EXPERIENCES IN THE LEADERSHIP ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

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A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the experiences in leadership advancement of African American women. Over 10 million African American women are in the civilian labor force (United States Department of Labor statistics, 2015). The population of African American women with degrees having significantly increased over thirty years, with 264% more Bachelor’s degrees and 353% more Master’s degrees being earned, however barriers to opportunities continue to exist (Nooks-Wallner, 2008). Although anti-discrimination laws have existed since 1964, covert discriminatory patterns continue and are often entrenched in workplace systems, which prevent advancement opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2013).

Phenomenology was the qualitative research method utilized for this study. Phenomenology is a scholarly study method that provides meaning-making, to more effectively comprehend the perspective of an individual or group of individuals. Meaning is gained through attaining data about situations or events surrounding a specific phenomenon. The intention is to determine how and why it influences others as it goes beyond the surface to gain depth. This study gathered data through various methods, such as an advance questionnaire, semi-structured interview protocol, review of participant leadership samples, and resumes/curriculum vitaeas.

This study contributes to understanding the leadership advancement experiences from African American women who have ascended to director-level or higher positions, across various industries. The key themes in this study were strategic preparation, and self-determination and courage. The data collected illustrate these themes and ten associated sub-themes. The purpose is to gain understanding from the experiences that influenced the
advancement of African American women within this study into leadership positions. Interviewing African American women who have ascended into leadership offered contextual insight into their lived experiences, obtaining what they perceive helped promote their advancement into leadership positions. The themes may serve as a model for other African American women seeking advancement into leadership positions.

Keywords: African American; leadership; leaders; career advancement; promotion; discrimination; barriers; concrete ceiling; glass ceiling; diversity; gender; race; Black; inequality; ethic of justice; ethic of care; women; black tax; phenomenology
I dedicate this dissertation back to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust.

To my mother, Lois E. Dubose, who was my primary influence to advance into leadership. You taught me the importance of faith, family and believing in myself. Your final words to me were, “you have put your pursuits aside, to care for me. Now it is your turn, promise me you will complete your doctoral studies.” Mom, I kept my promise. I did it, this is dedicated to you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Inequities in the advancement of African American women into leadership roles continue to exist, when compared to Caucasian men (Cook & Glass, 2014). African American women who are qualified for advancement have experienced discrimination, by not being afforded access to promotions, when leadership positions are predominantly held by men (Cook & Glass, 2016). Obstacles preventing equal access to leadership positions for African Americans and women have been well-documented. Workplace marginalization has deterred African American women from ascending into leadership positions and has often limited them to staff level positions (Cook & Glass, 2014; Johns, 2013; Mitra, 2003; Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein, & Hein, 2015). According to Giscombe and Mattis (2002), there is demonstrated variance regarding opportunities for career advancement between Caucasian men and African American women, by job, position level, and peer-to-peer inclusion.

The phenomenon of inequity in opportunities for minorities and women desiring advancement into leadership positions has been identified as an invisible barrier hindering ascension beyond a particular professional level. Position advancement for the African American females (Rose & Bielby, 2011) remains plagued by barriers, “social norms and pressures surrounding equality of opportunity” (p. 845), which are societal and organizational in nature as validation of advancement inequity and its impact on women and minorities, who are contributors to the workplace, spawned the creation of a federal commission in the early 1990s to identify and address inequity in the workplace.

The landscape of diversity composition in the United States workforce has expanded gradually; however, professional work advancement imbalances still occur (Mitra, 2003).
Statistics identified by the United States Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau (2015) state there were about 10.2 million Black women in the civilian labor force in 2015, representing 1 in 7 women in the labor force. The population of African American women with degrees significantly increased, between the years 1976 – 2012, as 264% more Bachelor’s degrees and 353% more Master’s degrees were earned, however barriers to opportunities continue (DOL, 2015) to exist.

The United States Department of Labor’s (DOL), Women’s Bureau (WB), has existed for over 90 years, maintaining two primary goals were reducing access and retention obstructions and to further fair and equitable workplace treatment. Statistics produced by the WB (2015) provide that 59.7% of African American females in the US are employed or actively seeking employment. However, Catalyst (2017) reported that only 4.4% of CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies are women, which means 95.6% are led by men. Catalyst (2013) reported women of color make up 4.5% of executive/senior-level officials and managers. Updated reporting (Catalyst, 2017) indicates that less than 1% of key leadership positions were held by African American women as of January 2017.

African American women chief executive officers such as Ursula Burns, Chairwoman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Xerox Corporation, stepped down from her role in January 2017. Sam's Club CEO, Rosalind Brewer, also announced her departure for new opportunities days apart from Ursula Burns. As the two African American women leaders stepped down, it caused the percentage of such positions held by African American women leaders to plummet further below 1%.

Civil rights and affirmative action employment laws exist to ensure justice for those facing discrimination or harassment based on protected categories such as race, color and gender
(U.S. Civil Rights Act, 1964). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2016) was created to enforce the Civil Rights Act violations. However, fifty-three years later, the EEOC is continuing to address discrimination. In fiscal year 2014, race discrimination filings amounted to 35% of the national allegations under Title VII, which demonstrates that allegations of equal employment opportunities inequity continue to exist (EEOC, 2015). Efforts by the EEOC in fiscal year 2014 addressed 30,429 violations and $75 million in retributions recovered for race related discrimination or harassment in relation to employment. In fiscal year 2014, gender discrimination filings amounted to 29.3% of national allegations filed with the EEOC.

Although anti-discrimination laws have existed since 1964, Cook and Glass (2014) reported that covert discriminatory patterns continue and are often entrenched in workplace systems, which prevent advancement opportunities. Existing studies focused on the professional barriers and the consequences of barriers that African American women experience in their pursuit of leadership positions that White men do not incur (Glass & Cook, 2016; Malveaux, 2013; Rowe, 1990; Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein & Hein, 2015).

The underrepresentation of African American women in leadership positions is a result of a variety of barriers. Research has identified barriers as discrimination, bias, lack of mentoring or sponsorship, and exclusion from networking opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2013; Rowe, 1990). The low percentages of women and minorities draw attention to underrepresentation. If there are professional organizational pipelines to leadership advancement, have those channels been traditionally built to position African American women for the attainment of leadership positions (Colaco, Myers & Nitkin, 2010; Davis & Maldanado, 2015; WB, 2015).

Giscombe and Mattis (2002) findings lend support regarding the underrepresentation of African American women in executive leadership positions as they found barriers extend beyond
gaining entry level access to positions, but barriers that are occupational segregation which block advancement opportunities (Beckwith, Carter & Peters, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The low percentage of African American women in workplace leadership has not diminished with the creation of diversity programs. More current research identified there were expectations of African American women to fit in the workplace including: acceptance and participation in playing the workplace political game; volunteering for committees that are high profile; and assimilation to the culture of Caucasian men; although instead there should be inclusion welcoming them (Beckwith, Carter and Peters, 2016) and their perspective into the work environment.

Even with the number of comparably educated and professionally equipped African American women rising in the workforce, there remains a discrepancy in their path toward leadership positions in comparison to Caucasian men (Mitra, 2003). Brewer noted during her tenure as Sam’s Club CEO, workplace diversity was important. It was not optional within the organization and she challenged vendors when no women or minorities were in leadership. According to Bever (2015), Brewer’s professional story was one of an African American woman who advocated for herself and made diversity efforts a priority within Sam’s Club and with external business partners. Brewer received backlash for her inclusion efforts, being called a racist by white males, but modeled the change she endeavored to influence, through intentional mentoring of other women externally and within Sam’s Club.

African American women desiring advancement into leadership positions have faced internal barriers (Johns, 2013) which have been imbedded within corporate culture, work practices and business; with external racist exclusion from after-work networking norms internally or external to an organization. Beckwith, Carter, and Peters (2016) identified lack of
mentorship, lack of inclusion in networking circles will hinder professional growth and the ability to make contributions in the workplace from an African American female perspective (Glass & Cook, 2016; Johns, 2013; Mitra, 2003; Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein & Hein, 2015).

Davis and Maldonado (2015) acknowledged leadership studies have primarily focused on the White male point of view, further noting that research on women of color in leadership has been largely ignored. According to Davis and Maldonado (2015, p. 48), “while some scholars have studied African American female leaders from a sociological perspective, few studies have researched how race and gender interact to inform their leadership development”. Research identified the glass ceiling as an invisible barrier to the upward advancement that may hold minorities and women from promotions and leadership promotional opportunities (Catalyst, 2004; Nooks-Wallner, 2008; U.S. Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

**Purpose Statement**

This qualitative research study examined the phenomenon of experiences contributing to African American women advancing into senior leadership positions across various industries. The perspective of selected study participants offered practical insight to share meaning about their professional trajectory to leadership.

As there has been relatively little research on advancement experience, this study was designed to (a) obtain knowledge for meaning-making from the experiences in leadership advancement of African American women; and (b) determine if there were programs within their organizations that were implemented to promote the advancement of African American women in their professional trajectory into leadership positions. This phenomenological study gathered experiences through a semi-structured interview process.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What experiences influenced the leadership advancement of the African American women in this study?

RQ2: Were there organizational programs implemented, which influenced advancement opportunities of African American women into leadership positions?

Significance of the Study

As previously stated, barriers to prevent the advancement for women and minorities exist. This research contributed to literature through gaining understanding from the experiences of African American women who have advanced into leadership positions. I propose this study to provide insight needed to assess the lived experiences of African American participating in this study.

African American women have experienced fewer opportunities for advancement to leadership positions and participation in workplace organizational programs to promote access and opportunities for advancement (Cook & Glass, 2014). Barriers to advancement for African American women have been researched and have addressed the negative impact hindering their efforts toward professional advancement (Cook & Glass, 2014).

The EEOC (2016) documents continual equal employment opportunity complaints which worked to recover millions of dollars in financial damages. Identifying advancement barriers for African American women was not the primary focus of this study, but rather understanding the experiences of women who have advanced, beyond those visible and invisible barriers, into leadership positions. However, understanding what research has identified as hindrances for the advancement of African American women, may be relevant in relating how African American
women have overcome barriers and the experiences they identify as promoting their ascension into leadership positions.

Literature has shared information about what African American women may do to better prepare themselves (Johns, 2013; Nooks-Wallner, 2008), and what employers may do to ensure equal employment inclusion opportunities. Professional development programs, researchers posit, lend support to African Americans who desire leadership advancement. Programs include mentorship, training and development, and networking (Johns, 2013; Nooks-Wallner, 2008; Tarmy, 2012; Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein, & Hein, 2015).

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework was grounded in the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, which address the duty and obligation for justice to ensure the best interests in fair and equitable conduct toward the majority of people. Justice and care interests promote concern and growth of others (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks & Meyer, 1996; Wood & Hilton, 2012). The impact of the theories in the development of equal employment opportunity laws, policies, and workplace programming were be explored.

This study drew from the ethics of justice and care frameworks to explore the experiences of African American women who have ascended into leadership positions. Kenneth Howe (1993) theorized the importance of liberal egalitarianism which lends itself to addressing not only equality, but also the principles of justice and liberty for the disadvantaged. In this study, the disadvantages were identified as gender (women) and race (African Americans). According to Rawls (1971), justice is having access to equal opportunity beyond extenuating circumstances where a person has no control, such as race or gender (Howe, 1993) so bias is not introduced.

Kohlberg’s moral reasoning framework (1987) identified equal rights and fairness as a
pursuit to universal norms, presented from the white male vantage point; however, Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) identified an additional African American view, which bring clarity, as African American women perspectives matter.

The ethic of care involves actively accepting the viewpoints of others through mutual understanding, subsequently responding in a manner that seeks to maintain relationships (Beck, 1994; Mayeroff, 1971). An ethic of care helps with the growth of understanding and recognizing that understanding various aspects of any situation is necessary to fully offer care to someone and further their growth.

As the research study interests include justice and care for African American women, we must reflect on the experiences of African American women in their ascension into leadership positions. In leadership, there are also acts of care which include “receiving the other’s perspective; (2) responding appropriately to the awareness that comes from this reception; and (3) remaining committed to others and to the relationship” ((Beck, 1994, p. 10).

After over five decades of civil rights laws, an increase of African American women with college degrees and working in the workplace, the civil rights laws that were intended to bring justice to discriminatory situation and eradicate inequities have not impacted much change to the barriers to advancement, continue as supported by research data identifies less than 1% - 5% of Fortune 500 companies respectively have African American or women leaders. Examination, through conducting individual interviews with participants, provided insight into the experienced that influenced the advancement of various African American women into leadership positions.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following key terms and definitions to be used in this study, throughout this chapter and other chapters to follow, are to promote a consistent understanding of the intention of these
African-American/Black (Not of Hispanic origin). African American and Black are terms tantamount to one another and may be used interchangeably. Persons with ancestries in any of the Black cultural groups of Africa (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016).

Business. Organizations engaged in trade of goods, services, or both to consumers (Morgan, 2006).

Caucasian/White (Not of Hispanic origin). All persons having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016).

Diversity. “The collective mixture of differences and similarities that include individual and organizational characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, and behaviors” (Society for Human Resources Management, 2008, p. 8).

Double Jeopardy. The hypothesis that minority women are discriminated against both as women and as minorities (Berdahl & Moore, 2006).

Ethic of Care. Care involves actively engaging in relationships and seeking to know and understand the viewpoints of others through mutual understanding and consideration (Beck, 1994; Mayeroff, 1971).

Ethic of Justice. Justice principles address equal rights and social and economic inequalities, from a disembodied perspective, as identified universal liberties and societal privileges that government cooperation could establish for society (Rawls, 1971).

Inclusion. “a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization’s success” (Society for Human Resources Management, 2008, p. 9).
Glass Ceiling. A nearly unbreakable and more complex barrier to upward mobility for women (Catalyst, 2004).

Glass Cliff. Phenomenon where African American women are more likely than men to be appointed CEO in a firm that is struggling (Cook & Glass, 2013).

Concrete Ceiling. For African Americans and other minorities, the concrete ceiling emphasizes impenetrable barriers both to upward mobility and to co-existence in the workplace. “The underpinning of these barriers includes stereotypes, visibility, and scrutiny; questioning of authority and credibility; lack of ‘fit’ in the workplace; double outsider status; and exclusion from informal networks” (Nooks-Wallner, 2008, p. 15).

Gender. The result of social and cultural forces rather than biology that operates at the level of the individual personality (Vannoy, 2001). A term used interchangeably with sex.

Leader. A leader is one that others willingly follow and exhibits honest, forward-looking, competent and inspiring characteristics (Kouzes & Posner, 2012)

Leadership. Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal or mission achievement in a given situation (Timmins, 2008).

Leadership Development. Leadership developed in people over a lifetime and grounded in the leader’s experiences, psychological qualities, self-awareness, moral perspective and ethics (Davis, 2012).

Macroaggression. Subtle exchanges that have the intention of snubbing non-dominant members of a community (Bucceri, Capodilupo, Esquilin, Holder, Nadal, Sue, and Torino, 2007).

Sex. “Either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are
distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs
and structures” (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).* The premiere international
organization for HR professionals that established standards for how human capital should be
governed (Society for Human Resources Management, 2013a).

in employment, government, education, law, business, and housing that work to maintain an
unequal and unjust distribution of social resources. Unlike bias and prejudice, which are
characteristics of individuals, the structural domain of power operates through the laws and
policies of social institutions” (p. 301).

**Methodology**

A phenomenological, qualitative research study occurred, through conducting in-depth
interviews, to explore for understanding, the experiences of African American women who have
successfully reached senior-level leadership positions (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).

**Participants**

I proposed this study to attain insight regarding participant pathway experiences from
seven adults, African American women, to learn about their ascension into professional
leadership positions, despite the glass ceiling barriers that exist. Further, this study is proposed
to obtain meaning from the participants to analyze obtained data to determine, if there were
programs that organizations implemented, to improve employment or promotional opportunities
for African American women in their inclusion in leadership.
Limitations

According to Maxwell (2013), evaluating the trustworthiness of data collected and analyzed as a part of the research study is to reflect upon and identify limitations. I identified study parameters, conducted semi-structured interviews with a small number of participants which were established to obtain meaning from African American women in leadership positions (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). It is also pertinent to denote that I asked questions in a way to seek relevant information, relying on the participants to be factual in providing information and in me interpreting such without bias (Glesne, 2011).

Delimitations

According to Roberts (2010) delimitations focus the scope or boundaries of a researcher’s study. For this study, there were three delimitations for participants as they must be: African American in race, female in gender, and have experience holding a leadership position, which is identified as director-level or higher.

Summary

The goal of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to determine the experiences that led to African American women advancing into leadership positions. Through phenomenological research, semi-structured interviews, with seven participants, was utilized. I sought to obtain descriptive information from African American women leaders surrounding their live-experiences, which laid their pathways to professional advancement in manner to effectively understand, organize the data and obtain themes (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).

Chapter Two gives a review of literature, pertinent to this study which include race and gender inequity that hinders leadership advancement, review of civil rights laws and its relation to the ethic of care and ethic of justice theoretical framework; women in leadership, and women
of color in leadership. Chapter Two provides a theoretical framework from the view of the ethic of justice and ethic of care, while reviewing literature which identifies the perspectives of the barriers African American women have faced in penetrating the glass ceiling and experiences that promote the ascension of this participant group to achieve leadership positions.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology to be used, outlining instrumentation, the process of data collection process and subsequent analysis of the data. The research outcomes and analysis are captured within Chapter Four. Chapter Five offers study analysis conclusions and recommendation for future studies.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research pursuits for this study focused upon African American women who have advanced into leadership positions. Knowledge, obtained by gleaning from their professional insights, addressed researcher questions to understand experiences that influenced their ascension into leadership positions for African American women. Further exploration addressed if organizational programs were available to African American women in the workplace to promote advancement opportunities.

Chapter One spoke to the extensive, published research substantiating overt and covert barriers to the advancement of women and minorities into leadership positions. This chapter addressed the gap in literature and why meaningful knowledge was sought from those who have risen above barriers faced by African American women.

The review of literature includes an overview of women in leadership, women of color in leadership, workforce demographics, laws, and the advancement of African American women in leadership positions. This review of literature presents important findings regarding barriers to advancement; more specifically, it presents information from studies focused on professional barriers and how the consequences of these barriers have prevented African American women from their trajectory into leadership positions.

Research has been conducted and published that identifies and addresses barriers that inhibit advancement opportunities for women and minorities, and the majority of these studies have specifically focused on (a) women in general or (b) collectively on the broad category of “minority women” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 2005; Haack, 2014; Jones & Palmer, 2011; Mitra, 2003; Williams, 2015); however, a limited number of research studies have been conducted about the experiences of African American women who have ascended above glass
and concrete ceilings or balanced the glass cliff (Livers & Carver, 2003; Richardson, 2016).

Inequity in career advancement continues for minorities and women even when workplace policies exist. As Malveaux (2013) points out, “Many corporations talk the diversity and inclusion talk, but do not walk the walk, in terms of their policies, to advance the careers of African American women” (p. 20). Beckwith, Carter and Peters (2016) suggest that “the root cause of the inequity is perpetuated in part because men wrote many of the workplace policies, norms and practices, for men and out of the experiences of men” (p. 118), sharing such brings a limited one-sided perspective, which does not represent the female point of view.

The present study seeks to obtain meaning from African American women who have advanced into leadership positions, their experiences, and as pertinent, the workplace programs they perceive led to their professional development.

Theory Framework

The ethic of justice theory and the ethic of care theory served as the theoretical lens through which this phenomenon of African American women advancing into leadership positions was studied. Several traditional and foundational researcher perspectives from a White male or female lens were reviewed. According to Collins (2000), “The exclusion of Black women’s ideas from mainstream academic discourse and the curious placement of African-American women intellectuals in feminist thinking, Black social and political theories, and in other important thought such as U.S. labor studies has meant that U.S. Black women intellectuals have found themselves in outsider-within positions in many academic endeavors” (p. 12). As such, consideration of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care through an African American lens were also introduced in this chapter.

The ethics of justice and care offer varied perspectives through which to assess the same
situation. While their perspectives are not the same, they are also unlikely to be opposites and the amalgamation of viewpoints assists enhanced understanding regarding ethical situations (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

**Ethic of Justice**

The ethic of justice lens in this study was presented from an equal access and fairness perspective, rather than from a criminal justice or punishment perspective. A book about the theory of justice by John Rawls (1971), challenged members of society to wipe the existing knowledge of ourselves and our born to present life experiences to encourage decisions without self-bias. Rawls (1971) published findings on two principles, which are equal rights and social and economic inequalities.

The principles are concepts that universally identify liberties and societal privileges. Classic writings by Rawls (1971) established that in society there should be an expectation for the citizens to have equal access to ensured basic liberties and opportunities for social and economic equality. Clarification was offered about inequality being fair, when someone worked harder than others, if they were not related to privilege. Justice ethics offers that the least advantaged in society is to have the opportunity to seek and achieve positions of privilege.

The challenge of equality comes when those disadvantaged are prevented from opportunities and when those with social and economic power make decisions from their own vantage point, without consideration of what is truly needed; that does not perpetuate fairness (Rawls 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

Rawls (1971) supported justice as fairness being key when bias for one’s own potential personal gain is intentionally veiled in ignorance, and having the power of ideas changes societal injustices. Based on the evidence available, it seems fair to suggest that an imbalance of wealth,
work positions and power to influence societal situations exists. Societies do not easily become fair (Rawls, 1971) or just as those individuals who benefit from economic and power injustices are not motivated to address injustice or understand the perspective of those with a different life experience.

The process Rawls (1971) proposed was based on reducing individual bias, through hypothetical disembodiment of moral thought without personal bias. Societal justice decisions should not be made in consideration with one’s current position, but that of an original position for a sense of common justice. The original position (Rawls, 1971) proposed for decisions to be made, from the perspective that all are similarly situated. Veiled decision-making promotes the idea of acting as if one is unaware of their social standing and access to equality to prevent decisions from being self-beneficial and encourage a more universal societal design, for fairness for all.

For bias reduction, (Rawls, 1971) the proposal of deciding from the participant’s original position assessment, as if debating and considering what should occur within society (Rawls, 1971) should be to make it fair and just for those with less or who are less advantaged. The thought experiment was to render decision recommendations from intentionally veiled ignorance.

Veiled ignorance (Rawls, 1971) defined and conceptualized how meaningful decisions may occur without personal bias. This experiment challenged individuals to rid themselves of self-knowledge, of their family structure, neighborhoods, judicial systems, living circumstances or life outcomes, being covered by a veil of ignorance, to make decisions, principled in integrity about creating laws or distributing justice without bias in benefiting their current class within society.

Based on this original position concept (Rawls, 1971), a participant entering justice as a
fairness discussion would do so without knowing their own projected outcome, thereby encouraging choices for the greater good of all, without influencing decisions for selfish gain. Accordingly, instead of gambling on how their fate would turn out in the society, decisions would be made to ensure solid educational systems, availability of health care, and justice with fair access to the law and appropriate housing. The original position would pose the questions of what type of society do we want to live in and how do we ensure adequate positioning for those within a developed or changed society?

The original position proposed decision makers would be asked to invoke decisions, without knowing where they would be positioned as a part of this new society, and would place the participants in a position to inspire equality (Rawls, 1971). The effort would elicit power to encourage change without bias; discuss what kind of society would need to exist to benefit the masses; and better understand the needs upon hearing from the perspectives of those, disadvantaged and impacted by injustice. When using one’s power to impact change, that general knowledge of the other person or the situation requiring care helps focus upon efforts to meet a desired outcome, rather than getting weighed down with conscious or unconscious bias (Rawls, 1971).

**How Shall We Govern Ourselves?** Starratt (1991) discusses the ethic of justice in a meaningful form, making it useful for application for practitioners. To build context for focused decision making, effective administrative frameworks for change must exist. Sound structures will stand (Starratt, 1991) amid varying circumstances; aid in making recommendations regarding policies or programs. Bear in mind moral rightness perspectives and its potential impact on equality is the (Starratt, 1991) moral responsibility of administrators, in “creating an ethical environment” (p. 187).
The ethic of justice helps to answer the question, how shall we govern ourselves? In support of Rawls’ idea of veiled ignorance, Starratt (1991) acknowledged that justice ethics have competing realities of one’s self interests, or an individual mindset, and a more community or society minded interest. As such the desired outcome is to find balance between individual rights and institutional good and taking theory and translating it to serve as a practical in making moral decisions.

In consideration for a common good of all, evaluates both the consequences of policies by review of what maximizes the common good for the most number of people, and the assurance of respect being equally provided in the process of decision making; which encourages a justice as fairness point of view (Rawls, 1971; Starratt, 1991; Howe, 1993). The ethic of justice (Wood & Hilton, 2012) encourages decisions based upon “the rule of law and the more abstract concepts of fairness, equity and justice” (p. 198). The rule of law parallels findings by Rawls (1971) as justice occurs when decisions are made without consideration of potential beneficial self-impact, but rather in consideration of others who have been void or fairness and opportunity.

Earlier in this review of literature was set to gain researcher perspectives and to use those justice concepts to inform this research process to understanding barriers that exist, and the balance of increasing good and reducing harm for a particular group or groups. Justice may situationally protect human dignity, offer fair and equitable treatment for everyone, encourage societal thought in ensuring respectful treatment for the wellbeing of others, and virtuously establish patterned compassion for others (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks & Meyer, 1996). Influencing and making leaders accountable are key elements as they are ones who are needed to institutionalize theories of justice into actionable practices of fairness beyond individual pursuits
to the larger community (Rawls, 1971).

Kenneth Howe (1993) theorized the importance of addressing not only equality, but also the principles of justice and liberty for the disadvantaged, which aligns with the writings of Rawls and Starratt. Existing civil rights laws and regulatory agencies have established a groundwork for justice (U.S. EEOC, 2016), however, when there is a measurement of the consequences or net satisfaction over time, researchers (Dijk, Engen, & Paauwe, 2012) found “15 years of debate between equality and business case proponents have not yet lead to a theoretical perspective on dealing with diversity in organizations that adequately integrates the main arguments of the equality and the business case perspective” (p. 187). As agreements (Mayeroff, 1971) occur about fairness concepts, those should be implemented within the organization to extend justice fairly, but also respond to the individual cares of others.

In evaluating how shall we govern ourselves, what happens when an individual receives care, but not on the motivation on why that care was given, and the inclination is to support “the dignity of each human being” (Howe, 1993, p. 27). One must consider whether it is equitable or fair to prevent or limit access to opportunities to all and is it equitable or fair to use available efforts to ensure access to opportunities for all.

Starratt (1991) offered the following regarding how we should govern ourselves: regardless of the debate on if individuals establish societal rules or if existing societal rules influence individuals about community greater good, governance is of societal importance. Answering his own question, Starratt (1991) stated the governing of oneself occurs by observing justice and treating one another according to the same justice standards which are equally enforced across each area of life’s relationship for work, societal civil rights, democracy for universal fairness.
**African American Perspective of Justice Ethics: Siddle Walker and Snarey.** The foundation on the justice ethic was offered above from the views of Rawls and Starratt, with implications from Kohlberg. A full explanation of the theory of stages to development are beyond the scope of this study, however brief mentions of Kohlberg’s study of youthful white males in moral development will occur below. Making attempts to do justice (Gilligan, 1987; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) without caring for the one seeking growth does not extend fairness, but care and justice ethics must work collaboratively to develop moral balance. Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) postulated that Kohlberg’s moral reasoning framework identified “equality, human rights and procedural fairness” and his six stages of moral development as written universal norms, regardless of variation in social standing or cultural backgrounds (p. 117). The frame (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) as established by Kohlberg is beneficial in understanding the foundational White male voice regarding impartiality and mutuality objective. Contributing to the scholarly discussion, Siddle Walker and Snarey’s (2004) disagreement promoted including the voice of African Americans, to expand the justice view with lived experiences and alternative perspectives just as Gilligan did with adding a feminist view of care to moral reasoning.

The same access to justice as fairness is desirable, but has not been experienced equally, therefore views on justice cannot be colorblind or disregard gender, but inclusive thought promote the evolution (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) of the moral formation voice to develop “greater complexity and adequacy” (p. 15). To be fully just is to be understood without hearing it from those who have experienced societal justice perspective with unjust realities. Further it offered implications hoping a standard of fair treatment would occur without consideration of one’s socioeconomic standing, race, gender or cultural background.
There is value in having the same end goal of a just common good for citizens (Rawls, 1971), but as offered by Siddle Walker and Snarey, ignores experiences that are significant in understanding the dimensions of experiences of an individual or a community of people. Remaining colorblind in speaking of justice, devalues the historical experiences and continuing pattern of marginalization based on race (African American) and gender (female) factors. The discussions (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) regarding dilemmas and stages of development expand beyond understanding the concepts of justice as being fair, and leads to understand implementation of justice cannot be universally applied from a majority viewpoint, without cultural consideration of race and gender injustices.

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) identified that perspective matters, but vary from Kohlberg and Rawls disassociating singular perspectives of White males with different experiences as the standard others should meet in moral development and justice. Opening doors (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) and discussion to decentralize majority thought, silences input from a community of others. To elaborate on varied views of the accepted universal beliefs of Kohlberg and Rawls, exploration of five contributing values of moral maturity will be developed later in this chapter, to address a broad perspective that offers strength, as culturally cognizant dialogue which is essential not only justice as fairness but also carefulness.

**Ethic of Care**

Care ethics (Gilligan, 2014) identifies a feminist view of how people are innately relational, with their interactions exceeding simplistic connections, and bridging connections of interdependence among the one extending caring and the one receiving care. The ethic of care lends moral guidance in understanding that no single voice should be heard over that of another, which builds trust.
Care ethics encourages growth while gaining understanding of others’ needs. The one offering care, based upon the perspective of the one receiving care and not one’s own presumptions, can obtain knowledge as an outcome of serving as a caregiver. Care is an embodied ethic that intentionally considers experiences, relationships and emotional regard, when evaluating the complexities in moral development. In taking on the view of others, and losing only one’s self-interests or personal views, capacity abilities of the caregiver is shifted from self-consideration, through aiding in the avoidance of moral injury.

The lens of the justice ethic separated care guides in averting from only addressing what is right or wrong by noting gender differences may lend depth of knowledge, refuting that women (Kohlberg, 1981) often do not move beyond his defined stage three of moral development, but care ethic alternative view held mostly but not exclusively by women. The approach to fairness from a neutral lens, as suggested by Rawls (1971), believed if participants making decisions were unknowing and ignorant of their current life experience, as they debated and made societal decisions, more equitable outcomes would occur based on not knowing their own expected end would be, as an individual participant.

To impact a moral problem, consideration about the development of moral thinking between the one cared for, the caregiver takes into consideration of the needs of the other, ensuring that their individual understanding, includes gaining the perspective of the other. Further, the ethic of care promotes the assurance that the rights of others are not violated or betrayed.

Moral development and justice theory (Kohlberg, 1981) identified six stages of development based upon his assessment of youthful Caucasian males in assessing behaviors surrounding an ethical situation posed of a male stealing medication to save the life of his wife.
In assessing the data, Kohlberg (1981) offered that females often do not develop beyond stage three.

Gilligan (1987) took exception to Kohlberg’s view and offered there was no consideration of care in evaluating moral development, in Kohlberg’s research, which downplayed the development and perspective of females. Relational connectivity, often linked to the experiences of women, occurs through the acts of being invested by attentively understanding the voice of the one cared for and in mature care, also consideration of the caregiver (Gilligan, 1987; Noddings, 1988). Relationships with others (Noddings, 1988) bring awareness to the needs through verbal and nonverbal communication, which promotes obtaining understanding of how to develop growth.

The addition of care thought in education was offered by Noddings (1988) who found “human beings involved and the situation under consideration and their relations to each other” (p. 218). This knowledge often makes care multi-dimensional and not singularly focused, as the care perspective in teaching, as was the academic perspective of Noddings (1988), who identified as relationships develop, teachers go beyond just addressing topics solely about course material, but also ventured into addressing social ills impacting the lives of the students (Noddings, 1992) they serve as the students will work harder for the individuals they trust. For example, applying this education-based care thought view, to overcoming advancement in employment barriers, justice ethics would establish societal frame to address how to address the impact of societal issues such employment inequity, that impacts an African American woman individually. Then the extension of meaningful care, as demonstrated by writings of Noddings (1992) could address the specific need and aid in one’s growth toward employment ascension would encourage the mutuality of growth for both involved in the care dynamic.
According to Noddings (1998), knowledge obtained of needs should not be ignored and “feisty minorities have found their voices and are beginning to suggest alternatives among addressing moral priorities” (p. 218). Concern for outcomes to actions is key in this care ethic, as it is often regarded as feminine which varies from principled obligation maintained under justice ethics thought.

The African American perspective (Gilligan, 1987; Noddings, 1998; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) offers that justice and ethics cannot be separate, but must intertwine fully to address moral formation that is community focused. In a dyad, the carer responds to the needs of another, with the one receiving care reacts to the act of caring. The act of caring (Noddings, 1998), for example is modelled through the naturally, organic mother daughter relationship where there is often dependence and interdependence. The one providing care (Mayeroff, 1971), is to meet the identified need of the other. In care, individuals may switch positions switch from being the caregiver, to becoming cared for. Additional discussion of the ethic of care from the African American perspective will be presented later in this chapter.

The ethic of care (Gilligan, 1987) studies the “significance of a moral viewpoint articulated by women” (p. 19), offering insight of mature care, which extends beyond just the singular perspective the one receiving care by also the insight of the caregiver. This view contributes to what makes actions morally right or wrong and how to respond. The evaluation of this researcher’s theories offered the importance of seeing moral development through a different care lens versus justice and recognizing that another way to look at an issue, does not diminish the other person’s view, but adds to that view.

Moral theory lends itself to the ethic of care as it is a commitment to ensuring equity and inclusion for others but it is not simply an act of justice, but is inclusive of an ethic of care. There
are activities of care that scholars have prescribed that are organized and comprehensive and consistently occur within relationships. The acts of care (Beck, 1994) include “receiving the other’s perspective; (2) responding appropriately to the awareness that comes from this reception; and (3) remaining committed to others and to the relationship” (p. 10). When women share work experiences, they are intertwined with relationships and connectivity with others and feels that it is morally problematic to detach and not consider all factors (Gilligan, 1987) as done with justice ethics because perspectives matter.

The manner of knowing and understanding the ethic of justice is not averse to care. The, ethic of mature care adds to the dimensions of care to greater care as a moral perspective. It does not mean that one manner of thought is better or more superior to the other person’s view. Adding the care perspectives help extending better clarity to justice and ethical situations (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1995). Clarity offers (Gilligan, 1987) a better understanding visually on why one photograph can be seen in more than one way, as it is in perspective of the one experiencing the situation.

Popular illusions or images have played out in literature to include whether: the sketch is of a young or older woman; and if the picture is of a rabbit or a duck demonstrates this theory of care visually, by demonstrating varied points of view. The individual view differences do not make one person’s view better than the other, just different, which lends itself to view a full perspective (Gilligan, 1987). See Figures 1-2.
Mutuality of Growth: Act of Caring and Being Cared For. The goal the ethic of care is to ensure care about human dignity, growth and development and quality of life. The main theoretical premise behind the ethic of care is that (Mayeroff, 1971) it is viewed mainly from the perspective of the person providing care, and offered that to care for another person, ‘in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself’ (p. 1). The Mayeroff (1971) perspective was that one must understand the needs of the person requiring care, versus assuming the caregiver knows what care is needed.
There are thirty (30) care characteristics, according to Mayeroff (1971), who defined what it truly means to be the one being cared for, and addressed the self-care as the caregiver. In care ethics, growth occurs when there is a relationship with someone, where the care received promotes the development of another person. The ability to positively impact (Mayeroff, 1971) the evolution of the human condition of another, can have the subsequent effect of self-fulfillment, through being needed and coming to understand “what is most important” (p. 3) in life.

According to Mayeroff (1971) knowing who the other person is, or what the idea or ideals are is important in caring. The act of caring involves having both generalized insight, and a more detailed understanding, as both are ultimately important. Caring ingredients include knowing, devotion, direct and indirect knowledge, patience, humility, and intelligibility and unfathomability (See Table 1). All thirty have been synopsized in table form, with a portion of those identified being explored in greater detail. A key characteristic of care was identified as knowing. To care for a person, an ideal or an idea, knowing requires having knowledge of many things and understanding who needs care and caregiver views.
### Table 1

**Mayeroff: Major Ingredients On Caring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing</td>
<td>General, specific, direct and indirect knowledge of the needs of others must be understood to appropriately respond, within one’s power and limitations, to help others grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternating Rhythms</td>
<td>Ascertaining whether to maintain or modify behavior in helping others, which comes from evaluating behaviors and outcomes after going back and forth between caring activity and care inactivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>In caring for others, patience permits growth through active participation, by listening even while others struggle or are confused, and believing in the growth of the other, while learning and growing within themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>The positive act of being open to oneself as it really is, not based upon how one acts and feels and not based upon what or how one is desired to be seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Involves letting go to permit the other to grow in their own way and in their own time based on experiences, not attempting to control but caring to be present while trusting the capacity to care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Acknowledging that there is always more to learn and that learning may come from any source, being responsive to the other’s growth and value caring and having something to care for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Growth through care appreciating the present and anticipating future possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Built upon insights from past experiences, moving into the unknown and growing into one’s abilities</td>
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#### Some Illuminating Aspects of Caring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Actualization Through Caring</td>
<td>By selflessly focusing upon the growth of the other, such care brings self-actualization and growth to the caregiver, further improving the ability to respond to the needs of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Primacy of the Process</td>
<td>Process of care in taking insights from prior experiences to and apply to present and future situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ability to Care and the Ability to Be Cared For</td>
<td>Care in general, bridges with caring for a specific other, aiding in growth, if desiring growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Constancy of the Other</td>
<td>Caring is developmental and consistency in desiring and experienced to help another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingredient</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt in Caring</td>
<td>Failing to maintain the care relation based on the other’s expectation, correcting one’s understanding of responsibility and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>In meaningful relationships, trust is mutual and each with contributions to growth through care; being cared for strengthens and activates me to care for the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring as a Matter of Degree Within Limits</td>
<td>Understanding there are good days and bad days and care existing within fluctuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Features in Caring for People**

| Caring for Other People | To care for another depends upon understanding through an intrinsically, engulfed point of view; and while affirming their view, maintaining one’s own perspective to extrinsically lend growth through the perspective of discussion. |
| Caring for Myself | Responsiveness to one’s own need for growth within one’s self and separate from one’s self |

**How Caring May Order and Give Meaning to Life**

| Caring Orders Other Values Around Itself | Understanding when a more significant care activity occurs, and becoming liberated from another activity now less significant; and building alliances may occur with others who are likeminded in actively caring. |
| Caring for My “Appropriate” Others | Living being centered by caring for others which promotes self-growth as extensions of each other |
| Living the Meaning of My Life | Determining what is meaningful for one’s own life and being needed to offer care, helps me grow |

**Major Characteristics of a Life Ordered Through Caring**

| Basic Certainty | One who is rooted in familiarity in one’s way of life has comfort in their existence without being submerged by the ties, and further not avoidant of embracing the growth through eliminating clutter that distracts from new possibilities of aiding others needing care. |
| The Process of Life Is Enough | The process of living is enough when the meaning of life and caring for others is fulfilled |
| Intelligibility and Unfathomability | Understanding what is important about each day to grow and live with purpose as a caregiver and overcoming something as more knowledge is developed |
| Autonomy | Taking care of one’s own life and path and achieving growth through maturing and from caring relationships with others |
| Faith | Living life with confidence facing unknown situations knowing myself will be cared for and caring for others |
| Gratitude | Thankful for the ability to give of oneself. Through caring for another, one receives growth and care in return |

Adapted from *On Caring* (Mayeroff, 1971)
In review of the study of advancement perspectives beyond barriers faced by African American women, knowing is reviewing how information is obtained and within which confines, and professional leadership opportunities and care are considered. Mayeroff (1971) offered there is a “difference between directly and indirectly knowing something” (p. 14). Knowing, in caring ethics, can be understood from both a direct knowledge point of view about the problem needing care, from an immersed firsthand experiential perspective or indirect knowledge through being familiar with a need separated from it but with a sense of empathy or compassion.

According to Mayeroff (1971), devotion is a necessary part of caring. The devotion characteristic expresses a form of commitment and dedication that is not ambivalent, but rather lends the caregiver to consistently engage in caring activities based on the needs of the one or communities. Consistent devotion and care not only helps for the development of others, it also enriches the well-being of the one extending care as it impacts growth and commitment to fulfill needs.

In care and knowing, there must be an understanding of what power and limitations exist in relation to the person, idea or ideal. Intentional efforts should impact the needs of another and seeing and using the powers of both to impact those needs of someone or something to perpetuate his or her growth, can occur during awareness of the limitations that exist (Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) in the ability to respond to the communicated or uncommunicated needs of a person, ideal or idea through care, existing to impact the actualization of the growth of another. In care and caring for myself, it is an ingredient where an individual is intentionally responsive to their own personal needs, taking responsibility for what self needs exist, while placing value on being needed by someone else, who is needing care.

In care, patience (Mayeroff, 1971) enables growth, as time and interactions and not
waiting on something, but being participative interaction occurs, in due season and even while being conflicted or unsure. Patience demonstrates care as one believes in the growth of each other as they lean in and exist in their feelings while in the midst of confusion. The characteristic of intelligibility and unfathomability (Mayeroff, 1971) is key as it prescribes that “in the sense in which intelligibility means being at home in the world, we are ultimately at home not through dominating or explaining or appreciating things, but through caring and being cared for” (p. 76) as facts are known and shared, while some elements are difficult to articulate. The unfathomable character is not eliminated by intelligibility, but is intentionally aware of barriers or issues, as being knowledgeable aids in overcoming powers or limitations.

**African American Perspective of Care Ethics: Siddle Walker and Snarey.** The foundation on the care ethic as discussed above is an involved and layered journey rather than a simplistic quick destination. The theorists Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) posit care has been reviewed from “white, middle-class, heterosexual conceptions of caring were (or ought to be) universal” (p. 27), while the reality of those culturally different may not share the same voice perspective. Lack of consideration (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) for race in care ethics would undercut its premise to gain perspective of one needing care but failing to extend care in a culturally sensitive way would rather perpetuate inequity.

The authors differed from the Gilligan and Noddings perspectives of the ethic of care, noting it is not the view of African American women who have a patterned history and experiences that do not mirror the same perspective of care, as their options are limited. For example, the view of maternal caring (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) was linked to idealism of Caucasian female within their domestic household. Differing experiences exist for African American women who have throughout history, served as domestic workers for others due to
needing to work outside of the home as a single parent, or to supplement household incomes, versus Caucasian women who are supported by their husbands.

The strategy from an African American perspective surrounding the ethic of care (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) is to include being attuned with cultural factors that are contributors, which impacts the abilities of individuals to be successful. Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) suggested the manner in addressing them should be from a holistic point of view, not just regarding a generalized focus. African American theoretical care perspectives speak to promoting rightness, presumably after gaining knowledge about barriers, so responsiveness about continued disparity may occur (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). This view aligns with Mayeroff’s (1971) knowing characteristic, realizing there may be a difference in being aware of injustice as opposed to it being fully experienced, but differs in being ignorant of it in decision making.

The African American perspective (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) for justice and care ethics are intertwined and must be collectively considered, as race and gender factors for African American women must be equally considered. The views offered by Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) align, in part, with Noddings perspective matters & disputes Kohlberg believing the White youthful progression of stages could reasonably represent the unrepresented voice of African Americans. The primary values of justice and care ethics (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004), include hope; pluralism; empowerment, liberation and uplifting.

Liberation was discussed (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) in relation to care and justice with race and gender as influences. The authors offered that neither race nor gender are more important than the other. The act of liberation in care and justice is being able to detangle the two allowing for each perspective to be heard. Further, liberation realizes each voice (race and
gender) are not competing interests, but compounded experiences when considering how to care or be cared for and how to approach and address matters of fairness or justice.

Pluralism overcomes resistance and accommodation tolerance, as it comes to know and understand something is valuable about embracing different experiences for the sake building mutual respect. This virtue of pluralism promotes inclusion while accepting that each varied community offers unique and relevant balance of maintaining one’s life perspective, but participating as with others within a larger society. When conversations occur with respect of the perspective of others, they will not get lost in debate resistance, but embraced through accommodating perspectives discussion.

Hope as a virtue discusses the interplay of religion and ethics. Hope (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) is an offshoot of religion as it addresses maintaining strength in the face of unjust and uncaring treatment. Both forms of treatment are intertwined with communities of varied faith, have a parallel religious belief that God will correct wrongs, as He is a just and caring God. If an imbalance occurs between these two virtues it could lead to despair and neither justice nor care will impact or address the needs of the other; but hope is the epicenter of all the contributing values.

Moral maturity in justice is impacted through the contributions of the empowerment virtue. There is a long-known history of oppression of African Americans in American history, however that is not the end of the story as individual and group resilience, responsibility to self and others promotes success (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Individuals and collective justice social activists (Collins, 2000; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) balance having knowledge of an oppressive legacy for African Americans, the concerns with continued barriers, and identifying how to not have that experience dominate their thoughts while encouraging attitudes of forward
moving strength and empowerment to “provide care-and-justice for themselves and their community” (p. 136). Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) found with those advancing or failing to advance being attributed to “luck or fate rather than to their own ability or effort” rather than placing blame on societal ills.

Uplift is the final virtue. The perspective of African Americans on the ethics of care and justice is understanding not only the community of thought, but the perceptions of individuals within the community (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). To explain that uplift perspective, caring for the larger group also cares for the individual within the group that has been impacted by inequity due to race and gender. Descendants of slavery (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) within the United States had to adapt to life through enslavement, slavery and post-slavery Jim Crow segregation. Through such arduous wrongs, the gifts and values of contributions made by African Americans ascended beyond the horror of slavery. Collectively, this community uplifted each other during slavery and segregation and is forging forward to address continued disparities in employment opportunities and advancement barriers to reaching leadership positions.

When African Americans care for others in their efforts to attain leadership, they care for and ensure justice for the other and while uplifting others, they uplift themselves as well. This study of African American women leaders advancing above glass and concrete barriers provide insight to care in their professional journey.

Ethic of Justice and Care Intersection

Dr. Martin Luther King (1963) stated that the greater the knowledge that leaders have, the greater the accountability of those leaders to meet the justice and care obligation to ensure equal access to employment opportunity and workplace inclusion. Literature demonstrates that ethics of justice and care are elements to include in determining opportunities for equity and access to
advancement and inclusion for minorities. Civil rights leader Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963) wrote in the letter from a Birmingham Jail “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (p. 1). Justice promotes fairness more readily when one operates without self-bias.

The ethics of justice and care are situated at the heart of framing discussions regarding equity, diversity and opportunity. The ethic of justice and care focus (Gilligan, 1987), are not opposites, or even ambiguous in nature encouraging one to choose one primary reasoning perspective, but in reviewing the reasoning, evaluating care may bridge the two in order to shift from terms such as equality to “hierarchy or balance to network or web” (p. 23). In consideration of governing ourselves (Starratt, 1991), the factors include the impact of power, privilege and a culture of silence which impacts life quality, human dignity and individuals having the ability to meet their full human potential.

In balancing the importance of justice and care; there is perception in literature that if the ethic of justice is considered, then the ethic of care may be unrealized; but consideration of one does not have to be mutually exclusive (Starratt, 1991). Sevenhuijsen (1998) disputed the need of debate between the ethics of care and justice in presuming sameness for all. The importance of the ethic of care and justice is that consideration of both establishes a framework for equity and inclusion as a norm, offering views regarding social justice for oppressed populations.

Bass (2009) interviewed five African American women to obtain depth of knowledge from their perspectives, in relation to the ethic of care as related to their race. The participants identified to the researcher, while these African American women faced multiple oppressions or double jeopardy based on gender and race, they continually work toward efforts to impact organizational transformation (Bass, 2009; Graham, 2007). Whether from an individual or societal perspective, advancement opportunities occur when others care enough to discuss
necessary change, but moreover act to propel change which demonstrates the impact of caring
and helping in the promotion of justice (Bass, 2009).

The ethics of justice and care from the African American perspective are interrelated and
collaborative versus being mutually exclusive (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Knowing and
justice as fairness are situational (Mayeroff, 1971; Rawls, 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004),
based on varied real-life experiences and environments differ from which the other needing care
and desiring justice hail from, are different from those who hypothesized developmental or
characteristics of care.

Application of ethic of care and justice through the alternative African American view
does not believe there is a universal voice, as the minority voice is not included within the ethical
foundational frame of justice and care which prevent lived experiences to inform the moral voice.
Ethics applications (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) may become empty without a variety of
perspectives as “no single voice is ever adequate, so a plurality of tongues is essential” (p. 146)
in moral development and justice and care ethics.

The scholars offer that as Kohlberg is described as creating the justice model and Gilligan
for creating the care model in addressing moral development, Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004)
identified while they are not the first or only ones to do so, including Gilligan and Starratt,
proposed a model consisting of both being fully integrated, but from a perspective considering
the experiences of African Americans which acknowledges yet another voice is essential. The
African American perspective offered five virtues which were previously outlined in this chapter.
The balance of justice and care values included: liberation of gender and race; pluralism of
resistance and accommodation; hope in religion and ethics; power through agency and legacy
and uplift through community and individuality. Siddle Walker and Snarey’s (2004) mutuality of
intertwining both ethics more readily addresses injustice and care, considering and caring about the experiences that have occurred, to better impact moral development through societal processes that can be applied with care.

The intersection of justice and care for Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) was critical in their sharing the African American perspective, as they offer that one cannot exist without the other.

**Women in Leadership**

According to the Women’s Bureau of the United States Department of Labor (DOL), more than 120 million women are eligible to participate in the labor force, including women who are either working or looking to work. It is concerning that, with laws and enforcement agencies and data gathering entities, there is still a disproportionately small percentage of women in leadership roles for Fortune 500 companies and even less for African American.

A study conducted by Susan Hubbard and Jacquelyn Robinson (1998) identified that there continues to be a difference between men and women in advancing into positions of leadership. Although women and men have received equitable educational experiences and degrees, there is still a differentiation in the comparative number of fewer women securing positions in leadership as opposed to men, even as a greater number of women have entered the workforce, few reach key leadership positions.

The Council of Economic Advisors provided a research report entitled *Women’s Participation in Education and the Workforce (2014)*, which was created for the Executive Office of the President of the United States. This report suggested that the number of women graduating college has been increasing, while they have continued to earn less than their male counterparts, which links to lesser position elevation. The United States Department of Labor
Women’s Bureau (2015) has predicted that by 2022, women will comprise 56% of the workforce, which lends itself to evaluating if increasing women graduates and increasing numbers of women in the workforce should also be reflected in the number of women advancing into leadership positions. Women seeking advancement into leadership positions have faced professional obstacles that have limited their career trajectory, based on prior studies.

**Glass Ceiling**

The term ‘glass ceiling’ is a metaphor which vividly represents a nearly unbreakable and complex barrier to upward mobility (Catalyst, 2004; Rowe, 1990). The glass ceiling, coined in 1984, identified when women advanced into higher-level positions, eventually noting they were stopped by an invisible barrier, impeding further progress (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gamble & Turner, 2015).

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) published a report which noted that nearly sixty percent of the population is made up both women and minorities but little movement in leadership to ensure the American dream for equal opportunities for all citizens. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995), consisted of a total of twenty-one members who were either politicians, attorneys, judges, or business industry leaders who collectively surmised that disparity in advancement continues to exist. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) stated “while minorities and women have made strides in the last 30 years, and employers increasingly recognize the value of workforce diversity, the executive suite is still overwhelmingly a white man’s world” (p. 6).

Upon review of assessment data, several recommendations were made by the commissioners, which are unfolded later in this review chapter. The commission members (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995) posited the growth in women obtaining advanced
degrees led to more than 50% of Master’s degrees were earned by women; however, that statistic was not reflected comparatively within Fortune 1000 companies and senior level leaders continued to be 95% Caucasian men. The question ‘how must we govern ourselves’ could pose the question if civil rights legislation influenced greater access to career advancement not solely from 1964 when legislation was created to 1995, the time of the creation of the commission report with recommendations for action; but also from 1995 to present in 2017, workforce data reported by the women’s bureau of the United States Department of Labor and Catalyst offered a gap in professional advancement continues to exist.

Researchers Glass and Cook (2015) found that women leaders make positive contributions to the workplace, but they continue to be underrepresented in holding positions of leadership within organizations. As inclusion opportunities expand through welcoming contributions by women in the workplace, inclusion promotes a work environment where there is equity, access to opportunities, which promotes human capital being treated justly. The Society for Human Resources Management (2013b) identified the achievement of a work environment where equal access for all individuals for workplace opportunities, can impact organizational success.

The pathway to leadership postulated by Burack and Mathys (1979) are based on seven outlined progressive steps, which identify an organization’s commitment to purposefully developing a pipeline of trained and experience employees, may be considered rungs to advancement. Advancement opportunities Burack and Mathys (1979) may be impacted when organizations: 1). establish organizational responsibility and policies identifying succession programs; 2). conduct analysis of those with knowledge skills and abilities to perform well; 3). establish uniform job skill expectations, across titles; 4). develop career ladder with a progressive
job sequence, which include critical abilities for proposed upward mobility; 5). establish a clear communication plan explaining the organization’s intention regarding the job ladder; 6). develop a link to organizational development, so programs may be developed to prepare those interested understanding as change happens the pathway ladder may need to adapt; and 7). review for periodic modification, as varying may need to occur over time. According to Burack and Mathys (1979),

The language of careers has become quite popular yet frequently marks a wide variety of planning and procedural problems which are just starting to be recognized. Basic to all of these issues is the recognition that career planning effectiveness can only be as good as the ability of personnel and human resource officials and planners to coordinate it with the manpower planning and more conventional personnel programs found in the organization. (p. 8)

A career ladder (Burack & Mathys, 1979) model for advancement was outlined and included goals for employers to have equal opportunity, communicate outcome expectations and a success approach, while developing a reasonable, sequential advancement ladder. The Society of Human Resources Professionals international organization (2013) offered that human resources (HR) is responsible for aligning its own strategic goals with the goals of the organization they serve, to identify implications and step forward aiding in managing processes or activities that build upon current, acquire new talent and support succession planning and mentoring needs within an organization.

Looking forward from 1979 to a survey conducted in 2012, women voters were asked by author Andrew Dugan in twelve key swing states, what issues were of concern to them, which may vary from their male counterparts. As an outcome equal rights, equal pay and equal
opportunity were among continuing concerns for women voters.

The Glass Ceiling Commission (2012) published a listing of barriers faced by women in the workplace that contribute to inequity in employment. The professional upward mobility obstructions include pay inequity, lesser experience because of childbirth and child rearing, part-time employment to accommodate family responsibilities, and low value of contributions made by women in traditional support roles.

The Glass Ceiling Commission (2012) found women were not paid equitably in comparison to men, with further implications that even with moderate advancements in positions, the greater the wage differential widens between genders. The Women’s Bureau of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), produced 2014 statistics showing even as women comprise 57% of workers in the workforce, there is a disparity in earnings from low paying jobs to high paying positions. On average (DOL, 2016), women earn seventy-eight cents for every single dollar earned by men. There is even a greater employment and wage differential for women of color, which is reviewed in the following section.

**Women of Color in Leadership**

The United States Department of Labor statistics (2015) generated data sharing “historically, Black women have had high labor force participation rates compared to other women”. The DOL (2015) further identified over 10 million Black women are in the civilian labor force, representing 14% of women in the labor force. The data compiled and reported by the DOL (2015) affirmed that even with greater workforce representation, less favorable workforce outcomes occur for Black women, in relation to White and non-Hispanic women.

The DOL (2015) and noted historically, Black women rendered more unfavorable leadership advancement options than Caucasian or non-Hispanic women. The Black female
experience has dual elements regarding advancement barriers. The prejudices found are not just based on a singular bias regarding sexism, but includes an additional consideration of racial prejudice (Crenshaw, 1989).

There is a fundamental contradiction (Collins, 2000) in societal justice, when a democracy assures all the availability of the American dream, supported by civil rights laws and regulated by regulatory agencies. However, the realities (Collins, 2000) for the disadvantaged do not parallel “promises of individual freedom, equality under the law, and social justice are made to all American citizens. Yet on the other hand, the reality of differential group treatment based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status persists” (p. 23), it is social injustice. Research studies exist which address and identify barriers that impact advancement opportunities for women and minorities (Glass & Cook, 2016; Mitra, 2003; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). A survey of African American women within fortune 1000 companies was conducted by Catalyst (2004). The survey results identified barriers facing African American women as negative racial stereotypes, absence of institutional leader support, challenging of their credibility and authority, exclusion from informal networks, and conflicting relationships with Caucasian women.

The glass ceiling (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Catalyst, 2004) primarily addresses the blocking of Caucasian women from their professional upward movement; and hindrances for career ladder advancements for African American women being blocked by the more solid concrete ceiling. There is a shortage of studies offering enlightenment from African American women who have successfully ascended above the glass and concrete ceilings or balanced on the glass cliff to attain leadership advancement and factors influencing success (Glass & Cook, 2016).
Concrete Ceiling

Research insight offers that African Americans and other minorities face discrimination that block workplace advancement and the term “concrete ceiling” emphasizes impenetrable barriers both to upward mobility and to co-existence in the workplace. The terminology shift from glass to concrete ceilings denotes that even within the same gender, race is a factor that takes opportunities from being seen but unattainable, to being unseen and unwelcomed to enter the workforce, let alone advance.

Organizations frequently have identified affirmative action or strategic plans to address diversity and inclusion in leadership positions. However, there is often not a plan of action to ensure the plans are successfully implemented. Organizations identifying a vision for diversity and inclusion in leadership should develop and execute organizational strategies, without bias, discrimination, or barriers, such as the glass or concrete ceilings. Gamble and Turner (2015) identified professional development programs as contributing factors in breaking through advancement barriers. Professional development programs (Gamble & Turner, 2015) should involve networking opportunities and professional mentorship. Traditionally Gamble & Turner, (2015) the “male circle of power within the business world” (p. 84) also known as ‘good old boy’ network have excluded women and minorities.

Regarding African Americans and other minorities, the concrete ceiling emphasizes impenetrable barriers both to upward mobility and to co-existence in the workplace. As Nooks-Wallner (2008) shared, “the underpinning of these barriers includes stereotypes, visibility, and scrutiny; questioning of authority and credibility, lack of ‘fit’ in the workplace; double outsider status; and exclusion from informal networks” (p. 15) reinforcing lack of equal access to promotional growth.
Of the Fortune 1000 companies in 2003, only 17 are led by women CEOs (Catalyst, 2003a). This corresponds to less than 2 percent of women serving as CEOs. Moving forward a decade, executive CEO or senior level positions are held by women in the United States at a rate of four percent (4%); and the percentage of African American women in leadership roles are less than one percent (1%) per Beckwith, Carter and Peters (2016).

A study was conducted, surveying 370 men and women at four-year institutions of higher education, across six states. The scholars sought to determine the presence and utilization of mentorship influenced advancement success (Hubbard & Robinson, 1998). The study used a questionnaire, receiving a 73% response rate, which offered several outcomes. Responses identified that women used mentors more often than men to prepare for advancement; men were not supportive of mentoring women; women were advised to seek other women to guide them in navigating male dominated work environments; and women who held similarly earned degrees as men, had fewer advancement opportunities in comparison to men (Hubbard & Robinson, 1998).

Women have been segregated in the workplace by nature of the types of positions often identified as more appropriate for one gender versus another gender (Mitra, 2003). Even when women move past prior segmentation and receives a position such as a supervisor, they (Mitra, 2003) “are placed in supervisory positions that do not involve extensive training, interactions with their superiors, and decision-making power, the level of experience or tenure that they acquire within the company is also devalued” (p. 69) then (Graham, 2007) further offered that position were also considered to be “lower rungs of the occupational ladder” (p. 198). Women of color are seeking opportunities and equal consideration for positions, with the ability to advance.

While legislation has existed for over fifty years, the impact of barriers to access impact
professional and financial success. Mitra (2003) found:

“unequal access to meaningful management jobs as well as the lower wage returns for black female supervisors raise concern since the recent Workforce 2000 report shows that minority women will represent the largest proportion of the increase in the non-white labor force during the next several years (p. 68)”.

Barriers to employment and promotional access impact an individual or targeted groups’ professional and financial success. Pathways for professional advancement for minorities (Graham, 2007; and Mitra, 2003) are plagued with inequality and (Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs, 2010) “often segregated into jobs offering lower wages” (p. 229). Once African American women are employed, a wage gap exists (United States Department of Labor, 2016), based upon 2014 median annual earnings of workers 15 years and older who worked full-time and year-round, including the self-employed. Governmental bureau of labor statistics (DOL, 2014) report showed Black women in the workforce earned between $7100 to $22,000 less than Black men, White women and White men (DOL, 2016). Black women suffered from pay inequity as they lost wages as they earned 82.4% of Black men, 80.2% of White women and 60.5% of White men. Lesser pay impacts the ability of those facing inequity from justly earning pay for the same work completed by others who are Caucasian women or men.

There was significant difference on non-dominant race leaders in relation to dominant race leaders. Caucasian women (Catalyst, 2004) within Fortune 500 companies were 20% more likely to hold a first, mid, executive or senior level leadership position, over African American women.

Gamble and Turner (2015) found, “highly educated and experienced women face their biggest challenges at upper levels of corporations” (p. 83). African American managers in the
workplace often work to advance, without mentorship or access to formal or informal networks; resulting in African American and Caucasian female managers, unlike white males, feeling organizationally isolated (Mitra, 2003). Gamble and Turner (2015) supported this thought by stating, “as a result, they have been known to disproportionately cluster in white collar ghettos or the bottom tiers of management and lowest paying industries” (p. 83), leaving those who are disadvantaged, secluded from growth opportunities.

Research identifies that these advancement exclusions and limitations to advancement opportunities, which excludes the intellectual perspectives and insights of African American women (Gamble & Turner, 2015) limit equal access to organizational ascension.

Glass Cliff

According to research published by Glass and Cook (2014), “women are more likely than men to be promoted in weakly performing organizations” (p. 92) a phenomenon termed the glass cliff. According to Glass and Cook (2016) the glass cliff is a predictor that occupational minorities are more likely to be promoted to leadership positions in organizations that are struggling, in crisis, or at risk to fail. The study extended existing scholarship in two ways. While the literature on the glass cliff (Glass & Cook, 2014) has been principally concerned with the promotion opportunities of women, “we extend this scholarship by analyzing whether the glass cliff thesis applies to racial/ethnic minorities (p. 169).

Institutional challenges are structural and environmental barriers, such as limited access to vocational guidance and assessment, tracking into ‘appropriate’ jobs and discrimination in hiring, promotions and transfers. According to Barrett, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2004), “Personal challenges would encompass specific problems or issues related to the individual” (p. 86). The ability to share experiences that differ from those who are privileged provides an
opportunity to care (Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) be responsive and meeting the need from a view, that differs from a person not impacted by unequal access.

A Data on Diversity journal article (Nelson, 2014), indicated that “diversity is important to organizations that innovate, but the culture of an organization determines whether minority members of the community can thrive” (p. 94). Nelson (2014) studied one-hundred subjects, segmented into three to five people sub-groups, between the ages of eighteen to sixty, as they reviewed and figured out challenging situations. The study revealed those with greater diversity, rendered elevated interactions and improved outcomes (Nelson, 2014).

As previously noted, there are a plethora of studies addressing the glass ceiling, and women advancing into leadership positions (Combs, 2003; Cook & Glass, 2015; Davis & Maldanado, 2015). Kim stated, “A large number of women and minorities have typically occupied stereotypical roles in government agencies–clerical and blue-collar jobs, and lower and middle positions–even though the percentage of women and minorities in public bureaucracies keeps increasing” (p. 165).

Notwithstanding acknowledgment of promotional barriers to the ascension of African American women into leadership positions, although slight, there is consideration to factors which may increase promotional opportunities into leadership positions (Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs, 2010). Restructuring of HR to change organizational behavior toward hiring, promoting fairness in organizational opportunity based on representation of community needs; and the establishment of diversity committees are a few organization options.

A study conducted by Tarmy (2012) examined and reported upon the career strategies used by African American female executives to advance their careers. The questions evaluated the strategies used to navigate their careers and identified themes rendering positive career
advancement outcomes, avoiding glass cliff implications and techniques to propel opportunities into career success. Study on this topic reviewed African American women in the workforce, their career advancement experience, if race and gender had an impact on career advancement; advancement barriers, stories outlining stories and secrets to success.

According to Tarmy (2012), study outcomes identified ten themes that supported their career advancement processes used by women and women of color, which included professional:

- work performance in task completion by producing quality work;
- relationship building through intentionally developing and maintaining connections which provide access to information, people and growth;
- job knowledge to have a mastery of the core duties to and gain knowledge that may be transferable to other roles;
- education is important especially for women of color so one can demonstrate the ability to learn and contribute;
- work ethics to be predictable in contributions in a manner of excellence that can be valued;
- support that is multifaceted is invaluable as the organization helps with skills development, mentors help with political and relational development, family and friends offer a clear perspective on one’s strengths and offer encouragement, and professional networks offer key contacts;
- career goals come with the responsibility of career mapping to be intentional about progressive and strategic preparation;
- visibility by positioning oneself to be recognized, which may involve volunteerism internally and external to the business to gain exposure;
- spirituality by reliance in faith on God for guidance; and
- adaptability which demonstrates the ability to handle oneself in a variety of settings and professionally fit into the business culture. Although the themes were identified, it was not found that each was specifically used as strategies to professionally ascend.

Studies of career advancement success are often tempered with barriers to hinder advancement. Beckwith, Carter and Peters (2016) found while discrimination may not be as blatant, it does not diminish its continuation through organizational culture and norms, which promote patterns that previously prevented advancement opportunities, to continue to persist. The research studied by Osuoha (2010) affirmed advancement barriers exist; then shared their
relationship with the perceived glass ceiling syndrome acknowledging workplace diversity
issues, concern with social justices of racism, sexism and heterosexism.

With knowledge of the disparity between identified and knowing the impact that a lack of
equal access to employment and advancement have on others, laws were implemented with
regulatory agencies created for application of justice and care oversight of such occurrences.

Application of Justice and Care

Studying the meaning of theories of justice and care ethics, through researcher findings, is
important in establishing the basis through which practitioners can frame and balance efforts of
society and individuals respectively. Rawls’ views are grounded on the assumption that justice
denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. The
application of the principles of justice occurs in society through the actions exercise of citizens’
sense of justice. The second fundamental case is the application of citizens’ powers of practical
reason and thought in forming, revising, and rationally pursuing their conception of the good.

Veiled ignorance (Rawls, 1971) conceptualizes how meaningful decisions are made when
only knowledge of an individual or community need requiring care is better understood when
hearing from the perspectives of those impacted. When seeking to impact change, that general
knowledge of the person or regarding the situation requiring care helps focus on efforts to meet a
desired outcome instead of having information about the full details and subsequently getting
weighed down with conscious or unconscious bias (Rawls, 1971). In addressing change, it
became necessary to pass laws to ensure fairness and equality based upon factors such as race,
gender, and national origin.

Civil Rights Act identified expectations related to ensuring bigger picture societal equity
in employment for protected classifications, and the associated regulatory agencies are
responsible for the application of justice.

Starratt (1991) defined in part the multidimensional ethic (1) the ethic of care, and (2) justice. While they may not be in full correlation, there is importance in understanding the interrelation of each of the perspectives. In caring, to help another grow enough to promote fairness, efforts are to be made to offer minorities and women access to employment and mentorship opportunities. In care and growth, it also includes diversity in workplace networking opportunities, demonstrating a stand for equality and bringing about change (Starratt, 1991).

**Application of Justice: Key Laws and Agency Guidelines**

African American women have endured employment discrimination, facing barriers preventing their upward advancement (Cook & Glass, 2013; EEOC, 2016; Nooks-Wallner, 2008). The Civil Rights Act (1964) and associated regulations and agency guidelines were created to eliminate discriminatory practices and ensure employee rights for those who are a part of protected classes which include, but are not limited to, race and sex. Compliance with federal and state laws demonstrates thought and care for the fairness of those who have systemically faced discrimination.

Federal laws have existed (e.g. Civil Rights Act, 1964) to outline compliance expectations in ensuring equity and opportunity in employment, and have been in place for over fifty years, yet as previously outlined, the prevalence in leadership disparity continues to exist. Barriers to advancement have been researched and outlined within this literature review, from ethics of justice and care perspectives, and their relation to the lived experiences of African Americans based on race. However, the gap in advancement opportunities for women and minorities continue to exist.

**Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.** This landmark federal legislation, was the
first comprehensive federal law prohibiting the career trajectory based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin discrimination (SHRM, 2013b). Title VII of the Act requires equity in employment decision-making specifically related to hiring, transfer, promotion, compensation, professional development training access (EEOC, 2017; SHRM, 2013b).

There was an amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act (1972), which expanded coverage oversight to combat discriminatory behavior, giving EEOC oversight with covers public, private and academic institutions; when employers with more than 15 employees who have worked twenty or more weeks per year (SHRM, 2013b).

Sections 102 and 103 of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 amends Title VII to permit for damages in cases discriminatory actions are found to be intentional. There are penalties for compensatory or punitive damages to make whole people for intentional discrimination, and trial by jury we included within the Civil Rights Act of 1991. There is a maximum on the amount of compensatory damages based on the number of employees within the employer workforce (EEOC, 2013).

Civil Rights Act of 1964 was amended in 2009, when President Obama signed into law, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, creating a rolling timeframe, expanding the statute of limitation timeframe from a one-time 180-day from incident window, to 180-days from the date of each individual wage disparity infraction. This provides additional time to file actions of wage discrimination, which may overlap and related to sex or national origin discrimination.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.** The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2016) enforces federal laws. These laws prohibit job applicant or employee discrimination due to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic
information. The EEOC is empowered to investigate claims of employment discrimination. There is no cost to file a complaint or talk with an investigator if clarity is needed regarding potential matters employment concerns in relation to the protected categories.

**Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978).** These procedural guidelines were established for Title VII, Executive Order 11246 and other federal laws that regulated equal employment opportunity compliance (SHRM, 2013b) to address “all aspects of the selection process, including recruiting, testing, interviewing, and performance appraisals” (p. 2-22) to purposely create initial hire and ascension capabilities. The exclusion of women and other protected classifications of people, such as African Americans, from employment advancement opportunities which have an adverse impact based on sex and race, in relation to hiring or advancement into leadership positions is discriminatory (EEOC, 2017; SHRM, 2013b).

**Affirmative Action.** When workplace underutilization of protected classes such as national origin and sex, a plan may be developed by an organization to demonstrate meaningful steps that will be taken to increase employment diversity (Beckwith, Carter & Peters, 2016; Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; SHRM, 2013). Affirmative action plans aid in developing efforts to increase in workforce diversity, which include women and minorities.

To proactively look from a varied view, with the desire to add to literature, this research recruited and interviewed African American women who have advanced into leadership positions. Interviews occurred to learn about their experiences which may have influenced their success to serve as a model for others. Additionally, this has the purpose of replication for future studies that may involve other racial minority groups or other marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, or veterans.

According to Sevenhuijsen (1998), “justice is a process in which content and form are
interwoven in specific ways, or a common commitment to structure our collective lives in
c accordance with situational considerations on just rules and public provisions” (p. 145) which
promotes responsibility for diversity for others (Flax, 1993). Laws have been established to
address equality (Sevenhuijsen, 1998), including gender and race, however “given the history of
gender, we know that equality between the sexes…is unlikely simply to happen. Only legal,
political and social changes can bring it about” (p. 117) broader change for justice and equality.

Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. The term glass ceiling was popularized when a
1986 Wall Street Journal article described what women confront when attempting to reach for
leadership positions as an invisible barrier (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). The Glass Ceiling
Commission was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in 1991 and consists of 21 bipartisan
members to evaluate barriers impacting women and minorities. The commission further is
responsible for providing barrier eliminating recommendations regarding professional
advancement opportunities for both women and minorities.

women and minorities are not only “an egregious denial of social justice that affects two-thirds
of the population, but a serious economic problem that takes a huge financial toll on American
business. Equity demands that we destroy the glass ceiling. Smart business demands it as well”
(p. 4).

Currently known as the Glass Ceiling Commission (2012), updated information has been
published noting invisible barriers continue to impede the upward career advancement of
women. Regardless of the type of employment held by women, (Glass Ceiling Commission,
2012) whether it is in public, private, non-profit positions or if even an entrepreneur, women and
minorities continue to face prohibiting glass ceiling barriers from them entering the workforce,
transitioning positions, or attempting to climb the ladder of advancement. Migrating from intellectual thought, theory and debate, needs to move to implementation for ethics of justice and care to be actualized.

**Application of Care: Advancement Opportunities**

Care ethics shares the importance of not just listening, but hearing and responding to the care of those in need (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). The United States Department of Labor statistical data and research reviewed earlier in the chapter speak to the limited growth of African Americans attaining leadership positions. Barriers to advancement were identified for women and for minorities. To care and promote fairness, knowing the concerns of the other is important.

There is value (Mayeroff, 1971) in understanding the other’s perspective. Therefore, in this frame, the care perspective of the African American voice is included to join it with ethic of justice thoughts of justice as fairness and ethic of care emotions which compel change as knowledge of needs is understood (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Accordingly, as there is value in the African American female perspective being added to the ethic of care perspective, there is also value in the contributions made by women in the workplace.

Failure to ensure workplace inclusion in upward promotional opportunities with fairness as justice are why regulatory agencies exist and continued barriers “can be costly to an organization, not only in terms of lost productivity among women of color who feel stymied in the careers, but also in terms of turnover costs and annual salaries” (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990). Additionally, penalties for barriers to employment are statistically reported by the EEOC (2015) who recorded $75 million in retributions for employment race based discrimination settlements.
Weyer (2007) affirmed the glass ceiling theory noting that after two decades since the phrase glass ceiling term was coined, explaining woman and minorities being blocked for advancement continued. Weyer (2007) outlined barriers that result in a glass ceiling were: “(1) corporate practices such as recruitment, retention, and promotion; (2) behavioral and cultural causes such as stereotyping and preferred leadership style; and (3) structural and cultural explanations rooted in feminist theory but also recognizing advancing beyond the barriers is achievable” (p. 483). Laws were implemented in the 1960s, descriptive verbiage about women and minorities seeing, but not being able to reach higher levels require strategies to impact change.

According to Davis and Maldonado (2015), limited progress of minority females into leadership roles are a result of barriers to advancement based upon biases of attitude or organizational culture. There continues to be a lack of exploration (Cook & Glass, 2014) regarding how environments, within organizations, may improve the overall likelihood of upward mobility for women and minorities, into leadership positions. When organizational cultural biases are addressed, it has been found that “the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization’s success” (Society for Human Resources Management, 2008, p. 2).

Barriers to advancement of workplace minorities (Osuoha, 2010) such as failing to have organizational support for inclusion and to being afforded access to networking opportunities with leaders contribute to barriers; moreover, a lack of leadership ability, experience and skill development conflict with inclusion efforts. According to Tarmy (2012) the following interventions have impacted advancement opportunity and inclusion via networking, training,
mentorship, succession development planning. Application from the previously stated global HR perspective on equal access frames the collective impact of societal injustices at organizational levels. The application of procedures and goals organizationally also addresses care expectations, in knowing the view of individuals who seek fair treatment will have growth opportunities.

There is value in perspective when the African American voice is included to join it with ethic of justice thoughts of fairness and ethic of care emotions compelling change as knowledge of needs are understood. As there was value of the African American female perspective added to the ethic of care perspective, there is also value in the contributions made by women in the workplace. Accordingly, barriers to advancing women and minorities can foster organizational losses, through diminished returns and turnover rates by women of color, in work productivity when obstructions prevent career advancement (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990). More recently, statistics reported by the EEOC (2015) recorded $75 million in retributions for employment race based discrimination settlements.

According to Williams (2007), upward career trajectory is improved with mentoring relationships, with other factors to leadership attainment being credibility, professional development and work experience. Factors for mentoring ensure that they are astute in speaking the language of non-minority leaders to be prepared and knowledgeable (Cook & Glass, 2014), on the topics of “sports, politics, read the wall street journal” (p. 92). Manager led employee growth-interventions help prepare workplace minorities for advancement into positions of leadership. The interventions support prior research and identified mentoring and training as catalysts for advancement opportunities (Nooks-Wallner, 2008).

The 21-member bipartisan Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) was developed
because of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. The Commission identified and recommended four government recommendations to eradicate barriers and improve advancement opportunities for African American women, including leading by example; strengthening enforcement of antidiscrimination laws; improving data collection; and exposing diversity data to demonstrate transparency.

**Government Recommendations.** The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission’s (1995) study on making full use of the nation’s human capital, offered four government recommendations to ameliorate employment discrimination against women and minorities. The concepts identified the importance of the government leading by example in it being conscientious in their governmental hiring and promotion practices; strengthen enforcement of antidiscrimination laws by addressing matters and holding decision makers accountable; improve data collection regarding barriers for women and minorities; and expose diversity data to demonstrate transparency. Governmental intervention is necessary to ensure business compliance with federal laws and regulatory bodies.

**Business Recommendations.** Further the commission members identified eight overarching factors for businesses to focus upon to continue efforts to eliminate barriers and make full use of the nation’s most valuable resources, human capital. The factors are top administrator commitment; diversity as a part of all strategic business plans; use of affirmation action as a tool; select, promote and retain qualified diverse individuals; prepare minority women for senior positions; educate corporate ranks; initiate work life balance; and adopt improved performance and workplace practices.

The factors establish a framework, but specific to establish practices to framework that should seven elements of comprehensive, systemic business practices to breaking the glass
ceiling including leadership and career development; rotation/nontraditional employment; mentoring; accountability programs; succession planning; workforce diversity initiatives; and family friendly programs.

Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) has published a report stating that barriers preventing the advancement of women and minorities from obtaining leadership positions betray America’s most cherished principles of the American Dream. Further the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission’s (1995) report offered that “breaking the glass ceiling gives all Americans the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to economic growth. Economic gains must, and can, be shared by all” (p. 6). This stated belief supports efforts as identified by Rawls in ensuring equality.

**Conclusion**

The first part of this chapter identified the broad foundational principles as identified about the ethics of justice in mid-twentieth century, which were from the white male perspectives of Rawls and Starratt, discussing the balance between systematic policies and their overall impact on the masses or individuals, additionally considering self-governance. Further, it evaluated if there was equality in the implementation of policies and the impact to individuals who were different than or similar as the decisional authority. Subsequently, a care perspective from Mayeroff, a white male and a different voice through Gilligan, a white female was introduced to discuss the ethic of care, which offered a perspective not focusing on a process but on the needs of those needing care or growth. However, missing from both ethics, was a review of justice and care ethics from the African American perspective, as such more current literature, more relevant to this study was reviewed which added to, disagreed with and expanded views.

The second part of this chapter identified broad understanding of women in leadership
and the glass ceiling which served as an invisible barrier to the advancement of women, even within a society that has increasing numbers of women in the workforce, and having experience and higher education, but minimal increase in hiring or advancement, which does not demonstrate justice, greater good for the most amount of people or equal respect. More miniscule opportunities were identified regarding women of color in leadership, facing a concrete ceiling where the impact was that opportunities were not seen, and not available. The consequences of laws and regulations enacted to ensure equal opportunity to employment, has not impacted equal access, equal respect or care for the growth of those impacted by patterned disparity.

Studies have identified barriers blocking access to African American women seeking leadership advancement in employment. This research addressed the gap in literature to gain meaning from those participants who have advanced into leadership positions. Chapter Three provides significant detail regarding the methodology for this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Significant research has been published to bring attention to the barriers African American women have endured, obstructing their advancement into leadership positions (Beckwith, Carter, & Peters, 2016; Cook & Glass, 2013; Davis & Maldanado, 2015; Johns, 2013). Conversely, less research has occurred to address African American women who have successfully advanced into leadership positions (Catalyst, 2004; House, 2014). This qualitative study examined the experiences in the leadership advancement of African American women.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this research study as interest was in exploring lived experiences through the lens of participants who can directly address and describe the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Roberts, 2010). Meaning cannot be obtained through the assessment of numerical data surrounding the statistical relationships between variables, as in quantitative research (Maxwell, 2013; Roberts, 2010). Rather than using numbers or figures, qualitative research better informed this study as answering the research questions involved gaining an understanding of participant knowledge and perspectives (Roberts, 2010).

The EEOC (2016) documented allegations of claims nationwide for various protected categories, including race and gender. The data have not shifted to lessen implications. The United States department of labor workforce analysis supports there is a significantly lower rate, less than 1%, of African American women holding leadership positions (Catalyst, 2003).

The appropriateness of qualitative research as the research method was identified by Creswell (2014) who identified that the qualitative research process surrounds having interest in the process leading to outcomes. Quantitative research has interest in just the outcomes which
does not well identify the experiences leading to the outcomes. In evaluating the questions to be answered, comparing research methodologies can assist in pursuing the appropriate method (Roberts, 2010, p. 143):

1. The conviction of the researcher based on research experience
2. The nature of the research problem
3. To uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known
4. To gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known
5. To give intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods.

Accordingly, based upon the five items noted above, qualitative research is the method I propose to use in this study.

**Research Methodology**

According to Roberts (2010), qualitative research may present a more holistic understanding of a phenomenon, beyond solely a statistical review of variables in relation to a hypothesis, as with quantitative research. This insightfulness serves as a “critical reflection on conscious experience, rather than subconscious motivation, and is designed to uncover the essential invariant features of that experience” (Goulding, 2004, p. 302). Qualitative research brings a deeper understanding by collecting data from the knowledge and perspectives of participants (Roberts, 2010).

In qualitative research there are several inquiry traditions that can be used to meet various research objectives; phenomenology is one of those traditions.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, a type of qualitative research, is a scholarly study method that lends itself to meaning-making to more effectively comprehend the perspective of an individual or group of individuals through collecting data about those situations or the events surrounding a
specific phenomenon, with the intention to determine how and why it influences others (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). This research approach goes beyond the surface to gain depth.

Phenomenology (Creswell, 2014, Roberts, 2010) permits researchers to obtain knowledge about the lived experiences of participants and, moreover, seeks to obtain meaning from the individual perspectives of those who have experienced a phenomenon being studied. Phenomenology (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2010) permits researchers to ask open-ended questions which are semi-structured, for the purpose of ensuring the same foundational questions being asked, while allowing latitude for the participants’ experience untainted by researcher ideas, on their rise to success. Ultimately, phenomenology is to obtain the underlying meaning of experience (Creswell, 2014) then categorizing the experiences of the participants with a phenomenon to best define the topics identified and code as structures develop.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

The subjectivity of a researcher can impact the credibility of a study, when the experiences of a researcher (Peshkin, 1988) interferes with their ability to impartially ask questions without leading, and further analyzing data without biasing the results to fit researcher expectations or personal experiences. Handling HR issues is a part of my line of work as an HR administrator; however, I learned of participant experiences that vary from my perspective.

As an African American woman working in the field of HR for twenty-five (25) years, my personal and professional experiences provide a unique lens as one who has not only investigated allegations of discrimination made by African American women, but I have personally experienced employment discrimination being blocked from advancement opportunities. These experiences compel me to learn how some African American women have ascended above the glass or concrete ceilings. To overcome barriers, I began academic degree
pursuits, requesting attendance at professional conferences and volunteering for workplace committees. While I have my personal experiences, as a researcher I created a participant connection and became open to gaining knowledge about participant experiences, which may be different from my own.

Wolcott (1995) found that there is value in the development of researcher and participant rapport, as it ensures the comfort level of research participants. Rapport building (Wolcott, 1995) eases participant concerns, which helps with data collection, while ensuring that the mind of the researcher remains focused through the development of two strategy questions for the researcher. The first question asks whether the opportunity allowed the researcher to gain desired insight. The second question asks if the obtained insight effectively utilized the opportunity (Wolcott, 1995). Further, establishing an effective connection promotes the effective gleaning of meaningful data from participants, ensuring that as the researcher I do not allow bias to taint the study. Peshkin (1988) identified that a researcher’s personal bias is so ingrained within us, it cannot be fully removed. Conscientious monitoring of researcher questions and goals promote focus and not getting lost in the research (Wolcott, 1995, Huziak-Clark, 2016, personal communication). Later in this chapter, I address research credibility and trustworthiness.

**Autoethnography: Research Study Self-Integration or Self-Participation**

Newer considerations (Stanfield, 2011) breed rethinking research methods involving race and ethnicity and identified four research inquiry thoughts to develop new methods perspectives. Those published methods (Stanfield, 2011) included how momentum has grown and “respect for autobiographical and biographical analysis, methodological triangulation as mixed methods, sexual orientation sensitivity, and transnationality” (p. 22) as related to logic inquiry discussions.
Explaining each of the more recent methods is outside of the scope of this study; however, I shared my own experiences through autoethnography as it is pertinent to this study, so I offered my researcher perspective as a part of this research.

Stanfield (2011) identified previous resistance to exploration of researcher’s own story or biography; however, more recently autoethnography has recently been identified as an appropriate alternative research method as it is a “value-embedded intellectual practice” (p. 22) to create depth and richness. The dispelling of academic trepidation (Stanfield, 2011) of researcher bias began occurring over forty years ago with ethical oversight of human subjects to serve as study participants. Autoethnography allows me to be a researcher as well as a participant in this research study. As such, I introduced my ethnographic perspective into this research alongside of the other participants. This approach pursues both (Ellis, 2011) descriptive and systematic analysis of my own researcher experiences to better understand the cultural phenomena studied.

Ellis (2011; 2006) identified that autoethnography combines characteristics of both autobiography and ethnography. When considering researcher self-participation Ellis (2011) found that autoethnography is a method which recognize researcher’s perspectives. There is importance in directly addressing the influence of the researcher, not avoiding it as if it is inconsequential.

Researcher autoethnographies, according to Ellis (2011), often provide vivid reflections of their experiences through telling a story. The story can be developed upon review of field notes, interviews, or other documents, which adds to the analysis of data obtained through trustworthy collection methods. Adding to the data collected, this method allows me as the researcher to tell my experiences, and identify reliable data gleaned from the semi-structured
interviews. The semi-structured interview protocol to be used was modeled from an instrument that was used by Edmondson and Nkomo (2001) in their writings on race and gender and the differing journey of women and women of color in their pursuits in the professional workforce.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the present study was to gain understanding from the experiences that influenced the advancement of African American women within this study, into leadership positions. Interviewing African American women who have ascended into leadership offered contextual insight into their lived experiences, obtaining what they perceive helped promote their advancement into leadership positions.

My study sought to uncover and reveal the meaning of the human experience, understand participant behaviors regarding the study, and ensure an effective rapport to glean meaningful non-statistical data (Maxwell, 2013; Wolcott, 1995). Researchers seek to comprehend and describe social phenomenon based upon the perception of the participants (Glesne, 2014). The themes and assertions obtained from interviews may serve as a model for other African American women seeking professional advancement.

**Research Questions**

Research questions (Maxwell, 2013) are developed with the purpose to outline what I desire to learn as the researcher. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What experiences influenced the leadership advancement of the African American women in this study?

RQ2: Were there organizational programs implemented, which influenced advancement opportunities of African American females into leadership positions?
**Research Design**

The phenomenological, qualitative method that was used in this research study was to explore experiences based on experiences of people (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010); this method of research is inductive and uses the collection of descriptive words. Conducting qualitative interview involves in-person, audio telephone or virtual on-line or internet engagement (Creswell, 2014) which involves open-ended questions to obtain lived experience data from participants.

This study is to learn about the leadership advancement phenomenon, from participants who are uniquely equipped to provide information (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013); therefore, face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from a maximum of seven African American women participants, in professional positions that are classified as director level or above.

**Participants**

To glean meaningful feedback, literature has identified that the number of qualitative, phenomenological research participants often vary between three and ten (Creswell, 2014) individuals. Alternate literature perspectives identified, there is no preferred qualitative research standard that dictates the sample size, but the qualification is a “sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected” (Roberts, 2010, p. 150). As the researcher, it is important for me to ensure that the richness of data generates both depth of content and credibility (Creswell, 2014; Glesne; 2011), through interviews with participants, who are uniquely able to serve as witness to particular events (Maxwell, 2013).

After the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved me to conduct the
research, convenience sampling was sought to seek African American women to be invited to share their experiences regarding leadership advancement (Appendix A). The sample population recruits were solicited by email from outreach to three civic organizations. Two of the organizations were founded by and for African American women over 90 or 109 years ago, where the members consisted of college-educated African American women; and the third organization includes a significant population of women and minorities. The position titles for consideration in this study are director level and above. Additional information regarding participant sampling is identified later in this chapter.

As a matter of background exploration, it is important to solicit a representative sampling size to reliably call upon (Roberts, 2010) to address the phenomenon. Convenience sampling was used to interview seven (7) face-to-face participants, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews to obtain information regarding career advancement experiences identified by African American women in leadership positions. Only in the event where participant availability makes it impractical to have face-to-face interviews, other alternatives have been defined. Either telephone interviews or video conferencing were identified as an alternate interviewing method based upon the availability and needs of the participant.

While various studies have occurred on the barriers to African American women in attaining leadership positions, I looked from a different perspective to study the lived-experiences of African American women who, despite barriers (Beckwith, Carter, & Peters, 2016; Cook & Glass, 2014; Nooks Wallner, 2008), have advanced into leadership positions. Leadership position levels for this study were defined as director level or above. The criteria for selection included race (African American), gender (woman), with experience advancing into a senior leadership position, and sample size (seven willing participants) in this
In qualitative research, theorists have identified there is logic and power when phenomenological participants and site selection purposefully occurs (Creswell, 2014; Galvan, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative research theorists have further identified a variety of different purposeful sampling strategies (Glesne, 2011). According to Glesne, 2014, efforts in purposeful selection “leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (p. 44), where researchers can learn about issues of importance surrounding the purpose of the research (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002).

The population from which this purposefully selected sample-set is made to gain insightful information related to my research questions and study objectives to “provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97) were drawn from African American women who work or who may work in a small, mid-size or large businesses, which may be educational, governmental, business, public or private organizations.

I recruited and enrolled twenty-five (25) individuals who fit the subject criteria (Appendix B). Recruitment to enroll twenty-five individuals who meet the criteria occurred via telephone or recruitment email. Each method included me supplying essential details regarding the purpose and intent of the research study and method of data collection. The recruitment email provided significant details about my study topic, method of data collection, and time commitment. Attached to the recruitment notice was the process outline to be followed by individuals demonstrating interest in becoming a study participant, the associated consent form, and the research question(s) the study focused upon.

I am a member of an International civic service organization with over 290,000 members
and 997 chapters internationally. I am also affiliated with another national civic association, with influential African American women as members and served as co-chairman of an Ohio diversity organization. I am actively involved and serve as a member of a five-state Great Lakes regional committee in an international sorority and a statewide professional organization with immediate access and the ability to solicit interest from several hundred successful African American women in leadership positions.

The organizations have expansive lists of professional, college-educated women. The organizations include: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA); The Girl Friends, Incorporated (GF) and The State of the State Diversity Conference (SOS). As an active member of these organizations, I had direct access for ease in outreach to request potential enrollees through each organization, to learn of potential interest in participation, or who may refer other potential participants.

Consent to participate form was given when the participant voluntarily responds yes to my recruitment via email after email or phone recruitment occurs (Appendix C). An electronic informed consent form was provided to all potential participants for their review. Providing this documentation in the recruitment email allowed the recipient to read over the information, ask them to contact me, the advisor, or the IRB with any questions. The last portion informed them if they selected "yes, I am willing to participate" on the form, or voluntarily responded to interview questions, it would verify their consent to the study. Participants’ availability made some face-to-face interviews infeasible, therefore telephone interviews or electronic video conferencing served as alternate interviewing methods, to gather experiential data regarding the phenomenon. As such, those who replied to my researcher email, with an affirmative “yes, I consent”, were requested in lieu of PDF signature, if actual signatures were not possible to obtain.
Data Collection

Data collection in qualitative research generally involves observation, probing interviews, document review, or a combination of these methods to ascertain understanding of the experiences of those individuals participating or processes reviewed as a part of a study (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010). There are four data sources for the present study: an advance questionnaire, interviews, resume or curriculum vitae review, and leadership sample.

The total time commitment of participants was not projected to exceed six hours, which is inclusive of consent document review, advance questionnaire completion, interview time, providing resume or curriculum vitae and leadership information, and member checking. While I did not anticipate having to follow-up with participants on questions, it was necessary and occurred by phone or email based upon participant availability. For participant member checking of the interview, the transcript was provided to them electronically with password protection. Clarification occurred by phone or email; as participants offered potential edits to their transcribed interview analysis.

Individual semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted leaving liberty to build questions as the knowledge sharing occurs. Pseudonyms were developed to protect as best as possible, the confidentiality of participant identification and names of organizations. Study interview participants were audio-recorded and later transcribed. The researcher’s handwritten, personal notes or memos were used for researcher recall.

The interview settings used were mutually agreed upon, but primarily based on the participant’s comfort level. The locations were intention focused to attempt to limit interruptions, of those agreeing to participate in the study to answer the semi-structured interview questions.
According to Creswell (2014), the characteristics of qualitative research include data gathering in the comfortable natural setting, often where the phenomena occur. Researchers (Creswell, 2014) make use of fact gathering instruments they create; uses a variety of forms of data collection such as interviews, review of hardcopy or audiovisual information; inductively and deductively analyze themes and data collected; concentrate on study participant meaning making about the phenomenon; evaluate patterns as they develop; assess the perception and bias potential of my potential influence over the study; and finally have full insightful understanding regarding the complete phenomenon.

Data collected (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2011) during research were held as confidential as possible to minimize risk. As the researcher I protected participant privacy, by deleting email messages after saving pertinent information electronically with a pseudonym. Collected participant identifying information was kept separately from collected data, in a locked file or under a password protected electronic document. If there are situations where participants may be quoted, those were attributed to the appropriate individual, and identified with the associated pseudonym.

**Advance Questionnaire**

In advance of selecting participants from the recruitment pool, I asked those affirming interest in participating in the research study to complete this written life history advance questionnaire. The advance questionnaire established baseline information for the interview on topics related to past and current work experience and leadership advancement. This questionnaire helped contribute to these stories and experiences.

The advance questionnaire was adapted from writings by Bell and Nkomo (2001), who developed a survey distributed to over 1400 African American and White women with MBAs
and involvement in professional women’s associations. The questionnaire has five sections which includes gathering potential participant data regarding life history; position characteristics; race and gender implications to advancement; advancement to leadership experiences and life lessons (Appendix D).

**Interview Process**

In advance of establishing interviews with participants, I gained authorization from the IRB which is the administrative body responsible for approving research involving human beings, as identified during doctoral degree coursework at Bowling Green State University human subject review board training (Sondergeld, personal communication, 2015).

As a matter of protocol, the interview interactions began by ensuring the setting selected is comfortable for individual participants. I asked questions to build familiarity through engaging opening dialogue and obtaining basic demographic information. Wolcott (1995) was eloquent in explaining that a field worker, otherwise defined as a researcher, should “make good use of the opportunity before me to learn what I set out to learn” (p. 90), ensuring knowledge is gleaned through the interaction.

Structuring an effective interview process includes assuring participant comfort and specific insights promote obtaining the knowledge through rapport building. Additionally, researchers were to show appreciation for the time volunteered to participate in the study; staying adaptable and tolerating ambiguity in participant statements; and holding onto faith and determination while obtaining data (Wolcott, 1995).

The semi-structured interview questions (Appendix E) lasted approximately ninety minutes and provided latitude for discussion about their academic and professional backgrounds; their perceptions of the impact race and gender may have played in their career advancement;
and what workplace efforts have been beneficial in their professional trajectory. Additional questions (Glesne, 2011) may emerge through the course of interviewing, that the participants may perceive have attributed to their leadership advancement.

To minimize risk to the participants (Maxwell, 2014), the handwritten notes and printed, transcribed data were stored in a locked file cabinet and computer or password protected as appropriate. Further risk reduction efforts for participant confidentiality, included pseudonym development and use, which were maintained separate from the data collected and analyzed. Access to electronic and/or written notes (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2014) were me as the researcher, the transcriber, and peer reviewer who was not directly involved in the study (Appendix F). Consent to confidentiality was provided in writing via emails; with participants having the option to review and member-check their individual transcribed analysis of their individual responses.

All data have a retention time period, not to exceed two years following research completion, then destroyed by shredding to maintain confidentiality. When participants affirm consent, via email response or by physically signing consent forms, any data that reports participant names or other identifying information for program documentation or for a participation reward, were stored separately in a locked file or electronically stored on the computer with password protection.

**Resume/Curriculum Vitae**

I requested a resume or curriculum vitae from each of the participants. This review allowed me to visually and sequentially review the professional pathway taken by each study participant. These documents also served to demonstrate if there were workplace programs identified. Document review sought to find notations of mentorship, sponsorship or professional
development programs on leadership which may have helped propel the participants into leadership positions.

**Leadership Samples**

Leadership sample documents were requested as a form of making meaning of their leadership experiences. The participants were asked to provide a sample document of their choice to demonstrate their leadership related work, which shares their roles or responsibilities. Sample documents included policy development and the strategy of an implementation program. The participants were also able to verbally share leadership samples as an alternative to sharing workplace documents.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves appropriately transforming raw data into warrants and assertions to better code data into themes and categories after listening to recordings; reading participant interview transcripts; notes; or memos that were taken to trigger insights observed during the process (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010) to identify, according to Maxwell (2013), “tentative ideas about categories and relationship” (p. 105). While there are various methods that a qualitative researcher may use to systematically process and code raw textual data, Creswell, (2014) reiterated eight steps of the coding process, as identified in 1992 by Tesch. Those rephrased steps include:

1. Gain a big picture view by reviewing entire document and writing down overarching ideas that reveals what the topic was about;
2. Review one document at a time and systematically write down topics in the margins asking, what is this about;
3. Upon review of several documents using the same process, the researcher is to make a document listing all the topics, with one column per document, placing all the columns on the same sheet to begin comparison and groupings listing major topics;
4. Abbreviate the topics into codes, return to the data documents, list the code next to appropriate sections, being open to new codes which may emerge, and conscience of ideas that develop through the process;

5. Use descriptive words for the topics, which may now develop more fully succinctly into 20-50 categories;

6. Begin alphabetically organizing the categories to eliminate redundancy and overlapping topics. Refine the topic abbreviations for each category.

7. Place the data in the best category, understanding there may be shades of gray until all are thoroughly reviewed through a preliminary analysis, keeping the research questions in mind; and

8. As appropriate, recode the data, into a more organized system and structure.

According to Glesne (2011) the process of data analysis is regarding the organizing collected data that was “seen, heard, and read so that you can figure out what you have learned and make sense of what you have experienced” (p. 184), and data descriptions, comparisons and explanations are developed. Categories were developed based on the sorting and coding of data analysis to review broad information and segment it into more specific sub-categories of themes, patterns and comparisons to develop understanding.

**Data Coding**

The coding of collected data of analysis is improved by ensuring I have organization during the data collection phase. According to O’Connor and Gibson (2003), making meaning of the words and descriptors used by participants to describe their experiences in relation to the phenomenon and the research questions, required my researcher attentiveness. Data coded from semi-structured interviews of participant assertions were maintained separately from interview collection data files. Coding determined (Glesne, 2011) “themes, patterns, processes, and to make comprehensions and build theoretical explanations” (p. 194). My goal as I conducted the research was to be open to hearing the perspectives of the participants.
As the researcher, I sought to understand that while the manner of verbal expressions varied between participants, focusing on the meaning behind the verbal expressions of the participants, is crucial in the establishment of themes, patterns processes, or concepts through data analysis (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). For example, I learned that participants obtained academic degrees or certifications to expand their qualifications or noting that the participants linked with a mentor or leadership coach.

In addition to researcher analysis and identification of themes (Creswell, 2014), to promote assurance of “trustworthiness, authenticity and creditability” (p. 201), various strategies were used to enhance the correctness of findings. Through triangulation (Creswell, 2014), I used peer review and member checking to ensure no researcher bias or reflectivity would threaten the trustworthiness of this research.

**Peer Reviews**

Using multiple processes for data analysis increases the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings and peer review is one which was available (Galvan, 2014). Peer reviews of transcript data were conducted by individuals who had no affiliation with my research study. The peer reviewers followed protocol and added credibility to the study through their independent analysis of participant transcripts (Appendix F). Reviewers’ reflections of the data were provided through what they found as participant themes.

The three peer reviewers were diverse in age, race, and professional work experiences. The first peer reviewer was a retired, African American woman with career experiences as a K-12 public school administrator. Peer reviewer number one is over the age of sixty and has an earned doctor of philosophy degree. The second peer reviewer was a White female attorney, with career experiences in higher education. Peer reviewer number two is over the age of forty,
and has earned both juris doctor and doctor of philosophy degrees. The third peer reviewer was a White female marketing manager, with career experiences in manufacturing. Peer reviewer number three is over the age of thirty and has an earned doctor of education degree. Each peer reviewer provided written comments on the transcripts they reviewed. The peer reviewers commented on themes based on their analysis of the participants’ transcripts. The themes were charted for researcher cross-analysis. The table was provided to the researcher’s dissertation chair and methodologist.

**Member Checking**

Member checking allowed participants to review their individual transcript to ensure that I characterized their experiences precisely (Glesne, 2011). The participants were informed at the time of consent that this opportunity would occur after their interviews were transcribed. I contacted each participant by phone to provide them their unique transcript password. Further contact with the participants occurred by email to electronically provide each participant with their individual secured transcripts for their review, edits, or comments. The seven participants were invited to review their own transcripts to offer edits over a span of two weeks. Feedback and responsiveness occurred, and participants completed winding thoughts and asked if more examples of actual job duties and experiences were needed that had not been shared. They also edited out filler-words and corrected typographical errors.

Chapter Three established the triangulation methods by which the participants’ data were collected. Additionally, this chapter outlined the processes to promote reliability of the data analysis. Chapter Four shared the findings from this phenomenological research study.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Credibility and trustworthiness surround my being able to affirm the trustworthiness of
data from participants sharing their interpretation of their lived experiences (Glesne, 2011). Multiple methods of review to promote credibility and trustworthiness through my analysis, coding and member checking (Maxwell, 2011). To address interpretation validity, participants were intentionally involved. Each participant was sent their own password protected transcript electronically to review. As a part of the member-check process, the participant had the opportunity to elaborate or clarify the analysis as necessary. Enlisting them serves to ensure the summation of me as the researcher, reflected the individual participant views appropriately (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013).

Using more than one data analysis process (Galvan, 2014) promoted accuracy and increased “the confidence consumers of research can have in a qualitative study’s research results” (p. 58). In addition to researcher analysis and identification of participant themes, I utilized peer reviewers, not related to the study. They reviewed the data and assessed potential researcher bias or reflectivity that may threaten research validity. Confidence is gained through consulting with participants by way of member-checking (Creswell, 2014) to “determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determine whether these participants feel that they are accurate” (p. 201) and reflection on researcher subjectivity (Glesne 2011; Maxwell, 2013; Wolcott, 1994). I audio recorded those interviews, which were transcribed, to be studied and analyzed (Maxwell, 2013) in relation to the researched questions identified.

Credibility (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013) in qualitative research is promoted when a researcher consciously establishes procedures for research accuracy. Bias could occur, centered in my own beliefs, values or perceptions; therefore, trustworthiness through triangulation serves as a strategy to check accuracy of a study and addressed concerns of researcher bias and
reactivity (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013), which may be considered threats in conducting qualitative research and have been identified as factors that could lead to inaccurate conclusions. The consideration of concerns in qualitative research promotes a study of integrity (Maxwell, 2013).

I used early data analysis observation techniques, during the interviews, to continually look for ways to shape the study and organize facts or themes, in real time, versus awaiting full completion and analysis of data (Glesne, 2011). This strategic plan was to analyze data as it was collected, promoted a persistent focus on the research questions. The probing interview questions kept me conscientious of the fact that the data collected addressed the questions. As such, I monitored both validity or bias threats (Maxwell, 2013; Wolcott, 1995).

To ensure valid data analysis, Huberman and Miles (1994) offered that credibility “is immensely aided by data displays that are focused enough to permit the viewing of a full data set in one location and are systematically arranged to answer the research question at hand” (p. 432). Identification of topics or themes and categories should be specified based on individual participant responses, as verified by transcript and researcher note review in relation to the research questions is key (Maxwell, 2011). For accuracy “the best way to examine the validity of the research findings and of the researcher’s interpretation of them is for the researcher to go back and ask those individuals who participated in the study or who can speak on behalf of them” (O’Connor and Gibson, 2003, p. 74), as identified in literature.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

More than 10 million African American women are in the United States civilian workforce and have increased their academic and professional preparedness by over 350% through earning advanced level degrees over a fifty-year span of time (DOL, 2015; WB, 2015). However, the inequity in leadership advancement for African American women versus White women in the workforce continues (Beckwith, Carter & Peters, 2016; Gamble & Turner, 2015; DOL, 2015; and Malveaux, 2013).

Accordingly, the purpose of this research was to study African American women leaders to learn how these women achieved success. Further, this research studied if professional development programs existed within the organizations where these women worked and if the programs influenced the advancement of these women into leadership positions. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What experiences influenced the leadership advancement of the African American women in this study?

2. Were there organizational programs implemented, that influenced advancement opportunities of African American women into leadership positions?

The crystallization of themes emerged after the analysis of participant experiences, based upon the participant responses to an advance questionnaire, and a review of participants’ resumes, leadership samples and responses during the semi-structured interviews. This chapter was divided into the following six sections: (a) participant descriptions and pseudonyms; (b) thematic analysis; (c) leadership sample; (d) autoethnography; (e) thematic summary; and; (f) participant experience-based suggestions.
Participant Descriptions and Pseudonyms

Participants have some commonalities beyond race, gender and leadership positions. The women in this study have ties to organizations that are civic, social, or service-oriented.

Participant recruitment occurred from membership in community-based organizations: First, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA), was founded at Howard University in 1908 by African American women (one generation from slavery) with the purpose of promoting and encouraging high scholastic, ethical standards and unity, and addressing concerns regarding girls and women and works to improve their social stature. While this international organization has 290,000 members, recruitment for the study occurred within the Great Lakes Region which includes Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Western New York, and Western Pennsylvania.

Second, Girl Friends, Incorporated (GF) was founded in 1927 by African American women during the Harlem Renaissance to foster friendship, networking and charitable and cultural activities. This national organization has over 1500 members. Recruitment occurred within Ohio.

Third, the State of the State Conference (SOS) founded in 1995 by an African American male, along with other male and female diversity professionals had as its goal the banding together of a variety of Ohio organizations to plan, create, and implement a conference addressing issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and opportunities. An annual conference held in Ohio averages over 150 attendees.

Membership and involvement within these organizations have historically and contemporaneously allowed African American women and other diverse members to work alongside like-minded individuals with different experiences to promote and receive the
development of knowledge, skills, abilities, as well as gain networking opportunities. The participants in this study may be involved with one or more of the aforementioned organizations.

Additionally, all the participants shared involvement in other professional groups that are specific to their professional areas of study and expertise. Involvement in community and professional groups added to the practical experiences of the participants as the engagement offered them access to networks of other people, career trainings, committee participation, and accepting took on volunteer leadership roles, which the data shared ultimately contributed to their leadership experiences.

An advance questionnaire was used to obtain demographic life history data from participants. Data was obtained through various collection methods to offer some context. The collection process was not established to conduct a case study of activities, processes, or events (Glesne, 2011). A brief amount of summarized participant demographic information is provided below, with the following section introducing the participants in greater depth. The study participants interviewed included seven African American women, with professional work experience in director or higher-level positions. I served as the eighth participant in this study, and shared experiences in leadership advancement through autoethnography. As the eighth participant, my data are presented in a separate section, following the thematic analysis of data provided by the seven participants who were interviewed.

To follow is the basic demographic information gleaned from the advance questionnaire. Five of the seven participants interviewed are married; one was divorced, but remarried; and one was single. Six participants came from two-parent households, with one participant being raised by her grandmother. One of the women had earned a Bachelor’s degree, three earned a Master’s, and three earned doctoral degrees. The industry types span private, public, for profit, and not for
profit, with industries that include higher education, manufacturing, medical healthcare, and real estate. Finally, participant age ranges fell between 40 and 64 years of age.

Each of the selected participants volunteered valuable time to share their personal experiences that led to their advancement into leadership positions. Every participant had her own meaningful experiences to share with me as the researcher. The experiences shared during the semi-structured interviews were reflections that left indelible marks upon those interviewed. As unfolded below, some reflections were filled with a sense of accomplishment, others with disappointment and frustration. Overall, the data shared provided insight into the experiences in leadership advancement as African American women.

Pseudonyms were used, instead of actual names, to ensure the participant’s confidentiality. However, the actual professional titles were used to demonstrate that their leadership levels were director or higher positions. As follows, I introduce the seven volunteer participants that were interviewed as a part of this research study.

Bella Renee Jones’s experiences in leadership advancement began with wisdom provided by her southern grandmother. Bella Renee said her grandfather was a church pastor and her grandmother was the church’s first lady. They told her how Black people were treated differently than their White co-workers, so she had to work harder than White people to achieve in the workplace. According to Bella Renee, that family advice influenced her to establish academic and professional goals and set out to work hard to achieve them. Bella Renee served in the role of the regional president and CEO of a healthcare system, where she aligned regional operations and launched its strategic branding campaign. Bella Renee initiated a multi-faceted financial and operational turnaround strategy that produced $16 million in annual savings, reduced labor expenses by $5 million, and maintained employee and patient satisfaction. This participant
oversaw the creation of physician partnerships as a precursor to the establishment of the first regional physician advisory council, to improve physician engagement. Bella Renee has been the subject of one journal article and the co-author of a different healthcare journal article. Finally, Bella Renee is in the 55-64 age range, is a product of a two-parent home, has four children, and is married.

Dr. Cindy Fiev served in the role as vice president of global talent management and development for a manufacturing business with a worldwide footprint. Cindy established and directed the implementation of human resources strategies within the organization’s international business structure. The participant strategically partnered with organizational leaders across operating regions to align overarching business goals. Additional, Cindy had the responsibility of meeting departmental needs with the recruitment and development of human resources within and outside of the United States. Cindy holds an earned doctoral degree, and is a self-published author. She is also a presenter on transformational leadership and courageous followership. Finally, Cindy is in the 45-54 age range, is a product of a two-parent home, and is married with four children.

Missy Fitz served in the role as the regional director of a governmental agency, with the responsibility of enforcing regulatory compliance. Missy issues subpoenas and assigns Title VII penalties for non-compliant organizations. Missy also provides subject matter testimony concerning cases in courts of law within the region and the nation’s capital. Notable settlements have occurred with her involvement in the amounts of $850,000, $1,000,000, and Missy received recognition for settling a $4.3 million case. Missy holds a four-year degree and provides expert professional development education to the public, employers, governmental agencies, attorneys, judges, realtors, and advocacy groups. Finally, Missy is in the 55-64 age range, was initially a
product of a one-parent home until her mother got married when Missy was 10 years old. This participant is married with one child.

Olivia Pope serves in the role as the vice president of a property management company, responsible for the conceptualization, development, and implementation a diverse portfolio nationwide. This participant manages a budget of nearly $5 million dollars and staff members in various states across the country. Olivia earned a master’s degree and heads on-the-ground and remote crisis management efforts to address urgent and safety matters involving residents. She engages with various political, organizational and community leaders in her property management role. Finally, Olivia is in the 55-64 age range, is a product of a two-parent home and is married with two children.

Francis Black serves as an academic medicine program department chairperson and is both an associate professor and dean within a college of medicine and science. Francis is a published author, presenter and is an award-winning leader within her profession. She is an actively practicing, credentialed clinician who also instructs students as a faculty member. Francis serves on 18 of 20 division workplace committees, advises multiple student groups, provides direct patient care and brought nationwide recognition to her university from their program’s clinical association by setting a standard of excellence for diverse enrollment. Finally, Francis is in the 55-64 age range, is a product of a two-parent home and is remarried with two children.

Noleda Josephine serves as a department director and faculty member within a university. This participant has maintained 85% student retention within advanced university
degree programs for nearly a decade. She has brought in $750,000 in tuition revenue through remote site cohorts with community businesses and secured thousands of dollars of funds for undergraduate scholarships. Noleda Josephine was personally invited by the university’s top leadership to partner in conducting employee forums to collect data to make recommendations for strategic restructuring. Noleda Josephine worked with other faculty to redesign curriculum to healthcare administration, global leadership, and nonprofit/public sector leadership. This academically prepared participant has an earned doctoral degree and is a published book and journal article author and presenter. Finally, Noleda is in the 35-44 age range and was a product of a two-parent home. She is unmarried with two children.

Ruth North serves as a campus dean. She leads oversight for all campus operations, budgets and curriculum development, assessment and instructional schedules. Ruth strategically planned and directed all instructional, facilities, staffing, technology and support services for the college campus. Ruth has partnered with community entities to establish a new high school option linked to her campus. The new high school is designed to recruit first generation, at-risk female and minority students. Those who enroll will obtain an accelerated academic high school diploma and public safety associate’s degree. This academically prepared participant is all but dissertation in her doctoral program. Finally, Ruth is 45-54 age range, was a product of a one-grandparent home and is married with two children.

Now that I have presented the participants, next I will discuss the themes that emerged from the data. The analysis will present a sampling of participant perspectives regarding the themes and sub-themes, reviewing both similarities and differences.
Thematic Analysis

I charted the themes that emerged from each peer reviewer and evaluated them in relation to her own analysis, then reviewed them collectively across all seven participants. This research study sought to obtain insight from those who broke through glass and concrete ceilings in the workplace, often where they were unwelcomed, but whose experiences to serve to contribute meaning to leadership advancement for African American women. The participant data offered insight into the experiences of African American women holding leadership positions.

In the assessment of transcribed notes for themes, the outcomes demonstrated the value of gaining meaning from the varied perspectives of others. The data assessed from each of the seven interviewed did not fully parallel each other, or even my own experiences. However, the data substantiated the essence of their individual experiences. The experiences were collectively assessed to develop themes as I did not postulate a priori factors. I captured the collective experiences to report the findings of the data, but I did not reflect upon each individual participant in every theme, as cases of analysis in every section. However, to support the emergence of themes, several meaningful experiences will be shared regarding each theme.

There were two predominant themes which were gleaned from the analysis. A succinct response to the first research question: what experiences influenced the leadership advancement of the African American women in this study? Participant data showed that advancement is a result of the sum total of their experiences. A succinct response to the second research question: Were there organizational programs implemented, which influenced advancement opportunities of African American females into leadership positions? Yes and no. Four of the participants identified that they experienced workplace sponsored professional development opportunities, while three of the interviewed participants found other avenues for training. The themes
developed, based upon participant experiences were identified as (1) strategic preparation and (2) self-determination and courage. There were three sub-themes that emerged from strategic preparation, and seven sub-themes for self-determination and courage. Some whose experiences may fit into more than one section. Supporting data for both research questions were intertwined with the themes and sub-themes. For strategic preparation, sub-themes include family and community influences; preparation to work harder; and education, experiences and professional development. The themes are revealed in greater detail below along with participant data related to the key themes, beginning with strategic preparation.

**Strategic Preparation**

For this study, strategic preparation for these participants was the process by which an individual may focus on how to achieve future success by evaluating their current standing, in relation to where they wish to be, and how they will achieve their leadership advancement goals (SHRM, 2013). These foci may be intrinsic and/or extrinsic and include external influences, self-directed efforts, and tenacity as foundational aids in their pursuit of leadership advancement goals. The essence of participant reflections identified both personal and professional experiences which were beneficial in their leadership preparation. Insight about the experiences emerged from analysis of participant data. These insights permitted the participants to better position themselves for opportunities for professional growth and advancement. The participants had extraordinary experiences, which built one upon another, before they became extraordinary leaders.

The preparation for leadership advancement began many years before any of the participants ascended into their leadership roles. The collective influences of family members, members of community organizations, preparation to work harder, and education, experience and
professional development were identified. As shared in the semi-structured interviews, the participants noted that some influences for them were more intentional with direct influence through parenting or membership in organizations that gave verbal insight on what to do to accomplish goals, while other influences were incidental as the participants learned the importance of preparation by watching leaders.

There were influences that family and community had on the participants and were early and more recent community involvement influences which left lasting impressions. There were indirect and unintentional occurrences that happened on their leadership journey. However, the data demonstrated direct and intentional experiences that were beneficial to the participants. The participants attributed a portion of their success in their advancement to family and community influences, as family and community modeled the way for them to move forward into leadership roles. As the influencers were not the focus of this study, I did not review the recounting by participants of all their statements, but included the perceptions about influencer experiences as shared by the participants.

When it comes to one being an educated and experienced professional, in all things, preparation was key. Bella Renee shared:

Even as President and CEO, I always practice my presentations before I give it at a board meeting or if I'm giving a speech. I've been on panels at local universities where there was a women's event. They give once a year. And so, I still do that today...and my executive team thinks I'm crazy but my motto was "nothing beats preparation".

There were three sub-themes that emerged from participant data, as contributors to their strategic preparation: family and community and community influences, preparation to work harder, and education, experience and professional development. The exploration starts with family and community influences.
**Family and community influences.** Parents, grandparents, community leaders, and community involvement in organizations had influence with participants. The influences in each participant’s preparation for leadership were provided through either lived examples, spoken narratives or witnessing community impact efforts. Examples were offered from participants who shared family and community experiences that influenced their desire to become leaders. There was more than one avenue of influence that provided leadership lessons for the participants. They include parents, community leaders, and participation in organizations.

Both Olivia and Missy contributed vivid accounts of learning the importance of leading efforts to fight against racial discrimination through fighting for civil rights and through watching parents and other community members at organized meetings at churches. Both Olivia and Missy learned how to understand issues, plan protests, and collaborate with others to accomplish a united goal. Missy’s community church and NAACP influences from her youth were an integral part of her foundational understanding of leadership. Her current affiliation with the community organization has Missy leading governance matters as a board member sitting alongside community church pastors, entrepreneurs, and bank executives as they develop strategies to address community biases. The influences of trainings received within and partnerships developed with other leaders in this collaborative community organization were transferable into her professional regional director role.

Olivia’s mother and grandmother were activists and instilled in her that she could accomplish whatever she worked hard to do and to not take a seat in the back, as too many people fought and died for her to take a seat in the front. Olivia shared:

I have had a lot of strong African-American women in my life. And those are the women who have really pushed me forward and I want to make proud. So, I
never try to do anything that's not going to make them proud. I think about that with every action that I take. Because they've done so much for me to put me out there. If they [mother and grandmother] had some of the opportunities that I had, within academia and in my career, I think they would be presidents of companies now, because that's the type of women they are. But they did not have those type opportunities, but they made a way for me and they saw the path that I could take and they really pushed me.

Leadership lessons were obtained from family members verbalizing the importance of being prepared for opportunities that were not available to either Olivia’s mother or grandmother. Failure to ascend to leadership, according to Olivia, was not because her family members were incapable, but because they did not have equal access to opportunities because of their race and gender. Olivia was told her rightful place was where opportunities existed. As a grade school student, Olivia and eleven other African American students had to be escorted to their ninth-grade class of a school being integrated for the first time.

According to Olivia, her mother decided to position her daughter in better schools. Olivia shared:

I'm originally from the south - Selma, Alabama. I was born there and I remember being one of the students to integrate a high school for the very first time. I remember people telling my mother, [who] was a civil rights activist, and still is…she's 85 years old, - that she allowed me to go to this school to be one of 12 students to integrate this high school. My mother was told that our [Black] students, integrating [the school would have] blood through the hallways. My mother said, that she'll be giving her life to Christ, and she'll be fine. And I remember going to the high school that day and us having state troopers there and police there to walk us into our classrooms.

Olivia described the history-making high school integration experience influenced by her mother. That act of challenging the process of separating schools by race, demonstrated the power of a community effort in advancing access and now cowering from bias. This effort was not just for Olivia and the eleven others, but served to as examples of preparation and courage for all of them. Young Olivia was a conduit for equal access to education as influenced by both
family and community organizations. Olivia offered about her experiences in leadership advancement, “I think as a result of a lot of those things growing up and then moving forward in life, a lot of that leads to your leadership style and how you're going to be as a leader”. Information about more current community involvement by Olivia was detailed in the section on determined-creativity.

Missy identified that her greatest influences in leadership came from African American community churches. Missy shared:

You know, when I think about my journey, I don't know if I'm going to pinpoint one person or one particular organization. I can just tell you I remember as a child observing, believe it or not, the men in leadership roles. I was interested in how they became leaders and how people reacted to them. And, if I have to actually choose one organization, that would actually be the African-American church.

Missy identified she was determined to make decisions as a leader, so she set out to see what it took to be a community leader at the forefront, not in the background, to motivate change like the men who influenced her to be a leader. Seeing men in leadership intrigued Missy, but seeing women leaders not being recognized in the church as true leaders intrigued her more, especially as she shared in the African American church, women were trained that leadership was a man’s role. Missy stated, “I can just remember. The conversations that the ministers would talk about, and it had to do with discrimination, but they were all for particularly the males…equality, equal rights and standing up, except when it came to females. Still you can do all of that [racial equality] as long as you don't overstep your boundaries”.

Missy identified her leadership influences as the African American church and her mother, who told her not to let church gender boundaries within the race limit her seeking to be a leader and that she could work to accomplish anything. While others in the community were defeated by oppression refusing to pursue advancement, Missy stated oppression inspired her. In
reflection of past experiences, Missy stated, “I was born into a community where there was much hopelessness, where these people had been oppressed for years and where they saw no way out and no solution. I said, no, I see it as a solution. And I will be back to help you all, you can rise above this. I don't know, I always had that going for me, I fought my way”. Missy set the goal to go to school and earn a degree so she could be a leader. Details about how these influences brought Missy full circle were detailed in a later section titled education, experience and professional development.

Cindy Fiev received an internship opportunity as a young woman, because of a community connection. “My first internship was at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan - was a part of that connection between the sorority and someone who actually worked there that gave me you know my first opportunity to really get out there into the workforce. And then I really got to see other female leaders being successful. Cindy said, seeing women leaders influenced her. Her workplace competitiveness pushed her prepare herself, to follow in the footsteps of these women leaders, subsequently earning master’s and doctoral degrees.

Bella Renee spoke of becoming strategically prepared. There were influences by family but, differing from the other respondents, also noted the influence of a professional work sponsor, who was also her supervisor. Bella Renee’s maternal grandmother instilled life lessons. Bella recalled being told to always do her best, tell the truth, and mind her manners. Two points Bella Renee expounded upon were firstly, being taught to ensure she did what she could to help others, without expecting anything in return and to work hard as the reflection was not just on her, but also upon the family. Secondly, Bella Renee had both a similar viewpoint and differing perspective from other participants. Bella shared an experience that changed her trajectory. She strategically made the decision to work a second job to fill an experience void she knew she
would need to ascend to the next level. Bella reflected on this experience early in her career:

The president and CEO of a medical facility selected me as an administrative fellow. He interviewed me on Thursday at 3 p.m. and, the next morning Friday at 9am, he called me and offered me the job. I was shocked. It had not been twenty-four hours and when I got there he told me there were other people with more experience than I had, but the reason why he chose me was because I impressed upon him that I really wanted to work at a hospital.

And when I was working as a manager with [a data business] and, I also took a second job to work at George Washington University. And the reason why I took that second job in the evening is so that I could prove that I get some experience working. No, he had never met someone in their early career life to do that. I would leave my house at 7a in the morning and get home at 11p at night. I did that for five months. I needed to show I had experience in the hospital and that's why he hired me. Even though I don't even have the same experiences that others [who applied] had, he thought he could contribute to me [and my development].

Bella Renee said this same White male supervisor instilled in her that “whenever given an assignment, not only do it completely but always add something extra that may not have been asked, and that the person who asked you to complete the assignment would find it valuable. Secondly, he told me that whenever a deadline was given to me, always complete it before the deadline. So, for example if he gave me an assignment that's due Friday, I always gave it to him on Wednesday”. Bella continues to follow this leadership practice in her professional and civic organizations.

Family and community influences also encouraged the remaining participants to establish plans to being intentionally prepared for leadership. Ruth shared that her mother was a PhD and university administrator, and her accomplishments inspired her to want to be a campus leader. Additionally, Ruth offered that because of a workplace experience she realized in higher education, an employee could not make a difference at a lower level. For changes to occur, there would need to be policy and procedure changes. Ruth knew she needed to be at a position where she had influence. Not only was this relevant to family influence, Ruth’s perspective was
directly related to a section to follow which addresses education and expertise. According to Ruth, “so that's what inspired me to keep moving up the ladder, because differences aren't made when you are at the bottom of the hierarchy, but more when you become or when you go higher”.

Ruth often consulted with her mother, who was her professional influence, and mapped out the work experiences and position progression she needed and pursued positions in different states requiring commutes of over an hour each way, accepted overlapping leadership roles directing functions and serving as associate vice provost, ultimately relocating to another state to become the dean of a campus. Ruth offered:

I realized that the job description of where I want to be required a PhD. So that way, I just kept moving in the same direction in higher education to get to that next level. So, where my first position only required a bachelor's degree, I liked that position, but - I wanted to do more; therefore, I worked on a master's degree and then entered a doctoral program.

Ruth’s journey to leadership advancement to progressive advancement into positions required her to take a position and commute to a different state and ultimately relocate with her family across several states to lead an entire campus as dean.

Noleda Josephine expressed a similar journey to university department and program leadership, setting faculty-to-administrator goals, obtaining advanced degrees and relocating twice to take positions that propelled her into leadership. The strategic preparation influences were community related, based on high school, higher education and African American woman influences. Noleda Josephine stated she was a cocky doctoral student talking with her advisor wanting to be in a job that the advisor held. Noleda Josephine’s preparation to ascend began based on the discussion that follows:

I was like I want your job, what do I need to do? Well, she was like, can you write? …I was like yea, I can write. She was like, well that's what you need to
do to get where I'm at. You know, she kind of explained the whole tenure process, for higher education... and that by the time you get to department chair, associate dean, those sorts of positions you gain tenure and this is how you do it”.

Regarding an unplanned incident, became an example of a community influence from study participant, Noleda Josephine reflected on a high school memory. The minority students were on a civil rights class trip to Mississippi in the early 1990s. Taking a pit stop for snacks at a Mississippi carry out, the following was shared:

This white carry out owner called us niggers. He said he wasn't going to sell - and I can still see this man's face as if it was yesterday - pop, candy or a bag of chips to a bunch of nigger kids. And at that moment, I think that was the first time anybody had really called me a nigger. I heard people's experiences and I listened to my grandparents because they were from Mississippi, so I heard it secondhand, but not being called that and being a teenager in high school, being called that from some grown man, you know, but that kind of shocked us.

The African American woman school principal and chaperone said, one thing you will not do is call my children “niggers”. And I was just like wow! And if you knew her, she was short, she wasn't a big woman. She was a little petite woman but at that moment I remembered two things: she stood up for all of us and at that moment, we became her children. Now being an adult, realizing she risked a lot to stick up for kids she knew and kids she really didn't know and for her to take that risk for us, that was powerful for me. So, I always told myself, that in whatever position I'm in, if she could do that for us, I can take the risk and stand up for other people.

This community leader set an example for Noleda Josephine and the other students on the high school trip of the importance of protecting innocent youth and presenting an example of strength and courage in standing up to discrimination on behalf of others, which this participant stated still inspires her to act in a way that mirrors the principal, even today.

Noleda Josephine stated she learned the value of strength in the face of challenge from watching the African American high school principal stand up to an adult White man who was yelling racist words at her underage African American and Hispanic high school students. Noleda Josephine said, that moment in high school sparked something within her and motivated
her to be a leader to stand up on behalf of herself and others. Noleda Josephine made the
decision to obtain a college education so she could be a leader like her unintentional high school
mentor. This decision made her plan to be an educator, so after she found out what she needed
academically, she intentionally set goals to become a leader. Noleda Josephine obtained her
doctoral degree in leadership before age thirty. Noleda Josephine is now an executive board
member of an organization that the principal was a member of, where Noleda serves as the
strategic planning chairperson. She also serves alongside other tri-county association African
American leaders. She co-chairs the leadership development committee where helps develop
monthly professional level training for African American leaders.

The journey for Francis was initially influenced by family and her husband at the time.
Francis was encouraged by her ex-husband to pursue her academic goals after encouraging him
as he obtained his master’s degree. With an attraction to healthcare as a field of study, Francis
sought to become a registered nurse by earning an associate’s degree. Over time a physician
assistant role became Francis’ goal; so, in researching the next steps, she learned she had to
obtain her master’s degree to write prescriptions. The steps Francis followed allowed her to
reach her established goal to become a healthcare clinician.

In contrast to two other participants, Ruth and Noleda Josephine, Francis had not
considered or planned to work in an academic setting: so typical progression to strategically
prepare to ascend into academic leadership did not occur for Francis. Often, ascension within
academic leadership involves faculty instruction, obtaining tenure and seeking academic
administration positions to become a department chair and associate dean. However, even
without that traditional path, she ended up in academic leadership anyway.

Francis was invited to be a part of an advisory team based on her clinical expertise.
Francis had never developed courses or curriculum for programs. In sharing her physician assistant knowledge as a clinician, she gained understanding from other advisory team members with academic experience. Francis shared this unintentional journey to ascension in academic leadership by stating:

I wish I could tell you that I had aspirations to enter higher education and to start a Physician Assistant (PA) Program graduate program ... or be in any type of education because I'm a clinician at heart and I wanted to always be a clinician.

However, I always acknowledged divine intervention, and I really believe the reason why I ended up in higher ed[ucation] was really divine intervention. It had nothing to do with my aspiration. And I, every day because I am a spiritual person.... receive confirmation for the reason why I was rerouted from being a clinician to higher education.

By the request of a colleague who was charged to explore the development of a physician assistant program at a college of medicine, Francis was invited and it changed her career trajectory. Francis stated, “As the advisory committee set up the proposal for the physician assistant program framework, I played a minor role because I was not familiar with PA education. I had absolutely no expertise to really provide other than the fact that I was a physician assistant. I knew nothing about curriculum, I was a clinician”.

While divine intervention was identified by Francis as the reason she has ascended into a faculty administrator role, no strategic preparation occurred as precursors along the way. Whether the preparation was strategic, as noted by six of the interviewed participants, or incidental as noted by one of the participants, hard work was a constant that was identified by all the participants.

**Prepare to work harder.** Parents, grandparents, educators, mentors, and leaders in the African American community, in many cases, taught the participants what they needed to do in order to be prepared for their journey to leadership. The data expressed that there would be
greater work output expectations of them as African American women. Olivia participated as an international committee member for property management for her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and additionally with the American Society on Aging to contribute her experience and work at broader international and national levels. Noleda Josephine is the tri-county co-chair of the leadership development committee for a community service organization. Monthly leadership trainings are conducted by and for African Americans to provide experiences they may not obtain through workplace professional development. The monthly professional development sessions are developed in agreement with committee members who are African American human resources or bank vice presidents, a university dean, industry financial officers and city administrators.

Participants identified feeling as if they were in a fishbowl, expressing that they were visible to all in a setting with few or no other African American leaders and stating they had to work harder than their White counterparts to prove their professional abilities. While participant life experiences differed, six of the seven participants expressed they were told be strong or were shown strength through their family member efforts, that they were well able to accomplish anything they set their minds to doing.

As an example, Olivia recounted being a new hire and attending her first regional insurance meeting. Olivia learned that a recent lawsuit had been filed against and lost by the organization. The settlement required the company to hire an African and a woman. Applying and receiving the position, she fit both protected classes. Olivia shared that when she was headed to the meeting with her boss, who was also the district manager of sales, she was forewarned she would be the only woman and African American woman in this position. Olivia recalled that the men in the room were not welcoming or inclusive. They acted like she was not
there, until one White man spoke loudly and said:

“I heard that a bitch had been hired”. Then Olivia’s boss stood up and said, “that's enough”!

I was sitting on the front row with my boss and he stood up and said that's enough! And he said we're going to start this meeting. And then he introduced me, and everybody just kind of looked, and no one really said anything at first, and then there was this one man who stood up and acknowledged me and then a younger man stood beside him.

They were sitting next to each other, and he acknowledged me and they both welcomed me to the region. The other men booed them [the two men]. I found out later that these two men were going to be my office mates and they really supported me. The older one was the top sales person in the district. He really helped to mentor me in sales and my district manager took a special interest in me and he took me around on a lot of my calls in the very beginning, gave me a couple of his clients to take over and to help me out in the very beginning to see how I would do.

I did very well, but in the meantime, you had to get all your licensures, you had to go to sales school in Illinois, you must do all these things to go to claims school because you have to learn all these things.

And because of how these men treated me, I felt like I always had to be at the top of my game, and it pushed me to be number one. I was number one in every class for my licensure, and then I became number one in our region for sales and then within the company. I became what they call a gold ring bearer; and that's when you receive a gold ring for being - one of the top salespersons in the country for the company.

Olivia and the other participants shared similar experiences, with several of them opting to demonstrate professional competence and leadership abilities by working harder versus filing an internal complaint or pursuing an external legal filing. This shared example demonstrates Olivia’s hard work, as she was resolute to prove her capabilities. Olivia verbalized to me that she had to work harder, outperform, and excel beyond the White male colleagues who were not only unwelcoming and unprofessional, but discriminatory and belittling just for Olivia showing up. Olivia was not the person who filed that complaint against the insurance company, but she just happened to have applied for the open position.
Other study participants shared insight into their need to work harder. Cindy said she learned her professionalism and work ethic from her father, who was a leader and business man and emulated him when entering the workforce. Cindy said that whenever she had to present in front of peers, she would be diligent in her preparation and practice continually until she was prepared. Noleda Josephine spoke of her academic experiences, which included serving as a faculty member and administrator.

While her peers did not take on volunteer tasks, Noleda Josephine served as president of the faculty senate and participated on or led several committees. She worked harder as she believed if she did not accept these additional tasks, she would be viewed as not being a team player. Ruth’s views partially aligned and varied a bit from those previously mentioned. Ruth did mirror her pursuits after her mother in academic leadership. She took it upon herself to perform well and prepare like the others to have others see her value. However, there was no company lawsuit and she had limited concern for peer acknowledgment of her presentations. She was externally determined to work harder to make a difference for those not represented during discussions about programming or funding at academic leadership decision-making table.

Bella Renee offered that her parents and grandparents, who grew up in a different generation, told her that she had “to be twice as good in order to succeed. And so not to complain about it, and not to focus on things I can’t control, [but] figure out how to deal with it”.

Colleagues would come to me probing to learn where I went to school, ask about my education and experience path, in a way to justify how Bella achieved her success, as if Bella was an anomaly in her race, I would not let people get away with saying things like that to me, letting them know she is just like the other Black people she knew.

Bella Renee shared that she developed this understanding over time, that there is a hierarchy of challenges she faced, pressing her to work harder, dealing with race, gender and age stereotypes.
I will say Black is because people have a belief, that if you're Black, then it is impossible to be that intelligent. To be in a position where you are managing millions of dollars. It's just impossible because they have what I will call 'cognitive dissonance'. Because, in their life and in the way they grew up, they've never see a Black person in that [level] role.

Bella Renee provided insight on how she was promoted four times and others wondered how it occurred. Bella Renee recalled that she used to “take initiative and ask for assignments that other people didn't want to do. And so, I did that at [the medical facility]. That's why I was promoted four times, when there were things that needed to be done in the organization that may not necessarily fall real neatly into line – if one of the executives and the CEO needed to have something done, I would volunteer to do it”.

Bella Renee shared an experience where the CEO assigned her a hospital survey to analyze. Offended, Bella Renee went to the CEO reminding him she was a master’s prepared professional and an administrative staff member could do this work, but he did not reassign the work. Bella said it was not until much later that she realized what he was doing as her sponsor.

What happened is when we would get into executive committee meetings and board meetings and they were asking questions. He would say Bella Renee, “how many employees do we have? How many doctors? How many residents? How many fellows? How many beds? What was our revenue? I would [answer the questions], and everyone would look around the room wondering how does she know that? It was from completing those surveys. And at that point I told him, I would never complain about any assignment he gave me again”.

This exercise strategically prepared Bella Renee to learn to be more cognizant of pertinent details when advancing, a strategic practice she mirrored and modeled through her career. This supervisor strategy taught Bella Renee to intimately know the statistics of the organization, and while others did know how she had that knowledge, when senior colleagues had questions, they then had to reach out to her as the subject matter expert and it elevated her status amongst her peers and more importantly, board members.
Missy spoke of preparing to work harder from a different lens than five of the other interviewed participants. Missy gave the perspective of historical implications and from a reverse perspective proving qualification by working harder. Missy’s perspective was she would not justify she is capable, but would simply perform the role and if she faced discrimination, she would address it through formal action. According to participant, Missy,

What is not widely understood by many that as an African-American woman, while women totally experience discrimination - African-American women experience far more discrimination, because we experience what is called compounded discrimination. And [that] there is a hierarchy in America here.

The African-American woman is at the bottom of the totem pole here. And because people, or I should say others that are not of my particular race and sometimes even sex have treated me along this journey like I, perhaps, was less than talented. It was not up to me, I felt, to prove that I was more intelligent or equally intelligent. It was up to me to let them feel the pain because when they discriminated against me [then] they figured out how intelligent I am.

Francis also shared her professional experiences regarding working harder, referring to it as the ‘black tax’ which is having to work harder as an African American woman than White men or women, not only to ascend into leadership, but also work harder to serve as a senior leader and harder to maintain a leadership position. Francis offered this example:

The problem with that, is that I sit on every college and university diversity committee. I call [it] the Black Tax... because I am the only full-time African American faculty in the College of Medicine. So, I have to sit on every single search committee because the rules and regulations have been developed over the years. The university policy dictates “that you must have diverse recruitment committee, and since I'm the only full-time African-American, I sit on every search committee and every single committee that's in the College of Medicine and many on the main campus.

Responding to my question, “How do you get to work done”? Francis responded:

Tell me about it! That's why I put in a minimum of 14 hours a day, and my dean is like, every time I go home your car is still here. Well ...who is going to do his work?

Because when you are African-American, I don't have the luxury of saying I
couldn't get it done. And I think that's another one of those Black Taxes where we really have to be the best and the brightest, we cannot be mediocre. We don't get a bye for mediocrity. So, I've worked very hard in the last 20 years to make sure that I'm not on someone's list that she's not doing this or she's not doing that.

I have two offices, two [sets of] staff so my office that I spend the majority of my time is in my Academic area, because I'm the department chair. I have two programs: human donation sciences and the PA program. I have another office with staff and where the pipeline programming is delivered. All diversity issues, programming and questions come through my office. And again, we have 20 Committees in the College of Medicine: I'm on 18 of them.

I asked Francis about the other two committees, her response was “because I just said, no”!

Francis shared with me that her colleagues do not have to serve on the volume of committees, do not advise the same number of student organizations, nor have an overarching associate dean position like she was asked to hold regarding diversity issues, nor consistently work the same number of hours. However, the work expectations and deadlines for Francis did not lessen, while her presence on the committees ensured the schools’ compliance.

**Education, Experience and Professional Development.** Data analysis identified participant diligence in demonstrating their commitment to learning and absorbing the knowledge to be prepared for leadership advancement. Most participants were age fifty or older, with two in their forties. Their lived experiences developed during an active time of African Americans talking about, fighting and marching for civil rights in the 1960s to gain fairness, justice, and access not just to employment opportunities, but also education.

The pursuit of higher education was promoted by participant influencers and/or by self-interests that education should be a great equalizer to be more competitive within the workforce. The data shared that the focus of participants in securing college degrees, were to be competitive and to serve as examples to others that barriers can be overcome. Participants noted they were academically equipped for advancements into leadership opportunities and with those
opportunities; they worked relentlessly to prove their capabilities.

The participants offered that gaining higher levels of education and experience should serve to open doors to gain access to opportunities to work and advance into leadership positions to influence change. As stated earlier, the participants have higher education degrees, with one with a bachelor’s degree, six of the seven having at least Master’s degrees, one within the seven at the all but dissertation completion phase for her doctoral degrees; and three of the seven having already earned doctoral degrees.

Each participant identified the value of academic preparation. Missy came from an area that did not believe getting a degree or fighting for equality would make a difference. Missy not only obtained her four-year degree, but she did so successfully in a field of study African American students did not often pursue (computer science). However, she did and was successful in her role. Fighting oppression became Missy’s passion, so she shifted careers and positioned herself to gain knowledge from community organizations such as the NAACP. Community involvement with organizations in her early life influenced her desire to lead based on professional development she received through them. Currently, Missy leads governance issues in that same organization, which seeks to address discriminatory practices related to civil rights laws in with employment and housing discrimination. Missy has 27 years of experience in the agency as she progressed within the workplace. Her expertise has won her awards for abating issues that violated the law. Missy’s experience has placed her in positions to influence change, remedy discrimination, and present professional development trainings to small groups, employees, judges, and other enforcement regulators.

Noleda Josephine was committed to be an academic professional, which required her to achieve a doctoral degree. Professional development funding through a fellowship was available
to Noleda. The funding paid for academic conference attendance where training gave foundational understanding on how to be an effective faculty member. It additionally allowed the fellow to purchase a significant number of resource books for Noleda Josephine to use to better prepare her to instruct her students and begin her personal library. Gaining experience was important to Noleda Josephine’s professional work success, so she relocated her family twice in order to expand her work experience and contributions.

Bella spoke on the importance of not only obtaining advanced degrees, but strategically earned the degrees from respected institutions of higher education. Academically, Bella Renee said she knew her parents and grandparents did not get to go to college, but it was important to them that she went to college. Bella said,

I knew that the first step to being a successful is going to the right schools. So undergraduate, I attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. For grad school, I got my master's degree from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine … so at least no one could discredit the schools that I had received my degrees from...so that's what I did academically.

Further, Bella learned it was not always coursework or trainings that develop leaders. Bella learned to be cautiously open to advice that helped her rise to a challenge and professionally develop as a leader. “I'm one of these people when something is brought to my attention and I know that you're doing it for my benefit, even though it may be hard to hear, I am one of those people that will go do research”.

Olivia received a bachelor’s degree from Knoxville College and several years later at Case Western Reserve she earned a master’s degree summa cum laude. In addition to academic degrees, Olivia valued the formal licensure-based professional development through her current and past employers. She noted it added value to her professional and leadership success, where she ultimately became a top salesperson in the country for her company. Professional
development from another employer sent her to Harvard University to do post graduate work in the field of non-profit programming. Olivia stated she was “very passionate about learning and about education, noting she valued her academic experiences - what we do as far as what my company does and what we stand for, - [we are] always looking for new ways or innovative ideas of how we can do something different”.

Francis’ insight to learning came from a lens of wanting to have her expertise parallel that of her peers. When she was a clinician she obtained her associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees, and when she was to pursue as a program coordinator, faculty member, and ultimately chair, she earned a Ph.D. Regarding learning about academics and curriculum, Francis stated that she “was a sponge, I wanted to learn, so I came in as a sponge and I felt that if I'm going to do this, then I'm one of those folks where it's got to be correct”. In addition to the lessons learned through committee participation when developing the new PA program, Francis attended formal professional development trainings and conferences, noting:

The institution and my Dean invested in my ability to transition into academia from the clinical setting. I attended the conference with two other new faculty; one faculty from the College of Medicine and one from the College of Nursing. I also was sent to the American Academy of Medical Colleges (AAMC) faculty development and the Association of Schools of Allied Health Profession (ASAHP) conference that required three classes in Washington, DC as well as visiting Capitol Hill.

I also was sent to Harvard first and then I attended the ASAHP program that was a two-year program. So, we started in the fall and then we returned in the spring to submit projects and initiatives we had developed. We would return in the spring and receive more training. We also went to Capitol Hill where we were taught how to present ourselves, how to lobby and navigate education. So, I must say, that the institution really invested in my success by providing me the opportunity to attend these three development conferences for new faculty.

Professional development program experiences within the workplace are a leadership advancement component thought to be valuable in being strategically prepared. Cindy, Francis,
Noleda Josephine and Olivia offered specific experiences about workplace programs.

The participants provided insights regarding the availability of work sponsored programs to help them build competence in work specific areas to develop and equip them as high potential talent. For example, the experience Cindy gained through a workplace high potential program was valuable as it allowed introspection, interaction and expansion, as explained below. The high-potential program lasted four weeks, where selected participants who were already identified as high performers, where employees were assigned tasks. Upon being assigned a workplace challenge, the high potential employees would:

Work through that challenge to come up with a solution and present it. Cindy offered that she learned a lot about herself during that time about working with others that were across functions in the business. So, it really grew me as an HR business partner. So yeah, I mean that type of a program is helpful. It's not targeted [to African American women] but it's helpful. I would say I've done a lot of self-development.

The data from the remaining three study participants - Missy, Noleda Josephine and Bella Renee - identified that internal professional development programs were not available for employee strategic preparation. However, they were assigned the responsibility of developing and providing professional development for other employees within and even external to the institution.

The participants who did not have internal options for development verbalized their belief that programming would have better equipped them for leadership advancement or would have aided them in avoiding professional slip ups. The participants’ knowledge, skill and abilities were such that they were entrusted by their organization’s higher-level administrators to develop organizational trainings for other employees within the workplace. However, internal workplace professional development has not been available for these participants.

Participants pursued educational advanced degrees, worked multiple jobs to gain
experience, worked to perform higher than colleagues to prove their abilities, relocated to gain experiences at other institutions, participated in community organizations, took on volunteer tasks that were not in their areas of expertise to expand their knowledge base. For example, Francis shared she has worked 12-14 hours per day for twenty years, to keep her seat of influence at the table, to speak on behalf of underrepresented students who without her had not historically had much access for medical program entry. As department head, Francis sat in a position not to talk about inclusion. However, with sponsorship by the White male hospital president, she established the standard, where fifty percent of the recruited physician assistant program enrollees had to be minority students. These outstanding inclusion efforts brought recognition to Francis who led the initiative and her medical hospital upon receiving a national excellence through diversity award. In seeking to understand what motivates Francis to make significant personal and professional life sacrifices, Francis stated:

…let me tell you what motivates me. My African-American students, who are so proud to see that there's an African-American [in leadership]. That's what motivates me. The biggest thing is that I have African-American students who are excellent. But more importantly, what keeps me on this job is that the day that I leave is the day that the program will probably become 90% White and 10% Black. Because right now … the incoming class… I have 40 students [for this medical program]. I have 40 students [that will] come in, and 50% of them are underrepresented in medicine. I have 10 African-Americans and 10 Hispanics.

The participants offered that their experiences within community organizations helped prepare these leaders to learn how to be a part of a bigger effort, how to work as team members and how to accomplish goals. For example, Francis helped led efforts to promote inclusion of underrepresented populations within the medical program. Support of her community members encouraged college support of diversity efforts upon their outreach to the university’s president and board members.
When professional development in the workplace was not accessible by these African American women, their strategic preparation pushed them to be creative in gaining the experiences needed for enhanced leadership development. The essence of experiences will be discussed more in the self-determination and courage section.

Self-Determination and Courage

When professional development did not exist in the workplace, it did not deter them, but motivated them to find ways to accomplish their professional leadership goals. Collected participant data consistently identified self-determination and courage as a theme. The data established that while each participant was motivated to advance into leadership, there were distinctions in the motivational factors. While external motivators or influences were presented to participants from family, mentors experiencing societal ills, it was only when the passion for leading change became internalized for the participants that their advancement intentions moved to advancement actions.

The participants freely shared their individual rationale that made them determined to impact change as leaders and break down barriers. For example, Ruth shared a story about a former White male supervisor who was responsible for area leadership. She said he was ill equipped to address or impact change for underrepresented populations, although it had a direct impact on retention. The lack of attention caused a decline of retention for minority students. Another experience offered by Missy addressed being determined and courageous when addressing issues to impact bias within the race. While it was a challenge to face external stereotyping and bias by others, it was also challenging to address those within the race. There are some who believe traditional roles should continue within African American families and community organizations. This especially occurs in the traditional Black church and some
households, which support behaviors that marginalize women to support roles versus leadership roles, and limit their contribution capabilities. It was key for the study participants not to fall prey to earlier learned race or gender stereotypes, even when biases were made by trusted church or community leaders to have the courage to believe. Missy specifically articulated and the others demonstrated – that a woman’s place was not behind men in leadership, but alongside them to also serve as leaders.

The participants did not support a restrictive mindset on the role of women, that some participants experienced in churches and the workplace where men were considered better leaders and not emotional and certain roles and levels of compensation should be different based not upon ability or duties performed, but by gender. Determined not to let others diminish their professional aptitude by working relentlessly to obtain a seat at the leadership table, the participants used the encouragement received from family over periods of time to pursue growth through education and professional development.

Francis committed herself to creating opportunities for those otherwise excluded from the medical field. Francis offered insights about battling with majority-peers, while facing ridicule from students, parents, faculty colleagues and administration. The organization and people may differ; however, experiences are more parallel than different among the study participants. Francis demonstrated internal determination and external courage in ensuring they used their influence as they sat at the decision-making table. If there were any regret Francis had, it was not pursuing tenure.

Bella Renee was determined to gain access to additional experiences by joining healthcare organizations and by taking different positions. Along with Ruth and Cindy, Bella also had a supportive spouse. The husbands who worked as business executives or as a
physician all had location flexibility. Determined to obtain leadership positions, each of the three participants mentioned, as well as Noleda Josephine, relocated to other cities or states to obtain a leadership position.

The level of work required of Francis to be a department chair, sit on 18 of 20 committees to make the school diversity compliant, see patients as a clinician, have oversight of diversity and inclusion as an associate dean, teach coursework as faculty and advise student groups, publish, and pursue individual self-fulfillment paled in comparison to the bigger picture of caring for the minority students and fighting for fairness for them within their medical programs.

These participants discussed the sacrifices they made in their lives. The sacrifices were time away from friends, family and even implicated foregoing individual success opportunities, for leading efforts for the greater good of a community of others. For example, Francis talked about foregoing tenure, as her time was significantly impacted by work overload. Ruth shared her delay in obtaining her doctoral degree, in taking on extra positions to support the institution. Participants noted that in their being focused, they endured judgment from others in taking on so much work, as there was no external understanding regarding why the participants were so community-minded and determined to foster change within their organizations.

There were seven sub-themes that emerged from self-determination and courage. They include skills development, creativity, networking, creativity, mentorship/sponsorship, faith in God, and goal setting. Those topics were explored which, when combined, supported the shared experiences and support participant determination and courage.

**Skills Development**. When skills and experiences are missing from the participant portfolio and no workplace programs existed, these women did not sit back and continue to wait for an opportunity in hopes of gaining opportunities to work and advance. These self-determined
women had the courage to come up with ways to develop their own knowledge. They were determined to seek ways to gain practical experience. According to Cindy, who had access to workplace professional development,

I would say I've done a lot of self-development. Whether it was through my educational journeys or, you know, I stay ahead of trends. You know, I do research still, outside of my doctoral journey. I look at executive HR magazines, I connect different networks. So, I think it's important that we continue to develop ourselves and not wait for people to develop us or for organizations to offer development opportunities so that we're ready when they come up, we're ready when those opportunities present themselves.

As presented earlier in the chapter, Noleda Josephine and Francis spoke of professional development training that equipped with skills to be effective in their academic roles. Missy did not have professional development trainings in the workplace. However, she had sessions for skills development within the NAACP and civil rights trainings for her team.

In addition, Ruth spoke of being told that while she and a White male counterpart performed the same role, he would be paid more as he had a family. Ruth was married with children, but the role of the male family lead was valued over her female role. Women who advanced into leadership roles faced discrimination directly, in meaningful ways that impacted them with status and compensation. Ruth was determined to accept tasks and invitations for committees to equip her for leadership. As Missy shared, it was important not just to identify it, but take measures to remedy its effects by filing formal complaints. Cindy, who unlike other participants, worked first and secured college degrees afterward, noted her determination to disappoint the naysayers, as “the you can’t push me to the you can”. She set out to expand her skills and abilities through strategic job transitions within the global organization to gain experiences and then took higher education courses, ending with a doctoral degree.

Ruth was determined to meet the need of the community that paralleled her own
experience. When working with colleagues who demonstrated limited interest in African American and Hispanic community students’ academic preparation, Ruth summoned her courage to help develop programming to assist underrepresented students. Ruth was determined to expand her knowledge. She attended professional conferences and then use her advanced degrees to ascend into a decision-making leadership position. Serving as a campus dean, she was doing just what she had the courage and determination to pursue.

During her career, Bella said she continually advises young people looking to advance with the following advice:

I would also tell them that what’s really important to advance, in addition to networking and joining professional organizations, is that people know who you are, because people only refer people who they know. Is that you need to make sure that you have some successes at your organization, and that you have the right skill set. And I would tell them that you can obtain the skill set outside of your job. You can volunteer for a non-profit, you can volunteer for your professional organization. You can be the treasurer; you can put the budget together for the organization. See there’s a whole bunch of things that you can do outside of your organization that you gain the skill set, if your organization will not assist you in gaining the skill set internally.

**Self-determined Creativity.** As all preparation may not be done in advance, the data showed their creativity in volunteering for additional workplace tasks or for community agencies. In being creative to gain the knowledge needed when not available through professional development in the workplace, Cindy asked a key leader if they would mentor her, but was not accepted. That did not deter her. She continued to learn from consistently reading her profession’s human resources journal, served on community board of directors and had membership in a community organization. Thereby, learning best practices from her international peers and taking courses toward her doctoral degree.

Creativity in seeking a mentor or sponsors at times ended in denial occurring within the organization. The participants were not deterred and became more determined in finding other
options for development. Bella Renee identified her need for experience she could not get in her existing full-time position. Bella was determined not to let go of her ascension goals, so she sought out and began working a second job in the evenings to gain hospital experience needed to develop professionally and make her more marketable. The participant leaders created opportunities where obstacles stood. Further insight was offered by participants who noted external membership organizations may expand their network and open up other opportunities. Ruth joined a year-long Leadership North Carolina group, requiring monthly trips to different parts of the state where this cohort learned leadership from a federal government to local government and organizational leadership from senior leaders overseeing or advising business operations.

Olivia participated as a national committee member for property management for her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and additionally with the American Society on Aging to contribute her experience and work at broader international and national levels. Noleda Josephine is the tri-county co-chair of the leadership development committee. Monthly leadership trainings are conducted by and for African Americans to provided experiences, they may obtain through work. The monthly professional development sessions monthly. Francis’ experiences showed that her willingness to serve as a subject-matter expert on physician assistant clinical knowledge, as her accepting a creative way to use her knowledge modified and enhanced her purview and career trajectory into academic leadership. According to Bella Renee, it is imperative to complete tasks accepted in voluntary roles and in advance of the deadline, representing yourself and organization well. These volunteer efforts were creative pathways to obtain experiences and build networking relationships with community colleagues.

**Networking.** Next, determination and courage in developing pathways to leadership
advancement opportunities was to network. Ruth discussed the value in identifying those key men that are colleagues, that might participate in meetings outside of work, that could help her get invited to the larger network to enjoy the conversations or minimally learn about the discussions which occurred in an individual networking effort. Bella Renee sought to gain exposure to meet others within her field and in other professional fields. She began volunteering for positions to build relationships. Bella Renee using both determined creativity and networking to volunteer, which later turned into external leadership:

So, I found out there was a young healthcare professional group in D.C. I joined that and ended up becoming the 30th president, the first black to become president of the group. And I think I may have been the second or third woman to become president. Sometimes it is an advantage being young. I just thought I was just doing what I should be doing. It didn't dawn on me... that I was breaking barriers. You know I had worked in various positions in the organization. I had proven that when I commit to do something I do it.

In her doing so, Bella Renee’s creativity to seek leadership roles, through her professional association and brought acknowledgment to her employer, supervisor and mentor.

I became well known in the healthcare community in D.C. they they're like oh Bella Renee at children's. My boss was out at that event and he said oh you know I'm John Doe, and they said what do you do? He said, I am the President and CEO of children’ hospital. Oh, that's where Bella Renee works [laughter]. So, he came back and said, oh hello I'm now associated with Bella Renee at [medical facility].

[However], when I was president, I established relationship with the public relations group, with the health care financial management group, and met people who worked upon me here at the U.S. Capitol building and then I wiggled my way into them allowing me to put on educational programs at the U.S. Capitol building. It was a great time, so I did that on that side.

Also, I discovered there was a black healthcare executive group called the National Association of Health Service executives. I became involved with the D.C. chapter. I was an officer. I think the highest I got was vice president, and so also, there was a women's healthcare executive a local group and I became president of that group when I was in D.C.

Data obtained from participants showed all sought networking options through their
employer, community and professional organizations. The meaning behind the expressed experiences offered that access and opportunity to leadership opportunities may not always be through traditional process by applying for a position, but by getting to know and becoming known by others within their fields of expertise and working to get included in discussions that often ended with a seat at a decision-making table. Bella Renee advised that people hire who they know, so turn community and professional organization involvement into learning mechanism with networking benefits. Both Olivia and Ruth identified the importance of intentional networking as a manner of gaining knowledge, building relationships and gaining insight to conversations that may have happened outside of the workplace that you were not invited to attend.

Olivia offered that her participation in professional and civic organizations allowed her to meet others with similar or varied experiences. A mentor can assist with networking. Olivia said, “I joined organizations that could support future endeavors and to network with them to go to events. Because sometimes you have to spend money to make money and to start acting the part”. Noleda Josephine’s community leadership role has her interacting and networking with tri-county leaders monthly for professional development training sessions.

Cindy found value in networking with others through organizational involvement. Cindy spoke of the value of those connections. Cindy stated that joining organizations and networks can “support your growth and your development”. She further said that she did not “wait for someone to offer you development. I've seen individuals sit in an organization for 15 years waiting for the organization to give them an opportunity. You have to manage your own career and your own development and know what you want”.

Ruth was influenced by an advertising audio message she received and it made her
consider the value in meeting others and building relationships. Ruth said the conference was to be in Washington D.C, for the ACE leadership platform and “I listened to it and decided that it would be kind of an opening to network and meet some people, um and see what it really takes to climb the academic ladder”. Ruth relocated for this campus dean position and knew no one besides the family that came with her. In an earlier section, Ruth gave an example which fit, networking, skills development and professional development. Ruth said there was another leadership organization called Leadership North Carolina, where over the year-long commitment, she met colleagues with levels of expertise, from across the state, and “it really opened my eyes to different responsibilities and roles of government”, beyond academics.

Noleda Josephine spoke of the value of networking in her career from a knowledge view, but also offered a different perspective: “You need a professional and personal network. Because when [issues at work happen] you need to be able to have people outside that can just keep you grounded because sometimes when you go through experiences, you want to just blow your top”.

I have a cohort of friends. We met in graduate school and we just kind of stayed friends and support. We have a group chat that goes off, at least 10 times a day. So, we still stay connected that way in the profession. We help each other out in that way. And they have also contributed like my scholarship and they teach me so much.

When internally undernourished professionally, the participants used their creativity to network in professional organizations and excelled in performing projects and serving in volunteer roles, so that their reputation spoke well of their competence.

**Courage.** When barriers presented themselves, while frustrating, disheartening, uncaring and unjust, all participants learned to speak up for themselves or others. When discriminatory or unjust behaviors occurred, they used their leadership voices to ask questions and called it out as
unacceptable, whether remedied or not.

Missy’s voice on courage was clear. Her passion was advocacy and fighting for the rights of others. Even in her youth, Missy said she bypassed going to her prom to go to march on issues in Washington D.C. Missy shared “my overall experiences growing up and they see discrimination as a woman and as an African-American, and those experiences in life molded and shaped me. It really developed my passion for fighting for the underdog and fighting for equal rights. This just really had to do with discrimination I faced”. Missy also stated that she likes “to be where the action is, and if you see a good fight I always say join it. The struggle continues and the struggle is real”.

Cindy provided insight into her leadership style, specifically noting she has managerial courage. Cindy said she had courage in speaking her viewpoint amongst her peers at senior leader mentors. A mentor said to her, “you know one of your strengths is your managerial courage that can also be an overused strength - that needed style flexing”. Cindy said she appreciated the feedback, but noted it is who she is, stating, “I speak up. I don't back down. I'm the one in the room who doesn't care if you're the CEO or janitor. I'm going to ask the same questions. I'm not very hierarchical or politically savvy when it comes to you know expressing myself”.

Bella Renee spoke of being courageous when she challenged the CEO after he promoted her and offered a significant pay increase. However, being hired into the number two position. It did not provide her with the second highest level of income in the organization. While she was appreciative of the executive role, Bella Renee knew to be respected by all senior leadership, compensation mattered. Accordingly, Bella Renee asked the CEO the following:

Is this the number two position in the organization? He said, yes. If people look at an org. chart, will it show it as the number two (2) position? Oh,
absolutely it is the number two position. So, is my pay indicative of being the number two position? No response. I said well let me ask you a question. The CFO, does he make more than a $175,000, because he's not the number two person in the organization?

I said, I need to be paid to fit the role, I said let me explain this to you, I believe that there should be equity and parity, not only internally but externally, I'm sure you've done your market analysis of what this position should be paid, but if I have to have the respect that I deserve, being the number two position, then I need to be paid like I'm the number two position.

He said, well, I have to go back to the board because this is what they authorized me to do. I said, to show you that I am truly being fair, you can pay one dollar more than the next person [CFO]. So, I went home, said well, we'll see how this works. He came back the next day and he offered me $500 more.

I said, you know that's really generous. I told you I would take one dollar more. The reason why I did that, is because I know from going back to my psychology background, I knew psychologically one more dollar would send this person [CFO] into orbit, for just one dollar more. And I was asking for one dollar more, but he gave me $500, I said “Ok I appreciate your listening to me and said I would do a really good job for you”, but I was nervous, it took a lot of nerve [courage] to do that. But that also sent a message to him too.

Bella Renee also reflected on a different role she held where a new White male COO complained to the CEO about staff who was aggressive in team meetings and concerned about their fit, when Bella Renee made a counterpoint to a statement the COO made. Fortunately, the CEO recognized that those the COO named were women and corrected him saying ‘I don't have a problem with them, they make me look good. He said I think it's you. They do what they say, you are going to have to learn to let them do their jobs. They have high quality in their work’.

Speaking up with confidence required courage, during a leader transition. Fortunately, per Bella Renee, the CEO valued the work of the women being questioned.

Francis shared that she is not fearful to speak up and speak her mind to challenge her colleagues and their bias. However, her students needed an advocate to grieve through due to fear or retaliation. Francis served as an advocate for the minority students who came to her.
For the African-Americans students who do come in, I have to protect them! To be real honest, the reason that I wear several leadership hats and I sit on a lot of committees is because, I have to literally call people out when racism is obvious and I have had knock down drag out verbal fights with my colleagues as a result of inequality that is race driven decisions. -- I'm not afraid to -- and they know if I am there, I'm going to challenge them.

So that's what keeps me going is that if I am not there, no one will step in to eliminate the bias - I once heard a wise person said, a cry in the wilderness is better than no cry at all.

Olivia’s experiences with integrating a high school escorted by state troopers and being a part of a family that taught her that others fought for her to sit in the front, instilled in her courage to be bold and challenge the CEO to ask questions in the workplace to gain ownership in properties she oversees. Further, when facing direct discriminatory behavior by peers in the workplace, her best tool was to demonstrate her capabilities, by out working and out performing her White male peers and being recognized for it.

Ruth shared that earlier in her career she was fearful of speaking up, but over time she realized the importance of her perspective and view being presented in leadership meetings. Ruth shared,

So, I feel like I'm often the spokesperson or advocate for my race - and I'm often the only one that is there as an advocate for my race. It was not done on purpose or it's kind of an afterthought, but it feels like when you're in organization where you serve minorities, that the minority voice is not being heard at the very top level where decisions are being made and I'm constantly advocating for minorities, whether it's for a new service, or whether it's a curriculum experience, I'm that voice, and so I'm very conscious of when I'm in meetings, that I speak up for African Americans.

Cindy spoke of having utilized balanced managerial courage, to speak up and let her voice be heard on work project matters and issues of concern. In speaking up and using their voices in the workplace to address employee or workplace dynamic issues both Noleda Josephine and Missy noted there are systems in place that leaders should be knowledgeable of
and act accordingly as necessary to file a grievance or seek outside counsel for litigation
advisement. Noleda Josephine had the courage to file a formal grievance against the provost, for
failure to follow two precursor steps they identified in the outlined process. The student
concerns occurred when Noleda Josephine corrected an inaccurate response by a student
regarding a group discussion on the voting rights act. The small group, consisted of:

three white women that were in that group went to the provost directly. Now they skipped the dean, well they skipped the whole grievance process are supposed to notify me the faculty member then go to the dean because I was a program director and then go to the Provost and when exactly directly to the Provost, skipping to two steps in the grievance process. And what ticked me off was not that they skipped the process because sometimes that's what you expect students to do when they want their way they just don't do whatever.

I was disappointed and ticked off that the provost entertained them and didn't tell them to go back and follow procedure or the policy. So, [although I was not wrong] he then had me in a session with three white women who are basically saying they were fearful of me because I challenged them in an open classroom, at that moment the camaraderie was - with the provost, who is a white guy connecting with these white women against me. And if he had just said [to the students] I need you to follow the policy and procedure in the syllabus and outlined in the university catalog, that situation would have turned out differently.

The provost chose to engage in an out-of-process complaint for her White students who inaccurately stated historically documented truths about the voting rights act. Since that time, when an assistant provost position came open, Noleda Josephine said, while she had colleague support, she was not considered. She believes it was directly related to having the courage to stand up to the academic leader who diminished her academic freedom as an African American faculty member in front of her White students.

When ascending to leadership roles, but seeing disparities as African American women versus others within the workplace, courage is needed to take the risk to call out fact-based matters in a professional manner. Regarding having courage, Missy offered:
you just have to take a sledgehammer and knock that concrete down, and while the struggle is real, “do not sit back & talk about all the different reasons you cannot do it, find a mentor, research, study, be persistent, it can happen for you.

In facing race or gender discrimination in leadership advancement, the participant was not satisfied with backing down from gender stereotypes. Missy shared her perspective:

Why go to school? Why become educated? If all I'm going to do in the future is step back when a man steps up. I never quite understood that day and I don't understand it to this day. But we are deeply rooted in sexism. And, so you know oppression inspires me. People who are the underdog inspires me. Fighting for their rights inspires me in fact. I love challenging the status quo, [it] challenges me to step up. Someone has to do it. Someone has to be a risk taker, hell it might as well be me.

**Mentorship and Sponsorship.** Mentorship and sponsorships made a difference in the ability for several participants to avoid pitfalls and nuance their leadership journeys. Through the aid of experienced leaders interested in their individual leadership development, both mentorship and sponsorship is an effective strategy in advancement, as explored below.

In a non-traditional mentoring sense, where there is a more senior leader mentoring a junior professional, Noleda Josephine shared her peer-mentoring experience. She stated, “a positive aspect of the intersection of my identity I would say I've been privy to some strong, smart Black women that have mentored me throughout my life and in the academy”.

Based upon advisement by a long-time White male president and CEO level sponsor from a prior employer, Bella Renee had to address a compensation discrepancy involving a subordinate employee. Bella Renee shared in depth how having a sponsor equipped her to ask the right questions, in the right manner. Upon obtaining a major promotion with a $50,000 salary increase, had Bella Renee not had professional insight, she would have accepted the money and started to work with her second-in-command title. In the section on courage above, an account on how sponsorship equipped Bella Renee to addressing a race or gender based
difference, by advising her how to ask questions strategically, to avoid conflict with the CEO.

Bella Renee had to establish her authority from the beginning. Her courage paid off as the CEO corrected the inconsistency of compensation with the level of her position. Not only did Bella Renee’s prior supervisor and sponsor spend years developing her business acumen and preparation for executive leadership, he continued to serve as a mentor on professional matters and gave her professional advisement on how to handle this work disparity with finesse.

Other participants shared similar lived experiences, identifying the value of mentorship and sponsorship as integral to their professional advancement to leadership. Olivia shared how being mentored/sponsored earlier in her career by two White males, assisted her in understanding the insurance business and interacting with customers. One of Olivia’s mentors “was the top sales person in the district [who] really helped to mentor me in sales. Olivia’s sponsor was her “district manager [who] took a special interest in me, and he took me around on a lot of my calls in the very beginning, gave me a couple of his clients to take over and helped me out in the very beginning, and I to see how I would do”. Ultimately, Olivia became one of the top insurance salespeople in the country for the insurance company.

Francis’ mentor was a minority woman president and the dean of the Medical College in the United States Midwest who met with Francis twice per week for three months. Upon building rapport, the President/Dean helped advise why nuancing a little bit of how Francis described her own “East coast Billy bad ass manner of addressing comments about an African American woman heading a medical program, and replacing it with diplomacy” after being challenged by the parents of White students. Noleda Josephine, described her sponsor as a tenured, senior faculty member, and author who began developing Noleda Josephine’s understanding of academics as “higher education, on the faculty side is very hard to navigate if you don't know”.

After many years, the junior faculty to senior faculty relationship developed to peer colleagues. Noleda Josephine’s sponsor has introduced her to influential colleagues, prepared her to speak fluidly about her research and methodology, and to have an elevator speech ready about the ‘so what’ of her research topic, and advised her on understanding editorial boards for journal publications and pursuing the right opportunities. Finally, the sponsor has co-authored journal articles and an academic book with Noleda Josephine.

Cindy shared that her sorority connections helped her get an internship position in her early career where she first saw women leaders being successful. It drove her to work hard. A second experience occurred later in her career,

…where I worked and there was someone there who was a very powerful successful black woman and she really mentored me, helped me really see must my skills what I could do as a matter of fact I was in college I was doing a temporary job there and then they offered me a full-time position and she really took me under her wing.

The participants (Ruth, and Missy) did not have mentors or sponsors each spoke about the professional void it caused in having to correct their errors and missteps along the way, which would have been prevented with a trusted professional guide.

**Faith in God.** The essence of participant reflections identified the importance of faith in God. Most participants provided examples of experiences where they believe God, in complement with their academic preparation, divinely intervened to allow them to be invited to meet with leaders for new academic programs, to be mentored as an entry-level or younger professional, or to be sponsored by a white male professional in top positions to provide them with access or opportunities that could not otherwise be obtained or explained.

Participants provided data about special interest taken in several of them by department heads, senior level administrators, presidents and chief operating officers giving them favored
positioning for development and recognition. Six of the seven interviewed participants believed in Godly or divine intervention in positioning them for leadership advancement directly or through others.

Even upon advancing into leadership, participants worked diligently to remain in leadership positions. One participant, Bella Renee said, “I take nothing for granted because I can take nothing for granted because of who I am and what I look like”. Missy spoke of being prepared and going after professional goals and not being swayed by the comments of others. Missy said that focus is key in becoming a leader understanding that the “struggle is real” - and with that, “it never hurts to have God with you”.

Another participant, Francis, spoke about divine intervention throughout her interview, speaking that there is a special expectation on her life that her journey and preparedness equipped her to perform. She takes no credit for her pathway to advancement, but spoke to the divine intervention that shifted her opportunities in such a way that they all led to preparing her for the significant role she currently holds.

Noleda spoke of the value of faith in her career advancement and in her daily life as a professional. Noleda offered that work can be challenging and said,

You have to be spiritually grounded to know. You have to know what fits best with your spirit. So as much as we have this tangible stuff, a lot of things can kind of keep me going is a daily devotional. There are the people that you know can pray, so it's that earthly knowledge that you need and that spiritual component together and I've seen people, and not that we all have to believe in Jesus or whatever but you need a connection to something higher than yourself. And I've seen people that didn't have that connection to a village. And a higher power and umm, and they don't last long.

**Goal Setting.** Having a professional vision with ideas on how to achieve individual objectives was vital to the development of plans of action to achieve their goals. Participants identified incremental goals they set, which moved forward as expected, were influenced by
family members, mentors, sponsors or divine intervention. Regardless of how the goal began, the experience of accomplishing them met or surpassed the expectations of preliminary goals established in their youth. Participant data demonstrated consistency in goal setting as a contributor to success, even if goals shifted during that journey. Understanding the value of setting goals then reinforced this as a model to pursue developing goals with confidence and fervor.

Admittedly, one participant shared during her undergraduate years, her nickname at the University of Michigan was C.O., an abbreviation for career-oriented. The focus demonstrated by Bella Renee made her purposeful in her efforts not to be distracted from completing her bachelor’s degree within four years, which she accomplished. Bella Renee verbalized this to her academic peers and to her romantic suitor that the stereotypical goal of coming to college to get an MRS degree was not her intention, as she desired to earn a Bachelor’s degree in four-years to equip her to become a business woman.

Even after graduation, this focused woman of vision expressed to this same suitor, that for her to reach her goals, before she could agree to marry him, he would need to be willing to follow her when she needed to relocate, for opportunities, as that flexibility would move her closer to her business woman leadership goal. Her suitor agreed and as a physician he could easily obtain work whenever they relocated.

As stated by Missy, you must “know who you are and where you want go. Don't buy into what someone says to you, but more or less challenge it. It is through that challenge that you're going to make that change. You would be recognized and you will take your rightful place in America”. Missy promised those in her community she would show them going to school did make a difference. Those oppressed in the community, during their youth, can now see how
Missy now enforces penalties and wins discrimination cases that address practices that violate the law.

Ultimately, the phenomena were not simply that the participants strategically prepared and were self-determined. The data demonstrated that there were layers and levels to strategic preparedness that were both internally motivated showing self-determination and courage and externally influenced. The influences were family, community leaders, mentors and sponsors, and by those promoting stereotypes and discrimination.

These African American women participants were not always welcomed or included in the workplace, and when opportunities did not exist, they took measures to equip themselves with additional knowledge and experience through various avenues. The participants sought: higher education academic degrees; development of expanded colleague network, experience expansion and community engagement through volunteerism; and working harder than other colleagues to earn advancement into leadership roles. As justice in equal opportunity did not readily exist for the participants, they took action. Several of the participants received growth and care through having mentors or sponsors. When at the leadership decision-making table, they used their voices and did not fail to speak on issues that represent a perspective other than the majority view.

**Leadership Sample**

As detailed in Chapter Three, a leadership sample and resume were documents requested of participants to demonstrate an example of leader roles and the resume shared their leadership pathway and the work they have performed in their roles. Leadership sample documents could have included policy development, the strategy of a program implementation or another sample that demonstrated their leadership efforts. Not all participants provided a written sample. This
did not disqualify their participation in the study. However, several participants provided samples in written form and all participants shared experiences in verbal form.

The findings provided specific examples of the experiences of each participant which aided in the development of themes. Based upon the data obtained from each individual interview, the experiences and quotes were provided by each participant, if relevant to the theme or subtheme. Accordingly, a recounting of specific examples in this section would be redundant and will not occur. The resumes provided the progression of leadership of each participant, but the present research was not a case study or biography, each position progression was not identified.

Bella Renee discussed how she developed the regional hospital’s strategic plan review for the board of trustees, which encompassed the market realities and challenges and further projected goals and market strategies of the organization that only Bella Renee, a limited few confidential personnel, and the board of trustees have seen as her leadership sample. As the redacted document was highly sensitive, I reviewed it, but am unable to be discussed with full breadth and depth. However, I affirm the leadership sample document provided a level of insight organizational at an elevated level of leadership. A small portion of the overarching categories in the redacted leadership sample included the following: system integrations, delivery networks, cost management, organizational engagement, strategic growth, organizational risks, projections for next generation infrastructure and strategic growth plans. Bella Renee verbalized discussion about two other documents provided where she wrote an article for a healthcare executive magazine on career advancement and shared a second leadership journal article where she was interviewed and quoted.

Bella Renee served in the capacity as a regional president and CEO. Her leadership served
to represent research question one. Her experiences in leadership placed her in this high Bella Renee’s resume identified earned progressive position, learned skills, organizational involvements and summary of her education, experience and professional development level position to create a strategic document. Bella Renee’s resume identified earned progressive position, learned skills, organizational involvements and summary of her education, experience and professional development.

Ruth provided a leadership sample of a project under current implementation. Ruth was a key leader in the development of this academic endeavor and a part of the negotiation of a consortium agreement to develop a new 11th-13th grade feeder high school to recruit female and minority, at-risk youths seeking an accelerated education. One document detailed the core goals and expectations of the consortium agreement. It outlined how the at-risk students who successfully complete the program will graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree and/or a transportation system public safety certification from her college campus. The second document showed the signatures of authorization to move forward with this major project implementation.

Noleda Josephine is an accomplished co-author of a book, and has published articles and presented at local and national conferences and meetings. Noleda Josephine co-chairs a regional affinity group leadership committee that presents various monthly leadership topics. Noleda Josephine recently served as the retreat planning committee chairman for the local chapter of her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, where plans for the next cycle are discussed.

Cindy’s resume referenced her leadership sample. Cindy wrote a book and developed an associated workbook. The book subject addressed interactive discussions with peace officers who look to challenge the status quo. A verbalized sample of leadership was provided earlier in the
chapter, when referencing her managerial courage in challenging decisions with the leadership team members.

Francis provided copies of local leadership awards and recognitions she received within the community for the work she has led. Her efforts in diverse enrollment as a department leader, gained her medical hospital a national excellence through diversity award. Francis’ woman in the sciences recognition within the city brought positive marketing for her leadership at the medical school. Another sample of leadership Francis verbalized was her presence and voice at the table, where diversity is unrepresented; creating access to opportunities in the medical field that did not otherwise exist, being an example to new students of color in medicine and serving as their advocates within the school.

Olivia provided both written and verbal samples of leadership. A sample document from a national conference was provided. Olivia was one of six conference co-chairs. The booklet was fully comprehensive of topics, presentation themes, presenters and their credentials and sponsors, and included conference co-chair photographs. A leadership sample from Olivia involved a discussion with the CEO of the property management organization with whom she is currently employed who she described as caring and supportive, who selected diverse women to lead at the highest level of his organization. During a very small senior leader lunch discussion, a topic arose about the differences in how men and women lead. The question arose regarding, is it true or false that men ask for what they want, and women take what is given to them? After back and forth banter, Olivia said the following:

I'll tell you what, it's something I've been wanting to ask you, but I didn't want to ask it to you in mixed company, - but now that you say this I'm going to go ahead and ask you. I want a percentage of some of the properties that we own. And he said what?! And I think I kind of took them off guard for a minute. And he said he said, ok what do you want? And I said 20 percent. And he asked me, what property? I told them which property. He said well what percentage? And I
said 20%. He said, No! Nobody gets 20%. And I said OK, I said then 15%. He said, no! Nobody gets that! I said well, would you give? And he says 1%. I said 1%? No, 5%. And then he said 2%. And I said 3%. And he said fine you can have 3%. And I said, so when are we going to drop the legal papers?

So, it took them five years to follow-up on a promise that he made, but - he did it and gave me the monies that he promised me, the 3% for in those five years. I received a person's salary in one check. I was actually on a plane and I was coming back from a business trip and I saw this e-mail from his one of his accountants and that in our parent companies' corporate office - saying where do you want me to send this check? And I said, a check for what, because I forgot about this, and she said you know the CEO told me to contact you and find out where to mail this check to you for -xyz- property, and she said there's quite a large sum of money. And I just about flipped and I immediately called him to say thank you. And I could feel him grinning from ear to ear over the phone, - he was so excited that he could do this and that I was happy, and I've been getting it every quarter since.

Missy’s leadership sample was identified in the form of awards for her professional regulation in remedying discriminatory practices that were either regional or national in redlining practices against protected populations. A class-action case involving Chrysler and systemic sexual harassment involving management and union members and newer hires having to perform sexual acts or be placed in unfavorable positions on unfavorable shifts, was handled under her purview and reported in local and regional news. Missy’s more notable settlements have occurred with her involvement in the amounts of $850,000, $1,000,000 and Missy received recognition for settling a $4.3 million case. The verbalized sample from Missy addressed the concrete ceiling. She stated that when facing a concrete ceiling that serves as a barrier to advancement, “take a sledgehammer and knock that concrete down”.

**Autoethnography**

As the eighth participant in this study, the manifestation of experiences addressed within this chapter reflect many of my experiences. I am uniquely situated to have both individual and organizational insight on advancement. The first is my personal journey and the second is my
professional responsibility to ensure existence of opportunities and equal access for underrepresented employees. The second allows me to contribute practical workplace experiences to my personal experience. Now both researcher perspectives are added to the data collected from study participants.

I am a Human Resources (HR) professional with twenty-five years in the field. I have lived experiences similar to study participants that shaped my professional leadership perspective and my pathway to advancement into leadership roles. I intimately know my own personal journey, as an African American woman who has ascended to director level and higher positions, to be representative of the leadership advancement experiences of other African American women in leadership positions.

While there are differences in experiences I had in my career, it was unexpected to find there were significant similarities with the seven African American women who consented to serve as research participants in my research study. Strategic preparation and self-determination and courage were the primary themes that emerged from the analysis of interview participants. In recounting my personal journey, while not fully parallel, the themes well-represent the totality of my leadership advancement journey.

I did have positive influences from family and both positive and concerning influences from community affiliation. Like others in this study, I did get assigned an abundance of extra work, requiring long work hours. I faced direct bias. I did work determinedly to accomplish professional, educational and community goals like my research participants. I did voluntarily commute to another state to gain experience. I joined professional, civic, and social organizations to network with others within and external to my field of expertise.

In the case of facing repeated inequity concerns, I differed as I had the courage to file a
formal written complaint of discrimination, not on emotion or envy but based on violation of policy based upon civil rights laws. This made me more committed to level the playing field and have equal access to all, regardless of race or gender. Within my chosen field, my goals was to influence care and justice to go beyond filling out a form for compliance, to being a part of a larger mindset change, to address the fear of those in leadership of working with those who are different and have experiences that differed from their own. Now to share my personal experiences in leadership advancement, I begin with family influences, integrating references to study themes or sub-themes.

As I shared in my application to this doctoral program several years ago, when I selected my career path, my parents were my primary influence as they moved north to seek better education and employment opportunities free of blatant and clandestine racist practices they both faced in Alabama and Mississippi, which responds to the first research question one and sub-theme prepare to work harder. Our parents taught my sisters and me about their lived experiences and assaults incurred simply because of their race. They instilled in us that they wanted the best for us and if we had faith in God, worked hard and dedicated ourselves to being ethical people, we could accomplish all that we could imagine, and we believed them.

While my parents did not have the opportunity to obtain a four-year degree, they encouraged, pushed and supported me so that I could excel in high school and further achieve a Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree. My mother had the greatest influence on my life. Her final spoken wish of me was to promise her that I would complete my doctoral degree. She told me she watched me work and study hard, set and achieve goals with determination and that I could do anything I set my mind to doing.

My journey is one where I intentionally chose Human Resources as a profession with the
purpose of creating work environments to ensure fairness in access so there would be an equal playing field for all. Twenty-five years of lived experiences have a way of taking my college-aged perspective and showing it that idealism about affecting justice does not make a difference; only relentless action, determination and courage does.

As the eighth participant within this study, many of my experiences were reflected in this chapter. I am uniquely situated to have both individual and organizational insight regarding employee relations issues regarding opportunities and access for underrepresented employees, which contribute practical workplace experiences to my personal experiences. Now both researcher perspectives are added to the data collected from study participants.

In my current and former roles as HR director, chief diversity officer, and vice president, I often directly faced, received reports of, and addressed concerns regarding barriers based upon race, gender, and other EEOC protected categories concerning equity in employment practices. My strategic preparation allowed me to obtain the skills to direct several areas, including formal and informal complaints regarding Title VII for employees and investigating or assigning work on those matters, in association with organizational policies regarding equity, opportunity and inclusion. The measures the data provided regarding advancement experiences reflect experiences I have had, seen for others, and with courage, addressed for remedy.

My sphere of influence and motivation came from church, family and organizational involvement, keeping me encouraged when a lesser qualified and lesser experienced White male and White female were promoted over me for two different positions in a three-year span. In the first incident, I was still being assigned extra tasks outside of my scope that my peers did not have to do. Instead of receiving appreciation, I only became a resource for data updates, but not to provide verbal input. As I was a copious note taker, my older White male supervisor would
enter my office to review my files and notes while I was out of my office for lunch and provide updates without giving credit. However, you never know who is watching you and through it all I kept performing well. This was significant to my professional experience, as it drove my determination to succeed by working even harder, seeking education and professional development credentialing through outside resources. My faith in God and prayer time multiplied. While I was weary, similar to a statement Cindy made, someone telling me can’t push me to set and accomplish goals to prove I could.

I was asked one early morning by the HR Director to take on a new project because he saw and appreciated my work. Upon announcing this in a full meeting, my supervisor pulled our small team for a group meeting. He leaned in and pointed his finger closely in my face and accused me of going around him to ask for assignments, which was untrue, and told me to stay in my role and created an environment amongst my peers that left me unwelcomed in discussions and without access to opportunities. As a young professional in my twenties, in my first job after getting my bachelor’s degree in Human Resources, the exchange left me overwhelmed and humiliated, but I did not complain. Fortunately, an older female colleague walked by and saw through the window what occurred and unbeknownst to me, reported it to the vice president, who made my supervisor apologize; however, his treatment became worse and toxic to my health.

I literally read the Bible Scripture Psalm 91 three times a day for a year, and my prayer was for God to allow this man to stop treating me horribly each day for being born an African American woman. My supervisor would raise his voice, make negative comments to me alone or in front of our team, and give me short notice tasks with unreasonable completion deadlines that I met by working early and late.

A year of this treatment from my supervisor took its toll. I discussed it with my parents
and after holding my father back from coming to my office to talk with him, I decided I would resign that next Monday morning, without a new job on the horizon and live at home. With my resignation letter typed and in my purse, I arrived at work to find an emergency HR meeting was called by the vice president over HR at 8:30 a.m. We learned of a massive health incident that occurred with my immediate supervisor over the weekend, and he would not be returning to work. My faith in God sustained me through the most unjust treatment I had ever experienced just because I existed as an African American woman. My courage in deciding to leave when his behavior did not change was met with relief, in his unplanned departure.

From that point, I began reporting to my colleague who acknowledged past incidents, and as the associate director’s role was not going to be filled, I had the courage to ask if I could help him take on projects. I was determined to prove my professional worth and value even more, now that this transition in supervision occurred. I came in early and stayed late to show my commitment and readiness for the next opportunity. It was at that time I set my next goal to become a Director of Human Resources by the time I was forty. Being purposeful in career strategic preparation, and self-determined to accomplish the goals, pushed me to be creative in how I expanded my professional and skills development through external associations.

I realized to be equipped and better prepared to handle the function of an HR director and to make myself more competitive, I needed additional skills, so I joined the local HR association. The membership allowed me to attend monthly meetings, network with professional colleagues and develop the ability to email or call them to discuss situations and to discuss them with another confidential professional. I received calls asking for my opinion on handling difficult supervisors, contract negotiations and often about making job changes within the industry and the correct timing to do so. There are benefits to strategic preparation and self-determination.
Gaining additional education, experience, professional and skills development helped expand my networking due to involvement in community organizations.

As there were not programs for professional development for non-academic staff, I decided to pursue my master’s degree to increase my knowledge base and marketability. I recall contacting my alma mater on my lunch break and spoke with a professor in the educational leadership program. The professor shared with me that the semester just started the day before and that his class started that night and invited me to sit in to listen before registering. The timing was divine intervention by God. I attended and the next day I submitted a request for the tuition reimbursement program that was signed by my new supervisor, and I began taking graduate courses in the evening.

As I was nearing graduation almost two years later, I had worked on a variety of projects successfully and ahead of deadlines. I received consistently positive performance appraisals, and had taken on more duties within my role, trained a new colleague, and I proposed a new elevated position within our HR sub-group. The concept was accepted, but was ultimately given to the new hire in the department without a search. While I was again not provided equal access to even apply for the second position either, I was directed to train the new White female to perform the additional tasks for the position I was performing. When I asked why I was not considered, I was told they wanted a fresh perspective from someone who had not been in this department long as there was a need for change.

Factually, while the White female had fewer years in the HR field, less seniority at the employer and a four-year degree, they placed her into the new position without a search, otherwise termed equal opportunity. Ironically, I had just graduated with my master’s degree. The very same business that granted me paid work-release time for two years to attend classes
and paid 75% of the tuition costs of my master’s degree did not provide me with equal opportunity to competitively bid for an open HR position.

This time I did not sit back silent. I filed a formal complaint internally and externally, while I simultaneously applied for positions outside of the institution. Within two weeks, I had multiple external lunchtime interviews and received a job offer from a bank for a higher-level HR position, making much more money, and earning greater options for HR growth. I accepted the position and gave my notice of resignation. It took many years to gain internal fortitude to have enough courage to confront discrimination. Early in my career I kept thinking the incidents were unique to me, not systemic barriers to advancement. I have enough faith in God and myself to work harder to prove I could accomplish the goals I set for myself.

The internal Title VII director agreed with my documentation on the Title VII violation, advised the department and attempted to negotiate with me to stay; I refused. However, I did request that the HR department be required to hire a diverse candidate to backfill my vacated position and I even made a referral. My request and the qualified African American woman who was in my sorority was hired to backfill my position. The White woman colleague who was appointed without a search was unsuccessful in the role and was later released from the position she was given.

This transition on the surface appeared to be fast-paced. However, from my perspective, the transition validated my strategic preparation. The experiences and knowledge I gained were through family influences, community involvement, hard work, education, experience and professional development, goal setting, and faith in God. Each experience helped prepare me to advance to the next level HR position, at a different institution.

The new bank HR position allowed me to flourish and was located on the floor with the
president, vice presidents and marketing. I learned the culture of in early, out late and to be seen every Saturday even if for two hours. The role pushed me to grow and I created relationships. I used my experience to resolve low to mid-level concerns at the regional level and with our branch managers. When restructuring occurred company-wide a year later, HR was told two to three positions had to be cut from our region, so I began looking for a new position as the most recent hire.

When I was called in first, I planned to discuss the efforts I already made in outreach to the HR association. I contacted my colleagues to seek a list of open positions, and I revised my resume, and asked my supervisor when my last day would be with the bank. Instead my supervisor, the HR associate vice president, asked me if I would assist her with the reductions processing and transferring of employees to other parts of our region. I gladly accepted and told her I appreciated this opportunity and the extra time this would add for my search. What occurred next surprised me. My supervisor said she would be eliminating two professional positions and one-half of a support person position. My supervisor was told by the bank president that he had only heard and seen positive things about me and my work performance, and that my position was not to be eliminated.

My second year was riddled with many complicated HR matters, which taught me a great deal. I enjoyed going to work every day, but I knew I needed to prepare for the next step to reach my goal, which was to move from coordinating HR issues to work to ascend to become an HR manager. Several months later, I was approached within the bank about promotion options out of this area, but as my father had just passed away, I did not want to leave my mother so soon to relocate. With that discussion boosting my confidence, I began praying and looking for the right manager role for me and I soon found it.
I competed for an HR manager position at a local health crisis facility. This elevated level of work responsibilities and pushed me to develop further and quickly. I managed the entire HR function and staff. I participated with the nursing director in each labor management meeting on matters and union contract negotiations, responding to grievances and advising the executive director on HR matters. Within my first week, a notice for a union strike and critical social worker and nurse employees walked out on this 24-hour, in-patient crisis facility, which required managers and line crossing union members to be escorted in and out of the building by armed security, as we had to cover in-person and phone triage for 24-hour crisis matters.

The manager position led me to be prepared for additional advancement. I competed and was offered the director of HR position at a long established metropolitan agency at the age of thirty-three, well before my previously established age-40 goal. I learned later that the hiring deputy director knew a person at my church. The deputy director, who was much older, called her colleague at the church saying she wanted to offer me the position but wanted to know if there was anything she could tell her about my work ethic. My church colleague told her that I was a committed, dedicated member and president over the young women’s group, and I was one who kept promises and performed tasks given with excellence. Networking in this situation was between a church member and a new potential supervisor and intersected with who I knew from my church volunteerism.

In my first director position, I increased my involvement back into my sorority, reactivating and immediately taking an officer position where I created the monthly newsletter to inform all local chapter members of committee programs, meetings events and reporting deadlines, and over several years, I was positioned to become president. This organization had regular leadership sessions taught by senior members and serving on committees and holding an
office, contributed to my professional preparedness. After six years, I became a short-term loan executive at the request of a federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) official on behalf of a Michigan metropolitan agency to assist consultants with its separation from local government and much needed restructuring. I was ultimately recruited to Michigan by the same HUD official, where I commuted daily and gained significantly more growth in re-creating a new HR department.

While also serving in professional roles, I maintained active involvement in church and the community, serving as the president of the young women’s group developing programs and served as centennial president of the local chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, in Ohio requiring meetings four nights per week after work and on weekends for two years. This volunteer role elevated my leadership experience as I oversaw more than twenty committees responsible for building and implementing strategic planning, community engagement, fundraising, managing a sizeable budget, and reporting to the regional director and international leadership team. As the membership consisted of current and retired community leaders such as principals, attorneys, executive leaders of business in Lucas county, faculty, and university chairmen, our leadership training efforts involved elevated development goals. After three and one-half years of commuting, I competed for a position and returned to Ohio to be what would become the chief diversity officer at a two-year college.

Ten months into my diversity officer role, the vice president for human resources resigned with two weeks’ notice to relocate to Michigan. The college president shared that news with two people, the provost and general counsel. The president learned of my HR background from the general counsel, who I had worked closely with as I established the new inclusion function. She was integral in creating the position description and serving on the search
committee which ultimately hired me. I proved myself as a prepared and experienced professional who worked. My track record demonstrated I was fair, but firm; and that I followed through on tasks. The process of inclusion development required collaboration with the general counsel, the chief of police, vice president of HR and dean of students on challenging matters.

The president met with me the same day the HR vice president resigned. He reviewed my resume and asked me significant questions ending with, would you be willing to lead HR for six-weeks until a search could occur? The announcement of my interim appointment was sent out immediately. I met for a couple hours over two days with the resigning HR vice president. Then all associated HR staff and functions shifted to me, as well as all existing projects and committees such as early retiree buy-out, researching executing sex-domestic partner benefits and developing a readiness strategy for reconciliation of campus-wide HR position lists and finance funding reconciliation and the impending implementation of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). I prepared a diversity section and co-wrote HR section for the report and presented to higher learning commission reviewers for mid-term review.

Next, the HR Director resigned to relocate to Colorado with his spouse. A few months later the VP of labor relations retired as expected. As I had the experience, I was also asked by the new interim president to take on this extra, added role which included labor management meetings, faculty disciplines, investigations and grievances, reporting at board meetings and participation with closed door executive session discussions, as needed. This was all while I still had responsibilities for my original diversity officer position, engagement with student conduct and campus police on behavior intervention team, and actively investigating various formal and informal issues filed by or against president’s cabinet members. This load was overwhelming, but, by the grace of God, I lead these functions contributing greatly to advancement of
professional strategic efforts.

I continued my leadership within the sorority serving as advisor to undergraduates and began my involvement with the State of the State Conference, where I ascended to being statewide co-chair within five years. This statewide volunteer organization was led by of vice presidents, chief diversity and human resources leaders, attorneys, regional enforcement leaders, executive directors, as we planned annual state conferences with nationally known speakers, who addressed the state of the state in its pursuits for equity, diversity and opportunities. The level of community leaders within our community organizations, shared knowledge that helped challenge processes set as barriers to minorities and enabled us to act in a manner to influence advancement.

To demonstrate my work capabilities, I had to work more than 12 hours per day, most days, as meetings occurred all day, which left work for multiple key positions to be performed after regular work hours. Eventually I had to stand up for myself, push back on the continued extra addition of duties and formally requested to appoint a part-time, temporary trained investigator (African American) to hear and write findings for EEO and a temporary HR Director (African American) until searches could occur. My affiliation networking and membership in Alpha Kappa Alpha and the State of State made candidates to get encouragement and to recommend as qualified and experienced temporary staff option, easier to secure. I purposely placed African American women in these roles as the affirmative action plan noted underutilization.

Employment at the two-year college was one of the most professionally challenging, rewarding, difficult, disappointing, and professionally tumultuous times in my career. But, it equipped me for a larger institution. Academic institutions promote higher education and while I
have spoken at events, and served as a consultant over the years, I realized there are many
colleagues who have the same experience, but all do not have international HR certifications. I
attended formal HR certification classes after work, during the week and study sessions
conducted by employment law attorneys on Saturdays for several months. There was a less than
50% average pass rate, but I studied and passed the senior HR profession timed exam with my
HRCI senior certification the first time. Gaining certification credentials was a bonus, but
building new experiences with HR colleagues across various industries was invaluable.

The next year, I took and passed a newly created international certification. Afterward, I
investigated my starting law school or a doctoral program. I did independent study and scored
well on the LSAT and I also applied for the BGSU Leadership Studies program. Once accepted,
I decided I preferred to pursue my doctoral degree. I am now at the final defense phase and pray
for God’s grace in successful completion.

My academic career experiences prepared me for the director level position at a four-year
institution that was significantly larger. After a year in my new director role, I was asked to
direct the EEO and faculty/staff Title IX Compliance functions in addition to my current
functional areas, invited to serve on the higher learning commission sub-committee as I had prior
experience.

It took continual prayer and faith in God; family encouragement; self-determination;
willingness to be creative to effectively grow and learn in traditional and non-traditional ways
which my experience demonstrates. When internal development was not present, I prepared
myself and worked hard for opportunities, and I intentionally expanded my knowledge and
experiences through goal setting, education, work and networking through professional and
community based organizational involvement with senior professionals. I had the courage to
pursue advancement into leadership positions, and without a formal mentor or sponsor, I made intentional plans to be strategically prepared for opportunities.

**Summary of Thematic Analysis**

There are varying experiences that the participants and researcher shared as a part of their advancement into leadership positions. The autoethnography has detailed my experiences. Now, I was included in the summary which briefly synopsized the data from all eight participants. The condensed assessment relates to the research questions, themes and sub-themes. The experiences I had will be reviewed in relation to the experiences of study participants and related to the research questions. There were similarities and differences gleaned from the research study and while the pathways were different, the data developed the themes and sub-themes that emerged.

The first research question asked what experiences influenced the leadership advancement of African American women in this study? The second research question asked were their organizational programs implemented, which influenced advancement opportunities of African American women into leadership positions? The data identified strategic preparation, self-determination and courage as the overarching themes that encapsulated varying, yet ten sub-factors were elements of the key themes, influencing the leadership trajectory of these participants.

The first theme was (1) strategic preparation, and there were three sub-themes that emerged from strategic preparation which included: family and community influences; preparation to work harder; and education, experiences and professional development. The second theme was (2) self-determination and courage, and there were seven sub-themes that emerged which include: skills development; self-determined creativity; networking, courage, mentorship/sponsorship, faith in God and goal setting. I developed tables to provide an at-a-
glance view, to more easily reflect the data provided by the participants on: influences
(Appendix G); (Appendix H) answers research question one and the first key theme strategic
preparation, with sub-themes to prepare to work harder, and education, experience and
professional development; the second key theme self-determination and courage (Appendix I);
and finally to answer research question two (Appendix J).

My data revealed responses to both research questions. The professional experiences of
all eight participants responded directly to the first research question. There were significant
experiences supporting my advancement into leadership positions. Each of the seven other
participants provided data that demonstrated experiences that propelled them to advance into
leadership. My data revealed that I did not work in organizations that provided workplace
professional development that influenced her advancement into leadership in relation to the
second research question. Rather, I was responsible for overseeing the development of trainings
for other employees. The seven interviewed participants’ experiences differed. Four of them
had workplace professional development that influenced their success. This group of four were
not deterred and sought other community, professional, and academic organizations to develop
professionally. The remaining three, Ruth, Noleda Josephine and Missy had similar experiences
to mine and did not have formal professional development in the workplace. However, I was
made responsible for professional development for my peers as were Noleda Josephine and
Missy.

The first key theme was strategic preparation, with influences, working hard and
education, experience and professional development being supporting sub-themes. All eight
participants had data demonstrating they were (1) strategic in their efforts to advance at different
points of their career advancement journey; (2) influenced by family and involvement with
community organizations; and (3) all sought and attained degrees of higher education, all had experiences within and external to the workplace that contributed to their advancement; however, half of the participant had the opportunity for workplace PD, while the other half did not. That one exception sub-theme was professional development. This same workplace PD experience gap was mirrored in Ruth’s, Missy’s, Bella Renee’s, and Noleda Josephine’s data. However, they along with the other four participants also used creativity in their pursuits to gain PD through other methods (volunteering or membership with community, professional or social organizations).

The second key theme was of self-determination and courage. Participant data fully supported its emergence, even if data from each participant did not support all of them. The data identified that researcher shared experiences that documented support of the emergence of the second key theme. Review of my own data only supported having six of the seven sub-theme experiences. That one exception was mentorship and sponsorship. This same experience gap was mirrored in Ruth’s and Missy’s experiences. Another variation included data from six of the seven participants sharing the value of faith in their advancements, except for Ruth.

Advancement into leadership occurred through a series of identified experiences that built upon one another as no single experience led to leadership advancement, but rather the totality of their varied lived experiences.

The autoethnography identified clear examples of my family and community influences; preparation to work harder; and education, experiences and professional development experiences that influenced my advancement to leadership. In assessing similarities and differences with mine: (1) all eight of the participants shared experiences which were detailed in earlier in this chapter. The data collected and analyzed demonstrated each participant had family
had both family and community influences on their advancement into leadership; (2) seven of all eight participants spoke of working harder to demonstrate capabilities to advance into leadership. As I did, another participant, Missy, spoke of performing her role and if discriminated against in that role to pursue them through a formal complaint; and both of these participants noted that continuing to work harder does not replace addressing work injustices and/or filing former complaints to request as remedy; (3) all eight of the participants shared experiences detailed earlier in this chapter demonstrated that education, experience and professional development were direct contributors to their advancement.

There were three levels of academic advancement that ranged from having a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degrees. Regardless of their education level, each of the eight participants holds director level or higher positions. I have twenty-five years of experience. The years of experience for the other seven participants vary. Noleda Josephine had a minimum of eleven years of the experience and Bella Renee and Cindy had more than thirty-one years of experience, with the other four averaging between twenty-three to twenty-seven years of experience. Data from each of the eight participants identified specific experiences they had in the following seven sub-themes of self-determination and courage. Any exceptions are noted separately.

Participants set goals for the advancement and obtained skills development, even when not available within the workplace by using self-determined creativity to participate in external organizations to gain knowledge and network with those within the same or different work functions. Each participant demonstrated courage in speaking up, challenging oppression, switching positions and relocating where they live. Mentorship and sponsorship was available for half of the participants; the others learned by trial and error, did not retreat, but were creativity determined to figure out other ways to advance. Nearly all expressed their faith in God impacted
their advancement into leadership.

I found that the entirety of the data obtained for analysis from the participants contributed to the findings that answers research question number one. I found that the phenomena of leadership advancement for African American women were not based upon one singular experience. The data identified that it was the totality of the experiences of each participant, herself included, which influenced her individual journey into leadership advancement.

**Participant Experience-Based Suggestions**

Finally, I asked each interviewed participant to share information that would have benefited them earlier in their career. The findings were situated in Chapter Four, while Chapter Five discussed the research findings in relation to the theoretical framework it also provided recommendations from me.

These participant suggestions were related to the key themes, the data identified as being strategically prepared, self-determined and courageous in advancing into leadership. I capsulized from the data, participant experienced-based suggestions. The participants’ brief suggestions are offered to be helpful to other African American women seeking advancement into leadership positions. These participant suggestions were based upon their own individual leadership advancement experiences. Additionally, I included my own participant leadership experience-based suggestions. The following suggestions from each participant’s experience may be helpful, but were not stated as guarantees that advancement would occur because of mirroring one or all suggestions.

**Bella Renee’s suggestions.** According to Bella Renee, Act and behave in what comes natural for you; do not change who you are to adapt to the environment. You need to make sure that you volunteer for tasks to obtain experience and to gain some early successes at your
organization. If you do not have a mentor or a skill you desire and cannot obtain it within the workplace, seek to obtain the mentor or any lacking skill outside of the workplace, if not available internally.

**Cindy’s suggestions.** According to Cindy, she suggested that you manage your own career and seek your own development when it is not otherwise available. Do no wait for an opportunity to come to you, seek it out intentionally. Get a mentor that serves as a professional advisor. Take the initiative to join organizations and networks that serve to support your growth and your development.

**Francis’ suggestions.** The first order of business is to have integrity and always work harder than others, giving your best. It is not fair, African Americans are always in a fishbowl, but understand you do not have the same luxury as privileged or majority race leaders. You cannot fail because you are not going to be evaluated as an individual, but you get evaluated as the one representing other persons of color.

**Missy’s suggestions.** Make sure you know what you want to accomplish as a goal, then research and study it, be persistent and understand it can happen for you. Do not worry about facing stereotypes from others; just know they will come your way, so have a thick skin. You do not have to believe the stereotypes others try to generalize about you and those of your race and gender. Understand, once a potential African American leader starts believing those generalizations, it will hold them back from advancement and they will fail; so, press forward.

**Noleda Josephine’s suggestions.** Know the functions and qualifications of the leadership role being sought. In senior leadership, not only do you have to know exactly what your role is, you also should know the work and have a relationship with the people reporting to you. If the potential leader does not have that relationship with their support team, they can stop
your progress. Build workplace relationships with key people within the organization. Some relationships may be known to others and other relationships not known can give you information. Senior leadership is like a game of survivor; all alliances do not need to be know.

**Olivia’s suggestions.** There is value in having mentors in professional development of leaders. Olivia suggests potential leaders get mentors, not just one. Get mentors of color, mentors that are men, women, White, and mentors that come from diverse backgrounds, but mentors that are in leadership roles. Olivia further suggests joining organizations to prepare you for future endeavors through volunteerism and development and network because sometimes you must spend money to make money. Begin acting the part of a leader by finding out everything that you can about who you want to become and where you want to be and start being that person, because it can encourage helping you become that person that you are portraying to others. Keeping the same mindset of the lower level position, without actions to move forward may prevent those interested in advancing from doing so.

**Ruth’s suggestions.** Ruth suggests that potential leaders develop the skills needed for the job you are seeking. Any person going into higher education with the desire to enter into a leadership role, should understand the budget system. Understanding should start at the highest federal level, all the way to the state, then institutional level of how funding is distributed.

Those seeking leadership should be able to communicate effectively and assertively to get their information across in a convincing way, where their voice is being heard. Be watching of connections and make opportunities to network with the key men in the organization that might meet with others outside of work, positioning themselves seek to get invited to the meetings before or after the official meeting. Further, do not be ashamed to be the advocate or don’t be ashamed to be the voice of the Black person.
**Lisa’s suggestions.** I reviewed and assessed the data collected, including participant suggestions. Agreeing with each of the suggestions extended by the study participants, she added this additional perspective from my researcher experience. When African American women are seeking advancement into leadership, they should consider the colloquialism that, if you stay ready, you don’t have to get ready.

I suggest that up-and-coming leaders begin with becoming confident in the fact that they can advance into leadership. These women should purposely develop a professional strategic plan for their career path. This requires forethought and planning, with the understanding that the potential leader should leave room for pathway adjustments by being flexible for unexpected opportunities. Leadership advancement may have different paths, so be open to considering opportunities that may not have been in the original career plan.

Promising African American leaders need to understand history for the purpose of awareness. The field for equal access and opportunity in employment or equal compensation has not ever been level for women of color and it does not appear that it will be level anytime soon. In the pursuit of seeking a leadership role, do not let historical understanding deter them from pressing forward, but equip each of them for what they may experience. This preparation allows insight when developing a plan to obtain advancement and not become discouraged, but to see the advancement of others who did not give up and keep working hard to achieve their goals.

The experiences I had being an HR administrator for years offered an additional suggestion. Those African American women interested in leadership should be cognizant that leadership advancement for anyone should be justly based on qualification, without bias or consideration of gender or race. However, the firsthand insights from my experiences have revealed organizational goals and policies unsupported and mandated by the senior most leaders
are simply words on a page. It should be clear that efforts to advance into leadership should not solely be the role of the individual.

To address disparities and encourage care for those interested and qualified for advancement, but not historically considered, organizations also have responsibilities for ensuring inclusion through documentable processes. Within organizations, it is every hiring professional’s and every search committee member’s responsibility to speak up and to think beyond their own lens to ensure equity, opportunity and inclusion of diverse candidates and hires. Be prepared for opportunities as best as possible and prepare for interviews to demonstrate readiness for leadership roles.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“You are the sum total of everything you’ve seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot – it’s all right there.” Maya Angelou

The purpose of this study was to gain insight from the experiences of the African American women participants and the phenomenon of their leadership advancement. Further, the study set to determine if there were workplace professional development programs implemented that influenced advancement opportunities for the participants. The data collected clearly answered the two research study questions.

Firstly, I determined the essence of the leadership advancement phenomenon by identifying a variety of experiences that contributed to the leadership trajectory of these African American women above the glass and through concrete ceilings, as detailed in Chapter Four. Secondly, I found that four of the eight participants worked for organizations offering workplace professional development programs. However, those participants without internal professional development programs did not wait for growth opportunities to occur; they, like the others, looked for development options externally, which the data identified as contributors to their ascension through the ceilings.

Regarding research question number one, the data provided and analyzed were extensive. My findings indicated there was not one experience that impacted their advancement. I found there was not one singular experience that propelled the advancement of any study participant into leadership positions, but the totality of the various experiences shared by each participant, myself included, that influenced our individual journeys into leadership advancement. I support this assessment by noting that work professionals evolve and adjust based on what they know and what they need to know for new opportunities.
Regarding the second research question, four of the eight participants worked for employers that provided workplace professional development, while the other four did not have access to internally sponsored offerings. The participants with internal programs benefited through participation with formal high-potential, insurance licensure certifications and academic preparedness programs. The remaining four participants without internally sponsored offerings were Bella Renee, Ruth, Missy and me. We solicited non-sponsored professional development. Creativity occurred in gaining professional development as detailed in the self-determined creativity section of Chapter Four, when not offered internally.

The findings from this study provide meaning about the leadership advancement of African American women. The key experiences of strategic preparation and self-determination and courage influenced leadership advancement for each of the participants. These findings were discussed in relation to leadership literature and the theoretical perspectives of the ethics of justice and the ethics of care, as reviewed in Chapter Two. Following the discussions are implications for leadership, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion.

**African American Justice and Care Perspective**

The ethics of care and justice, per Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004), must include African American experiences. Justice and care views that do not consider diverse perspectives as a part of its foundation may not meet the needs of those seeking care and justice. Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) expanded the thought on the theories Rawls and Gilligan as explored in Chapter Two. Debating prior justice and care thoughts, Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) added to literature when they identified the need to include African American thought in relation to the ethics of care and justice. The lived experiences of those within the African American community differed from theorists who advocated care and justice perhaps without knowing
what care was needed. Further, Siddle Walker and Snarey’s (2004) research classified cultural African American perspectives regarding the ethics of justice and care into the five values of liberation, pluralism, hope, empowerment, and uplift as detailed in Chapter Two.

The analysis of collected data from participants in the present study supported, in part, the theoretical perspective of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care from the African American perspective (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Liberation is the act of allowing a person with compounded experiences, such as an African American woman, to have her lived perspectives considered in the quest to extend care or be cared for. Accordingly, the participants shared experiences that addressed race and gender addressing both justice and care as they are not mutually exclusive. The participants, except for Cindy, spoke of compounded race and gender factors in experiencing bias and the extra added dynamic of not knowing if workplace exclusion is based on one protected category or both.

The act of liberation allowed Bella Renee to provide examples of being mentored and sponsored by others, after making intentionally strategic choices about the universities to attend, and working a second job to gain experience. In being offered, as an African American woman, less pay than a subordinate CFO staff member, Bella spoke from her African American and female lens to call out disparity in pay in relation to being hired as the number two person at the institution. Bella did not settle for what offered to her, she was liberated enough to speak her truth and ask the right questions. The data demonstrated that, in being cared for by a mentor, liberation from the barriers of access, will allow a prepared, self-determined woman advance to leadership. However, even with Bella Renee’s selection based on qualifications, there was still disparity in compensation. In addition to what was offered by Siddle Walker and Snarey’s (2004) liberation virtue, even when access to opportunities occurred regardless of race and
gender, there were still devaluing factors that were demonstrated with Bella Renee and others in the study. As an African American woman, Bella Renee was unable to share which protected category impacted her being paid less that a subordinate employee, but she had to have courage to challenge the processes, as her worth was portrayed less than a White male subordinate leader.

Pluralism is the act of finding value in the difference of individuals and their lived experiences. This value promotes being open to respecting one another. It does not come from a place of guarded tolerance, but the space of welcomed race and gender inclusion. This remains to be a work in slow progress (Cook & Glass, 2013; Johns, 2013) and research analysis identified this progress remains slow. The data consistently demonstrated welcoming work environments did not exist for all participants. Internal and external exclusions from networking or mentoring required the participants to be creative in not only obtaining knowledge, but in developing relationships. Olivia provided a poignant reflection to me during the semi-structured interview process.

Olivia provided during her interview, her experiences being hired in a sales position in the insurance industry. Olivia’s employment came due to the company’s lost lawsuit. She was the only woman and African American woman. She was met with anger, exclusion, and derogatory words. Olivia’s differences were not embraced, but working hard elevated her to be a top performer in the region and country earned her recognition. Olivia was stereotyped by the White men who worked in leadership sales positions and did not welcome African American women. Professional development trainings to understand the business was shared with all employees in their licensure training, so it was not an exercise of justice or care for those marginalized. Olivia brought the fullness of her social work, community influences and civil rights experiences in this sales role. Olivia had the same training as others, but she had a
perspective that made her determined to succeed in class and in building networks and relationships with her customers. All Olivia needed was access to liberty and justice, her capabilities allowed her to advance. Her self-determination and courage in the face of an unwelcoming work environment is what propelled Olivia to number one in her region, surpassing the White men who underestimated her capabilities.

Hope is the act of leaning on one’s faith in God to be strengthened to deal with uncaring and unjust discriminatory actions hoping God will correct injustices. The participant data addressed their faith and belief in divine intervention. Nevertheless, the participants did not rest on hope. Each of the participants were determined to make room for themselves through strategic preparation and self-determination and courage. Noleda Josephine spoke of faith, but in praying for the right opportunities when working on her doctoral degree, her data did not support hoping to become a faculty member. Noleda Josephine asked a trusted advisor what was needed to become a faculty leader and set goals and worked hard to accomplish her vision. As a researcher, my data does not support hope as an action. Faith without efforts to prepare for opportunities is waiting on hope to make a difference. The women in my study did not hope to ascend into leadership; they had influences, strategically prepared, and were self-determined and courageous in pursuing their goals to leadership advancement.

While everyone may not have had the same internal fortitude, the clear majority pulled upon their faith in God to direct them in their advancement. This aligns with a more recent study (Tarmy, 2012) where faith is key to advancement. However, the findings on the present study on faith also did not support it in the sense of hope as Siddle Walker and Snarey identified. My participants kept equipping themselves with knowledge, skills and abilities to lead and did not wait upon hope to bring about change, as they did not wait on an original position of veiled
ignorance to gain liberty and justice. Additionally, when actions were discriminatory there were occasions where Noleda Josephine, Missy and I filed formal complaints or grievances to address behaviors. The act of filing a complaint was not easy and not based on courage. When the work environments were already unwelcoming to me as an African American woman, it took my faith in God to direct me on if this was the right direction because when filing a complaint, it could have impacted future job opportunities for me as an HR professional.

Empowerment is being aware of the concrete and glass ceilings that served as barriers to oppress opportunities based on race and, even having that knowledge, not letting the realization of continued societal ills stop forward progress. As Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) note the interconnection of justice and care, in seeking the same just liberties as other Americans, experiences were not forgotten, but served as a reminder to demonstrate capabilities. A small proportion received care from sponsors and mentors, however, this participant group understood fully what they faced was systemic and positioned and equipped themselves as leaders despite the barriers they faced. Participants in this study were determined to succeed, which kept them future focused and then as they advanced, the served as an advocate for inclusion and intentionally helped others along the way.

Uplift is the act of understanding the responsibility African Americans have for caring for others within their communities. This act of uplifting may often be the only avenue others within the community have for encouragement. In the zeal to extend care or fight for justice for others within the community, we encourage ourselves in the process. I intentionally uplifted and hired two African American women into positions, who had many years of experience, but were not actively employed during the time when I was asked to hold several senior level positions at the same time. Missy addressed issues of oppression and discrimination enforcing actions for
violation of laws. Bella Renee always said yes to requests to mentoring, to the point when requests came in, her support staff member knew to schedule an appointment without asking. Francis took on uplifting others by mentoring various students and advising minority medical student groups. Noleda Josephine mentored a minority student, taking her networking events to build her network.

In line with the data from my study, it was found that whether or not during (Alston & McClellan, 2011, p. 65) “fear, confusion, turmoil and uncertainty”, African American women rise to lead. The African American women in my study advanced into leadership roles, but instead of just focusing on what they achieved, they chose to serve others. The acts were described as burdensome and wearying at times to be the voice or representation of race and gender. The participants who shared this as their experiences, identified they became taxed to represent not just themselves in their quest to ascend, but other minority women. The leaders in this study were also representative of all things black and, at times, all things woman for those who had not welcomed diversity into the workplace. The weight of carrying one’s race and gender is an added tax on most African American women in this study.

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) theorized the value in considering lived perspectives. Further conversation of both justice and care ethics, from White male and White female theorists will also be developed below. The theoretical justice frame will be reviewed alongside a summary of research findings will be discussed as follows.

**Justice Perspective**

The ethic of justice and the ethic of care served as the framework of this study. Rawls’ theory of justice was reviewed in depth in Chapter Two. Rawls (1971) stated that United States citizens, especially those most disadvantaged, should have equal access to basic liberties as well
as access to opportunities for social and economic equality. The findings of the present study both support and refute Rawls’ perspective, as provided in the examples that follow.

Organizations that receive various levels of federal funds have requirements to have affirmative action plans. Organizations, like the ones I have worked with in the past, had this expectation and were also to have equal employment policies. For the sake of compliance, these policies exist, however if the proportion of African American women has not increased over the years, even when access to qualified applicants. For example, in Olivia’s experience, justice efforts occurred when an insurance company was found to discriminate against women and African Americans in hiring for sales leaders. Olivia did not file the legal complaint against the insurance company. However, justice efforts prevailed, as the company was required to provide equal access in hiring practices and as a settlement, was required to hire an African American and a woman for a sales leader position. Olivia reaped the benefit of mandate to hire diverse candidates. She applied and held the qualifications needed to be hired for the insurance sales position.

If justice efforts requiring the company to hire diverse candidates had not occurred the discriminatory employment practices would have likely continued and although qualified, Olivia would not have otherwise been hired. Justice opened the door for Olivia to demonstrate her knowledge, skills and abilities to perform job were not merely equal to, but at a level higher than the White males that booed her at the regional meeting once hired. Justice prevailed in requiring the company to extend equal opportunity to employment in selecting Olivia as an African American women for the position. It was Olivia’s work that dispelled their race and gender stereotypes by becoming a top seller in the region and across the country.

Within the organization, where Olivia worked, while all salespersons were men, they
were wholly unaccepting of her as an African American woman, apart from the three White men in her workgroup. These men served as both mentors and sponsors for Olivia, to ensure she understood how to navigate in the organization and more importantly how to engage with, serve and make sales with her customers. Rawls would state that there was not a societal greater good situation for those that were least advantaged in this example. There was liberty for Olivia as an individual, based on a lawsuit. Justice prevailed as the insurance company was required to hire an African America person and a woman, the organizational leaders did not follow the theoretical premise to look at justice with veiled ignorance. If so, there would not have been an outcome requiring diverse hires. The data did not show if equal opportunity became the company’s standard. The example does show that three office mates had an opportunity to impact justice, and they did for Olivia. Their influence through mentorship assisted Olivia with fulfilling her goals. Further, to be successful in the role, Olivia took advantage of the organization’s professional development licensure trainings. She ensured she was number one in scoring in each training course, and in implementation of that knowledge was key in establishing the foundation of sales success. Olivia used professional development and access to opportunity, based on justice measures, to catapult herself as a leader and top salesperson in their organization.

Justice and care are often inseparable (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) as demonstrated by the data. Participants were not always welcomed, but they took many personal measures to ensure they were equipped for advancement. In being just, it is not solely, having access to a new position, but also in the development of underrepresented professionals, such as African American women to purposely be prepared for leadership. Organizations can take lead on these efforts, to develop just and caring programs to influence inclusion and advancement.
According to Rawls (1971) application of citizens’ powers of practical reason and thought in forming, revising, and rationally pursuing their conception of the good. In support of this thought, justice efforts occurred in the form of the white male mentors and sponsors who served as caregivers, meeting the participants’ professional care needs. Mentors invested in the leadership development of several participants, such as Bella Renee, Francis, and Olivia in extending both care and justice through citizen support.

There were other participants who shared experiences that helped prevent pitfalls and aided in their professional development. Noleda Josephine had an advisor who helped her navigate academic politics and journal submissions and introduced her to peer leaders at conferences. Francis had a mentor and sponsor who held the most senior internal roles of major medical and/or academic institutions. The mentor and sponsor also had significant organizational influence. Francis had a minority female medical college president serve as a mentor who helped her nuance the politics of knowing when to fight and when to strategize on handling unwelcoming behaviors. She also had a White male university president, who upon hire, intentionally served as a sponsor who helped her move diversity related initiatives in medical school program recruitment forward, when there was little support prior to his hire.

Rawls (1971) posited justice occurs when decisions are made without consideration of potential beneficial self-impact, but rather in consideration of others who have been void or fairness and opportunity. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963) offered “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (p. 1). The mentorship Francis and Noleda Josephine experienced was a justice effort that gave them access to information otherwise known, increased their level of respect received as they were sponsored by those in positions of influence.

Bella Renee shared experiences of her White male mentor and sponsor giving her work
assignments she believed was below her capabilities. He explained later that the assignments were to develop not just her attention to detail, but positioned her as a subject-matter expert other senior leaders and board of trustee members relied upon for market data. Bella Renee’s supervisor impacted her trajectory by preparing her to navigate workplace politics, teaching her how to handle special assignments, and positioning her to meet key individuals that would serve as resources.

In contrast to the earlier examples within this section, there were some examples that reflected a lack of justice in leadership decisions and institutional policies and practices. Ruth specifically spoke of an experience where her supervisor told her that he was providing her White male colleague (who had the same position title she held) a raise. The supervisor said the pay increase was because he had a family to take care of. There were no checks and balances within the organization to prevent pay inequity for a White male holding the same position as an African American woman. Other examples were provided by Missy who shared an experience of decisional authorities discussing her regarding a promotion. Instead of discussing her competence to do the job, they discussed her marital status, the age of her young son, and if others would accept her as an African American woman in a leadership position.

The previous experiences of Ruth and Missy illustrate that, even for African American women who have shown success in leadership, barriers continue to exist. I am not alone in my view, and it is supported by literature and governmental statistics which demonstrated the disproportion of less than 1% of African American women in leadership roles within the United States’ workforce (Catalyst, 2017; DOL, 2015). African American women have endured employment discrimination, facing barriers preventing their upward advancement (Cook & Glass, 2013).
As the researcher, I have found even with those who have achieved leadership by overcoming barriers, institutions still did not welcome them or grant social inclusion. Achievement by the participants occurred despite unjust systems. Rawls posits that in justice, the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society, loss of liberty for some, is made right by a greater good shared by others. The participants were of varying backgrounds and while some may have been considered the least-advantaged, others may have had more stability options and support. However, in all cases, the participants had the goal to advance into leadership. When these participants advanced into leadership, they made efforts to uplift others independently, when they were unable to use their influence to impact departmental or organizational change as an advocate on race and gender perspectives. The rule of law parallels findings by Rawls (1971) as justice occurs when decisions are made without consideration of potential beneficial self-impact, but rather in consideration of others who have been void or fairness and opportunity.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed literature that studied the phenomenon of the glass and concrete ceilings, which continue to be validated by researchers fifty years later (Glass & Cook, 2016; Mitra, 2003; Nooks Wallner, 2008; Rowe, 1990). Data from the present study demonstrated that disparity for women and minorities in leadership ascension and associated compensation continues to exist. The leadership advancement experiences shared were not imagined, but real. Their life experiences demonstrated that while barriers continue to exist, they each have found a pathway to advance into leadership roles. However, this is the exception, not the rule.

There were noteworthy experiences offered by the eight participants. Leadership ascension for the women is this study was not always due to fair or just decision-making. The
ascension was not rooted in governing ourselves with a community of thought which supported veiled ignorance (Rawls, 1971; Starratt, 1991) to ensure an unbiased effect which grants liberty, equal access or opportunity for all. These participants do not exist in a society where their race and gender are viewed with veiled ignorance. As Bella Renee said, there is a hierarchy of factors when looking at her, you first see race, then gender and then age. These are factors that cannot be ignored. Societal biases continue to exist, as such the participants cannot exist in hope that equal access to opportunities will be fairly extended to them, as to those who are not African American women. These participants strategically prepared and equipped themselves through a myriad of interrelated experiences, to ascend despite the barriers.

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) disputed blind-justice ideology regarding fairness and justice based on White male theorist views. I agree with this view. Care and justice cannot occur without cultural consideration of the view of those who have faced the lack of care and continued injustice. My research study supports the view that it is idealistically unrealistic to quiet the lived experiences African American women and their unique perspectives from contributing to the justice discussions. To achieve justice, perspective does matter.

In my autoethnography, I shared experiences where I was as prepared or more academically and educationally prepared than my White male or female counterparts. My professional field, human resources, is responsible for ensuring equal opportunity and access, in accordance with Title VII laws. However, when ideas were presented or opportunities arose where I requested access to competitively apply for positions, they were denied. In that denial, position appointments were made for White individuals, without having to apply, competitively bid, or interview for the positions. In addressing my concern about disparity, professional claims were dismissed. The injustice placed me in a position where I had to decide to be defeated and
walk away or file a complaint. I decided to make the organization responsible to adhere to the
equal employment claims they portrayed in organizational goals. My remedy request was to
require them to recruit and hire an African American woman for the position I vacated, due to
adverse impact I faced. That remedy I requested was enforced by the office of equity, diversity
and opportunity.

Those who have organizational and individual authority, need to understand it is not what
they want to offer as justice, but what is needed that is most valuable in demonstrating care.

**Care Perspective**

When making moral decisions, there should be allowance for care ethics along with
justice ethics. The ethic of care (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1971; Noddings, 1988) considers the
growth of those needing care. Care ethics shares the importance of not just listening, but hearing
and responding to the care of those in need (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle Walker &
Snarey, 2004). Additionally, the ethic of care offered insight on mature care that goes beyond
consideration of the perspective of the one who receives care to include the perspectives of the
caregiver (Gilligan, 1987). Individuals and groups balance the legacy of oppression faced by
African Americans, coupled with the systemic barriers to advancement (Collins, 2000; Siddle
Walker & Snarey, 2004). Identifying how to avoid oppression experiences control their thoughts
while inspiring moving forward in strength and empowerment (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).
Further, it is important not to minimize the experience that differ from foundational theorists, in
their pursuit of advancement. Attributing the advancement or failure of African American
women in seeking advancement into leadership as happenstance minimizes the experiences of
underrepresented groups (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) rather than considering justice and care
regarding patterned societal ills.
Starratt (1991) defined in part the complexities of (1) the ethic of care, and (2) justice. While not fully interdependent, there is value in the connection of each ethic. When seeking to another grow, the care ethic may promote fairness. When care is extended to African Americans to gain equal access to opportunities, it engages them in mentoring, workplace networking, professional development opportunities, which may demonstrate support for equality and bring about change (Starratt, 1991).

The acts of care (Beck, 1994) include “receiving the other’s perspective; (2) responding appropriately to the awareness that comes from this reception; and (3) remaining committed to others and to the relationship” (p. 10). Accordingly, to care means responding to the needs of African American women regarding their advancing into leadership, requires those offering care to hear and understand their voices, views, and perspective. African American perspectives around the ethic of care (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) include being cognizant of cultural factors that are contributors, which impacts the abilities of individuals to be successful. Noleda Josephine’s experience demonstrated how an advisor, understood her perspective and goals, assisted the participant in understanding what would need to be accomplished to become a faculty administrated and remained committed long-term to go from being a mentor to a sponsor in achieving her advancement. This allowed Noleda Josephine to feel supported in her goals for advancement. A different view is when Cindy shared how she was creative in attempting to expand her knowledge base. Cindy asked a White male senior level colleague to serve as a mentor for her, for her professional development. This request was denied, which left Cindy feeling unsupported and uncared for, as her pluralism perspective in expressing her professional needs were resisted and unaccommodated (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

The strategy from an African American perspective surrounding the ethic of care (Siddle
Walker & Snarey, 2004) includes being attuned to cultural factors that are contributors, which impacts the abilities of individuals to be successful. Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) suggested the manner in addressing them should be from a holistic point of view, not just regarding a generalized focus. African American theoretical care perspectives speak to promoting rightness, presumably after gaining knowledge about barriers, so responsiveness about continued disparity may occur (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

Researchers offered insight about the importance of understanding what is needed by another before attempting to offer care (Gilligan, 1987; Mayeroff, 1971). According to Pompper (2011), “the voices of women of color are undergirded with uncertainty, anxiety, fear, frustration, disappointment, and anger – especially when describing what they perceive to be futile attempts to break through organizational glass ceilings to change organizations, no matter how well educated or talented they are”. Findings in this study support several of the eight ingredients of care such as knowing. Mayeroff (1971) identified the care-ingredient ‘knowing’ as having direct and indirect knowledge of the needs of others must be understood to appropriately respond, within one’s power and limitations, to help others grow. It is clear that those who have not suffered oppression and bias can have empathy, but only those who have been directly impacted by oppression and bias can express, with true knowledge, what care is needed to address it. When someone in decision-making positions fail to consider perspectives and experiences that differ from theirs, inadvertently, they may cause additional injustice. In Missy confronting race or gender discrimination in leadership advancement, she stated oppression inspires her to take risks to challenge the status quo.

Mayeroff (1971) said when caring for others, patience perpetuates one’s evolution as an outcome of engaged involvement and active listening; even when there is confusion. While the
one needing care evolves, growth also happens for the caregiver. I agree with this thought by offering that those with individual and organizational power must have patience, but as the caregiver’s understanding evolves, there must be a forward-moving action to ensure the creation of an environment of care which provides equal access to opportunities without a workplace climate that perpetuates barriers. For example, Olivia began a new position where the work environment allowed women and African Americans to be excluded from leadership sales positions. Upon a mandate, Olivia was hired, but entered an environment that made White men comfortable booing her and one referring to her as a bitch. The sum total of Olivia’s experiences aided her in handling this situation. This included the influence of her mother positioning her to integrate a school in Selma, Alabama. That experience prepared her to face the unwelcoming work environment, and still rise to the top of her class.

Mayeroff’s (1971), ingredient of ‘hope’ speaks to obtaining growth through care and appreciating the present and anticipating future possibilities. The experiences of the participants did not support being appreciative of overcoming systemic barriers to advance. The data demonstrated the courage, determination and preparation. I do not support this ingredient of hope which would imply that those African American women who have advanced, should appreciate what exists now in this unjust society, where liberty and justice is not accessible by all, while anticipating what may come in the future. I do not support Mayeroff’s ingredient of hope, as I did not support the definition of hope through faith as offered by Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004). My data which includes my professional experience identifies that action makes change, not passivity in appreciating where they were in their careers, they took measures to ascend into leadership. While hope for change would on a societal and organizational level, would level the playing field, literature within chapter two, identifies barriers still exist for
African American women.

There continues to be a lack of exploration (Cook & Glass, 2014) regarding how environments, within organizations, may improve the overall likelihood of upward mobility for women and minorities, into leadership positions. Beyond (Mayeroff, 1971; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) knowing, listening, being patient and evolving through interaction and gaining perspective, I believe intentional actions need to occur. The actions must address the deep and lasting ramifications of oppressive barriers that African Americans continue to face. Those in authority must seek to understand what efforts are needed, to address the barriers and promote the advancement of African American women equipped for leadership.

The experiences and the suggestions shared by each of the participants in Chapter Four offers insight on where to begin: networking, mentoring, sponsoring, and professional development opportunities are a few of the areas where care can occur.

I agree that the perspectives of African American women must be considered. To expand this thought, we must acknowledge the weight an African American woman has for her own advancement and subsequently, after achieving advancement, also taking on the responsibility of aiding others in their efforts. As data demonstrated, African American women have a less than 1% leadership advancement rate (Catalyst, 2017). If we continue to be the primary accountable party in helping other African American women achieve advancement, this may limit them to the levels we have reached.

**Unanticipated Findings**

I found rich and unanticipated findings which emerged that did not fully answer the two established research questions. The experiences shared were: (a) Black Tax where these participants identified being made responsible for taking on additional work to continually
prove their worth as leaders; (b) being intentional and unintentional change agents to promote workplace justice and care and advocate for diverse and inclusive environments; and (c) only a few of the participants have or would seek internal or external enforcement to address inequity in employment opportunities.

The meaning obtained about participant ascension did not end with the point of sheer celebration of self-accomplishment for earning leadership level positions. There were other issues that emerged after advancement occurred. The consensus viewpoint developed from each of the eight participants was that after the achievement of success, there was a Black Tax of: extra added scrutiny; lack of inclusion; the extra added pressures of doing more to prove their expertise; having additional duties not expected by others; and performing at a heightened level to attempt quiet those who held stereotypes about the capabilities of African American women. Bella Renee, Francis, Olivia, Noleda Josephine, and I provided numerous examples in Chapter Four of performing additional work at a heightened level.

Data collected and analyzed from the participants also demonstrated that advancement into leadership positions was not the Holy Grail. While their earnest pursuits allowed them to reach their individual professional goals, their experiences continually caused them to face challenges and additionally unexpected work responsibilities. Examples of the Black Tax for these participants are: Francis served on eighteen of twenty work committees for diversity reasons and advised multiple student organizations while her peers did not. Noleda Josephine shared the same experience of taking on extra work projects while her White peers did not. I was asked to serve as interim HR vice president, vice president of labor and hold my original role as the chief diversity officer. In interim assignments of others, my White colleagues were not tasked to hold multiple high-level roles.
I researched the phrase and came up with limited scholarly articles identifying the premise is Black people must work twice as hard as White people and/or are expected to participate in more service or activities that may be “unrelated to their competence and interests” (Baez, 2000; Wingfield, 2015). The participants, per the data provide, were taxed to now represent their race and gender and to be the spokespeople on inclusion and diversity matters, when their areas of specialty where academically and professionally different. Accordingly, I reflected on literature presenting data on barriers that prevented advancement and related this phenomenon of having to perform more work than non-minorities, as a post-advancement barrier to success in leadership (Glass & Cook, 2016; Malveaux, 2013; Rowe, 1990).

While I found limited scholarly articles, there were news stories found in Huffington Post (2017) which offers “It’s the axiom that states black people must work harder than their counterparts to achieve similar outcomes” and otherwise known as the cost of working while Black in America. According to Holmes (2016) “Black professional women who were raised to believe that we have to work harder than others to get ahead. While lots of Black women have taken this advice to heart, an exclusive study shared with Essence (2016) Magazine, by global research organization Catalyst, suggests that such thinking may not only have a negative impact on our health, but could also impede our overall career success”. This article suggests the black tax is a burden to Black women, and to avoid physical and emotional health implications, as well as its impact on success, black women need to get around this heavy expectation.

Being a change agent was another unexpected finding. The Black tax also included the assignment as, or self-imposed obligation to be an advocate on behalf of others who are
underrepresented, to be a voice against stereotypes, and the voice to represent perspectives that would not otherwise be considered beyond the White male perspective at the leadership decision-making table. Five of the eight participants offered that the price that an African American woman who ascends into leadership then feels the pressure of not just representing themselves, but their entire race as their performance may be the hinge on whether other African American women will be given access to future leadership roles. Ruth became the advocate voice for minorities in president’s cabinet and was an integral team member in the creation of a new high school to focus on at-risk minorities. Noleda Josephine was the only African American chair and faculty member and took over mentoring an African American female student who was not being nurtured by the provost. Francis was engaged on nearly twenty committees as diversity representation was required. Francis was the voice of the minority students and fought for those minorities that faced harsher punishment than their White peers, while mentoring African American PA students. I provided insight into speaking on behalf of or creating opportunities for other minorities to be hired when underrepresentation of minorities went unaddressed. This obligation further included participants intentionally mentoring other African American women and minorities.

Existing efforts for access and equal opportunity have proven to be ineffective in demonstrating care for those being marginalized. The EEOC and affirmative action efforts exist to enforce justice to show care to right discriminatory and historical wrongs, but can only be as effective as reports come to them for review. It becomes clear to me that I, that remedying injustice solely through these traditional means is not enough. There must be grass-roots efforts that occur to strategically prepare African American girls with a foundational understanding of strategic preparation, self-determination and courage. This
meaning obtained from this study will be used to add to literature and continue to develop grass roots efforts to equip up and coming women interested in leadership development.

Continuing down the same pathway to pursue liberty and justice will not occur solely waiting for laws to require decisional authorities to create realistic expectations without self-bias and for the greater community good, through veiled points of view. Caring enough to know how African American women have been impacted and what is needed is an important and necessary factor in determine what is considered justice.

The third unanticipated finding was the limited nature of the participants have or would seek internal or external enforcement to address inequity in employment opportunities. As an investigator of Title VII violations as identified in organization policy, I review submitted allegations on a regular basis, many without any foundation to demonstration policy violation. Surprisingly, there were only two other participants aside from myself, who shared experiences where they have filed complaints or grievances about workplace injustice.

**Implications in Leadership**

Over my career, I have learned that a person’s perspective is their truth until it meets truth. Only through deliberate care to understand all aspects through fact-gathering and analysis will allow the truth of disparity in ascension to be more meaningfully impacted. A neutral investigatory process and evaluation of gathered statements may not always reveal the full picture, but typically provides enough data to determine if an allegation is more likely than not to have occurred.

In this case, Chapter Two has identified United States Department of Labor Statistics (2015) which provided irrefutable data that there remains to be a lack of advancement of African American women into leadership positions. The same governmental bureau also
affirmed this occurs, even with the availability of degreed and experienced individuals has increased significantly, over 350%. While civil rights laws and regulatory agencies have made an impact when issues are filed, laws do not and have not been able to regulate in a manner to ensure justice for those African American women in the workplace who have not obtained the opportunity to ascend into leadership, or placed into a pipeline position which prepares them for advancement.

The ethic of care will fully be ineffective, if what is offered to an individual, groups or populations of people, are remedies that are not in sync with what is just or needed. This research about the experiences of African American women, used the theoretic framework and viewed the study from foundational and African American justice and care perspectives of the ethic of justice and care. While the core expectations were parallel, the process of aligning justice for those disadvantaged differed. Foundational theories expresses a process of doing the same for all, while more current theory identified the perspectives of those needing just and care must be considered. To execute the ethic of care for my researcher goals is the development of research to expand literature, care must occur to consider views different from others with different or more privileged life experiences.

True consideration transpires when decision-makers ask what is wanted from those needing care, versus presuming what is offered should be adequate or acceptable for those underrepresented populations, and specifically African American women, for this study. Placing verbiage in organizational strategic plans and speaking about them in announcements, but not requiring change must shift for statements to required actions. For example, leaders should be assigned to be mentors or sponsors for this underrepresented population in leadership roles as a job responsibility. Organizational leaders should intentionally include this
underrepresented population, by inviting them to professional networking events. Further, these leaders could promote or support the creation of, or serve as a presenter for workplace professional development programs to develop underrepresented African American women seeking to become leaders.

To create another pathway to liberty, these findings will serve as my starting point to develop guidance. Firstly, organizations receiving governmental funds should ensure leaders are required to be accountable for reaching affirmative action goals. Penalty of financial loss to the institution should occur unless rigorous documentation indisputably shows efforts but lack of interest. A leader is someone with influence that other employees are willing to follow (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2001). When leaders model the behaviors (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) they expect their followers to mirror, it has a greater impact than reading goals written on a page. Leaders with plans in place exhibit to embrace and ensure the selection and promotion of African American women into leadership positions.

Secondly, organizations must make diversity and inclusion efforts a part of leader essential functions for performance measures, with potential financial impact in failure to lead the organization in inclusive hiring practices. Kouzes and Posner (2012) identified the value of obtaining follower buy-in through inspiring a shared vision noting “visions seen only by leaders are insufficient to create an organized movement or a significant change in a company” (p. 15). The act of influencing commitment to change is one who has taken a vision and led its implementation to affect change. Ruth shared in her leadership sample, her participation in inspiring the vision of the creation of a new school with the local board of education, her academic campus and other community leaders to offer obtaining an accelerated high school diploma and associates degree program for at-risk minority students.
Thirdly, for African American women leaders to collaborate to organize practical leadership development to inspire a shared vision of ascension, enabling others to act, encourage their hearts the process for emerging as leaders has had on their views of themselves as leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Literature in Chapter Two affirmed the importance of the compounded understanding of race as a part of women's identities. These interconnected factors, and their experiences influence their perspectives when assuming a leadership position (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Additionally, these African American women continue their community ties (Alston and McClellan, 2004; Siddle Walker and Snarey, 2011). While we await justice, care and liberty to be realized, we must continue to care for ourselves. Therefore, in the development of grass root programming, these women serve to inspire, create and implement strategic programming for African American girls and women desiring leadership advancement by modeling the way (Kouzes and Posner, 2012).

Fourthly, the basis of the core curriculum that is to be developed will center on the two primary themes. Those themes which emerged from the data analysis were identified as strategic preparation, and self-determination and courage. The modules of learning to be created will be set to break down the key themes, and supporting sub-themes, to help enhance new leader development.

As established earlier, leadership ascension barriers continue to exist for African American women. The theoretical frame offers theoretically plausible guides on how to forecast care when justice parameters are built upon veiled ignorance. In the meantime, while some advancements have occurred, it is not proportionately in line with the availability of the expanded workforce who is academically prepared and work experienced. Equal opportunity, liberty, care and justice guidelines are only as successful as all of those who willingly support
and implement efforts. African American women and their advancement to leadership stand on
the shoulders of nameless others in history who paved a pathway or chipped away at the
concrete ceiling are and will be “self-defined, self-determined, develop and use her voice,
connect to build community, and seek spirituality and regeneration” (Alston & McClellan,
2011, p. 21).

**Future Research**

This study was conducted to collect data on a smaller scale to gain meaning. While the
findings may not be generalizable to all African American women, the methods outlined offer a
framework for conducting larger qualitative study. Strategically collecting data, using multiple
methods aided me in data collection. The two instruments used were the advance questionnaire
and the interview protocol. Additional forms of collection came through review of written or
verbal leadership samples and resumes submitted to me to establish the trustworthiness of data
analysis.

Future research could explore more deeply into one of the key themes, such as strategic
preparation, and its influence in leadership for African American women through qualitative
methods such as case study. Additional research could delve more deeply into the second key
theme of self-determination and courage and its influence in leadership advancement of African
America women. Finally, the concept of the ‘black tax’ is a void in scholarly research and
exploring this as a topic could affirm African Americans having to work harder or dispelling the
concept, based upon conducting a study comparing leadership advancement of African
American women and Caucasian women and men.

A qualitative study could occur to interview only directors and higher-level positions of
a particular type of industry such as healthcare. Other considerations for additional studies
could focus solely on private sector fortune 500 companies, or obtaining meaning from those who have ascended to be presidents of organizations to gain insights into their leadership advancement journey. Switching methods, a quantitative study could be developed to survey a significantly larger African American woman population to investigate the phenomena of leadership advancement from a statistical perspective and focus on the significance of the data versus the meaning of participant experiences. These other potential studies will also add more refinement to advancement into leadership research for African American women within a specific position or industry type. Additional trustworthy data will provide additional insight to African American women seeking to ascend into leadership in particular industries that are studied.

As a researcher, data in this study have provided support that theory works when we govern ourselves in a manner where justice and equality standards in leadership advancement are adopted and embraced (Malveaux, 2013; Starratt, 1991) for universal fairness. Liberty and justice has not occurred for academically prepared and experienced women to have equal access and fair consideration (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Therefore, additional efforts are needed to promote equality. African American women leaders, must equip themselves and be strategically prepared for their advancement. In ascension (Alston and McClellan, 2011), African American women have come to be transformational leaders. They must influence others to change; provide inspirational motivation to ascend to new heights; use intellectual stimulation to promote creativity to impact organizational issues; and seek individual consideration to diagnose needs for development and empowerment and change.
Conclusion: Final Thoughts

In conclusion, the African American women who participated in this research study provided meaning surrounding their individual experiences that led to their individual advancement into leadership positions. This dissertation journey adds to my researcher experiences and demonstrated the importance of me reviewing traditional thought as expressed by White male researchers. However, I had to steadfastly insure the inclusion of more current African American perspectives and women thought leaders’ views were a part of this study about African American women.

According to Collins (2000), “The exclusion of Black women’s ideas from mainstream academic discourse and the curious placement of African-American women intellectuals in feminist thinking” cannot continue to occur. When seeking to extend care and justice to those marginalized, the perspective of what will meet the needs should include their points of view. Further, per Pompper (2011, p. 466), “it is well documented that women of color experience institutionalized patriarchy earmarked by stereotyping, pigeonholing, and tokenism that reinforces different as subordinate – so that many encounter a triple jeopardy of workplace ageism, racism, and sexism. Moreover, federal laws and civil courts fail to account for the overlap of oppressions” of gender and ethnicity. This study is significant as it contributes to literature to offer insight beyond the barrier, to advancement practices, as preparation for leadership is key (Johns, 2013, Nooks-Wallner, 2008).

As the researcher I assessed the totality of participants’ experiences, finding that strategic preparation, self-determination, and courage served as key themes in their leadership advancement. The sum total of experiences of the African American women within this study demonstrated how they were equipped for leadership advancement. These women created paths
through their strategic preparation, self-determination, faith in God, mentorship or sponsorship, and courage. The study participant data demonstrated their excellence in knowledge and their tenacity in establishing and reaching goals.

Formal professional development programs did not exist for of the eight all participants within the workplace, and in a few cases the participants desiring internal development did not receive it, but were required to develop training to equip others for effective leadership. However, each participant had the determination to take her professional leadership advancement destiny into her own hands, maximizing her potential through obtaining academic degrees, certifications, volunteering for additional work tasks to expand their knowledge, and joining community organizations to gain knowledge, expand skills and abilities, and gain relevant experience.

The African American woman leader is the sum total of all her lived experiences. She must be self-determined to continue even when facing barriers and being uninvited and unwelcomed. In paying the tax, the African American woman is doing more and reaching back to equip other African American women to come with her or give her a helping hand along the way. In being courageous in facing such opposition, discrimination and injustice and care, but advance anyway. My goal as a researcher is to create practical programming for African American girls and women, to help advise them as they ascend into leadership to teach them the fundamentals of strategic planning, the value of being self-determined to seek to reach the goals they choose and the courage to demand to take their rightful place in leadership.
REFERENCES


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leaders", *Women in Management Review*, 22(6), 482-496.


DATE: July 24, 2017

TO: Lisa Dubose, M.Ed., B.B.A.
FROM: Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board


SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: July 24, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE: May 31, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Modifications Approved:

-Include up to seven (7) participants, instead of up to six (6) participants. Updated consent document to reflect this change.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the IRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on May 31, 2018. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or orc@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board’s records.
Dear _________________,

My name is Lisa Dubose and I am a doctoral student in the Leadership Studies Program at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Northwest Ohio. I am also a Human Resources Administrator at BGSU.

I am seeking potential participants, as I have been approved to conduct a research study on the experiences of African American women advancing into leadership positions. As African American women are underrepresented in leadership positions within organizations, those who have ascended into leadership may share meaningful information. I am inviting you to become a potential participate in the study. In sharing your experience, knowledge of your pathway to leadership that may be integral in aiding other African American women in their pursuits for advancement into leadership positions.

If you are interested in being a potential research study participant, please identify your desire to set up a time to learn more about this study, complete a questionnaire, and/or be considered for selection to be interviewed for the research study by emailing yes, to consent to participation. As there are study limitations, only up to seven participants will be selected to participate in the interview phase of the research study. My own experiences will be integrated as well. Each interested participant will be notified if they have been selected or not for the interview phase.

The interview will be an audio recorded, semi-structured interview and will last up to ninety minutes. The total time commitment from beginning (questionnaire completion) to end (review of your interview summary) is not projected to exceed 4 hours. If you consent to participate, precautionary procedures will be taken to ensure confidentiality in written and oral reports.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ldubose@bgsu.edu or [redacted] or my advisor Dr. Patrick Pauken at paukenp@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7401 regarding the study or the Institutional Review Board regarding participant rights at orc@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7716.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to your reply.

Regards,

Lisa E. Dubose

Lisa E. Dubose
Doctoral Student, Leadership Studies
Bowling Green State University
Hello _______________.

My name is Lisa Dubose and I am a doctoral student in the Leadership Studies Program at Bowling Green State University. I am also a Human Resources Administrator at Bowling Green State University in Northern Ohio.

I am seeking potential participants, as I have been approved to conduct a research study on the experiences of African American women advancing into leadership positions. As African American women are underrepresented in leadership positions within organizations, those who have ascended into leadership may share meaningful information. I am inviting you to become a potential participant in the study. In sharing your experience, knowledge of your pathway to leadership that may be integral in aiding other African American women in their pursuits for advancement into leadership positions.

If you are interested in being a potential research study participant, please identify your desire to set up a time to learn more about this study, complete a questionnaire, and/or be considered for selection to be interviewed for the research study by responding yes, which provides consent to participation. As there are study limitations, only up to seven participants will be selected to participate in the interview phase of the research study. My own experiences will be integrated as well. Each interested participant will be notified if they have been selected or not for the interview phase.

The interview will be an audio recorded, semi-structured interview and will last up to ninety minutes. The total time commitment from beginning (questionnaire completion) to end (review of your interview summary) is not projected to exceed 4 hours. If you consent to participate, precautionary procedures will be taken to ensure confidentiality in written and oral reports.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ldubose@bgsu.edu or 419-450-9552; or my advisor Dr. Patrick Pauken at paukenp@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7401 regarding the study or the Institutional Review Board regarding participant rights at orc@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7716.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to your reply.

Regards,

Lisa E. Dubose

Lisa E. Dubose
Doctoral Student, Leadership Studies
Bowling Green State University
Informed Consent (for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated; Girl Friends, Incorporated and The State of the State)

Introduction: My name is Lisa E. Dubose and I am a Leadership Studies doctoral student at Bowling Green State University, as well as the University’s Employee Relations, Training and Development, and EEO/Compliance Director within the Office of Human Resources. My Leadership Studies Doctoral Program advisor is Dr. Patrick Pauken. As a doctoral student, I have identified my research topic as the “Experiences in the Leadership Advancement of African American Women” for African American Women. As a result of you reaching professional leadership advancement success within your field, I invite you to participate in this research study. I have regard for (and membership in) each of the organizations from which I am recruiting participants: a) Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; b) Girl Friends; and c) The State of the State. As a result, I am pleased and proud to be reaching out to you today.

Purpose: Professional organizational landscape changes are impacted by leadership that has been informed and embraces the value of inclusion and diversity and the impact on organizational success. This study will obtain insight regarding the lived-experiences of African American women in leadership positions. There are significant studies on the barriers to African American women attaining leadership positions. My study is seeking to research the advancement of African American women in leadership. Leadership positions, for the purpose of this study, will be director level or higher. Notice of who is selected will occur as the study limits the researcher to up to seven participants for the interview phase.

The benefit of the study is to obtain insight from the experiences of African American women in leadership positions, which may offer insight that may provide insight for replication while integrating my researcher experiences. The benefit to you is your opportunity to reflect on and share your professional journey through their experiences, to serve as a potential guide for others, and to let your information be used to contribute to literature.

Procedure: Upon completion and review of this consent document, the research study will consist of the completion of an advanced questionnaire for those who consented verbally or via email. Randomly selected participants will have a semi-structured interviews. The interviews will be established with each randomly selected study participant and will be audio recorded and transcribed. Randomly selected participants will also be asked to provide their professional resume or curriculum vitae, and a leadership sample.

The method for the 90-minute interview will be based on your comfort level and convenience. The interview may occur in-person, via phone or electronically (email / videoconference), based on your choice.

The advance questionnaire establishes baseline information for the interview on topics related to your past and current work experience and leadership advancement. In addition, you will be asked to provide documentation of a non-confidential workplace project that you believe
represents your leadership work. This may be a presentation, program or course you created or support, policy developed, or any other relevant professional document you choose that demonstrates you in your leadership role. The full process from beginning to end will last no more than four hours, including questionnaire completion, interview participation, collection of vitae/resume and leadership documents, and review and edit of your interview transcript.

**Voluntary nature:** Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may freely decide to skip questions, a particular project or task; or discontinue participation at any time without penalty to you occurring. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University or your job.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity Protection:** The written or printed transcribed data will be stored in a locked file and computer and password protected accordingly. In an effort to reduce risk of participant confidentiality, the researcher will use pseudonyms which will be maintained separate from the data collected and analyzed. Access to electronic and/or written notes will be the researcher and transcriber who will indicate consent to confidentiality by responding to the researcher’s questions about maintaining research confidentiality. Also, access will include selected participants who will have the option to review the summary of their individual interview summary for member checking of their statements. All data will be kept for a minimum period of three (3) years, and destroyed, to maintain confidentiality. When affirming consent by responding yes via email or verbally via telephone recruiting, randomly selected participants will set up a time to meet or interview; any data that reports participant names or other identifying information for program documentation or for a participation reward, will be stored separately in a locked file or computer password protected for confidentiality.

**Risks:** The risks are minimal and no greater than those encountered in normal daily life. In an effort to promote confidentiality, please see the above Confidentiality/Anonymity Protection section.

**Contact information:** Contact information for me and my program advisor are as follows: ldubose@bgsu.edu and paukenp@bgsu.edu in case you have any questions about the research or your participation in the research. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or orc@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research. Thank you for your time.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary.

I will consent to participate in this research via sending ‘yes’ to the researcher via email ‘or’ by verbally saying ‘yes’ via telephone.

*Signature unnecessary.*
APPENDIX D: ADVANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my research study on the experiences in the leadership advancement of African American women. In advance of the detailed semi-structured interviews, I ask that you complete this written life history questionnaire as a part of the data collection. Based on the research, I will seek to become informed the essence of the journey of participants to obtain meaning of individual stories to gain meaning them and identify if there are common or differing experiences. This questionnaire helps contribute to these stories and experiences.

The questionnaire was adapted from writings by Bell and Nkomo (2001), who developed a survey distributed to over 1400 African American and White women with MBAs and involvement in professional women’s associations. Please mark the most appropriate response for each question. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

Research Question (RQ) 1: What experiences influenced the leadership advancement of the African American women in this study?

Research Question (RQ) 2: Were there organizational programs implemented, which influenced advancement opportunities of African American women into leadership positions?

Part I: Life History Demographics

Questions related to RQ #1:

1. Identify your race?
   a. African American / Black, not Hispanic or Latino
   b. Asian or Pacific Islander
   c. Hispanic or Latino
   d. White, not Hispanic or Latino
   e. American Indian or Alaskan Native
f. Other

If you have selected a response other than “a” above, then you do not meet the criteria for participation in the study. You do not need to complete the rest of the questionnaire.

2. Identify your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Other

If you have selected a response other than “a” above, then you do not meet the criteria for participation in the study. You do not need to complete the rest of the questionnaire.

3. Identify your age?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55-64
   f. 65+

4. Marital Status
   a. Never Married
   b. Married
   c. Divorced/Separated
   d. Widowed
   e. Other 1 (divorced & remarried)
   f. Other 2 (widowed & remarried)

5. Family
   a. Siblings
      i. Yes
      ii. No
      iii. If yes, list your birth order of all siblings ____________________________
   b. Children
      i. No
      ii. Yes
   c. Parents - raised within:
      i. 1 parent household
      ii. 2 parent household
      iii. Raised by another (in parentis loco, e.g. grandparent, aunt/uncle)
      iv. Foster care
      v. Other, explain ____________________________

6. Identify your level of education? (Circle all that apply)
a. High school / GED  
b. Some college – if so, what field ________________  
c. Associate’s Degree  
d. Bachelor’s Degree - B.A./B.S. Degree (circle all that apply)  
  i. Business  
  ii. Education  
  iii. Engineering  
  iv. Liberal Arts  
  v. Other, if so what field ____________________________  
e. Some graduate school  
  i. Business  
  ii. Education  
  iii. Engineering  
  iv. Liberal Arts  
  v. Other, if so what field ____________________________  
f. Graduate Degree – if so, what field ____________________________  
g. Doctoral Degree  

7. Job Type  
   a. Entry Level  
   b. Coordinator/Supervisor  
   c. Manager/Director/Chairman  
   d. AVP/VP/Dean  
   e. President/Chief Operating Officer/Executive Director  

**Part II: Current Position Characteristics**

Questions related to RQ #1:

1. Years of Work Experiences  
   a. 1-5 Years  
   b. 6-10 Years  
   c. 11-15 Years  
   d. 16-20 Years  
   e. 21-25 Years  
   f. 26-30 Years  
   g. 31+  

2. Industry category  
   a. Private  
   b. Public  
   c. For profit  
   d. Not for profit  

3. Industry  
   a. Communication/utilities
b. Finance/banking
c. Education
d. Entertainment
e. Insurance
f. Manufacturing
g. Medical/health care
h. Personal business (entrepreneur)
i. Real Estate
j. Retail
k. Transportation
l. Other, if so what industry? __________________________

Part III: Race and Gender

Questions related to RQ #2:

1. I am the only woman as a peer colleague on the leadership team in my organization?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. I am the only African American as a peer colleague on the leadership team in my organization?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. I am the only African American woman as a peer colleague on the leadership team in my organization?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. I am conscious of my racial identity at work?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. I am conscious of my race and gender amongst colleagues when offering my professional perspective?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. I am (race and gender) accepted/included as a member of the work team?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. I have been inhibited from professional advancement based on my gender?
   a. Yes
   b. No
8. I have been inhibited from professional advancement based on my race?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. I have participated in organized work professional development programs (e.g. leadership academy/program, etc.)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. There is an organizational Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) or Diversity and Inclusion Plan?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. I participated in a formal organizational program (e.g. professional development, mentoring, etc.) that promoted advancement for diverse candidates (e.g. African Americans or minorities)?
    a. Yes or No? (circle one)
    b. If yes, what was the program(s)? ________________________________
    c. The plan was effective, based on my perspective, in adding racial staff diversity?
    d. The plan is ineffective, based on my perspective, in adding racial staff diversity?

12. I participated in a formal organizational program (e.g. professional development, mentoring, etc.) that promoted advancement for diverse candidates (e.g. women)?
    a. Yes or No? (circle one)
    b. If yes, what was the program(s)? ________________________________
    c. The plan was effective, based on my perspective, in adding gender staff diversity?
    d. The plan is ineffective, based on my perspective, in adding gender staff diversity?

13. I participated in an informal process or program that promoted advancement for me as an African American woman?
    a. Yes or No? (circle one)
    b. If yes, what was the program or programs? ________________________________
    c. The plan was effective, based on my perspective, in adding diversity to staff?
    d. The plan is ineffective, based on my perspective, in adding diversity to staff?

**Advancement to Leadership**

Questions related to RQ #1 and #2:
Address pathway including challenges, barriers and/or programs, which impacted your pathway to your leadership position(s). Below I describe from my perspective, the experiences that were key or critical in initially deterring or delaying my advancement, or helpful in attaining a leadership position.

1. The events or occurrences in becoming a leader which have been my biggest challenge(s) or obstacle(s) are:
   a. Racism
   b. Sexism
   c. Lack of inclusion (e.g. a welcoming work environment)
   d. No networking efforts
   e. Lack of mentorship

2. The events or occurrences, in becoming a leader which have been my biggest aide or benefit are:
   a. Mentorship
   b. Networking
   c. Leadership program
   d. Organization advancement program
   e. Education &/or Experience
   f. Other
   g. N/A

3. What did you learn most about yourself, from your most recent advancement experience? Bullet point learned experiences (e.g. – how to develop work relationships, how to develop strategic plans, etc.)
   1.
   2.
   3.

**Part IV: Identity (Intersectionality)**

Questions related to RQ #1:

4. Consider your race and gender and their individual or collective contribution toward your professional experiences to leadership. See the questions below.

   a. Has your gender impacted your career experiences? If no leave blank. If so, how? (bullet point your initial thoughts, up to 3 items)
      1.
      2.
      3.

   b. Has your race impacted your career experiences? If no leave blank. If so, how? (bullet point your initial thoughts, up to 3 items)
      1.
      2.
      3.

**Part V: Life Lessons**
Follow up questions during the individual interview will touch on some of themes introduced in this questionnaire along with additional inquiries about your life lessons and your experiences in advancing into leadership.

Thank you for your participation
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In general, what ways did race and gender impact you as an African American woman in leadership development experiences?

The primary research question led to the following sub-questions:

- How has your race and gender shaped your development as a leader?
- How has your gender influenced or affected your career advancement?
- How has your race influenced or affected your career advancement?

Based on the research, a qualitative, phenomenological research method will be developed to capture the essence of the participants’ stories and to become informed of their common experiences.

Part I: Life History Demographics
Primary Question:

1. Demographic Information (family dynamic – do you have siblings, two-parent house, siblings)?
   - How many children were in your family? Where were you in the birth order? How would you characterize your parents’ expectations of you and your siblings?

Please share with me, about your upbringing

Follow up questions:
- How do you believe your upbringing influenced your leadership advancement?
- Did a person (parent, teacher, church member) or involvement with an organization (church, community centers, groups influence your interest in becoming a leader?
- What was your socio-economic status as a child?
- Did your parents talk about race? If so, how? About issues of being a person of color? Did they ever talk about your role as a person of color as you grew older? [How did your parents talk about gender? About issues of being a woman? Did they ever talk about your role as a woman as you grew older?]

Part II: Personal / Career Experiences
Primary Question

2. Please describe the experiences that impacted you the most during your career path.

Follow up questions:
- What made these experiences impactful or important?
- Were you treated in any special ways because of your race [ethnicity] while at work
• Did you experience injustice in position selection? If so, based on race, gender or both? How?
• What kinds of personal, academic, professional decisions have you made to attain your senior leader level position?
• What workplace (formal or informal) programs existed which you participated with that you perceive contributed to your advancement into leadership positions.
• What activities or committees did you participate in while at work?
• What supports were (or have been) there for you during your career? A person? A group?

Part III: Leadership
Primary Question
3. What were the key or critical experiences that impacted your pathway to your senior leadership position?

Follow up questions regarding advancement/leadership:
• Tell me about your current position, nature of work?
• Describe why you believe these experiences were key or critical to attaining a senior leadership position.
• How did your career ascension evolve from your academic and/or work experiences
• What experiences in being a leader have been your biggest challenges or obstacles?
• What experiences in being a leader have been your biggest support?
• What did you learn about yourself from this experience?
• What were the critical turning points in your career ascension?
• When did you establish your career goals to be a leader? Who were your influencers?
• What impacted your career success to advance into leadership?
• What kinds of personal sacrifices have you had to make to get where you are today?
• How has your organization helped in you in achieving professional success? What other support would you have liked to have?
• What developmental activities have proven to be particularly valuable in your career advancement? (Probe: Education? Courses? Workshops?) Which of these was a waste of time?
• Were these activities work sponsored?
• What work professional development efforts helped you in advancing? What would you like to have had help in your advancement?
• How have you changed significantly as a person over the course of your career? What changes do you like? Which changes don’t you like?
• How would you assess your career at this point? Are you behind, ahead, or about where you expected to be in your career?
• What can assist in advancing to the next level?
• What assisted you in advancing?

Part IV: Identity (Intersectionality)
Primary Question
4. How has your race and gender contributed to your professional experience and your pathway to leadership?

Follow up questions:

- How has your gender impacted your career experiences?
- Were there work experiences that you believe impeded your career ascension? If so what?
- Were there work experiences that you believe assisted with your career ascension? If so what?
- How has your race impacted your career experiences?
- Do you think the journey to leadership is parallel (varied) across race and gender? (i.e., black men, white men, black women, white women, other people of color)?
- What progressive positions or work skills you see as critically important in developing African American women on the way up?
- Do you see any differences between work styles by African American women versus others within the workplace? What are they?
- What impact has your race/gender had on your work at your organization? Why/How?
- What impact has the increase of African American women had in the workplace? Why/How?
- What are the knowledge/skills/abilities necessary for succeeding for African American women into leadership positions? Are these different from or the same as for men or Whites?

Part V: Work Life Lessons
Primary Questions

5. What lessons have you learned as a woman that impacted your experience in advancing into leadership?

6. What lessons have you learned as a person who is African American that impacted our experience in leadership?

Follow up questions

- What are some of the reasons for African American women’s underrepresentation in senior level positions?
- How did you overcome barriers to advance into leadership?
- What advice do you have for African American women interested in senior leadership positions?
- Have you experienced discrimination in your organization? Explain (race / gender)
- How did you respond when you became aware of the discrimination?
- Have you experienced sex discrimination in the workplace? (As a woman, have you experienced sex discrimination in your organization? Tell me a bit about those experiences. How did you respond when you became aware of the discrimination? What about sexual harassment?)
• How important to you is it that you develop close relationships with other African American women / people of color in your organization? In what situations would you turn to an African American person internally for support?

• Are there white people or men in your organization that support you? (Either emotionally or task-related?) How? In what situations would you turn to a white person in your organization for support? Can you tell me about one of those times?

• Do you have a professional coach or mentor? What is your mentor’s gender and race? Is there more than one? Do you go to different ones for different reasons? How long have you had these relationships? How did the relationship begin? Tell me a little more about these relationships (i.e., How often are you in contact? How have these relationships changed over time?)

• Are you particularly close to any of the white [male] colleagues at your organization? Tell me about this relationship. In what ways are you close? How did this relationship develop? Do you ever discuss your cultural [gender] differences? Has race [gender] ever been an issue in the relationship? How has the relationship changed over time?

• Are there African American men or women colleagues that you conflict with? Explain. What were the issues?

• Are there white [male] colleagues that you conflict with? Can you tell me about a time when you were particularly troubled by a conflict with a white [male] colleague? (Probe: How did you handle the situation? Do you think race was an issue?)

Part VI: Closing Question

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

• How have you felt about the many things we talked about today?
• What’s been the most challenging to talk about?
• What’s been the biggest joy to talk about?
• Has anything surprise you in your reflection on your journey to leadership?
• Is there anything you want to restate or address again?
• Any final comments?
• Any final questions before we conclude?

Thank you for the opportunity you’ve given me to learn from your life experience. I appreciate your honesty and will respect your privacy about your experiences accordingly.

Adapted from Our separate ways: Black and white women and the struggle for professional identity. Bell and Nkomo (2001)
APPENDIX F: PEER REVIEWER / TRANSCRIBER SCRIPT

(Participant Name)

Peer Reviewers/Transcriber:

“Thank you for consenting to serve as a peer reviewer/transcriber of data that has been collected, for credibility. Let us take a few moments to review the consent document with you, and let me know if you have any questions”.

“I remind you that to protect the privacy of participants, all transcripts have been coded with pseudonyms. I ask as you will work to assess credibility and trustworthiness of the transcript with the researcher defined themes for coding of interviews, I ask that while you not discuss what is discussed in the interview details or identified as themes by the researcher, with anyone else.”
### Strategic Preparation: Influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Influences: Family or Community</th>
<th>Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella Renee</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>Grandparents said you must work harder. You have to work twice as hard as a White person. “Nothing beats preparation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Fiev</td>
<td>Father, women in leadership</td>
<td>Practice, be prepared. Learned work ethic from her father. “The you can’t pushes me to the you can”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Black</td>
<td>Former husband, regional PA colleague</td>
<td>You will always have to work harder than others. Give your best. “It is not fair, but you don’t have privilege”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missy Fitz</td>
<td>Black Church, mother</td>
<td>Work as other do, file charges if treated differently. “Oppression inspires me”. You do not have to believe the stereotypes others try to generalize about you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noleda Josephine</td>
<td>Mother, mentor,</td>
<td>On a Mississippi civil rights tour, a carry out own called us [minority high school students] “niggers”. “African American woman Principal stood up to him. I always told myself, if she could do that for us, I can take the risk and stand up for other people too”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Pope</td>
<td>Grandmother, mother</td>
<td>As a 9th grader, my mother added me to 11 others students who integrated an all-White school in Selma, Alabama. Through threats of bloodshed, state troopers escorted us into school. This influence, “moving forward in life, a lot of that leads to your leadership style and how you're going to be as a leader”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth North</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>My mother was a role model of university leadership, making a difference for students. Ill equipped supervisors who were not interested in helping underrepresented students, this realization showed “where I want to be required a PhD”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Dubose</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents told me I had to work twice as others. We do not want handouts, we just want “equal opportunity and a level playing field”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX H: RESEARCH QUESTION 1 AND THEME 1**

*Research Question 1: What experiences influenced the leadership advancement of the African American women in this study?*

**Theme 1: Strategic Preparation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Influences: Family or Community</th>
<th>Prepare to Work Harder</th>
<th>Education, Experience &amp; Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella Renee</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>Grandparents said you must work harder. Took on extra assignments, complete them early. Work 2nd job.</td>
<td>Master’s, President organizations, certified, conference attendance, professional organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Fiev</td>
<td>Father, women in leadership</td>
<td>Practice, be prepared. Learned work ethic from her father</td>
<td>PhD, authored book, professional readings, community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Black</td>
<td>Former husband, regional PA colleague</td>
<td>Fishbowl effect, being watched. Cannot fail. 18/20 committees. 12 hours/day. Advise and advocate for underrepresented groups.</td>
<td>PhD, conference attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missy Fitz</td>
<td>Black Church, mother</td>
<td>Work as others do, file charges</td>
<td>BA, conducts trainings, community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noleda Josephine</td>
<td>Mother, mentor,</td>
<td>In addition to administrative and faculty work, had to do volunteer work and serve on extra committees her white peers did not have to do.</td>
<td>EdD, authored book, conducts trainings, co-chairs community leadership development program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Pope</td>
<td>Grandmother, mother</td>
<td>Be first in class to prove competence. Outperformed white male colleagues who did not welcome her.</td>
<td>Master’s Degree, certification prepared, volunteer for community and professional organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth North</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Wanted to make a difference for underrepresented students. Took on additional tasks, impacted PhD studies</td>
<td>Master’s, ABD, attends conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Dubose</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents, held 3 VP level roles</td>
<td>Master’s, ABD, HR certifications, community organizations; co-chair statewide diversity conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I: THEME 2

Theme 2:  *Self-Determination and Courage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Skills Development</th>
<th>Self-Determined Creativity</th>
<th>Networking</th>
<th>Courage</th>
<th>Mentorship / Sponsorship</th>
<th>Faith in God</th>
<th>Goal Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella Renee</td>
<td>Second Job, volunteer work for tasks</td>
<td>Seek Fellowship, Annual Conferences</td>
<td>Healthcare organizations, conferences. Presentations</td>
<td>Address pay issues</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I truly believe God said. (develop)</td>
<td>Career Oriented. Relocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Fiev</td>
<td>HR Magazine Best practices</td>
<td>Job change – global/relocate</td>
<td>Sorority, boards. Presentations.</td>
<td>Managerial courage, style flex</td>
<td>Yes. Once denied</td>
<td>I know God was working it out (job)</td>
<td>You can’t pushes me to the, you can. Relocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Black</td>
<td>Attend Conference</td>
<td>PA committee</td>
<td>Sorority, professional organization. Presentations</td>
<td>Address disparity for students</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Divine. God said be deliberate (admissions)</td>
<td>Learn about academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missy Fitz</td>
<td>SOS, work cases, but file charges</td>
<td>Work, file charges</td>
<td>NAACP, SOS. Presentations.</td>
<td>Enforcement, file complaint. Use sledgehammer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Through the Lord and faith in myself</td>
<td>Fight oppression. Take rightful place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noleda Josephine</td>
<td>Academic Fellowship</td>
<td>Co-chair 3-county leadership affinity group efforts</td>
<td>Professional cohort network. Presentations.</td>
<td>Address internal disparity, filed grievance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>God looking out for me. Spiritual component to cohort.</td>
<td>Academic and career goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Pope</td>
<td>Lifelong learner</td>
<td>Sorority and community organization involvement</td>
<td>Civic, professional organizations. Presentations</td>
<td>Integrated high school. Top seller in spite of racism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Grew up Catholic</td>
<td>Ensure diversity. Earn % ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth North</td>
<td>Volunteered for work tasks</td>
<td>Professional organization</td>
<td>Conferences, Leader cohort. Presentations</td>
<td>Advocate for underrepresented</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Dubose</td>
<td>Community organizations, church</td>
<td>HR certification</td>
<td>Community organizations. Presentations</td>
<td>Address discrimination. File complaint</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Godly direction.</td>
<td>Career goals, influence access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J: RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Research Question 2: Were there organizational programs implemented, which influenced advancement opportunities of African American women into leadership positions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes, but not solely for AAW</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>External Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella Renee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Conferences, Professional Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Fiev</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>HR Magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>National Academic conferences, Harvard program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missy Fitz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noleda Josephine</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Wilkins Fellowship for people of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Pope</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>But paid for New Ventures in leadership for people of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth North</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Attended ACE conferences, community leadership program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Dubose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>HR certifications, attend conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>