepted. Many of these women of color have been known to give themselves 'pep talks' or have an 'internal dialogue' with positive affirmations and reminders that they are in fact worthy and have earned their current job.

Conclusion 3:

Providing mental health services during onboarding would also be incredibly helpful for women of color who are struggling with the feeling of imposter syndrome or feeling overwhelmed due to other challenges. When a woman has multiple ethnicities or identifies with more than one identifies, they may not feel like they belong in either. This can show up in questioning one's own value. Providing mental health services Having someone who has gone through similar experiences would help with this.

The findings in this study showed that women of color who were immigrants or first generation were raised in a culture where they were taught to assimilate and not to be

outspoken so becoming leaders is not only a new concept for them but also their families. This can manifest in women leaders having two different personalities, one for work and one for their home lives. The work personality is one that fits societal norms, dressing professionally, using proper language, and fitting into the office culture, whereas the home personality openly embraces their diversity and uniqueness. The code switching adds an additional layer of stress upon the women of color as it can be challenging to be on alert when changing environments. This can be incredibly challenging and this can cause women to feel overwhelmed and, in some cases, cause them to leave their jobs. Encouraging mental health supports, including wellness programs are proactive and combat many of these issues. Having spaces where women could be their authentic self can lower their need for code-switching.

Conclusion 4:

There is a great need for four main types of support: cultural, organizational, personal, and stereotypical for women of color who are in leadership as well as those advancing into leadership. In this study, the researcher used the theoretical framework of social exchange theory to understand if women of color were being provided these exchanges and supports to advance into leadership positions. Social exchange theory, according to Blau (1964), is where individuals engage in connection with others that produces a type of commitment that requires a back and forth and various levels of support. The researcher wanted to understand how cultural, organizational, personal, and stereotypical supports influenced women of color in their role as leaders. The findings indicated that the participants had limited access to personal and organizational support but could use more cultural and stereotypical support. The implication for action

discusses how to provide these supports to women of color in leadership, as well those attempting to advance into higher positions.

Implications for Action

The research found that women of color in corporate leadership faced various struggles as they climbed the corporate ladder and that there is a lack of support for women of color moving into leadership positions. The following implications from this research would benefit organizations who are attempting to recruit or retain women of color in leadership, as well women of color who are attempting to move into leadership. Additionally, these implications can also support women of color who are currently in leadership roles who may need additional support.

Implications for Action 1: Onboarding Program

Organizations should provide an onboarding program for all women, but particularly women of color that includes a mentor and access to supports such as coaching. As organizations onboard their new employees, connect them with a mentor who can help guide them through the role and provide them with guidance. Ideally, the mentors should be of a similar background so that the mentees can connect on more than just a professional level. Providing employees support at the beginning of their journey will help them ease into the role and create connection with the people within the organization, which could translate into retention of the employees. The program should also include an opportunity for the employee to provide feedback on their concerns so they can be addressed through mentoring and coaching. The program should be formalized and given to everyone who joins the organization.

Implications for Action 2: Equity Training

Provide equity training on implicit bias and microaggressions for the entire organization from a reputable diversity company. Most of the women in the study spoke about being on the receiving end of microaggressions and it is important for organizations to provide training for *all* employees on biases and microaggressions and the impact it has on people. Many people who make comments may be unaware that their comments can be harmful or have a negative impact. Providing training to all employees decreases the chances of having someone making inappropriate comments but more importantly sets the tone for everyone to feel comfortable in the workplace.

This training should also come with the procedure on how to report someone who makes comments and options for communication and resolution. To ensure fidelity, the training and subsequent follow-ups should be done by an organization whose mission is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for all. Ideally, this should be a three-to-five-year plan to ensure all staff is trained and that it becomes a consistent part of the culture. Finding an organization may be challenging but this process should not be rushed, as the training will be laying the foundation within the organization. There should also be an expectation of participation not only among the staff but all stakeholders, including boards and owners. This will set the precedent of importance for all. The participants who are passionate about the work can be part of the organization's equity team, which can be the next step of the equity work.

Implications for Action 3: Equity Committee

Have an equity committee within the organization. An equity committee can consist of people within the organization who have a passion for equity. This committee

should consist of people of color, white people, all genders, so that all there is representation on all fronts. This committee can be charged with ensuring the policies and procedures within the organization are equitable to all who join. For example, looking at the recruitment process to determine whether the organization is recruiting in locations that would bring in more women and women of color.

With the hiring process, ensuring the interview questions are not biased and are inclusive in nature would encourage more people to apply and join the organization. This committee should also be tasked with ensuring equity when it comes to salary. The findings in this study and literature show that women of color are paid less than any other group and this continues to be the case.

Implications for Action 4: Alignment of Vision, Mission, and Values

Organizations should ensure their vision, mission, and values align with equity to ensure all employees feel heard and seen. Having everyone in the organization participate in creating an equitable culture can result in more organizational buy-in. All stakeholders should be a part of this conversation, from custodian to CEO to ensure all voices are heard and the decisions are not being made by senior leadership.

Wenstøp et.al. (2006), discuss the importance of creating values within an organization. They believe that there are three value categories, which are: 1) created values, which are the ones that the stakeholders in the organization work towards, 2) protected values, which are ones that should not cause encroachment to others, and finally 3) core values, which show the character of the organization. According to Wenstøp et.al. (2006), it is important to have all three to create the most inspirational and

motivational organization. The value, mission, and vision of an organization creates a positive culture that can keep its employees happy and provide positive mental health.

Implications for Action 5: Mental Health Programs

Organizations should provide mental health and wellness programs to support all their employees. This should not happen once an incident of discrimination has occurred but a proactive approach to the whole person's well-being. Mental health and wellness programs should be included in the onboarding as a proactive effort to keep staff safe and healthy.

There are quite a few organizations that have prioritized their employee's mental health. Even the National Basketball Player Association (NBA) started a mental health program for its players and staff to destigmatize mental health and prioritize the wellness of all (Spears, 2023). Having someone lead the mental health program would be ideal, but providing staff with the options of wellness, gym memberships, yoga and meditation, and self-care days would also increase the motivation among employees.

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Recommendations for Future Research

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Based on the findings in this study, as well as the limitations, it is recommended that further research be done around the topic of women of color in corporate leadership. The following recommendations would be beneficial:

1. Replicate this study with women of color outside of the Bay Area. The Bay Area is incredibly diverse and the experience of these women may not reflect the experiences of women of color in leadership in areas that are not as diverse. This would provide great qualitative data to help organizations who struggle with recruitment and retention of women of color in leadership positions.

2. Replicate this study with women of color in the Fortune 500 sector. Women in the Fortune 500 sector can provide more details on the challenges they have faced and provide insight into the support that could empower more women of color in leadership.

3. Replicate this study with a quantitative approach to help understand the frequency and impact discrimination and microaggressions on women of color in leadership. This study does collect the qualitative data, there is much more information to be collected.

4. Additional research can be done to understand why women of color face so much discrimination and inequality in the workplace, financially and in advancement. Understanding this would benefit organizations because it would help them understand what changes need to be made. This could be done by interviewing former staff who may have left due to discrimination and inequalities.

5. Replicate this study in other countries to determine whether women of color in the US face more discrimination than women in other countries.

6. Interview employees in the HR department to understand the data around recruitment and retention. This should be a mixed method study to understand not only the percentages of people coming and going but also the HRs understanding of the problem. This study could also be done with former employees to really understand why they left the organization and their recommendations for retention.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

This study aimed to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership and strategies to support their advancement. This study concluded that women of color in leadership faced discrimination, such as microaggressions and implicit and explicit biases, and felt the need to constantly prove themselves in the workplace. This study also found that women of color thrive when given support, such as mentors, community support and spaces. Women of color have been underpaid more than any other group. According to Sumati Srinivas (2007), there are five factors related to the gender pay gap in the United States, "education, age, job experience, gender and race" (p. 273). This study similarly found that women who were equally or even more educated were paid less than their male counterparts. Women of color face many barriers when advancing into leadership but there are so many things that can be done to remove these barriers and support these women.

This study was near and dear to my heart as a woman of color myself. I have been on the receiving end of discrimination and bias in the workplace as I have attempted to advance in leadership. I know first-hand how difficult it can be to advance in leadership with the cards stacked against you and no support, and how hard it can be to tell your story. I am in awe of the bravery of the women I interviewed for telling their stories and wanting to help others. Many of the interviews were emotional and some of the women ended up reliving some of their trauma around their journey to leadership yet they still persevered because they wanted better for the next generation.

The process of this journey reminded me not only of how phenomenally resilient women are but how much they have to offer. They are natural born leaders who juggle so

many different things yet the world is not prepared for them. Having a female Vice President of color is such a tremendous win for women and I am confident that we will be doing more amazing things in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent External Inbox ×

Rozina Kapadia <rkapadia@mail.umassglobal.edu>   Fri, Nov 11, 2022, 10:09 PM
to amklotz@gmail.com

Hi Dr. Klotz,
I hope you are well. My name is Rozina Kapadia and I am a doctoral candidate. I am working on my dissertation, looking at the underrepresentation of women of color in leadership. I will be doing a qualitative interview and would like to adapt your work/questions to include in my study. Please let me know if you are okay with this.
Thank you,
Rozina

Ann Marie Klotz <amklotz@gmail.com>   Sat, Nov 12, 2022, 5:01 AM
to me

Good morning,
I am thrilled to hear about your research and I am happy to give my consent. If I can support you in any way, please let me know.

Hang in there, the doctorate is a marathon! Take good care of yourself,

Ann Marie

Sent from my iPhone

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Launching the Next Generation of School Leaders: An Ethnographical Look at Leadership Coaches and Their Experiences on the Development of Transformational Leadership Skills in New School Administrators as a Result of Participating in the Blended Coaching Model.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Rozina Kapadia, Doctorate in Organizational Leadership

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Your Name Here, degree earned, a doctoral student from the Doctoral of Education in Organizational Leadership at UMass Global. This study intends to provide a better understanding of the experience of women of color in leadership and the supports they have received within their organization. The primary research questions that will guide this study are:

1) What are the lived experiences of women of color in their roles as leaders with respect to personal supports, organizational supports, cultural supports, and stereotypical supports?
2) What are the experiences of women of color in leadership positions?

The goal of this research study is to hear the experiences women of color have had and to provide strategies to future leaders to ensure the recruitment and retention of these women in hope of increasing the number of women in leadership. The data collected will or may provide organizations with added knowledge and insight on how important support is for women when they attempt to move into leadership.

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in a semi-structure interview. The interview(s) will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be conducted over zoom.

I understand that:
a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.
b) I understand that the interview will be transcribed. The transcripts will be available only to the researcher. The transcripts will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted, and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all data will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored

for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.

c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding the experiences of women of color in leadership and supports that help them advance. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about the experience of women of color in leadership. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation. d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Rozina Kapadia at student rkapadia@mail.umassglobal.edu or by phone at 408-472-0861; or Dr. Carlos Guzman at cguzman@umassglobal.edu.

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study, and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed, and my consent reobtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____

Signature of Participant

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator

_____

Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol Questions

1. Describe the professional journey that has led you to your current position as a woman of color.
2. Talk about the experience of being a woman of color in a position of power in corporate?
3. What does being a woman of color in a position of power look like daily?
4. Do you feel women of color are held to a different standard when climbing the professional ladder?
5. Describe your professional challenges and how they have impacted your motivation to move into leadership.
6. Have mentors affected your professional opportunities and career progression?
7. What types of support have you received in your professional journey to support your advancement? Mentoring, networking, sponsorship, shine theory, and coaching.
8. What types of supports have you provided to others that you wish you had received?
9. Biggest lesson you learned about yourself as a woman of color in your professional journey?
10. What type of support do you believe are needed to support women of color in leadership positions?

Questions adapted from Dr. Anne Klotz's research with permission.

Appendix D

Synthesis Matrix

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
	X						X		Abrams, D., Thomas, J., & Hogg, M. A. (1990). Numerical distinctiveness, social identity and gender salience. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 29*(1), 87-92. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1990.tb00889.x
X	X	X	X				X		Advisor, N. B. (2019). Women of color face gender, racial bias in nonprofit sector. *Nonprofit Business Advisor, 2019*(355), 5-8. https://doi.org/10.1002/nba.30578
X	X	X				X	X		Aguirre, A. (2000). *Women and minority faculty in the academic workplace: Recruitment, retention, and academic culture.* ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 27(6), 1-141. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED447752
X	X		X				X		Alfaro, A. (2017). *Gender bias in leadership: Do gender of leader, type of error, diversity climate, and gender of subordinate affect faculty perceptions of academic leaders' effectiveness?* (Publication No. 29118039). [Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X						X		Ashmore, R. D., & del Boca, F. K. (1979). Sex stereotypes and implicit personality theory: Toward a cognitive-social psychological conceptualization. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 5*(2), 219-248. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287932
X	X						X		Baker, J. (2006). *Sisters: The lives of America's suffragists.* Hill and Wang.
					X	X	X	X	Bamier, L. A. (1982). A study of the mentoring relationship: An analysis of its relation to career and adult development in higher education and business. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 42*(7-A), 3012-3013.
			X		X	X	X	X	Barnes, J. (2017). Climbing the stairs to leadership: Reflections on moving beyond the stained-glass ceiling. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 10*(4), 47-53. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21503
					X	X		X	Bartol, K. M., & Zhang, X. (2007). Networks and leadership development: Building linkages for capacity acquisition and capital accrual. *Human Resource Management Review, 17*(4), 388-401. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2007.08.004
X	X		X				X		Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2012). Female leadership raises aspirations and educational attainment for girls: A policy experiment in India. *Science, 335*(6068), 582-586. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1212382
X	X		X	X		X	X		Becks-Moody, G. M. (2004). *African American women administrators in higher education: exploring the challenges and experiences at Louisiana public colleges and universities* (Publication No. etd-10222004-111952) [Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University]. Digital Commons. https://doi.org/10.31390/gradschool_dissertations.2074
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Beckwith, A. L., Carter, D. R., & Peters, T. (2016). The underrepresentation of African American women in executive leadership: What's getting in the way? *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly, 7*(4), 115–134.

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Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
		X			X	X	X	X	Bennis, W. (2007). The challenges of leadership in the modern world: Introduction to the special issue. *American Psychologist, 62*(1), 2-5. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.1.2
X	X	X	X				X		Bergeron, D. M., Block, C. J., & Echtenkamp, B. A. (2006). Disabling the able: Stereotype threat and women's work performance. *Human Performance, 19*(2), 133-158. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327043hup1902_3
X	X	X	X			X	X		Bichsel, J., & McChesney, J. (2017). *Pay and representation of racial/ethnic minorities in higher education administrative positions: The century so far.* College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. http://www.cupahr.org/wp-content/ uploads/cupahr_research_brief_minorities.pdf
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Bishop, J. D. (2022). *The female leadership gap: Breaking down the barriers and biases of women in leadership* (Publication No. 28970704). [Doctoral dissertation, Columbia International University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Blue, G. D. (2022). *The impact of mentoring on the career advancement of African American women to leadership management roles in business* (Publication No. 28966837). [Doctoral dissertation, Campbellsville University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X			X	X	X	X	Bova, B. (2000). Mentoring revisited: The Black woman's experience. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning. 8*(1), 5-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/713685511
X	X						X		Bowen, S. A. (2016). Finding strategic communication & diverse leadership in the ancient world: The case of Queen Cleopatra VII, the last pharaoh of Egypt. *Cogent Arts & Humanities, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1154704
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Boyd, A. (2022). *An exploration of the lived experiences of Black women in senior/executive leadership positions in non-profit organizations* (Publication No. 28968795). [Doctoral dissertation, Robert Morris University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X						X		Brown, R. C. (2012). *Harriet Tubman: A Servant Leader?* (Publication No. ADA601025) [Master's thesis, Marine Corps Command and Staff College]. Defense Technical Information Center. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA601025
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Burton, B. (2022). *Lived experiences of women of color in educational leadership in Arizona* (Publication No. 29069235). [Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X						X		Campbell, D. T. (1967). Stereotypes and the perception of group differences. *American Psychologist, 22*(10), 817-829. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0025079
X	X		X				X		Candia-Bailey, A. (2016). *My sister, myself: The identification of sociocultural factors that affect the advancement of African-American women into senior-level administrative positions* (Publication No. 10117797). [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X	X	X				X		Cheryan, S., Plaut, V. C., Davies, P. G., & Steele, C. M. (2009). Ambient belonging: How stereotypical cues impact gender participation in computer science. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97*(6), 1045-1060. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016239
X	X		X		X	X	X	X	Chow, R. (2021, June 30). *Don't just mentor women of color. Sponsor them.* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2021/06/dont-just-mentor-women-and-people-of-color-sponsor-them
X	X		X				X		Clare, J. (2004). *Becoming leaders: An investigation into women's leadership in male defined and male dominated professions* (Publication No. 15947) [Master's thesis, Queensland University of Technology]. Queensland University of Technology ePrints. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/15947/
X							X		Cohen, G. L., & Garcia, J. (2008). Identity, belonging, and achievement: A model, interventions, implications. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 17*(6), 365-369. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00607.x
X	X		X	X			X		Cohen, L. L., & Swim, J. K. (1995). The differential impact of gender ratios on women and men: Tokenism, self-confidence, and expectations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21*(9), 876-884. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167295219001
X	X		X				X		Colbert, D. J. (2009). *Gender and racial experiences in executive school leadership: Perceptions of African-American female superintendents* (Publication No. 3367682) [Doctoral dissertation, Oakland University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X					X	X		Combs, G. M. (2003). The duality of race and gender for managerial African American women: Implications of informal social networks on career advancement. *Human Resource Development Review, 2*(4), 385-405. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484303257949
X					X		X	X	Crawford, K., & Smith, D. (2005). The we and the us: Mentoring African American women. *Journal of Black Studies. 36*(1), 52–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934704265910
X	X	X			X	X	X		Davis, D. R., & Maldonado, C. (2015). Shattering the glass ceiling: The leadership development of African American women in higher educat*ion. Advancing Women in Leadership Journal, 35*, 48-64. https://doi.org/10.21423/awlj-v35.a125
X	X				X		X	X	Dawson, A. E., Bernstein, B. L., & Bekki, J. M. (2015). Providing the psychosocial benefits of mentoring to women in STEM: CareerWISE as an online solution. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2015*(171), 53-62. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20142
X							X	X	DeChurch, L. A., Hiller, N. J., Murase, T., Doty, D., & Salas, E. (2010). Leadership across levels: Levels of leaders and their levels of impact. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*(6), 1069-1085. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.10.009
X	X						X		Delany, J., & Rogers, E. (2004). Black women's leadership and learning: From politics to afritics in the context of community. *Convergence, 37*(2), 91-106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422309351836

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Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X	X				X	X	X	Desroches Dean, M. (2010). *Women in educational leadership: An exploratory study of the lack of women in educational leadership and what can be done to increase the number of women presidents at four-year institutions* (Publication No. 9781267148643) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland University College]. University of Maryland Global Campus Archives Digital Repository. http://contentdm.umgc.edu/digital/collection/ p15434coll2/id/27/rec/1
X	X	X					X		Dunham, C. R. (2017). Third generation discrimination: The ripple effects of gender bias in the workplace. *Akron Law Review, 51*(1), 51-55. https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/
X	X						X	X	Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *The Leadership Quarterly, 14*(6), 807–834. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.004
X	X						X		Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders.* Harvard Business School Press.
	X						X	X	Eagly, A. H., Makhijani, M. G., & Klonsky, B. G. (1992). Gender and the evaluation of leaders: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 111*(1), 3-22. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.111.1.3
					X			X	Ennis, S., Otto, J., Stern, L. Vitti, M., & Yahanda, N. (2012). *Executive coaching handbook: Principles and guidelines for a successful coaching partnership* (5th ed.). The Executive Coaching Forum.
X	X	X	X		X		X		Foschi, M. (1996). Double standards in the evaluation of men and women. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 59*(3), 237-254. https://doi.org/10.2307/2787021
X	X	X	X			X	X		Foschi, M. (2000). Double standards for competence: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology, 26*, 21–42. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.21
X	X	X				X	X		Foschi, M., Lai, L., & Sigerson, K. (1994). Gender and Double Standards in the Assessment of Job Applicants. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 57*(4), 326–339. https://doi.org/10.2307/2787159
					X	X	X	X	Garavan, T., Hogan, C., & Cahir-O'Donnell, A. (2003). *Making training and development work: A best practice guide.* Oak Tree Press.
X	X	X					X		Gasman, M., Abiola, U., & Travers, C. (2015). Diversity and senior leadership at elite institutions of higher education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 8*(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038872
X	X						X		Gouldin, E. (2020). *"A purse of her own": Susan B. Anthony's fight for the economic independence of women* (Publication No. 27959079). [Doctoral dissertation, Notre Dame of Maryland University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
									Gray, T. (2021). *Factors in the career advancement of women leaders of color in IT:*

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Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X					X	X	X	Gray, T. (2021). *Factors in the career advancement of women leaders of color in IT: Mentorship, leadership, and career sponsorship* (Publication No. 28263802) [Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Hannum, K. M., Muhly, S. M., Shockley-Zalabak, P. S., & White, J. S. (2015). Women leaders within higher education in the United States: Supports, barriers, and experiences of being a senior leader. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal, 35*, 65-75. https://doi.org/10.21423/awlj-v35.a129
					X	X	X	X	Harmeier, M. (2016). *The impact of coaching on the leadership practices of California public school superintendents* [Doctoral dissertation, Brandman University]. UMass Global ScholarWorks. https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd_dissertations/80/
X	X						X		Hayward, N. (2018). *Susan B. Anthony.* National Women's History Museum. https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/susan-b-anthony
X	X						X		Heilman, M. E., Block, C. J., Martell, R. F., & Simon, M. C. (1989). Has anything changed? Current characterizations of men, women, and managers. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 74*(6), 935-942. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.74.6.935
	X					X	X	X	Heim, P., & Murphy, S. (2001). *In the company of women: Turning workplace conflict into powerful alliances.* J.P. Tarcher/Putnam.
X	X					X	X		Hinton, K. G. (2001). *The experiences of African American women administrators at predominantly white institutions of higher education* (Publication No. 3005434). [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X					X	X		Hoeritz, K. J. (2013). *Stereotypes and their consequences for women as leaders in higher education administration* (Publication No. 3568329). [Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
	X				X	X	X		Hoyt, C. L., & Murphy, S. E. (2016). Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat, women, and leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 27*(3), 387-399. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.11.002
X	X		X		X	X	X	X	Ibarra, H. (2019, August 19). A lack of sponsorship is keeping women from advancing into leade*rship. Harvard Business* Review. https://hbr.org/2019/08/a-lack-of-sponsorship-is-keeping-women-from-advancing-into-leadership
X	X						X		Jackman M. R. (1994). T*he velvet glove: paternalism and conflict in gender, class and race relations.* University of California Press.
				X		X	X		Jackson, P. B., Thoits, P. A., & Taylor, H. F. (1995). Composition of the workplace and psychological well-being: The effects of tokenism on America's Black elite. *Social Forces, 74*(2), 543-557. https://doi.org/10.2307/2580491
									Jackson, T. D. (2021). *An examination of the role of gender and gender quotas on women in*

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
				X		X	X		Jackson, P. B., Thoits, P. A., & Taylor, H. F. (1995). Composition of the workplace and psychological well-being: The effects of tokenism on America's Black elite. *Social Forces, 74*(2), 543-557. https://doi.org/10.2307/2580491
X	X					X	X		Jackson, T. D. (2021). *An examination of the role of gender and gender quotas on women in political leadership roles* (Publication No. 28772561). [Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
	X	X	X			X	X		Jean-Marie, G. (2011). Chapter 1: "Unfinished agendas": Trends in women of color's status in higher education. In Jean-Marie, G. and Lloyd-Jones, B. (Ed.), *Women of color in higher education: Turbulent past, promising future (Diversity in higher education, Vol. 9)* (pp.3-19). Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3644(2011)0000009006
	X				X	X	X	X	Jeffcoat, S. Y. (2008). *Mentoring women of color for leadership: Do barriers exist?* (Publication No. 3375041). [Doctoral dissertation, Antioch University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X				X	X	X	X	Jogulu, U.D., & Wood, G.J. (2006). The role of leadership theory in raising the profile of women in management. *Equal Opportunities International, 25*(4), 236-250. https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150610706230
	X	X	X	X			X		Johnson, P. M. (2022). *Experiences of women of color in leadership paths at predominately white institutions* (Publication No. 28964964). [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X				X	X		Johnson-Gooden, S.R. (2021). P*henomenology study on the lived experiences of women's barriers to advancement as leaders in higher education institutions* (Publication No. 28863374). [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
	X						X		Jones, C., & Shorter-Gooden, K. (2003). *Shifting: The double lives of Black women in America.* HarperCollins.
X	X	X	X			X	X		Jordan, L. (2021). *Critical qualitative multiple case study: Quest for women of color gaining equal employment opportunity* (Publication No. 28540225). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona Global Campus]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X						X		Kalokerinos, E. K., von Hippel, C., & Zacher, H. (2014). Is stereotype threat a useful construct for organizational psychology research and practice? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 7*(3), 381-402. https://doi.org/10.1111/iops.12167
X	X					X	X		Kanter R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation.* Basic Books.
					X	X	X	X	Klasen, N., & Clutterbuck, D. (2001). *Implementing mentoring schemes: A practical guide to successful programs.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080508511

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	McDaniel-Richmond, J. (2016). *A quantitative examination of gender's impact on the barriers of advancement to senior-level management positions* (Publication No. 10008714). [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X								McGlone, M. S., Aronson, J., & Kobrynowicz, D. (2006). Stereotype threat and the gender gap in political knowledge. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 30*(4), 392-398. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00314.x
X							X		Moore, C. (2015). *A queen's reputation: A feminist analysis of the cultural appropriations of Cleopatra* [Honors thesis, University of Southern Mississippi]. The Aquila Digital Community. https://aquila.usm.edu/honors_theses/297/
					X	X	X		Morrisette, S., & Oberman, W. (2013). Shifting strategic imperatives: A stages of leadership perspective on the adoption of corporate entrepreneurship. *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship, 18*(2), 59.
X	X			X		X	X		Moser, C. E. (2019). *Male allies decrease negative effects of tokenism for women in male dominated workplaces* [Master's thesis, University of Kansas]. KU ScholarWorks. https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/31378
X	X					X	X		Ndekugri, A., & Pryor, J. (2018). Factors affecting women in managerial roles. *Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance & Marketing 10*(2), 36-46.
	X				X	X	X	X	Noe, R. A. (1988). Women and mentoring: A review and research agenda. *The Academy of Management Review, 13*(1), 65-78. https://doi.org/10.2307/258355
					X			X	Northouse, P. G. (2014). *Introduction to leadership: Concepts and practice.* Sage Publications.
					X			X	Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Sage Publications.
	X				X	X	X	X	O'Neill, C., & Boyle, S. (2011). Leadership challenges for women at work. *Chief Learning Officer, 10*(6), 76-78. http://cedma-europe.org/newsletter%20articles/Clomedia/ Leadership%20Challenges%20for%20Women%20at%20Work%20(Jun%2011).pdf
	X				X		X	X	Packer-Williams, C. L., & Evans, K. M. (2011). Retaining and reclaiming ourselves: Reflections on a peer mentoring group experience for new African American women professors. *Perspectives in Peer Programs, 23*(1), 9-23. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ935419
					X	X	X	X	Paglis, L. L., Green, S. G., & Bauer, T. N. (2006). Does adviser mentoring add value? A longitudinal study of mentoring and doctoral student outcomes. *Research in Higher Education, 47*(4), 451-476. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-005-9003-2
X	X			X		X	X		Patitu, C. L., & Hinton, K. G. (2003). The experiences of African American women faculty and administrators in higher education: Has anything changed? *New Directions for Student Services, 104*, 79-93. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ss.109
									Percupchick, H. (2011). *Women in leadership: Understanding potential drivers/restrainers of female progression in the workplace* (Publication No. 3467494). [Doctoral dissertation

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Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X						X		Kristof, N. D. (2008, February 10). When women rule. *The New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/10/opinion/10kristof.html
X	X					X	X		LaPierre, T. A., & Zimmerman, M. K. (2012). Career advancement and gender equity in healthcare management. *Gender in Management, 27*(2), 100-118. https://doi.org/10.1108/17542411211214158
	X			X			X	X	Lennon, T., Spotts, D. L., & Mitchell, M. (2013). *Benchmarking women's leadership in the United States*. Colorado Women's College, University of Denver. https://www.issuelab.org/resources/26706/26706.pdf
X	X					X	X		Lewis, C. (2016). Gender, race, and career advancement: When do we have enough cultural capital? *Negro Educational Review, 67*(1-4), 106-132. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/gender-race-career-advancement-when-do-we-have/docview/1926455565/se-2
X	X						X		Lipka, P. (2008). *Stereotype threat and women's perceptions of leadership self-efficacy* (Publication No. 1454735). [Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X				X	X	X	X	Linehan, M., & Scullion, H. (2008). The development of female global managers: The role of mentoring and networking. *Journal of Business Ethics, 83*(1), 29-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9657-0
X	X						X		Logel, C., Iserman, E. C., Davies, P. G., Quinn, D. M., & Spencer, S. J. (2009). The perils of double consciousness: The role of thought suppression in stereotype threat. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*(2), 299-312. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.07.016
X	X						X		Lorber, J. (1991). The social construction of gender. In G. Kirk, & M. Okazawa-Rey (6th ed.), *Women's lives: Multicultural perspectives* (pp. 64-68). McGraw-Hill.
	X				X	X	X	X	Makekau, M. (2022). *Transactional to transformational: Women of color senior administrators, exchange relationships & their leadership development* (Publication No. 29213132). [Doctoral dissertation, California State University Fresno]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
	X				X	X	X	X	Mann, S. T. (2021). *A Qualitative Study Exploring the Effect of Women's Leadership Programs on Women's Advancement to Senior Leadership Roles in the Technology Industry* (Publication No. 28319483). [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X						X		Martin, S. E. (1980). *Breaking and entering: Policewomen on patrol*. University of California Press.
									McCrimmon, C. A. (2022). *The importance of mentorship, sponsorship, and politics for women of color who aspire to the superintendency and other school leadership roles* (Publication

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X							X		Prins, G. (2022). *Diversity, inclusion, and belonging practices, impacts on underrepresented minorities: The lived experience* (Publication No. 29065420). [Doctoral dissertation, Northeastern University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
					X	X		X	Ragins, B. R. (2016). From the ordinary to the extraordinary: High-quality mentoring relationships at work. *Organizational Dynamics, 45*(3), 228–244. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2016.07.008
					X		X	X	Ragins, B. R., & Kram, K. E. (2008). *The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research, and practice*. SAGE Publications, Inc., https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412976619
X						X	X		Riley, T. A. (2010). Stigma, stereotypes, and attributional theory: A successful merger. *The Journal of Educational Thought, 44*(2), 229-246. https://doi.org/10.11575/jet.v44i2.52251
X	X						X		Robnett, R. D., & Anderson, K. J. (2017). Feminist identity among women and men from four ethnic groups. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23*(1), 134-142. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000095
X				X			X		Roth, L. M. (2004). The social psychology of tokenism: Status and homophily processes on Wall Street. *Sociological Perspectives, 47*(2), 189-214. https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2004.47.2.189
X	X	X				X	X		Ryan, M. K., Haslam, S. A., Morgenroth, T., Rink, F., Stoker, J., & Peters, K. (2016). Getting on top of the glass cliff: Reviewing a decade of evidence, explanations, and impact. *The Leadership Quarterly, 27*(3), 446-455. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.10.008
X	X						X	X	Şahin Çeken, K. (Ed.). (2020). *Proceedings of the International AEGEAN Symposiums on Social Sciences and Humanities II*. ISPEC Publishing House. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344627229
X	X						X		Sanchez-Hucles, J. V., & Davis, D. D. (2010). Women and women of color in leadership: Complexity, identity, and intersectionality. *American Psychologist, 65*(3), 171-181. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017459
X	X						X		Sandberg, S., & Grant, A. (2016, June 23). Sheryl Sandberg on the myth of the catty woman. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/23/opinion/sunday/sheryl-sandberg-on-the-myth-of-the-catty-woman.html
X	X					X	X		Scales, J. (2022). *Redefining leadership to include women: A qualitative study* (Publication No. 29060866). [Doctoral dissertation, Royal Roads University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X				X		X		Schein, V. E. (1975). Relationships between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 60*(3), 340-344. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076637

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Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X	X	X				X		Shaw, ... (2022). *Lived experiences of inequity of top-level African women leading struggling, nonprofit organizations in the United States: A phenomenological study* (Publication No. 28964693). [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
					X		X	X	Smith, H. L., & Grenier, M. (1982). Sources of organizational power for women: Overcoming structural obstacles. *Sex Roles 8*, 733-746. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287569
X	X						X		Smith-Jones, M. E. (2022). *The perceptions and shared experiences of female leaders at community colleges* (Publication No. 29069566). [Doctoral dissertation, Widener University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X						X		Sow, A., & Friedman, A. (2020). *Big friendship: How we keep each other close.* Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.
X	X	X	X			X	X	X	Sowell, O. (2022). *Lived experiences of African American women climbing the corporate ladder for executive positions in healthcare administration* (Publication No. 29212258). [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X				X	X		Spence, E. A. (2022). *The experiences of women engineers as they transition to leadership roles* (Publication No. 29215936). [Doctoral dissertation, Gonzaga University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
	X						X		Spence, J. T., & Buckner, C. E. (2000). Instrumental and expressive traits, trait stereotypes, and sexist attitudes: What do they signify? *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 24*(1), 44-62. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2000.tb01021.x
X	X						X		Spencer, S. J., Steele, C. M., & Quinn, D. M. (1999). Stereotype threat and women's math performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 35*(1), 4-28. https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1998.1373
	X						X		Stanton, E. C., Anthony, S. B., & Gage, M. J. (Eds.). (1881). *History of woman suffrage* (Vol. 2). Susan B. Anthony.
					X	X	X	X	Steinhoff, R. L. (2015). Natural born leaders: Use of a self-assessment tool and benefits to coaching and development. *Journal of Practical Consulting, 5*(2), 19-28. https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jpc/vol5iss2/Steinhoff.pdf
X	X						X		Streets, V. N. (2014). *Gender stereotypes in leadership: How threatening are they?* (Publication No. 9781303996993) [Master's thesis, Old Dominion University]. Old Dominion University Digital Commons.
X				X	X	X	X	X	Sykes, L. (2022). *The lens of the African American leader: A multiple case comparative study to provide insight into the African American experience in executive leadership development in U.S. corporations* (Publication No. 29170124). [Doctoral dissertation, Cardinal Stritch University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
X	X						X		Taylor, T. C. (2022). *The experiences of minority women in leadership positions in higher education* (Publication No. 28966594). [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X		X			X	X		Tharenou, P. (1999). Gender differences in advancing to the top. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 1*(2), 111-132. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2370.00008
	X				X	X	X	X	Thomas, S. A. (2014). *Defining a successful leadership pathway: Women in academia and the role of institutional support* (Publication No. 3578898). [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X					X	X		Thompson, P. (2017). *Women of color in leadership: An examination of the benefits of hiring women of color in key-decision making positions in organizations and institution* (Publication No. 10269703). [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X	X			X	X		Thompson-Henry, M. M. (2022). *Racial burden associated with Black women in executive leadership working in financial services* (Publication No. 29168795). [Doctoral dissertation, Wilmington University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Vinnicombe, S., & Singh, V. (2003). Locks and keys to the boardroom. *Women In Management Review 18*(6). 325-333. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09649420310491495
X	X	X	X				X		von Hippel, C., Issa, M., Ma, R., & Stokes, A. (2011). Stereotype threat: Antecedents and consequences for working women. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 41*(2), 151-161. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.749
	X					X	X		Wang, J. (2009). Networking in the workplace: Implications for women's career development. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 122*, 33-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ace.332
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Webb, C. C. (2022). *First and only: The lived experiences of executive-level women leaders who broke through the stained-glass ceiling in Christian higher education* (Publication No. 28869545). [Doctoral dissertation, Azusa Pacific University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X				X	X	X	X	Welsh, E. T., & Diehn, E. W. (2018). Mentoring and gender: Perception is not reality. *The Career Development International, 23*(4), 346–359. https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-11-2017-0198
					X	X	X	X	Welsh, E. T., & Dixon, P. M. (2016). Improving mentoring outcomes: Examining factors outside the relationship. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 28*(3-4), 231+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470869603/AONE?u=googlescholar&sid=googleScholar&xid=c2c48ecc
					X	X	X	X	Whitley, W., Dougherty, T., & Dreher, G. (1991). Relationship of career mentoring and socioeconomic origin to managers' and professionals' early career progress. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*(2), 331–350. https://doi.org/10.5465/256445
									Williams, H. (2021). The Meaning of "Phenomenology": Qualitative and philosophical

Equality	Gender Bias	Pay Disparity	Lack of Opp.	Tokenism	Coaching	Recruitment/ Retention	Expectations	Sponsorship	Reference List
	X					X	X		Wang, J. (2009). Networking in the workplace: Implications for women's career development. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 122*, 33-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ace.332
X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Webb, C. C. (2022). *First and only: The lived experiences of executive-level women leaders who broke through the stained-glass ceiling in Christian higher education* (Publication No. 28869545). [Doctoral dissertation, Azusa Pacific University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
X	X				X	X	X	X	Welsh, E. T., & Diehn, E. W. (2018). Mentoring and gender: Perception is not reality. *The Career Development International, 23*(4), 346–359. https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-11-2017-0198
					X	X	X	X	Welsh, E. T., & Dixon, P. M. (2016). Improving mentoring outcomes: Examining factors outside the relationship. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 28*(3-4), 231+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470869603/AONE?u=googlescholar&sid=googleScholar&xid=c2c48ecc
					X	X	X	X	Whitley, W., Dougherty, T., & Dreher, G. (1991). Relationship of career mentoring and socioeconomic origin to managers' and professionals' early career progress. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*(2), 331–350. https://doi.org/10.5465/256445
							X		Williams, H. (2021). The Meaning of "Phenomenology": Qualitative and philosophical phenomenological research methods. *The Qualitative Report, 26*(2), 366-385. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4587
X	X						X		Wilson E. (2014). Diversity, culture and the glass ceiling. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 21*(3), 83–89. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1560769585
X	X	X	X			X	X		Wingfield, A. H. (2020, October). Women are advancing in the workplace, but women of color still lag behind. *The Brookings Gender Equality Series.* The Brookings Institute. https://www.brookings.edu/essay/women-are-advancing-in-the-workplace-but-women-of-color-still-lag-behind/
X				X			X		Wright, S. C. (1997). Ambiguity, social influence, and collective action: Generating collective protest in response to tokenism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23*(12), 1277-1290. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672972312005
X	X			X			X		Yoder, J. D. (1991). Rethinking tokenism: Looking beyond numbers. *Gender & Society, 5*(2), 178-192. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124391005002003
					X	X		X	Yukl, G. A. (2006). *Leadership in Organizations* (6th ed.). Pearson Prentice-Hall.
					X		X		Yukl, G. A. (2012). Effective leadership behavior: What we know and what questions need more attention. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 26*(4), 66-85. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2012.0088
X	X			X			X		Zimmer, L. (1988). Tokenism and women in the workplace: The limits of gender-neutral theory. *Social Problems, 35*(1), 64-77. https://doi.org/10.2307/800667

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant Pseudonyms	Ethnicity	Age
Sapphire	Asian Indian	45-61
Rose	Asian Indian	50-55
Diamond	African American	40-60
Amber	Asian Indian	40-60
Amethyst	Asian Indian	45-61
Emerald	Asian Indian	45-61
Pearl	African American	50-55
Opal	African American	45-61
Jade	Asian Indian	45-61
Ruby	Asian Indian	45-61
Topaz	Asian Indian	45-61
Onyx	Filipina	40-60

Table 2

Data Coding Results: Highest to Lowest Frequency

Theme	Frequency
1. Facing Microaggressions.	14
2. Women of color must prove themselves.	12
3. The Importance of Mentoring	8
4. Imposter Syndrome.	7
5. Immigrant Representation matters.	5
6. The importance of Community Support and Spaces	4