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Exploring General Career Barriers and Self-Constructed Career Impediments of Minority Women Managers and Leaders

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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Women Managers and Leaders

by

Octavia A. Harris

MA, University of Phoenix, 2014

BS, University of Central Florida, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

In 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau indicated only 39.1% of women occupied management and leadership occupations. The absence of women in leadership roles minimizes career aspirations, reduces the benefits of gender diversity, and lowers growth opportunities for women. The purpose of this interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological study was to unveil the lived experiences of a sample of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in Central Florida who encountered general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that hindered them from advancing. The conceptual framework that guided this study was the social cognitive career theory coupled with the self-efficacy theory. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 8 minority mid-level managers and leaders in the finance and insurance industry in Central Florida. Data were analyzed using the modified van Kaam method reformed by Moustakas. Five themes emerged from the data: General career barriers, self-imposed career impediments, career challenges, career management strategies, and career barrier counsel. These results may contribute to social change by raising awareness about career impediments that can discourage career paths of women and illuminating strategies regarding how to maneuver through interferences. Women can take control of their lives and modify their career paths. When organizational managers and leaders become more self-aware of the perceived career obstructions, they can initiate the appropriate training to help their employees maneuver, overcome, and navigate through difficulties.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my parents, and my husband. Lord, thank you for crafting me in greatness and ordaining me to be truimphant even before I could see your plan. Thank you for the ministering Angels that guided me through this journey. I love and appreciate my parents who have always been here for me through the thick and thin. They taught me to trust God when I cannot trace him, to never quit, and under no circumstances should I ever give up on my dreams. I made it mom and dad! I did not get a Pharm.D., but I did achieve a Ph.D. I am forever greatful to my husband for the love, support, and encouragement he provided before, during, and after this doctoral journey. You were my dictionary, thesaurus, grammarian, proofreader, motivator, and source of support. I love you, honey! Thank you all for making this great accomplishment a reality.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Gender diversity in managerial and leadership positions is a topic of discussion for many organizations (Moore, 2015). Although an extensive range of research efforts in the work environments centered on diversity initiatives, the problem of gender inequality remains a constant pressure point for many organizations (Novakovic & Glinka, 2015). Investigative energies reveal there is an underrepresentation of women in every managerial and leadership rank in both public and private sectors (Steyn & Parsaloi, 2014).

As of 2016, 70,868,000 people in the American labor force who were 16 years and older were categorized as women, as opposed to 80,568,000 people classified as men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Based on these statistics, the participation of women in the workforce was 9,700,000 less than the involvement of men in the labor force. The data confirmed that women occupied 46.8% of the workforce in 2016 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016). Interesting enough, 6.1% were Asian, 11.9% were of African American descent, and 16.7% represented the Hispanic or Latino culture in the work environments (U.S. BLS, 2017). For this reason, there is an implication that women will occupy fewer management and leadership positions than men.

According to the U.S. BLS (2017), women who were 16 years and older occupied 39.1% of management and leadership occupations in 2016 as opposed to the 60.9% of men employed in management and leadership occupations. Twenty-three percent of these women leaders employed in managerial and leadership roles signified ethnicity classifications where 15.6% were non-minorities, 9.9% were Hispanic or Latino, 7.5%

were of African American descent, and 6.1% represented the Asian culture (U.S. BLS, 2017). Although trends support the favorable movement of women up the corporate ladder, annual data from 2003-2015 (U.S. BLS, 2015) confirm the deficiency of ethnocultural females in middle level and top line authority ranks (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

This study's findings may add to the literature to fill the void on the perceived career barriers females' face in managerial and leadership positions that are self-imposed and constructed by others. Particularly, my research initiative tackled a knowledge gap of an under researched population of minority women in literature (Hampden, 2015); specifically, those women employed in authoritative middle level management and leadership positions in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region.

The results from this study contributed to society by providing a more in-depth understanding of the general career barriers and the self-imposed career impediments minority women in authority roles face. The findings of the study created a broader awareness of the strong parallel that transcends to the greater masses of women. Insights from this initiative could furnish organizational leaders with acumen into recognizing career barriers, identifying techniques to assist minority females in navigating through occupational hurdles, and tools to shield against professional career hindrances.

In this chapter, I present an overview of why the absence of women in leadership occupations is a concern. Additionally, I identify the problem statement for this study and expound on the purpose of this research. I elucidate the research questions and the theoretical framework that guide the study. The chapter concludes with my explanations

of the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and the study's significance.

Background of the Problem

Statistically, there are more women employed in the work environments today than there were during World War II (U.S. BLS, 2015). With the increase of women in the labor force, gender inequality concerns regarding diversity continue to surface (Kiser, 2015). Although literature confirms an upward climb of gender variability in management and leadership positions (Hampden, 2015), there continues to be a lower depiction of ethnocultural women in management and leadership ranks (Steyn & Parsaloi, 2014). Gender inequality may be a source of under representation of women in management and leadership jobs (Orser, Riding, & Stanley, 2012).

Although research advocates the nonexistence of gender differences for effective leadership (De Mascia, 2015), there is a robust entrenched mindset that leaders favor men over women in the workplace. Additionally, there is a notion that organizations privilege men over women, which is a growing concern of feminists and researchers (DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Reed, & Wheatly, 2014). Equally important, there is a perception that men are more competent than women in management and leadership occupations (King, 2016).

Historically, men demonstrating masculine attributes associated with stereotypical gender views of the male species dominated authoritative positions (Powell & Butterfield, 2013). In many male dominated management and leadership roles, the men are the decision makers. A common belief is that these decision makers favor applicants

and employees who match their attributes or whose traits are closely associated with a particular sex, limiting advancement opportunities for women (Powell & Butterfield, 2015b).

Some feminists tend to concur with this thought and believe that organizations create job opportunities and positional structures that allow men to realize prestigious and powerful positions easier than their women counterparts (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Other researchers corroborated with Eagly and Chin's argument by stating the business environment favors stereotypical male attributes over female traits in leadership occupations (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Researchers contend that these perceptions toward gender continue to plague the work environment and unfavorably influence the career tracks of women (McIntosh, McQuaid, & Munro, 2015).

There remains an unresolved quandary regarding the obstacles that minority women come across that have the propensity to discourage them from advancing into higher management and leadership roles (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). This underrepresentation of women in management and leadership roles limits the benefits of gender diversity, limits career aspiration, and fails to establish career advancement opportunities for growth (Steyn & Parsaloi, 2014). Gender inequality and the notion that organizations privilege men over women is a growing concern among feminists and researchers (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014).

A constant sensitivity is that career impediments exist in business environments (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015). In fact, there is a perception that some women leave corporate organizations to pursue entrepreneurship opportunities to avoid glass ceiling

career obstacles and economic barriers (Ajjan, Beninger, Mostafa, & Crittenden, 2014). These views support the notion that work environments need a higher level of gender inclusiveness and diversity (Mondi, Adedoyin, & Ajonbadi, 2011).

Until leaders address these career barriers, the glass ceiling phenomenon, which enables women to notice a glimpse of promotional opportunities but blocks them from realizing their career aspirations, may continue to exist (Orser et al., 2012). Some researchers describe the glass ceiling as an impenetrable career hindrance (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015). This unfavorable perception implicates that women reach their *glass ceiling* in leadership roles earlier than men (Tlaiss, 2014). These continued concerns regarding career barriers have benefit when women become aware and understand the impediments that have the propensity to hinder them from realizing their career aspirations (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012).

My study aimed to contribute to the field of management by bridging the gap to provide a more in-depth understanding of the career barriers women encounter in authoritative positions. Specifically, it proposed to explain the general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments minority women in authority roles face. Based on a review of the literature, there is a benefit when leaders are aware and understand the impediments that hinder females in managerial and leadership roles from realizing their career aspirations (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). My study is noteworthy as it proposed to bring awareness about the perceived impenetrable glass ceilings that can serve as career hindrances to women leaders (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015).

Problem Statement

Trends support the favorable movement of women up the corporate ladder (U.S. BLS, 2017). There are indications that a deficiency of ethnocultural women in middle level and top line authority ranks remains constant (Hampden, 2015). A perception is that career impediments toward women exist in business environments (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015). As of 2016, 70,868,000 people in the American labor force, who were 16 years and older, were categorized as women as opposed to 80,568,000 classified as men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). It appears that the participation of women in the workforce may be less than the involvement of men in the labor force.

Only 39.1% of women occupied management and leadership occupations in 2016 as opposed to the 60.9% of men employed in management and leadership occupations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The general problem is that gender inequality in authoritative positions remains a constant pressure point for many organizations, limiting the benefits of gender diversity for organizational management and leadership. The specific problem is the lack of knowledge regarding the lived experiences of some minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in Central Florida who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could impede them from advancing.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the essence of the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in Central Florida who perpetually encountered general career barriers

and self-imposed career impediments that could impede them from advancing in their professional careers. In my study, I focused on the population of minority women in middle level management and leadership occupations between the ages of 20 and 60. To complete this research initiative, I gathered data primarily through in person interviews where I presented open-ended questions to the participants. I organized the data and coded it by themes to help illustrate the meanings minority women in middle level management and leadership positions used to describe their lived experiences with career barriers in the workplace.

I sought to explore the career advancement obstacles minority women in middle level management and leadership roles faced that may hinder them from navigating further up the corporate ladder. I planned to determine if the classification of barriers minority women in the middle level management and leadership occupations encountered are general career barriers or self-imposed career impediments. Previous literature review efforts focused on the perceived barriers women face, but there appeared to be minimal research efforts placed on the general career barriers and the self-imposed career impediments women face in the context of minority women in middle level management and leadership positions (Hampden, 2015).

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study is: What are the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who have encountered general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impede them from promoting upward?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks that guided this study were the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) and the concept of self-efficacy. These frameworks were used to explore and understand their role in the perception of career hindrances. Together, these paradigms served as theoretical lenses through which I analyzed the study's data results.

Lent, Brown, and Hackett established the SCCT philosophy in 1994. This paradigm supported the essential components of career development including the formation of a person's career interests, aspirations, choices, educational pursuits, and the achievement of career success (Lent et al., 1994). The SCCT grounded its framework of understanding the various components of career development in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (Lent et al., 1994) that originated in 1986 (Bandura, 1986). From a social cognitive perspective, Bandura analyzed the factors that motivate human behavior and influence personal and social change (Bandura, 1986).

A significant tenet of the SCCT model is Bandura's self-efficacy theory that emphasized personal efficacy as a forecaster of his or her behavior (Bandura, 1977). In this theory, Bandura stated core elements of self-efficacy were human inspiration, performance based achievements, and emotional health (Bandura, 1977). Bandura argued an individual's level of self-efficacy influence a person's beliefs and ultimately affect his or her decisions (Bandura, 1986). Based on this theoretical notion, an individual's perception of self-efficacy can enrich or prejudice his or her thinking patterns (Bandura, 1989).

I used Bandura's concept of self-efficacy coupled with the SCCT to understand the behaviors of minority women managers and leaders as it related to internal and external career advancement impediments. The paradigms served as lenses to explore the lived experiences of the participants and provided a deeper understanding of the meaning the participants' lived experiences ascribed to the general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impeded their career development. Also, these frameworks functioned as platforms to evaluate the data accumulated from the respondents to understand the shared perspectives or themes that emerged from the participants' experiences.

Nature of the Study

Method

I used a qualitative method to understand the dynamics of this study from the participants (Masue, Swai, & Anasel, 2013). I selected a qualitative method as it was the most suitable method to explore the meanings minority women managers and leaders ascribed to their experiences with career hindrances. A quantitative approach would not be an appropriate method as I did not desire to study the participants in a controlled environment (Masue et al., 2013), test a theory, examine the relationships between variables, or understand the cause and effect relationships (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Likewise, a mixed methods approach would not be suitable for this study as a qualitative study could answer the research question alone (Bansal & Corley, 2012), and I did not desire to employ elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Zohrabi, 2013) in this investigative effort. During my study, opportunities did not arise to complete a mixed

methods study or to test the relationships of variables. Therefore, I did not recommend this opportunity under the implications for future study section.

The Design

Five common qualitative methodology designs are grounded theory, ethnography, case study, narratives, and phenomenology (Shuval et al., 2011). A grounded theory design is used to create a theory during the research efforts derived from the data collection results (Moustakas, 1994). An ethnography design involves studying the culture of social settings or a group of people through face-to-face observations and interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Case study designs are conducted in a natural venue and attempt to understand the nature of a specific case, event, group, or process (Andrade, 2009). A narrative is a personal account of a person's conversation, story, or life experience from the vantage point of the individual (Masue et al., 2013). Based on the intentions of my research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative designs are not appropriate for my study as I aimed to recognize the connotations individuals attributed to their lived experiences.

I selected a phenomenological design to understand the meanings people ascribe to their experiences based on their understanding, intuition, and judgment of the thing, situation, or circumstance (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, I used an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenology to focus solely on the participants' interpretation of their experiences (Applebaum, 2012). This design was selected as it could assist me to collect data primarily through interviews where I presented open-ended questions to the participants. The organized data helped illustrate the meanings the women managers and

leaders used to ascribe their experiences with career barriers in the workplace. Based on the study's result, I advanced a collective theme derived from the essence of meaning articulated through the comprehension and clarification of the experiences (Holroyd, 2007).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to alleviate ambiguity:

Career barriers: Internal or external influences that can hinder career aspirations (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000).

Ethnocultural or minority women: Women of color including Asian Americans, African-Americans, and Hispanics or Latinas (Dejun, 2016).

Glass ceiling: A phenomenon that enables women to notice a glimpse of promotional opportunities but blocks them from circumventing around the wall to realize career advancement (Orser et al., 2012).

Lived experience: An encounter or incident that has already occurred that an individual has lived through (Exkano, 2013).

Middle level managerial occupations: Leadership roles where the authority figure has the assignment of managing front level supervisors (Smith, Caputi, & Crittenden, 2012b).

Self-efficacy: An individual's belief in his or her own capability to strategize and fulfill whatever he or she attempts to achieve (Bandura, 1977).

Assumptions

Within the context of this study, six assumptions were necessary to explore the hindrances encountered during the career tracks of women. The first assumption was I would locate an adequate amount of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region. Additionally, there was an assumption that each participant has encountered career roadblocks at some point in her career. There was an assumption the participants were interested in this study and desired to participate in this research endeavor. Equally important, there was an assumption the participants were willing to participate freely in an interview regarding their lived experiences on the topic of career barriers. Also, I assumed the selected participants would honestly share their lived experiences that contributed to their perspectives on career hindrances in the work environment and not the experiences or perspectives of others. The last assumption was the open availability of the participants to assist in mitigating bias by reviewing the data's findings and my interpretations through member checking.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a research effort delineates the boundaries of an initiative (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2012). The span of this research effort focused on minority women in middle line managerial and leadership occupations. The findings of this effort have the potential to transfer its discoveries to the greater masses of women.

The delimitations of this research initiative described the restrictions and drawbacks of the investigative effort (Brutus et al., 2012). In this study, I employed purposive selection criteria to restrict the type of participants that contributed in this

endeavor. The delimitations included (a) women in managerial and leadership positions of authority, (b) women of minority ethnicity, (c) women managers and leaders employed in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region, (d) women who were between the ages of 20 and 60, (e) women who were open to disclosing their experiences with gender inequality and career obstacles, and (f) women who agreed to participate in this research endeavor honestly.

Limitations

The limitation section outlined the potential weaknesses of a research initiative and framed the research effort (Brutus et al., 2012). Within the context of this study, I foresaw that limitations might arise. The sheer nature of this investigative work and the number of minority middle level managers and leaders employed in the finance and insurance sector in Central Florida could limit the access to a larger population of women leaders. Future research initiatives could incorporate middle and top line minority women leaders.

Significance of the Study

From 2002 to 2016, the American labor force did not contain equal distributions of men and women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). In 2016, the labor market employed 46.8% of women (U.S. BLS, 2017). In contrast, 53.2% of men participated in the labor force in 2016 (U.S. BLS, 2017).

Equally important, there appears to be an unrelenting gender imbalance and representation of women in positions of authority in the workplace (Weidenfeller, 2012). In 2016, women occupied 39.1% of management and leadership occupations (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2017). In contrast, men occupied 60.9% of management and leadership occupations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

In the United States, the labor force is increasingly diversified based on the classification of ethnicity regarding women employed in management and leadership roles (U.S. BLS, 2017). Many cultures continue to confront gender based discrimination in their places of employment (Kong, 2015). Minority women occupied 23.5% of management and leadership occupations in 2016 as opposed to 22.6% in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Upward mobility of women in corporate organizations remains underexplored (Cook & Glass, 2014b). Also, the population of minority women in authoritative positions is under researched (Hampden, 2015). The next chapter begins with an explanation of how this study contributed to the field of management through its application in business practice. Following, a summarization of how my research endeavor added value to the body of knowledge from a theoretical perspective. Last, this section concludes with an elaboration of how this research initiative influenced and promoted social change, by educating organizational managers and leaders and enhancing the wellbeing of others.

Significance to Practice

Since gender inequality in authoritative positions can limit the benefits of gender diversity, it is critical for organizational authority figures to understand the behaviors of women managers and leaders as it relates to internal and external career advancement impediments (Cook & Glass, 2014b). In some instances, it is vital to organizational

success for leaders to become self-aware of the perceived impassable glass ceilings that can serve as career hindrances to women leaders. The knowledge of these perceived impenetrable glass ceilings may discourage women leaders from advancing into higher management and leadership roles.

The present study contributed to management practice by serving as a tool to add to knowledge regarding the career barriers minority women face in management and leadership positions. This research initiative is unique as it brought awareness to the problems associated with gender inequality as it relates to career barriers (McIntosh et al., 2015). Additionally, the results of this study helped minimize the knowledge gap of the under researched population of minority women in literature (Hampden, 2015); specifically, the women employed in authoritative middle level management and leadership positions in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region.

Significance to Theory

The upward mobility of women and minorities into higher authority roles significantly decreases as they advance up the corporate ladder (Pai & Vaidya, 2009). Theoretically, it is essential to identify the factors that have the propensity to accelerate the leadership opportunities of minority women (Cook & Glass, 2014a). Equally important, it is vital to recognize the factors or attributes that have the propensity to slow down their career aspirations or possibilities of an individual.

This study was significant to theory as it contributed to a more substantial body of scholarly knowledge to provide a more in-depth understanding of the general career barriers and the self-imposed career impediments minority women in authority roles face.

Additionally, the knowledge gained from this study could assist women to recognize proactively potential internal and external career interferences. This research effort could explain techniques that could equip women with knowledge regarding how to navigate a path through the perceived career glass ceilings and assist them in realizing socioeconomic parity.

Significance to Social Change

The contributions of women in the labor force peaked in 1999 with a participation rate of 60% (U.S. BLS, 2016). Since that time, the involvement of women in the labor market has remained the same in 2015 and 2016 with a 46.8% participation rate (U.S. BLS, 2017). This gender inequality has the propensity to limit the benefits of gender diversity in work environments.

The findings of the study influenced positive social change by furnishing organizational managers and leaders with the acumen to recognize career barriers, identify techniques to overcome occupational hurdles, provide tools to shield against professional career hindrances, and offer techniques to navigate internal and external barriers. The insight gained from this effort could equip society with the knowledge of the perceived interferences that limit career opportunities and explain techniques to manage impediments in the workplace. Equally important, it could significantly benefit a woman to become self-aware and understand the impediments that have the propensity to hinder her from realizing her career aspirations (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012).

Summary

In Chapter 1, I elucidated the problem of the low representation of minority women in management and leadership positions that limits the benefits of gender diversity, limits career aspiration, and fails to establish career advancement opportunities for growth. Additionally, I disclosed the issue of a lack of research regarding general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments women face in the context of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of minority women leaders who confront career hindrances that obstruct their navigation up the corporate ladder. To explore this topic, the overarching research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impeded them from promoting upward?

The theoretical framework guiding this study was the SCCT coupled with the self-efficacy theory. This study is significant as the findings may add to the literature by filling the void regarding perceived career barriers females face in managerial and leadership positions that are self-imposed and constructed by others. Also, this study is noteworthy as it proposed to influence social change by furnishing organizational leaders with acumen into recognizing career barriers, identifying techniques to assist minority

women in navigating through occupational hurdles, and tools to shield against professional career hindrances.

 In Chapter 2, a detailed analysis of the literature that is related to gender inequality, the low representation of women leaders, and career barriers that are self-imposed or constructed by others is presented. Also, the SCCT and the self-efficacy theory as it relates to these constructs are presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review aims to explore the general problem that gender inequality in authoritative positions remains a constant pressure point for many organizations. The analysis examines the existing knowledge about women in leadership and their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. The selected literature helps to explain the knowledge gap regarding the perceived career barriers women face in managerial and leadership positions that are self-imposed and constructed by others. The collected works serve to identify the benefits of gender diversity for organizational management and leadership.

This review analyzes literature on metaphoric gendered barriers, race and national origin barriers, gender inequality, discrimination, gendered stereotypes, and work life balance. I considered these topics to understand the specific barriers women face that shape their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. Of equal importance, I sought to identify the impediments women perceive as they navigate their professional aspirations above the perceived glass ceilings.

Although trends support the favorable movement of women up the corporate ladder (U.S. BLS, 2017), there are indications deficiencies remain constant regarding ethnocultural women in middle level and top line authority ranks (Hampden, 2015). A societal perception is that career impediments exist in business environments for women (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015). As of 2016, only 39.1% of women occupied management and leadership occupations as opposed to the 60.9% of men employed in management and leadership occupations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

There is an underexplored opportunity to examine the upward mobility of women in corporate organizations to understand the work conditions that enhance the promotional chances of women and minorities (Cook & Glass, 2014a). Also, the population of minority women in authoritative positions is under researched (Hampden, 2015). The specific problem explored in this research effort is how the lack of knowledge regarding general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments can impede women from advancing. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the essence of the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could impede them from advancing in their professional careers.

There is a benefit for organizations when authority figures understand the behaviors of women managers and leaders as it relates to internal and external career advancement impediments (Cook & Glass, 2014b). When companies understand the significance of career barriers and proactively address it, the business can capitalize on the talents of women, enhance employee morale, and can provide more significant levels of employee engagement, lower levels of behavior concerns, higher performance results, and stronger business relationships. Organizational awareness of career barriers can benefit women when the company provides women with the knowledge, tools, resources, and information regarding how to navigate a career path that enables them to pursue advancement opportunities (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). Equally important, it is vital to organizational success for leaders to become self-aware of the perceived impassable glass

ceilings that can serve as career hindrances to women managers and leaders, generating concerns associated with gender inequality (McIntosh et al., 2015). Organizational awareness regarding gender inequality can help to minimize the propensity of limiting the benefits of gender diversity in the work environment, allowing women to realize their career aspirations (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012).

Equally important, the benefits of enabling women to realize their careers include reduced gender bias, minimized career advancement obstacles, diverse perspectives, diversity in managerial ranks, gender mixture in decision-making boards, increase of women in higher leadership positions, and the increased ability of women to achieve their full potential (Cook & Glass, 2014b). These benefits can yield inspired workers, enhanced employee morale, higher levels of employee engagement, lower levels of behavior concerns, higher performance results, and stronger business relationships.

Chapter 2 begins with a detailed overview of the strategy I used to search for literature to support this section. Next, I explore the conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy and the SCCT in detail to ground this study. Following that, I offer a historical overview of the labor force to understand the participation of women therein. Afterwards, I provide a comprehensive examination of women in leadership occupations to explore the representation of women in these roles. This detailed examination includes a literature analysis of commonly perceived career barriers associated with management and leadership. Last, I explore literature describing how some women ascended above the perceived career impediments and realized promotional leadership opportunities.

Literature Search Strategy

The approaches employed to explore literature to support this study included peer-reviewed journals, electronic books, and government websites and statistics. The literature examination ranged from seminal works dating back to 1961 to present peer-reviewed works constructed in 2017. This section encompassed 94 references where 22 (18%) references were from seminal sources and 72 (83%) references were from present sources dated within the past 5 years (2012-2017).

To search for applicable sources, I used Walden University Library databases including ABI/INFORM, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Emerald Management, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, PsycINFO, and SAGE Premier primarily. The key words and phrases used in the searches included *career advancement, career development, career motivation, career success, direct and indirect barriers, ethnocultural women leaders in leadership, gender inequality, gender variability in leadership positions, glass ceiling, minority women leaders in leadership, perceived barriers, perceived obstructions, underrepresentation of women in leadership, women in leadership, self-imposed barriers, self-constructed barriers, self-efficacy, social cognitive theory,* and *social cognitive career theory.* Also, I conducted manual searches to retrieve historical statistical data regarding the U.S. population and the labor force.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study was built upon the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and the social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994). These theories built the foundation that served as the lenses through which I used to understand

the data as it related to internal and external career advancement impediments. These lenses helped to provide a deeper understanding of the meanings the participants ascribed to the lived experiences associated with the general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could impede their career development. Together, these two theoretical lenses created a foundation to assist me in analyzing and evaluating the data accumulated from the respondents to capture the essence of the shared perspectives or themes that emerged from the participants' experiences.

The Theory of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a mechanism of human functioning (Bandura, 1982) describing an individual's belief in his or her own capability to strategize and fulfill whatever he or she attempts to achieve (Bandura, 1977). An individual's perception of efficacy can enhance or impair the his or her cognitive process (Bandura, 1989). Efficacy beliefs forecast an individual's behavior (Bandura, 1993) through intervening influences by which an individual processes information, interprets situations, makes decisions, behaves, and reacts to stimuli (Bandura, 1995). This core belief implies that individuals could alter situations that influence their lives (Bandura, 1997).

The core elements of self-efficacy include human inspiration, performance based achievements, motivation, physiological wellbeing, and emotional health (Bandura, 1977). These components of efficacy support the notion that an individual's confidence in his or her aptitude directly influences his or her beliefs (Bandura, 1986), progression and psychological operation (Bandura, 1997), and ultimately his or her decisions

(Bandura, 1986). Based on this theoretical view, an individual's perception of self-efficacy can enrich or prejudice that individual's thinking patterns (Bandura, 1989).

An individual can develop and strengthen efficacy through self-mastered experiences, successful proficiencies of others, social persuasion, and emotional wellbeing (Bandura, 1995). In contrast, some factors can undermine an individual's level of efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Self-experienced failures, disappointments of others, doubts, fears, personal deficiencies, heighten stress levels, and negative emotional dispositions tend to undermine efficacy elevations (Bandura, 1983).

For example, individuals who successfully master experiences build a strong belief of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). In contrast, failures can lower a belief of self-efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Additionally, people can enhance their level of efficacy vicariously through the successful proficiencies of others based on the belief that one can also attain similar successes (Bandura, 1995). In contrast, individuals can also vicariously embrace the disappointments of others that can undermine efficacy attitudes (Bandura, 1983). Individuals who persuade themselves positively and possess self-affirming beliefs strengthen their levels of efficacy (Evans, 1989). In contrast, people who circle themselves with doubts while dwelling on their imperfections can lower and undermine self-efficacy levels (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who maintain healthy physiological and emotional wellbeing strengthen their efficacy perception (Evans, 1989). In contrast, people who possess heightened stress levels, negative emotional dispositions, and undesired physiological states have the propensity to undermine efficacy levels (Evans, 1989).

The theory of self-efficacy implies human behavior profoundly influences how an individual cognitively perceives a situation or event (Bandura, 1995). This paradigm is rooted deeply in the individual's perceived power to attain his or her desired outcome (Bandura, 2000). I considered Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to understand how efficacy beliefs influence the perception of women in the work environment.

The Social Cognitive Career Theory

Bandura advanced the concept of self-efficacy and used its roots to introduce the social cognitive theory in 1986 (Bandura, 1986). The social cognitive theory explicated the underlying determinants of human development are behavior, cognition, and influential environmental factors that ignite social and personal change (Bandura, 1986). These elements of human development are unidirectional and can influence each other (Bandura, 1988).

Inspired by Bandura's social cognitive theory, Lent et al. (1994) introduced the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) that uses the central tenets of the social cognitive theory and the self-efficacy theory. Lent et al. (1994) applied it to the career development progression to better understand career behavior. The SCCT explained career development as the formation of a person's career interests, aspirations, choices, educational pursuits, and the achievement of career success (Lent et al., 1994). The SCCT is a useful theory to explore the various influential factors of career development and understand how these dynamics coincide to career behavior (Lent et al., 2000). The SCCT postulates variables that have the propensity to influence career aspirations and actions such as an individual's self-efficacy philosophies, expectations of outcome, and

goal depictions that relate directly to his or her career development (Lent, 2005). I considered the SCCT as a lens to explore how the influential roles of cognition, behavior, and environmental aspects shape career related aspirations and contribute to human motivation and career development.

Critique of Conceptual Framework

The theorists of self-efficacy support the belief that an individual has a certain level of confidence to complete a goal, a definite level of certainty that the goal will yield positive or negative results, and a certain level of self-reliance that his or her interests are in alignment with the goal (Raque-Bogdan, Klingaman, Martin, & Lucas, 2013). Researchers acknowledged the self-efficacy theory paralleled strongly to career progression, but the theory failed to provide in-depth knowledge on the career development of women (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Out of the further need to understand the self-efficacy theory as it related to the career progression of women, Betz and Hackett (1981) introduced the career self-efficacy theory.

The self-efficacy theory considers an individual has anticipated positive or negative outcomes (Bandura, 1977). The majority of the researchers noted the SCCT supports positive results (Lent & Brown, 2006). Hackett, Betz, Casas, and Rocha-Singh (1992) explicated many of the research initiatives where the SCCT was the guiding framework and focused on negative outcomes. Fouad and Guillen (2006) and Lent and Brown (2006) acknowledged missed research opportunities to evaluate SCCT as it related to both positive and negative outcomes. In the study of Anderson et al. (2016), the researchers considered the inadequacies of the other research initiatives regarding the

SCCT. The researchers extended the previous research on SCCT and expanded the knowledge of self-efficacy expectations, the anticipated positive and negative career outcomes, and interests. Anderson et al. (2016) assessed the connections between self-efficacy, anticipated career outcomes, and aspirations. They found positive relationships between self-efficacy and aspirations in addition to positive anticipated career outcomes and aspirations. Of equal importance, they found positive associations between self-efficacy and positive anticipated career outcomes. There were negative relationships found between adverse anticipated career outcomes and aspirations as wells as between positive and negative anticipated career outcomes.

Of equal importance, SCCT supports the self-efficacy theory with the notion that an individual's expectations and the anticipated career outcomes influence his or her career choices and selections (Feldt & Woelfel, 2009). Betz and Hackett (2006) opined that these theories did not define or evaluate the specific behaviors that precede the self-efficacy construct and the attributes that were beneficial for the SCCT. Raque-Bogdan et al. (2013) acknowledged the SCCT implied an individual's perception could hinder his or her career pursuits and aspirations. The researchers stated future research opportunities exist to use the SCCT as a lens to capture a variable's impact on the behaviors of a person and to identify factors that could contribute to a person's perception and increase his or her career barriers. Also, the authors opined that there are additional research opportunities in career development with an emphasis on operationalization, conceptualization, and acculturation.

Literature Review

The review of the literature section examines the existing knowledge about women in leadership and their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. The literature evaluation commences with a historical account of the labor force that paints a visual illustration of the evolution of women and their participation in the labor force. The analysis includes writings focused on metaphoric gendered barriers, race and national origin barriers, gender inequality, discrimination, gendered stereotypes, and work life balances. Next, the review describes literature regarding women who navigated above the perceived glass ceilings. The section culminates with an analysis of the benefits of gender diversity in leadership roles.

Each of these topics helps to explore the general problem that gender inequality in authoritative positions remains a constant pressure point for many organizations. The literature supported this study by revealing the specific barriers women face that shape their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. Additionally, my review of the literature exposes the impediments women perceive as they navigate their professional aspirations above the perceived glass ceilings.

Historical Account of the Labor Force

Before World War II, the involvement of men in the work force was striking and noteworthy (U.S. BLS, 2015) as the characterization of men was that of breadwinners, and people regarded women as unpaid household laborers without financial equivalence (İnce Yenilmez, 2015). After World War II, men continued to occupy the majority of the labor market workforce (U.S. BLS, 2015). From 1970 to 2015, the participation of men

in the labor market decreased from 69.1% to 53.2% (U.S. BLS, 2017). The reason for the reduction of men in the workforce may be a result of a culture change. It is increasingly common to see gender role reversals where more men are remaining home to care for their children while the women work outside of the home. Additionally, the decrease in men may be a consequence of incarceration, shortage of resources, the absence of transportation, or the lack of education. Equally significant, technological advances reduced the necessity of men to complete labor-intensive manual jobs where men were primarily employed (Mahoney, 1961). In many cases, the demanding physical occupations reduced while clerical opportunities increased (Mahoney, 1961). The efficiencies in the work place allowed women the ability to infiltrate the workforce and complete the same job responsibilities as men.

In contrast, before World War II, the involvement of women in the work force was insignificant (U.S. BLS, 2015). In 1970, 56.7% of women did not participate in the labor force (U.S. BLS, 2015). From 1970 to 1989, the participation of women in the labor market increased tremendously from 31,543,000 to 63,714,000 (U.S. BLS, 2015). In 1999, the participation of women in the labor market peaked with a participation rate of 60% that represented 64,855,000 women in work force (U.S. BLS, 2015). While the men were away fighting in the wars, married women entered the labor market for the economic necessity to make money, support their households, and fund the war (Rosenfeld & Perrella, 1965). There was a shifting of economic and social activity of women from farms and homes to the work milieus (Mahoney, 1961). The employment opportunities moved away from production output and grew toward service related

opportunities that opened more doors of opportunity for women (Perrella, 1968). While working in the labor force, the behaviors of women changed (Mahoney, 1961). Women gained the appropriate skills, abilities, and work experiences; therefore, women became more liberated and desired to remain in the workforce (Perrella, 1968).

From 2000 to 2016, the number of women in the labor force increased even though the percentage of women in the work force, based on the total population of women, decreased (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Statistical data supported the notion that the American labor force did not contain equal distributions of men and women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Most recently, in 2016, the labor market employed 46.8% of women as opposed to 53.2% of men who participated in the labor force (U.S. BLS, 2017). Figure 1 depicted the annual participation rate of women and men in the labor force from 1970 to 2016. Figure 1 supported the notion that the participation of men in the labor force when compared to women in the work environments, is historically greater from 1970 to 2016. One reason the participation rate of men is historically higher than that of women may be a result of the traditional gender roles where the women remained at home to care for their children, while the men worked outside of the homes (Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012). Also, some women may have faced career barriers upon entrance into the labor force (Michailidis et al., 2012). These hindrances may have discouraged some women from entering the labor force. Similarly, business leaders may be likely to hire more men than women as men tend to take less time off from work than women (Evers & Sieverding, 2014). Women are perceived to be more empathic than men, take more time off work to care for children, and are more

inclined not to work during the childbearing years related to pregnancy issues

(Michailidis et al., 2012).
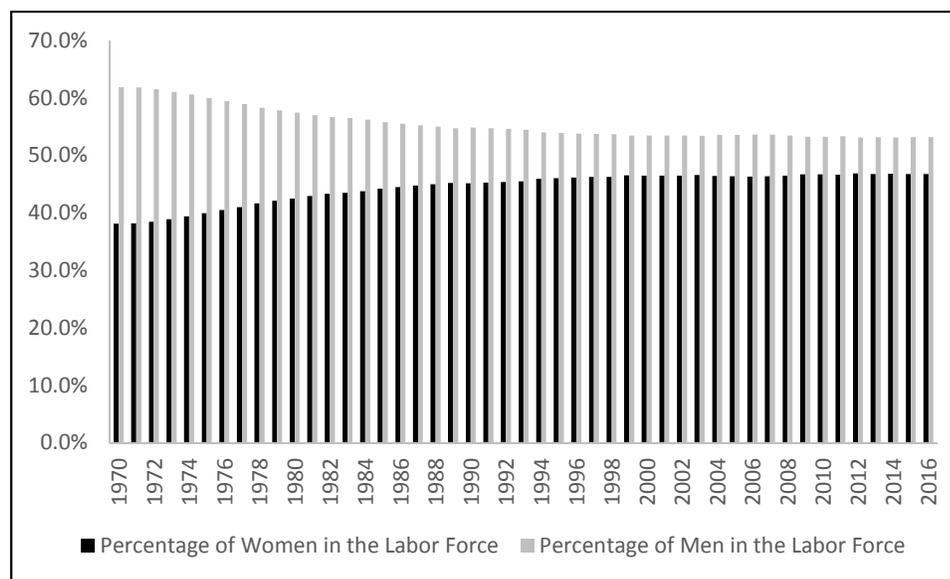
Figure 1. Labor force's annual participation rate. Adapted from Employed persons by occupation, sex, and age by U.S. Census Bureau, 2017.

Additionally, the gender imbalance of women in the labor force is evident in

business professions (Weidenfeller, 2012). In 2016, women occupied 39.1% of

management and leadership occupations as opposed to men who occupied 60.9% of

management and leadership occupations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Figure 2 depicted

the percentage of management occupations by gender from 2003 to 2016. There is a

theory that more men are in leadership because of the male dominated society, and some

of the old traditions and perspectives of male domination remain in the workforce (Evers

& Sieverding, 2014). Also, men may be stereotypically viewed as more reliable and less

emotional than women (Michailidis et al., 2012). There is a postulation the gender

integration in the labor force is slow to create a platform of equality (Holton & Dent,

2016).
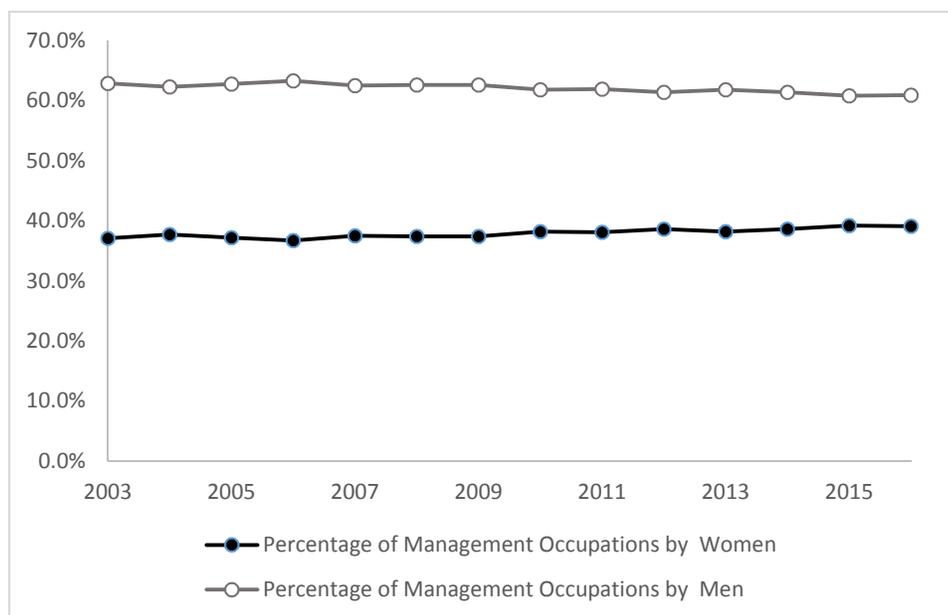
Figure 2. Percentage of management occupations by gender. Adapted from Employed persons by occupation, sex, and age by U.S. Census Bureau, 2017.

Figure 3 depicted the percentage of women employed in management occupations

based on ethnicity from 2003 to 2016. The illustration demonstrated an ethnicity

imbalance of women in the labor force in business professions. In 2016, although 39.1%

of women occupied management and leadership occupations, 7.5% were African

American, 6.1% were Asian, and 9.9% were Hispanic descent (U.S. BLS, 2017).

When compared to the total population of women, the reason might be that there

are fewer minority women leaders because of the corporate glass ceiling effects on

minorities (Cook & Glass, 2014b). There is an assumption that minority women leaders

are not valued because they are different (Eagly & Chin, 2010); additionally, there is a

perception that organizational leaders were not sensitive to the diversity minorities

brought to the company (Kilic & Kuzey, 2016). Minorities may still experience racism

and discrimination based on their skin color (Kong, 2015). In the past, non-minorities

were more educated and offered more positions of authority because of access to more

resources (Albrecht, van Vuuren, & Vroman, 2015). The lack of education and resources

may have contributed to the low number of minority women leaders in the labor force.
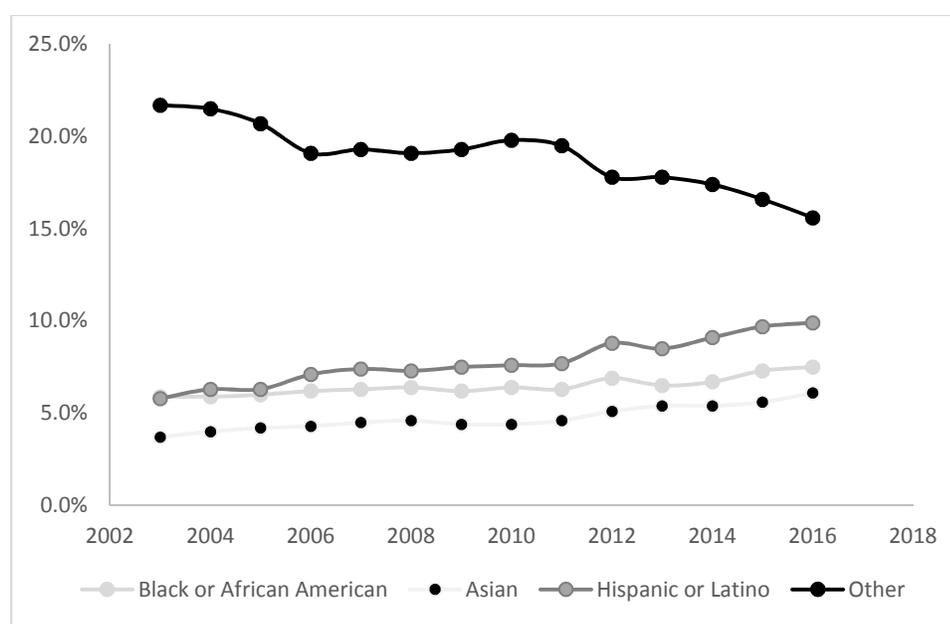
Figure 3. The ethnicity of women employed in management occupations. Adapted from Household data annual averages: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity by U.S. BLS, 2017.

Figure 4 represented the percentage of women employed in management

occupations based on minority status from 2003 to 2016. In 2016, the labor market

employed 23.5% of minority women in management and leadership occupations as

opposed to 15.6% of non-minority women (U.S. BLS, 2017). Figure 4 demonstrated the

number of minority women employed in the labor market has increased on an annual basis from 2003 to 2016.

More minority women occupy positions of authority than non-minority women because of increased affirmative action policies, equal protection initiatives, antidiscrimination efforts, and diversity; inclusion initiatives are valued more (Kurtulus, 2016). Also, women have become liberated and have begun pursuing more opportunities that may have been held back from them previously (Perrella, 1968). Women have taken more responsibility for their career growth by becoming more educated, qualified, and experienced; therefore, organizations are providing more opportunities to women that emphasize their skills and capabilities (Holton & Dent, 2016). Last, there is a culture change as the number of Hispanics in the work environment is growing (U.S. BLS, 2017). Organizational leaders may hire more minority leaders and bilingual leaders to manage the influx of employees where English is the second language of the workforce.
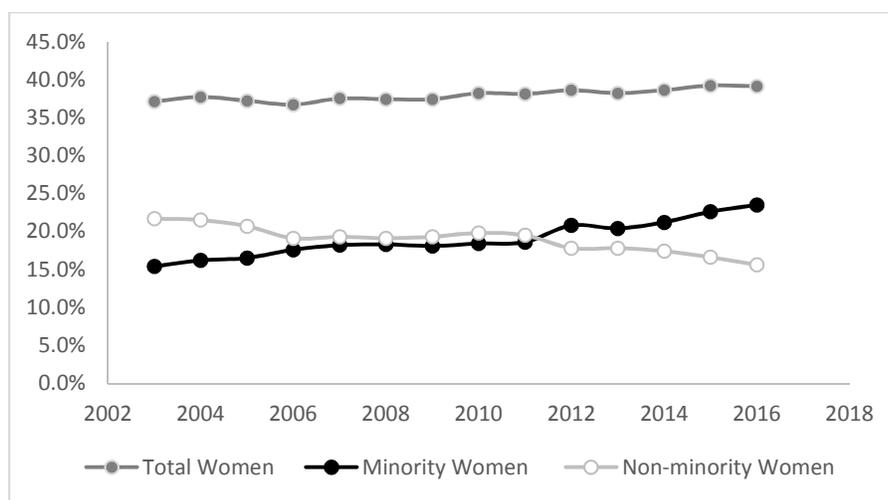
Figure 4. Minority status of women employed in management occupations. Adapted from Household data annual averages: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity by U.S. BLS, 2017.

Women in Leadership

Although there may be a high prevalence of gender disparities in some countries, the gender inequality gap is closing in the United States (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014). In 2016, the labor market employed 46.8% of women as opposed to 53.2% of men (U.S. BLS, 2017). With the emergence of more women in the labor force, there is a growing diversity of mentalities prevailing in the work environments.

The workforce in the United States is changing, and the White male dominated labor force of leaders with elite backgrounds is shifting (Eagly & Chin, 2010). From 2003 to 2016, more women incrementally embraced managerial and leadership roles in the workplace (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Also, there has been a gradual increase in the representation of women in leadership roles within the U.S. (Eagly & Chin, 2010) from 2003 to 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). In the 2008 U.S. presidential race, a woman arose as a prime Democratic candidate. In that same political election, a male Republican presidential candidate selected a woman as the vice-presidential nominee. In the 2016 presidential race, a woman received the Democratic nomination for president.

These leadership accomplishments of women posit the embracing of a greater value of women in leadership. Despite the closing of the gender gap in the workplace, there remains an underrepresentation of women in positions of authority (Steyn & Parsaloi, 2014). Women continue to face challenges in the work environment regarding promotion to executive positions (İnce Yenilmez, 2015). In fact, many cultures continue to confront gender-based discrimination in their places of employment (Kong, 2015). Perceptions continue to exist regarding the domination of men in high levels of

leadership that hinder the entrance and the ascension of women in top leadership roles (Cook & Glass, 2014b). Despite the deployment of various diversity initiatives, many women continue to confront ethnicity based discrimination in their places of employment (Byrd, 2014). Of equal importance, there continues to remain an underrepresentation of ethnic minority women in positions of authority (Michailidis et al., 2012).

In the United States, the diversification of the labor force is increasing based on the classification of ethnicity regarding women employed in management and leadership roles (U.S. BLS, 2017). Minority women occupied 23.5% of management and leadership occupations in 2016 as opposed to 22.6% in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Respectively, in 2016, the labor market employed 7.5% African Americans, 6.1% Asians and 9.9% Hispanic women managers and leaders (U.S. BLS, 2017).

Statistical data from 2003 to 2016 supported the fact that there is an increased representation of women in management and leadership occupations in the Unites States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017); however, only 39.1% of the women in the total workforce, who were 16 years old and over, occupied these positions of authority in 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Of equal importance, statistical data from 2003 to 2016 confirmed an increased representation of minority women managers and leaders in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Conversely, only 23.5% of the minority women of the total workforce, who were 16 years old and over, occupied these positions of authority in 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The underrepresentation of women and minority women in authoritative occupations necessitates an exploration.

The Perception of Career Barriers in Leadership

The path to leadership for women differs from that of men (Evans, 2013). The significant differences between the genders are the obstacles that women face when they are in leadership occupations (Evans, 2013). Comparatively, as women continue to pursue leadership professions, many women face obstructions in their career paths that men do not encounter (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Hertneky (2012) noted that the career trajectory and development of women is not a linear progression intended to assist advancement. Instead, the researcher asserted that the complexities of career development that women face often resemble a snakelike form or a nonlinear path.

Some women describe these employment complexities and obstructions as career barriers (Li, 2014). These hindrances may inhibit the access and ascension of women to managerial and leadership roles (Raque-Bogdan et al., 2013). Evans (2013) noted many impediments women face in leadership stem from negative stereotypes, work and life imbalances, prejudices, and the lack of mentors and proper networks. DeMascia (2015) opined that women face employment barriers because of the absence of mentors, networking opportunities, and self-confidence. The scarcity of women in leadership results from systematic hindrances such as gender stereotypes, work life conflicts, dominated male organizational cultures, and the labor market (Murray, Tremaine, & Fountaine, 2012). Women and men encounter ongoing career barriers associated with discrimination regarding cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

Barriers may have contributed to the paucity of women leaders in organizations (Eagly & Chin, 2010). There is a perception of gendered barriers that women face as they aspire to navigate forward into leadership occupations (DeFrank Cole et al., 2014). The importance of providing women with resources, opportunities, and business relationships assists them promoting up the corporate ladder. Intervention programs and resources could significantly assist women with leadership opportunities (DeFrank Cole et al., 2014). Nevertheless, both men and women can take the initiative to seek out self-help resources, intervention programs, networking opportunities, mentorship partnerships, and business relationships on their own. Chapter 5 will discuss in detail how initiative coincides with self-efficacy.

Of equal importance, the perception of career barriers has the propensity to encourage women to devalue their capabilities and fail to notice promotional opportunities (Novakovic & Gnillka, 2015). Contextual obstacles could influence career advancement through factors that can affect the development of self-efficacy and regulate trajectories of an individual's career ambitions and objectives. In the same fashion, the perception of career obstacles could associate directly to the career successes of women (Smith et al., 2012a, 2012b).

Smith et al. (2012b) explored the perspectives of some women toward employment barriers, and the researchers sought to understand how these employment obstacles related to career success. The researchers completed a quantitative cross-sectional design using 258 women, where approximately 34% of the participants were in middle or top level management. Smith et al. (2012b) identified the five indicators for

career success that coincided with employment barriers, specifically happiness, physical

health, employee engagement, career contentment, and psychological wellbeing. They

assessed the career success indicators against four beliefs associated with the perception

of barriers, specifically acceptance, resilience, denial, and resignation. The researchers

found a negative association between acceptance and employee engagement. There was a

definite connection between denial, career satisfaction, and employee engagement. There

was a negative relationship between resignation, happiness, psychological wellbeing, and

physical health. Last, there was a definite correlation between resilience, happiness, and

employee engagement (Smith et al., 2012b). While there are some career obstructions

that society overlooks inadvertently, other obstacles, associated with negative career

barriers, have caused women to undergo social and economic consequences (Hampden,

2015).

Metaphoric Gendered Barriers

Metaphoric gendered barriers are types of hurdles that women face that shape

their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. Gendered barriers exist as

many women have realized superior leadership positions; however, gendered barriers do

exist, and women continue to face career impediments that result solely from their gender

role (Li, 2014; Smith et al., 2012a). Career difficulties associated with gender categories

have the propensity to label and categorize women using metaphoric descriptors that can

lead to an unacceptable view of women (Smith et al., 2012a). Scholars coin various

metaphors to describe career obstructions that women face in the work environment

(Simpson & Kumra, 2016). Common metaphoric gender barriers used in literature to

describe women are velvet ghettos, glass doors, sticky floors, ivory basements, glass ceilings, concrete ceilings, labyrinths, and glass cliffs.

In scholarly literature, velvet ghettos refer to occupations where a preponderance of women dominate a career (Smith et al., 2012a). The glass door metaphor describes unseen and invisible preliminary hiring barriers that exist upon entry into an organization (Koch & Farquhar, 2015). The person does not know these invisible glass doors exist until the individual attempts to walk through them (Koch & Farquhar, 2015). A sticky floor metaphor refers to career hindrances women face earlier in their profession that keeps them employed and paid at lower levels in the organizations such as discriminatory practices, the absence of job flexibility, underpayment of wages, and the lack of career advancement opportunities (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Christofides, Polycarpou, & Vrachimis, 2013). In this metaphor, employers fail to offer women opportunities to advance into positions of authority. Similarly, the ivory basement metaphor refers to women who labor in lower level roles in a work place (Eveline & Booth, 2004).

In contrast, a glass ceiling refers to an invisible career barrier that women encounter that obstructs senior advancement opportunities (Powell & Butterfield, 2015a; Ryan et al., 2016). The glass ceiling effect enables women to be successful in many positions throughout their career, but a translucent ceiling blocks them from navigating upward to realize higher career advancement opportunities (Orser et al., 2012). This invisible plateau hinders the upward mobility and career advancement into senior level career opportunities (Jackson, O'Callaghan, & Adserias, 2014). In contrast, concrete ceilings describe difficulties targeted at ethnic women that impede minority women from

advancement opportunities (Davidson, 1997). Instead of encountering a glass ceiling, minority women face impassable concrete ceilings (Davidson, 1997).

Labyrinths describe the numerous challenges that women encounter throughout their professional careers (Carli & Eagly, 2016). The labyrinth metaphor portrays a maze where the walls of the labyrinth present hindrances for women as they navigate their career paths (Powell & Butterfield, 2015b). If women successfully navigate through the labyrinth, they can realize advancement opportunities (Carli & Eagly, 2016). In contrast, a glass cliff hurdle exists when an employer offers a woman in leadership a risky advancement opportunity that has great potential to fail (Rink, Ryan, & Stoker, 2013; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). The precarious opportunity has the propensity to be detrimental to the woman's career (Rink et al., 2013; Ryan et al., 2011; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). More women find success and gravitate into organizational board roles when the company is in a crisis. Women attempt to overcome barriers by accepting precarious opportunities even when the opportunity could be detrimental to their career (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014).

Race and National Origin Barriers

Race and national origin barriers are additional types of hurdles that women face that shape their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. Some women continue to face career barriers based on their race and ethnicity (Li, 2014). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a regulatory law that made it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an individual based on gender, race, religion, and national origin (USA.gov, n.d.). Many organizations are cognizant of the regulatory laws and impose

less than apparent discriminatory workplace hindrances on employees (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

In literature, scholars use the bamboo ceiling metaphor to describe impediments associated with race and national origin that hinders women from navigating into higher leadership roles (Li, 2014). The bamboo ceiling characterizes women who are successful in low and middle level occupations but encounter challenges entering managerial positions (Li, 2014). Employers overlook women affected by the bamboo-ceiling phenomenon often for promotional opportunities because of their race and national origin (Li, 2014). Raque-Bogdan et al. (2013) emphasized the significance of discovering the perceived career barriers associated with gender, national origin, and coping efficacy to implement career intervention strategies targeted to assist underrepresented individuals in their career aspirations.

Gender Inequality and Discrimination

Gender inequality and discrimination are other types of hurdles that women face that shape their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. Some scholars consider gender equality in the work environments as a distant objective since it has not been attained (Carli & Eagly, 2016). The sheer essence of gender inequality is still considerably high (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014). In fact, women who are of an ethnic minority status face double discrimination barriers of gender and race (Allen & Savigny, 2016).

In some cases, gender discrimination is not blatantly obvious because of the regulatory laws and sanctions against organizations (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Nevertheless, various forms of gender inequality and discrimination continue to affect the lives of women (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). Cultural norms, demographics, societal perspectives, and patriarchalism significantly influence gender inequality and discrimination against women (Ince Yenilmez, 2015). In a quantitative inquiry, Kiser (2015) studied the perceptions of 2,209 participants to test the relationships of managerial occupations and organizational culture. The findings revealed 37.7% of the participants believed men made better political leaders, and their gender should be favored over women when positions are limited. Additionally, the results showed 23.6% of the participants believed men form better executives than women. These perceptions can foster injustices for the female species and construct an environment of mistrust (Kiser, 2015). Initiatives have taken place to increase gender diversity in businesses; however, women still encounter challenges moving into top line managerial positions (Pai & Vaidya, 2009).

As women continue to pursue leadership professions, some women face gender obstructions in their career paths that men do not encounter (Carli & Eagly, 2016). There is a belief that the career progression of women is flatter than that of men (Evans, 2013). There is also a perception of gender inequality and gender discrimination where women are not treated the same or paid the same wages as their male counterparts even though women may complete the same tasks in the work place (Johnston & Lee, 2012). In 2016, 17,418,000 individuals, who were 16 years and older, occupied management occupations where 61% were men and 39% were women (U.S. BLS, 2017). The median age was 46.9 (U.S. BLS, 2017). Based on these statistics, women promoted into managerial and

leadership positions between the ages of 16-19 occupied 3,804,000 fewer leadership roles than men within the same age class (U.S. BLS, 2017). This inequality can result in men advancing further and faster than women who have similar or equivalent education and experience credentials (Evans, 2013). It is essential for women to feel that they have an equal chance to attain upper level management roles for the sake of society and the success of the business (Pai & Vaidya, 2009).

Gendered Stereotypes

Another type of difficulty that women face that shape their perception of career obstacles in the work environment is gendered stereotypes. Society can construct career barriers for women using gendered stereotypes (Evans, 2013). Stereotypical views of gender are still prevalent in the workplace and tend to be more socially acceptable (Bellou, Rigopoulou, & Kehagias, 2015). The presentation of stereotypical imagery for women in the work environment is subtle at times and blatantly used on other occasions (Robinson-Wood et al., 2015).

Gendered stereotypes portray a permanent and distorted generalization created by society regarding women (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Subjective in nature, stereotypes are biases entrenched in an individual's philosophies, principles, and expectations one holds to be true (Gupta, Turban, & Pareek, 2013). Societal norms influence the education and knowledge deposited into others that indirectly result in gender inequality and disparities (Hiller, 2014). Hiller (2014) completed a quantitative study to understand the roles of education, gender, norms, and the development of people. He found that cultural norms positively relate to gendered stereotypes of men and women.

Engrained in the structure of many organizations is bias and discrimination (Li, 2014). Employers use gendered stereotypes as a form of gender bias to perpetuate the stereotypical views of society (Koch, D'Mello, & Sackett, 2015). Gender stereotypes can plague the workforce and adversely affect career opportunities for women (McIntosh et al., 2015). Negative stereotypes regarding women such as ridiculing working mothers, pregnancy, and stay-at-home mothers can obstruct promotional opportunities for women (Smith et al., 2012a). In their study on gender perceptions and professional beliefs, advancement opportunities of women are often hindered because of biases, gender perceptions, and the fact that the women had children (McIntosh et al., 2015). Moore (2015) completed a qualitative study using an ethnography design of 1096 participants. The researcher explored how gender, native categories, diversity management initiatives, recontextualization, and cross-cultural management efforts relate to women in the workplace. The researcher found that the primary barriers to recruiting females for employment relied on the native categories individuals in leadership positions had regarding women and work. Moore (2015) defined native categories as cultural practices transferred beyond traditional borders whose meanings altered when people incorporated the cultural practice into the existing culture. Individuals in authority roles set separate expectations for the labor exerted by men than women. Of equal importance, people are influenced subconsciously by their native categories and cultural views, resulting in preconceptions as to which jobs are gender appropriate (Moore, 2015).

Another stereotypical view is the perception that successful organizational leaders frame their company structure on masculine hierarchical chains of command (Chin,

2016). The perceived culture within organizations symbolizes the fact that men originated and dominated many organizations, resulting in the establishment of a culture that is rooted in the preferences and attributes of men (Li, 2014). Often, organizational leaders evaluate the attributes of women in the workplace against the culturally accepted peculiarities of men (Chin, 2016). In these instances, women find themselves at a distinct disadvantage when organizations assess their traits against their men counterparts (Mavin & Grandy, 2012). An accepted stereotypical view of women is to possess communal attributes and for men to portray proactive, self-organizing, and self-reflective attributes (Berkery, Morley, & Tiernan, 2013). When women demonstrate atypical attributes commonly associated with a man, such as toughness and aggressiveness, people view these women as less likeable and ineffective leaders as the perception is they behave counter stereotypically (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012).

Rhee and Sigler (2015) completed a quantitative study using 166 participants. They researched the perception of sexual stereotyping and biases as it related to gender, leadership approach, and the perception of a leader's effectiveness. In their study, Rhee and Sigler (2015) found that men were perceived to be more efficient than female leaders. The study findings revealed that women who do not align themselves to the female stereotype are favored less and are less effective. On the contrary, the traditional view of leadership has been challenged as organizations are navigating toward a more communal approach to leadership that focuses on people (Berkery et al., 2013). Women who possess a mixture of female and male stereotypical qualities may find that these

attributes are advantageous in the work environment and corresponded with effective management (Berkery et al., 2013).

In contrast, successful women leaders tend to incorporate androgynous leadership styles that intertwine components of both masculine and feminine stereotypical leadership attributes (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Stereotypically, men align to the role of a leader more than women who may be the rationale behind the perception that men are better leaders than women (DeMascia, 2015). Women are seen as less favorable leaders when they attempt to possess androgynous traits. Individuals possessing a combination of men and women attributes can define whether a manager meets the terms of a good manager (Powell & Butterfield, 2015b). An equal balance of men and women attributes does not depict how the portrayals of effective managers have evolved. Also, the perception is a good manager possesses undifferentiated traits (Power & Butterfield, 2015).

Work Life Balance

Work life balance is a challenge that women face that shapes their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. The integration of work life is a significant obstacle for some women in the work environments as they face conflicts between the requirements of their employer and their obligations at home (Tajlili, 2014). Some women encounter challenges learning how to balance their work responsibilities and home obligations (Peterson & Wiens-Tuers, 2014). When women learn to balance their professional careers and personal obligations, both the organization and the employee can benefit from this union (Lester, 2013). When there is an undesirable work life imbalance

or conflict, there are notable consequences to both the employee and the company (Adisa, Gbadamosi, & Osabutey, 2016).

There appears to be socially accepted work schedules and work distributions based on gender (Peterson & Wiens-Tuers, 2014). The more flexible an individual is regarding work schedules, the more control he or she has over his or her work time. Flexibility in work schedules tends to advance gender (Peterson & Wiens-Tuers, 2014). Work schedules and flexibility are significant challenges for women (Peterson & Wiens-Tuers, 2014).

Powell and Butterfield (2013) completed a study to understand the rationale behind why some individuals chose to pursue or not to pursue a career that had the potential to place them on a faster track to higher levels of management. When compared to men, the researchers acknowledged that some individuals may hold the opinion that women still face the glass cliffs and ceilings based on a stereotypical assumption that females fail to be genetically predisposed to high levels of career ambition and career opportunities. Powell and Butterfield (2013) completed a quantitative approach to test the relationships of top management aspirations, gender identity, and gender of 293 participants. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the participants (68%) aspired to high managerial occupations. Twenty-nine percent aimed to achieve middle level managerial roles while 3% selected roles of low managerial occupations. The findings revealed that one of the reasons individuals opt out of top managerial occupations is work life balance. Powell and Butterfield recommended future studies that

examine the cognitive process that individuals undergo that crafts their aspirations to higher leadership levels.

Similarly, Michailidis et al. (2012) completed a quantitative study to examine the barriers that hinder the advancement of women by revealing the best practices and strategies that women can implement to balance their work life obligations. The study used 154 women participants who were in non-management and managerial roles. The research findings supported the notion that gender discrimination is still a valid concern, and women continue to encounter a glass ceiling as they navigate career opportunities. The study irradiated the perceived barriers of the participants that included diminished self-confidence, stereotypes, the absence of female mentors, and the imbalance of work life obligations.

Tajlili (2014) completed a qualitative study using 32 women managers as participants. The researcher aimed to describe the challenges women encounter as they attempt to balance the demands of their employment and their lives and expand a woman's understanding of factors that can influence the view of work–life integration. The careers of many women require them to make choices that can adversely affect their employment and their family life. It is impossible for a woman to balance equally between her home life and her work life. Although it is impossible to balance equally these factors, it is possible to find success in his or her choices and enjoy life. Societal, ecological, and individual stimuli factors could influence his or her view of work–life integration. Tajlili (2014) stated the use of triangulation of these models could assist women to make well-informed decisions regarding the factors that have the potential to

sway their perceptions of balancing the demands of their employment and their lives. A limitation of Tajlili's study was the consideration of only traditional and contemporary career routes. The researcher recommended future research endeavors to consider other types of career journeys and explore women managers in other countries to understand the impact of culture on career tracks.

Above the Glass Ceiling

Career impediments can create a perception of a glass ceiling effect that poses undetectable barriers to the ascension of women in higher authority occupations (Mishra & Mishra, 2016). Although there are many organizational and regulatory efforts to reduce and neutralize gender discrimination customs, shattering the glass ceiling and overcoming career hindrances is still an obstacle for many women (Lee-Gosselin, Briere, & Ann, 2013). Scholars have confirmed the existence of barriers that can impede a woman's access to specific occupational roles or positions of authority, but researchers also support the fact that some women navigate around these hindrances (Fitzsimmons, Callan, & Paulsen, 2013). Even though there is a paucity of women leaders (Dunn, 2010), there are some women who have ascended above the glass ceiling to realize promotional leadership opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2014a).

Weidenfeller (2012) sought to understand the lived experiences of women enterprise leaders and the imbalance of women in executive occupations. The researcher completed a qualitative phenomenological study to understand the experiences of 12 women who surpassed and shattered the glass obstructions. Out of the lived experiences of the women who transcended beyond the career impediments, five themes emerged that

included personal drive, impactful leadership aspirations, networking influence, adaptation to change, and a relentless focus to overcome challenges. The researcher recommended future investigative efforts that focus on the reasons why women leave employers and strategies that concentrate on the retention of women in organizations.

Similarly, Macarie and Moldovan (2013) studied women leaders to understand the traits and tactics used to overcome the invisible career barriers. The researchers completed a mixed methods study using 1297 employees. The study findings revealed that women leaders encountered obstacles inside their company, outside their company, and with personal obligations. The researchers found that women leaders who were successful in their professional lives surpassed the career hindrances based on their perception of success, highly valued traits, and the possession of specific influential factors. Most of the participants' perceived success based on their professional performance, work life balance, social esteem, recognition, and role model qualities. Successful leaders highly valued attributes of respect, responsibility, commitment, optimism, and professionalism. The most influential factors of success were hard work, perseverance, professional competence, and organizational loyalty. The limitations of the study were the small sample size, and the perceptions of men were not included in the study as the researchers concentrated on the perceptions of women.

Tlaiss (2014) explored the career journeys of women managers to examine the nature of the traditional and contemporary career tracks. Tlaiss argued that although upward mobility (the traditional career route) in leadership is quite common, there is an emergence of contemporary career tracks. Tlaiss conducted a qualitative study and

collected data from 32 female managers. The findings of the study indicated that the participants' career routes were a traditional path where they received higher leadership opportunities, promotion, and salary increases as they achieved organizational objectives. Additionally, the results revealed that the participants believed their relationship with their employer and loyalty to the company created advancement opportunities.

Irem, Rehman, and Rehman (2016) completed a qualitative phenomenological study to understand the strategies seven women leaders employed to attain higher levels of leadership. Seven women in executive roles experienced career obstacles such as gender stereotypes, work pressures, harassment, family commitments, and the lack of competence. Successful women leaders employed career management techniques such as empathetic intelligence, self-efficacy, endurance, hope, perseverance, patience, and passion. Other strategies women used to cope with barriers included delineating relationship boundaries, being positive, remaining silent, ongoing commitment, and hard work. The researchers of this study realized that some of these strategies were innate while others developed through experience.

Similarly, Cook and Glass (2014a) examined the contrivances that form promotional opportunities and the career trajectories of occupational minorities post promotion. White women and ethnic minority women characterized occupational minorities in higher levels of leadership. The researcher completed a quantitative study that analyzed a dataset of 57 participants. The researchers suggested employers appointed occupational minorities to struggling firms or in precarious business endeavors. In these instances, occupational minorities could face glass cliffs as they ascended to higher

authority positions. Of equal importance, post promotion occupational minorities tended to be replaced by their White male counterparts if the company underperformed. The researchers recommended an exploration of the career trajectory of leaders separately, specifically minority men, White women, and minority women. Also, an examination of the intra-ethnic variances in the career trajectories of women leaders and how these women surpassed cultural and structural hindrances could add value to academic literature.

Hurley and Choudhary (2016) completed a quantitative study that considered the career trajectories of 123 women and men in CEO positions and compared their ascension to higher authority positions. Contrary to the studies of Mulcahy and Linehan (2014), Ryan and Haslam (2005), Ryan et al. (2011), and Rink et al. (2013), Hurley and Choudhary (2016) discovered that 24 women CEOs were successful, profitable, and managed larger organizations. However, the researcher found that an increased number of children reduced the probability of women to reach CEO positions. Higher educational attainment of women, when compared to men, did not help women realize CEO roles; however, the findings revealed employers grant women more opportunities to secure CEO occupations in organizations where there are a more substantial number of employees. The researchers recommended a future exploration of the mechanisms and resources that assist women leaders as they ascend to higher authority roles.

Benefits of Gender Diversity in Leadership Positions

A diverse leadership team inclusive of men and women can foster corporate governance, increased organizational performance, and enhanced decisions (Evans,

2013). Similarly, organizations can benefit from the diversity, array of management skills, and varied leadership styles that women contribute to businesses (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). Women embrace leadership styles that support collaboration and empowerment while men adopt leadership styles that support power assertion and controlling behaviors (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). The integration of women in decision making authority positions could increase the representation of women in organizations, open the door of promotional opportunities for other women, and extend the tenure of women in authoritative roles (Cook & Glass, 2014b).

Mehta and Sharma (2014) completed a quantitative study using 50 women participants to understand the value of women and the importance of empowering them in leadership positions. The writers indicated that women are diverse and rich in culture. Both genders should make an equal decision regarding issues that shape the lives of people and organizations. The concept of empowerment gives women the right to add contributions of equal value to men. The authors used a structured survey questionnaire to understand the factors of women leaders empowered in their organizations. The study results emphasized self-determination, professional growth, impact, purpose, trust, self-efficacy, and independence.

The Gap

A review of the scholarly literature elucidated a knowledge gap regarding the perceived career barriers women face in managerial and leadership positions that are self-imposed and constructed by others. Particularly, this research initiative tackled a knowledge gap of an under researched population of minority women in literature as

indicated by Hampden (2015); specifically, those women employed in authoritative middle level management and leadership positions in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region.

The results from this study may contribute to society by providing a more in-depth understanding of the general career barriers and the self-imposed career impediments minority women in authority roles face. The findings of my study may also represent a broader awareness of the strong parallel that transcends to the greater masses of women. Insights from this initiative may furnish organizational leaders with an acumen into recognizing career barriers, identifying techniques to assist minority females in navigating through occupational hurdles, and tools to shield against professional career hindrances. Last, the insight derived from this study could assist in the development of self-help resources for women in a variety of techniques to enhance their self-efficacy.

Summary

This section commenced with a detailed overview of the strategy I used to search for an existing body of literature to support my research. The theory of self-efficacy and the SCCT served as theories for the conceptual framework that grounded this study. I used the theory of self-efficacy and the SCCT to study the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders who have encountered general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impede them from promoting upward.

The review of the literature section examined the existing scholarly knowledge about women in leadership and their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. I provided a historical analysis of women and men who participated in the

labor force before World War II to 2016 that provided a visual illustration of the evolution of women and their participation in the labor force. Next, I completed a detailed examination of the literature supporting women in leadership and the perceived career barriers associated with metaphoric gendered barriers, race and national origin barriers, gender inequality, discrimination, gendered stereotypes, and work life balances. Following this metaphor examination, I explored scholarly literature that supported women who have ascended above the glass ceiling to realize promotional leadership opportunities. I concluded with illuminating some of the organizational benefits gender diversity in leadership positions can provide businesses.

Each of the topics covered in this literature review helped to explore the general problem of gender inequality in authoritative positions. The selected literature supported this study through the revelation of specific barriers women face that shape their perception of career obstacles in the work environment. Additionally, the review of the literature exposed some of the impediments women perceive as they navigate their professional aspirations above the perceived glass ceilings.

Although a plethora of research exists on career barriers to employment and upward mobility, limited research exists on the perceived career barriers that women face when employed in authoritative middle level management and leadership positions in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region. This study has the potential to contribute to help fill the knowledge gap regarding the perceived career barriers women face in managerial and leadership positions that are self-imposed and constructed by others. Also, this study may extend knowledge by providing organizational leaders with

acumen into recognizing career barriers, identifying techniques to assist minority females in navigating through occupational hurdles, and tools to shield against professional career hindrances. Chapter 3 provides in depth discussions of the research methodology, design, and the direction of the research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative research initiative was to explore the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the Central Florida region of the finance and insurance sector who perpetually encounter career barriers that could impede them from advancing in their professional careers. To explore these lived experiences, I used a phenomenological research design to understand further the essence of their experience in how they described it. This chapter explains my selection of the research design that I selected to use for this study. I outline my responsibilities as a researcher as I conducted the study. I discuss the factors of my chosen methodology including (a) the rationale for participant selection, (b) instrumentation, (c) recruitment and data collection techniques, and (d) the data analysis strategy. This section concludes with a discussion explaining the elements of the study's trustworthiness including (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, (d) confirmability, and (e) ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Method

Researchers choose from three research methodologies to explore or investigate an inquiry that includes quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach (Zohrabi, 2013). Researchers use a quantitative methodology to quantify and generalize results regarding a population of interest using a sample population (Park & Park, 2016). This approach is beneficial when the research effort intends to test a theory (Ali & Yusof, 2011) or to forecast and manipulate social phenomena in a controlled environment (Astalin, 2013). In a quantitative approach, the research is objective (Barnham, 2015).

The researcher is not an integral part of the study and is independent of the investigative

effort (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative researchers frame the research questions in a

closed manner (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012) and collect data statistically from a

large sample size through structured techniques (Barnham, 2015).

In contrast, the goal of qualitative research is to seek to explore, interpret, or gain

an in depth clear understanding or underlying rationale of a social phenomenon

(Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013**).** This approach is favorable when the research effort intends

to generate a new theory, to gain knowledge on an underdeveloped theory, or to validate

an existing theory (Graebner et al., 2012). In a qualitative approach, the research is

subjective (Barnham, 2015). The researcher interacts with the phenomena of study and is

an integral part of the study (Astalin, 2013). Qualitative researchers collect data non-

statistically from a smaller sample size through unstructured or semistructured interviews

or group discussions (Park & Park, 2016).

Researchers use a mixed methods approach to blend quantitative and qualitative

data (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). This enhanced design represents data using words

and numbers (Zohrabi, 2013). This method is advantageous when the researcher intends

to use the results from a qualitative study to test a hypothesis quantitatively or to gain a

deeper understanding or clarification into a quantitative result (Kemparaj & Chavan,

2013**).**

A quantitative approach would not be an appropriate method, as I do not desire to

study the participants in a controlled environment, test a theory, examine the relationships

between variables, or understand the cause and effect relationships. Likewise, a mixed

methods approach would not be suitable for this study as a qualitative study can answer the research question alone, and I do not desire to employ elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods in this investigative effort. I selected a qualitative method as the most suitable method to explore the meanings minority women managers and leaders ascribe to their experiences with career hindrances. During my study, opportunities did not arise to complete a mixed methods study or to test the relationships of variables. Therefore, I did not recommend this opportunity under the implications for future study section.

Research Design

After the selection of a methodological approach, the researcher chooses a design, aligned with the research method, to explore and to gain a deeper understanding of the topic or phenomena (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). I reviewed the five common qualitative methodology designs to determine the most suitable paradigm for this study. I analyzed grounded theory, ethnography, case study, narratives, and phenomenology to determine the most suitable design for this study.

A grounded theory design is advantageous to a study when the research intention is to create a theory derived from the data collection results (Cho & Lee, 2014). One strength of the design is the inductive process, by which the investigator collects the data and makes inferences based on the observed data (Miller, 2015). A weakness of this design is the disastrous effects to a study that could result from researcher bias and sampling bias, particularly self-presentation and self-selection (Miller, 2015). A grounded theory design would not be appropriate for this research effort, as the intent of this study

is to gather data directly from the participants to understand the essence of the lived experiences associated with general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impede women from advancing upward in their organization and career.

An ethnography design is useful to a study when the research intention involves exploring the culture and social settings of a group of people through prolonged face-to-face observations and interviews (Brummans & Vásquez, 2015). A strength of this design is its flexibility to gather rich data through observations, interviews, surveys, and videography to study the sociocultural compositions in the behaviors of a group of people (Bensaid, 2015). Some adjectives that describe the weaknesses associated with this design are that it is time consuming, labor intensive, costly, and results in a lack of generalized findings (Hyland, 2016). Also, ethnographers encounter challenges when they are unfamiliar with the culture or language of the studied group of people (Astalin, 2013). An ethnography design would not be appropriate for this research effort as this method proposes to explore the cultural behaviors of a group of people, instead of seeking to understand the essence of the lived experiences women managers and leaders encounter in the Central Florida region of the finance and insurance sector, which is the intent of this study.

Case study designs are beneficial to a study when the research intention is to understand the nature of a specific case, event, group, or process in a real-world environment (Cronin, 2014). The researcher conducts case studies in the natural venue to understand the phenomena holistically in its natural setting (Yin, 2014). A weakness of this design is it fails to provide neutrality, consistency, and precision (Andrade, 2009). A

case study design would not be appropriate for this research effort, as the intent of this study is to gather data directly from the participants to understand the essence of their lived experiences associated with career barriers.

A narrative design is advantageous to a study when the researcher intends to obtain a personal account of a person's conversation, story, or life experience from the vantage point of the individual (Graebner et al., 2012). One strength of this design is recollecting a personal account of an occurrence in a storyline fashion with a beginning, middle, and end of the depiction (Dailey & Browning, 2014). A weakness of this design is the researcher's misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the participant's story portrayal (Yu, 2014). Of equal importance, the space between the actual occurrence and the retelling of the story as the participant recollects the events is a weakness of this design (Yu, 2014). A narrative design would not be appropriate for this research effort as the intent of this study is not to gather data from an individual that describes a situation or occurrence. Instead, this research initiative seeks to gather data directly from some different participants to understand the essence of their lived experiences associated with career barriers.

The final qualitative methodology design I considered was phenomenology. A phenomenological design is advantageous to a study when the researcher intends to understand the meanings people ascribe to their experiences based on their understanding, intuition, and judgment of the thing, situation, or circumstance of a shared experience (Moustakas, 1994). The weakness of this design is the scope of this model does not provide definitive justifications regarding the studied phenomena (Astalin,

2013). Based on the intentions of this research, I selected a phenomenological design as the most appropriate design to understand the meanings minority women ascribe to their experiences with career barriers in the workplace.

Phenomenology

A phenomenology is a methodical approach some qualitative researchers use to pursue knowledge and advance theories (Dowling, 2007). Historical accounts of the development of the philosophical view of phenomenology originated with the writings of Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1989) where he described phenomenology as the study of the natural world, or *life world*, as people see it as reflection or conceptualization occurs (Husserl, 1999). Today, there are numerous schools of thoughts toward phenomenology where influential thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Michel Henry, Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Marion, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty postulated different renderings of phenomenological inquiry (Van Manen, 2014).

From a research sense, phenomenology is the study of lived experiences of human subjects (Van Manen, 1990). An objective of this method is to expand and intensify the scope of an individual's immediate experience (Spiegelberg, 1971). This method encourages researchers to bracket or abandon their predispositions and preconceived notions of a phenomenon to allow them to see, embrace the pure nature of the phenomena (Spiegelberg, 1971), and clarify the essence of knowledge based on the way the individual sees the situation (Husserl, 1999).

Essential steps of the phenomenological method. Spiegelberg (1971) explicated there are seven essential steps of the phenomenological method. He opined that not all

philosophers encourage the completion of these essential phases; however, the steps of the method provide a framework and structure for the approach. Spiegelberg (1971) asserted these phases include (a) the exploration of a specific phenomenon, (b) the exploration of general essences, (c) the identification of fundamental correlations between or among essences, (d) the mode by which things occur or appear, (e) the observation of how phenomena forms and shapes individual perceptions, (f) the suspension of judgment regarding the reality of the phenomena, and (g) the interpretations of the phenomena's undisclosed meanings.

The exploration of a specific phenomenon refers commonly to the phenomenological description that explores the phenomenon intuitively, analytically, and descriptively (Spiegelberg, 1971). Researchers gain knowledge regarding the phenomenological description by interrogating the experience (Husserl, 1999). Phenomenological description helps researchers classify phenomena and describe its connection to the individual (Van Manen, 2014). In this step, researchers focus on the phenomenon's significant characteristics and overlook the immaterial qualities (Spiegelberg, 1971).

Next, phenomenology requires researchers to explore and consider general essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) described essences as universal descriptions of the inner meanings individuals attribute to lived experiences. Phenomenological studies do not focus on the accuracy of the instance or sometimes how the instance occurred (Van Manen, 1990). Instead, phenomenological efforts seek to intuit what the particular lived experience was like for the participants (Van Manen,

1990). The cognition of essences requires researchers to understand the perceived or imagined occurrences from the participant's vantage point (Spiegelberg, 1971). The nature of the experiences or the insight into essences benefits a study when the researcher acquires a depiction of a lived experience that is rich in detail and portrays the significance of the experience (Van Manen, 1990).

A phenomenological investigation also identifies fundamental associations between or among essences (Husserl, 1989). Internal relationships within one essence or among essences prompt the researcher to question if the elements of the essence are fundamental to the nature of experience (Moustakas, 1994). To diagnose the essential insights, researchers use free imaginative variation, where the components of the essences vary in imagination to explain the central relationships (Spiegelberg, 1971). The connections among the essences postulate the notion of synthetic knowledge (Spiegelberg, 1971), which is implied knowledge established by experience and is not theoretically based (Pina & Tether, 2016). Researchers use the essential relationships to understand their ontic referents (Spiegelberg, 1971) or symbolic representation of the real experiences (Van Manen, 2014).

Also, the method of phenomenology explores the way or mode by which things occur, appear, or the manner by which the lived experience presents itself (Merleau-Ponty, 2004). Researchers should analyze only the portion of the instance or experience presented (Spiegelberg, 1971). All other aspects and angles of the instance or experience are transparent, and researchers should not investigate (Spiegelberg, 1971).

Another essential step of the phenomenological method is the observation of how phenomena form and shape an individual's perceptions (Spiegelberg, 1971). Merleau-Ponty (2004) stated that human beings should rediscover the world of perception by understanding the way people see or perceive the world. A perception is an experience that belongs to a person (Husserl, 1999). People use their perception, memory, and expectations to influence the way they think and act about an experience that ultimately frames the basis of truth and reality regarding the perceived notion (Husserl, 1999). Perceptions are building blocks in the individual's consciousness that constitutes the manner by which an individual act and behaves (Husserl, 1989).

The design of phenomenology necessitates the suspension of judgment regarding the reality or non-reality of the phenomena (Spiegelberg, 1971). From a Husserlian perspective, the suspension of judgment creates a platform where the researcher can study the phenomena the way it appears (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). Husserl introduced phenomenological reduction as a technique to hold subjective outlooks and theoretical paradigms in abeyance while generating a platform for the insights into the phenomena's essences to materialize (Husserl, 1999). Phenomenological reduction requires researchers to detach themselves from the phenomena to allow a comprehensive grasp of the nature of the experience and the perceived notions (Husserl, 1989). Within this technique, Husserl encouraged researchers to enter into a state of epoche' where they suspend their personal beliefs and biases regarding the studied phenomena (Van Manen, 2014). This unbiased view assists the researcher in gaining a comprehensive appreciation of the experience and the human consciousness (Valle et al., 1989). Similarly, the

unbiased and natural view allows the researcher to study the phenomenon before theoretical reflection or explanation (Van Manen, 1990).

The final possible step of a phenomenological study is the interpretations of the phenomena's undisclosed meanings (Spiegelberg, 1971). Researchers use hermeneutics to discover the meanings of a text that was not revealed intuitively, analytically, or descriptively (Moustakas, 1994). The use of hermeneutics requires researchers to understand the participant's statements sufficiently to make an accurate interpretation of its hidden meanings (Moustakas, 1994).

Analyzing phenomenological data. Husserl's advancement of phenomenology stemmed from Franz Brentano's view of intentionality as a vital element of understanding an individual's conscious actions and behaviors (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl believed international analysis was synonymous to phenomenological analysis as it focused on the connection between an individual's intentional act and the intentional referent (*noema*) as discussed by Spiegelberg (1971). From a phenomenological scope, researchers intentionally connect themselves to the world, using study participants, to understand the world better and experience the world in a more significant aspect (Van Manen, 1990).

Two common ways researchers analyze phenomenological data is through transcendental and hermeneutical methods (Moustakas, 1994). A transcendental phenomenological view emphasizes the consciousness and the existence of essences, derived from experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Moustakas (1994) referred to transcendental phenomenology as the study of the described experiences and

transcendental structures of consciousness that become the object of the individual's reflections.

In contrast, hermeneutic phenomenological research is a reflective discipline that aims to capture the language of human science in the form of a text that describes and interprets how phenomena appear (Van Manen, 1990). From a hermeneutical phenomenological perspective, the researcher reflectively construes the undisclosed meaning and intention of a written text to grasp its objective fully (Moustakas, 1994). This approach can assist researchers to focus solely on the interpretation of the participants' experiences (Applebaum, 2012).

For this study, I used a hermeneutical (interpretive) phenomenological method. I explored the general and self-imposed career impediments women managers and leaders encounter by understanding their lived experiences. I used the phenomenology design to portray the essences of the participants' lived experiences of the participants to understand the internal and external barriers that hinder career advancement. Additionally, I used this design to explore the experiences of a group of participants articulated through the identification and interpretation of the underlying barriers that emerged from the recalled situations. With this design, I advanced a collective theme derived from the essence of meanings articulated through the comprehension and clarification of the participants' experiences.

Research Question

During this study, open-ended interview questions were presented to the participants to assist me in answering the overarching research question:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who have encountered general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impede them from promoting upward?

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative investigations, the researcher is a part of the research design (Schwab & Syed, 2015). My role as the researcher was to identify a researchable problem and to assess the existing scholarly knowledge on the research topic (Park & Park, 2016). Also, I was responsible for recruiting study participants, collecting the data through semistructured interviews, analyzing the data, interpreting the research findings, and delivering a written analysis that summarizes this investigative effort (Allwood, 2012). As I analyzed the data using a hermeneutical (interpretive) phenomenological method, I evaluated significant statements, conceptual theories, text patterns, and emerging themes (Van Manen, 1990). In this research investigation, my focus was to understand fully the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders who have encountered general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impeded them from ascending upward in the work environment. By understanding the lived experiences from the research participants' perspectives, I construed the undisclosed meanings and intentions of the recalled accounts to grasp their objective fully and to gain deeper insight into essences (Moustakas, 1994).

In my workplace, I am a member of a leadership team for an insurance company. I am interested in gaining a deeper understanding into the perceived internal and external

hindrances that minority women in authority roles encounter during their careers as they navigate up the corporate ladder. As a resident in the Central Florida region, coupled with the fact that I have 16 years of experience in the insurance industry, I am familiar with some of the internal and external impediments encountered in this industry's environment. My experience in leadership and the insurance industry was of great value and advantageous to this research effort as I was able to use my existing knowledge to understand and interpret the behaviors of women managers and leaders as they related to internal and external career advancement impediments.

As the primary data collection instrument, I understood that I might possess intentional and unintentional biases toward this research effort. As I could not separate myself from this research initiative, I acknowledged that my passion regarding this research topic might raise concerns of bias. For these reasons, it was vital that I discovered techniques to manage and mitigate any potential bias to avoid any contamination of this study's results.

One technique I used to mitigate bias was I would not possess any personal or professional relationships with any of the participants. I used purposeful sampling to select the participants who fit the study's predetermined criteria. Another technique I used to mitigate partiality was the self-awareness and acknowledgement of the predisposition that I may possess that might have the capability of influencing the way I interpreted the collected data. I recognized these prejudices might be a result of my experiences, values, education, preconceived philosophies, positional views, and ideological expressions. To mitigate these concerns, I desired to reach a state of epoche'

where I was able to suspend my personal beliefs and biases regarding the studied

phenomena (Van Manen, 2014). Also, I aimed to bracket my predispositions and

preconceived notions regarding the phenomenon to allow me to see and embrace the pure

nature of the phenomena (Spiegelberg, 1971).

Last, I proposed to use member checking as another way to mitigate bias. In this

technique, my participants served as resources to review the interpretations of the data to

ensure that I captured what they meant to convey (Harper Cole, 2012). Member checking

techniques assist in strengthening the validity and adding credibility to the study's

findings (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Methodology

In this section, I describe the nature of the study by elaborating on the factors of

methodology for this study. I explain the rationale for participant selection. Next, I

describe the instruments I used to gather the data, and I explain the data collection

process. I conclude with providing details on the data analysis strategy for this study.

Participant Selection Logic

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher studies the phenomena in its setting to gather

rich data (Dabic & Stojanov, 2014). In this study, I used an interpretive hermeneutical

phenomenological design to understand the meanings the participants ascribe to their

experiences based on their understanding, intuition, and judgment of the thing, situation,

or circumstance. I focused on the population of women employed in the finance and

insurance sector in the Central Florida region who were minority women managers and

leaders in middle level authoritative positions. The targeted participant population was

individuals who were between the ages of 20 and 60 and who met the classification status

of single, married, divorced, or widowed. I categorized the participants into four age

groups that included 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-60.

I posted communication for this research study on various informational exchange

engines and professional mediums. I targeted professional associations and service clubs

within the Finance and Insurance Industry to post communication regarding this research

study in their LinkedIn sub groups and Facebook pages to solicit participants (see

Appendix A). I instructed interested volunteers to reach out directly to me by email to

participate in this study. After receiving notifications of interest, I replied to the potential

candidate with pre-screen questions to ensure she met the minimal criteria participation

requirements of the study that included fluency in English, female gender, minority

ethnicity, middle level leadership status, and one or more perceived barriers. I added the

participants who met the minimal criteria to the study's population. Using purposive

sampling, I identified and selected the individuals to serve as participants in the

population sample. The participant or population sample was limited to the

representatives who could best epitomize this research initiative (O'Reilly & Parker,

2012). I postulated these individuals would be able to provide rich data to support this

research topic. To determine a sufficient purposive sample size for this study, I used data

saturation as the standard (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015).

After identifying the population sample, I sent notification letters (see Appendix

C) to the selected individuals requesting an emailed informed consent form and three

potential interview dates and times. The participants predetermined the interview location

at an agreed upon venue that allowed for minimal distractions. Some individuals expressed interest in participating in the study but failed to provide interview dates, times, and an emailed or signed informed consent form. For the women who failed to cooperate with the research process, I continued the recruitment process by selecting the next candidate in line to send the notification letter. Four women agreed to participate but failed to return the informed consent by email. For these women, I obtained their written informed consent in person before the interview.

Before the interview, I met with each participant to reiterate the purpose, scope, benefits, risks, and expectations of this research endeavor. I restated the research procedures and processes and addressed any questions. I repeated the benefits and risks the participant may encounter by participating in the study. I reiterated there was no compensation for participation in this study. I restated to the participants' that participation is voluntary and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point during the research process without penalty or retaliation. After I was assured the individual still consented to participate in the study, I initiated the interview.

The initial interview process consisted of semistructured dialogue with eight middle level minority women leaders in diverse ethnicities to ascertain the meanings these women used to ascribe to their experiences with career barriers in the workplace. This smaller sample size provided me the ability to focus my energies on understanding the essence of the experience of addressing career barriers by women leaders in middle level leadership positions.

Data saturation refers to the continual process of accumulating data for a research endeavor but ceases when data redundancy occurs, when new material concludes, or when new theme generation ceases to occur (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Roy et al., 2015). Equally important, data saturation relates to the transferability of the research's findings (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). During the data collection process, I did not determine that I had not saturated the data. Therefore, I was not required to return to my original participants to continue interviewing them, by asking additional probing and follow up questions until data saturation.

Instrumentation

As the researcher, I am a part of the research's design, and I served as the instrument that accumulated the data (Schwab & Syed, 2015). I employed data collection instruments to assist me to assemble and gather the interview data obtained to address the research questions. For this research endeavor, the primary data collection was through semistructured in person interviews where I presented open-ended questions to minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region.

Oftentimes, an expert panel is used to help improve the interview questions (Bourrie, Cegielski, Jones-Farmer, & Sankar, 2014). I used my dissertation committee to serve as the individuals on my expert panel. Specifically, the expert panel reviewed the construction and content of the interview questions to ensure it was in alignment with the research's design and study's intention (Bourrie et al., 2014). After the expert panel

approved the structure and content of the interview questions, I initiated the process of scheduling and completing the interviews with the participants.

I used the questions reviewed by the expert panel in semistructured interviews to draw responses from the participants that were rich in data. Throughout the interview, I took detailed notes recording my observations and my thoughts to reflect on later. With permission from the participants to record, I recorded the interview sessions using an electronic Smart Recorder software application. Next, I transcribed the interviews in preparation for the data analysis phase of this research endeavor. No participants refused to provide authorization to have the interview recorded. Therefore, I was not required to record any of the participant's responses in writing.

Recruitment and Participation

The recruitment process (see Appendix D) initiated by posting communication for this research study on various informational exchange engines and professional mediums. I targeted professional associations and service clubs within the Finance and Insurance Industry to post communication regarding this research study in their LinkedIn sub groups and Facebook pages to solicit participants (see Appendix A). I instructed interested volunteers to reach out directly to me by telephone or email to participate in this study. After receiving notifications of interest, I replied to the potential candidates with pre-screen questions to ensure they met the minimal criteria participation requirements of the study that included fluency in English, female gender, minority ethnicity, middle level leadership status, and one or more perceived barriers. I added the participants who met the minimal criteria to the study's population. I used purposive

sampling to identify and select the individuals to serve as participants in the population sample. To determine a sufficient purposive sample size for this study, I used data saturation as the standard as described by Roy et al. (2015).

After identifying the population sample, I sent notification letters (see Appendix C) to the selected individuals requesting an emailed or signed informed consent form and three potential interview dates and times. Some individuals expressed interest in participating in the study but failed to provide interview dates, times, and a signed or emailed informed consent form. For the women who failed to cooperate with the research process or who decided not to participate, I continued the recruitment process by selecting the next candidate in line to send the notification letter. Four women agreed to participate but failed to return their informed consent by email. For these women, I obtained their written informed consent in person before the interview. The interview location was a predetermined and agreed upon venue that allowed for minimal distractions.

Data Collection

The data collection process commenced after the Walden's Institutional Research Board (IRB) approved the application to conduct my study. The IRB functions as the regulating entity that certifies the research studies conducted by Walden University scholars meet the ethical terms of the university and federal regulations (Walden University, 2017). To safeguard the identity of the study's participants, I assigned alphanumeric codes to everyone. I referred to the participants during the interview and the study using the previously identified alphanumeric codes. I did not divulge any

information regarding the participants to anyone. I redacted any data that others could use to reveal the identity of the study's participants.

In qualitative inquiry, common methods used to gather data and provide panoramic lenses of the research topic include case studies, interviews, documents, observation, and focus groups (Denzin, 2012; Park & Park, 2016; Schwab & Syed, 2015). For this phenomenological design, I gathered the data through face-to-face semistructured interviews. During the interview, I presented open-ended questions and asked follow up questions regarding the participants' experiences. I asked probing questions to alleviate ambiguity in the participant's responses. I recorded the interview sessions and transcribed the recordings later for exploration.

After the interview, I debriefed the participants regarding the status of the research initiative. Also, I explained the expectations of continued participant availability should the need for follow up interviews arise. Equally important, I requested the participants to contact me immediately should they recall additional information that could add value to this research endeavor. Last, I asked the participants to partake in a member checking session. I explained the member checking session entailed the participants reviewing the study's findings and my interpretation of their interview session for accuracy and reliability purposes. I explained that the member checking follow up conversation would be completed using the participant's preferred mode of communication of telephone, Skype, email, or an in person discussion.

To authenticate the data and ensure its credibility, I employed the validation technique of member checking (see Appendix E). Member checking techniques assist

researchers in strengthening the data's validity and adding credibility to the study's findings (Harper & Cole, 2012). I intended to use member checking to verify the validity of the data's findings and the interpretations of the data to ensure that I captured what the participants meant to convey. I emailed each participant a draft of the study's findings and my interpretation of her interview session. I followed up with the participant, using her preferred mode of communication, to discuss her view and accuracy of the study's findings and the interview interpretation. Of the eight participants, seven of the participants responded back to me that my interpretations captured what they meant to convey during the interview. Although all the participants agreed to participate in the member checking process, one of the participants did not respond back to my attempts to member check my interpretations. I reached out to the participant on numerous occasions to solicit her involvement. For the participant that did not confirm the accuracy of my interpretations through member checking, I used the analyzed data from her response I received during the interview.

During the data collection process, I did not encounter a situation where the data was not saturated. Therefore, I was not required to return to my original participants to continue interviewing them, by asking additional probing and follow up questions until I saturated the data. I understood data saturation refers to the continual process of accumulating data for a research endeavor but ceases when data redundancy occurs, when new material concludes, or when new theme generation ceases to occur (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Roy et al., 2015).

The Interview

Before the interview began, I reiterated the purpose, scope, benefits, risks, and expectations of this research endeavor. I restated the research procedures and processes and addressed any questions. I repeated the benefits and risks the participant may encounter by participating in the study. I reiterated there was no compensation for participation in this study. I restated to the participants' that their involvement is voluntary and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point during the research process without penalty or retaliation. After I was assured the individual still consented to participate in the study, I initiated the interview.

The initial interview was set as a semistructured in person interview for 60 minutes of the participant's time at a predetermined and agreed upon venue that allowed for minimal distractions. The interview consisted of semistructured dialogue with middle level minority women managers and leaders in diverse ethnicities to ascertain the meanings these women used to ascribe to their experiences with career barriers in the workplace. I presented open-ended questions to the participants, and I employed the use of follow up and probing questions to alleviate ambiguity in the participants' responses.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector within the Central Florida region. During this study, I planned to uncover the general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could impede minority women from advancing in their professional careers. The data analysis plan helped to understand

the relationships between the classifications and the themes derived from the data to gain a deeper understanding of the studied phenomena (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

In research, a data analysis plan outlines a researcher's plan to examine the data, identify consistent preliminary themes and generalizations, and assign categories and codes to the data (White, Oelke, & Friesen, 2012). Also, the data analysis process encompasses the researcher's interpretation of data, evaluation of data, and identification of the study's findings (Gaya & Smith, 2016). Appendix E outlines an overview of the data validation and analysis process for this study.

I collected data by conducting semistructured interviews and recorded the interviews using an electronic Smart Recorder software application. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interview using Microsoft Word software. To improve the accuracy of the interview data, I used member checking as a technique that used the participants as tools to verify the validity of the data's findings and the interpretations of the data to ensure I captured what the participants meant to convey during their interviews.

Data analysis software. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis packages (CAQDAS) gain popularity from its ability to assist the researcher in organizing, managing, and coding the interview transcripts and researcher notes (Zamawe, 2015). Specifically, I used NVivo 11 to assist me in in organizing, managing, coding, and analyzing the research data (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Additionally, I used NVivo 11 to qualitatively analyze and categorize the data to identify themes, generalizations, and patterns that emerge from the data (Zamawe, 2015). I attended several NVivo webinars

that elucidated the features and benefits of using NVivo 11 as a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software.

Analyzing research data. Analyzing research data is a significant component of an investigative study (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Researchers use various coding strategies to analyze nonverbal data such as new directions coding, capture coding, corroborate coding, discover coding, and broaden coding (Onwugbuzie & Byers, 2014). Similarly, other coding approaches researchers use to analyze data include content analysis, open coding, thematic coding, selective coding, and axial coding (Sarker, Xiao, & Beaulieu, 2013).

For this study, I used the modified van Kaam reformed by Moustakas to understand the essences of the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994) regarding career hindrances in the work environments fully. Van Kaam (1966) used phenomenological research as a tool to understand the experiences of people and to generate a portrayal of what it means to feel understood. I employed seven steps of the modified van Kaam to analyze the phenomenological data. In accordance with the modified van Kaam, I employed

- Step 1 involves the transcription and notation of each participant's lived experience. I acknowledge the technique of horizontalization that accentuates the equal value that each statement contributes to the study.
- Step 2 encompasses the identifying and labeling of the emergence of non-repetitive themes.
- Step 3 consists of identifying any relationships between the themes.

- Step 4 requires the grouping of the non-repetitive themes of the experiences and organizing the themes by labels.

- Step 5 entails creating written descriptions of each participant's experiences, including specific examples from the interview transcription.

- Step 6 involves the review of the interview transcriptions, coupled with the emerged themes, to understand the possible meanings of the lived experiences and the varied perspectives of the phenomena.

- Step 7 entails creating written descriptions of the meanings and essences based on each participant's lived experience.

Once I completed the steps for the modified van Kaam, I integrated the themes that emerged from the all the participants' experiences to synthesize the meanings and essences of the lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994) to represent the species of women. The modified van Kaam data analysis may equip society, with the knowledge of the perceived interferences that limit career opportunities and describe techniques to manage better impediments in the workplace.

Additionally, I evaluated the data's findings against the conceptual frameworks that guided this study. The theoretical structures of the SCCT and the concept of self-efficacy served as lenses to explore the data's meaning and to understand its role in the perception of career hindrances. Together, these paradigms served as theoretical lenses through which I analyzed the study's data results.

I identified the classifications used to analyze career hindrances. By illuminating the themes that emerged from the study, I drew connections between the collected data

with the conceptual frameworks. Last, I identified the recurring patterns or themes that emerged from the data.

Data management. Regarding the data management procedures, I understood the importance of maintaining confidentiality and safeguarding the participant's personal information and interview responses. I stored all research related materials and documents inside a password protected computer. To increase privacy, I scanned and stored any physical documents as electronic documents inside a password protected computer.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative inquiry, the concepts of quality and trustworthiness are integral components through each step of the research process (Elo et al., 2014). Although there is no single way to evaluate the quality of an investigative study, researchers assess the quality criteria to determine if a study is trustworthy (Kornbluh, 2015). In this section, I explore elements of this study's trustworthiness through (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, (d) confirmability, and (e) ethical considerations.

Credibility

In research endeavors, credibility or internal validity refers to the soundness of the research initiative and the integrity of the study's outcome (Noble & Smith, 2015). To ensure this study was credible, I implemented strategies to guarantee a high amount of data quality, rigor, and objectivity. These strategies included bias accountability, data saturation, member checks, reflexivity, and peer-debriefing.

One approach I used to strengthen the credibility of this endeavor was the proactive acknowledgement of personal biases and positionality. I aimed to maintain an appropriate balance of positionality and communicate an adequate amount of information regarding any personal or professional characteristics or relationships and their significance to the study. Also, I used data saturation as a strategy to enhance this study's credibility. During the data collection process, I did not encounter a situation where the data was not saturated. Therefore, I was not required to return to my original participants to continue interviewing them, by asking additional probing and follow up questions until I saturated the data. The data saturation certified my study's findings were trustworthy and could be replicated by other researchers.

 I embedded respondent validation and member checks where I provided the participants with an opportunity to review the interpretations of the data and the study's results to ensure I captured what the participants' meant to convey (Harper & Cole, 2012). Member checking techniques assisted in strengthening the validity and adding credibility to the study's findings (Harper & Cole, 2012). Throughout the research process, I used the technique of reflexivity and reflection to acknowledge my perspectives and minimize researcher bias. Last, I participated in peer debriefing reviews that served as mechanisms to challenge research findings and uncover subjectivity, hidden biases, or unsupported assumptions.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity refers to whether a study's findings would be as applicable to a new venue as it was in the original setting (Burchett, Mayhew, Lavis, &

Dobrow, 2013). From a qualitative perspective, the reader evaluates the transferability of a study and assesses its applicability (Rocha Pereira, 2012). Readers consider a study as transferable when it is versatile to other situations and topics (Burchett et al., 2012). One strategy I employed to ensure the study was transferable was thick descriptions where I documented meticulous descriptions of the investigative process and findings to allow replication of the study.

Another strategy I employed was the variation of the participants contributing to the study. Purposive sampling helped to identify the individuals who best fit the study's criteria and who provided rich data to support this research topic (Emerson, 2015). When selecting the participants, I purposefully chose individuals with varied age, ethnicity, education, employer, length of time employed by the current company, leadership rank, length of time in the current role, and perceived career barriers.

Dependability

Dependability refers to a study's ability to replicate in a comparable environment with comparable participants (Cope, 2014). Researchers consider a study as dependable when another researcher can emulate and agree with the initial examiner's decision-making process throughout the research process (Onwugbuzie & Byers, 2014). I employed strategies of member checking to assist with creating dependability in the study. Respondent validation and member checks provided the participants with an opportunity to review the interpretations of the data and the study's results to ensure the interpretations captured what the participants meant to convey (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Member checking techniques assisted in strengthening the validity and adding credibility to the study's findings (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to a researcher's ability to validate objectively that the study's findings exemplify the participants' perspectives and not the researcher's views (Noble & Smith, 2015). Equally important, confirmability creates a platform for the researcher to explain how the interpretations and outcomes were derived (White et al., 2012). One strategy I applied to demonstrate confirmability was using rich quotes from the participants that illustrated any emerging perspective, pattern, or theme. Additionally, respondent validation and member checks validated objectively that the study's findings exemplified the participants' perspectives through the review of the data interpretations to ensure I captured what the participants meant to convey and the final themes accurately reflected the studied phenomena as noted by Leko (2014). Thick descriptions confirmed the study's findings through meticulous descriptions of the investigative process and decision-making findings to allow replication of the study (Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016). Last, the use of reflexivity and reflection allowed the acknowledgement of my thoughts and observations, the participant's voices, and the escape from the temptation to overshadow the participants' perspectives.

Ethical Procedures

The protection of human subjects, who participate in research efforts, has become a crucial focus for review boards (Ahern, 2012). With this notion in mind, there are ethical standards that researchers follow when conducting investigative efforts with

human participants (Moustakas, 1994). Before the initiation of data collection, I gained the approval of the Walden University's ethical committee, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), to conduct my research investigation on human subjects. Ethical committees evaluate closely the research intentions on vulnerable populations and individuals who may possess impaired judgment making ability (Adams et al., 2013). The ethical committee served as the review board, responsible for evaluating the study's intention based on validity and ethical standards (Adams et al., 2013).

IRB boards require researchers to inform the study's participants of the probable benefits and dangers of their participation in a research study (Ahern, 2012). To comply with this ethical protocol, I met with each participant to disclose the purpose, scope, benefits, risks, and expectations of this research endeavor. I discussed the research procedures and processes and addressed any questions. I elucidated any benefits and risks the participants could encounter by participating in this research effort. I reiterated there was no compensation for participation in this study. I communicated my commitment to guarantee the confidentiality of the identity of the participants and their data.

I explained in detail my expectations of the participants and their commitment to the study. I sought to understand their expectancies of me as the researcher. I provided each participant a copy of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) letter of approval that granted me the right to engage in this research endeavor.

Participants were asked to provide informed consent via email before the interview. I set aside 10 minutes before beginning the interview to reiterate the purpose, scope, benefits, risks, and expectations of this research endeavor. I restated the research

procedures and processes and addressed any questions. I repeated the benefits and risks the participant may encounter by participating in the study. I reiterated there was no compensation for participation in this study. I restated to the participants that their involvement was voluntary and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point during the research process without penalty or retaliation. After I was assured the individual still consented to participate in the study, I initiated the interview.

Qualitative inquiry generates data through the personal interactions with human participants where researchers must protect the privacy of the participants (Irwin, 2013). Regarding data management procedures, I stored all research related materials and documents inside a password protected computer. To increase privacy, I scanned and stored tangible documents gathered during the data collection process as electronic documents on a password-protected computer. I immediately shredded any tangible documents once I obtained an electronic record. I will retain the electronic data files for this study for five years after my dissertation gains approval. After that period, I will destroy, delete, and permanently erase any tangible and electronic data files related to this research effort.

In research efforts, conflicts of interest have the propensity to undermine the veracity of a study's findings (Mecca et al., 2015). I did not possess any personal or professional relationships with any of the participants to mitigate potential ethical concerns regarding the participants. This technique assisted me in reducing potential conflicts of interests referred to in the IRB application.

Summary

In this section, I reiterated the purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could impede them from advancing in their professional careers. I explained the chosen research method for this initiative was a qualitative method with a phenomenological design. I elucidated that my role in this research process was a part of the research's design and to serve as the instrument to collect the data. I identified strategies that I planned to incorporate to mitigate bias that included purposive sampling, self-awareness, reflective journaling, and member checking techniques.

Equally important, in this section, I communicated that I announced this research initiative on various informational exchange engines and professional mediums including, but not limited to, LinkedIn, Facebook, Finance and Insurance industry professional associations, and service clubs. I explained I used purposive sampling to select the participants. I determined that an initial sample size of participants for this study was eight participants. During the data collection process, I did not encounter a situation where the data was not saturated. Therefore, I was not required to return to my original participants to continue interviewing them, by asking additional probing and follow up questions until I saturated the data. The data saturation certified my study's findings were trustworthy and could be replicated by other researchers.

I communicated the data collection process including gathering data using semistructured in person interviews using an electronic audio recording device. NVivo 11 was used to assist me in organizing, managing, coding, and analyzing the research data. I described my data analysis plan for this study. I communicated that I used the modified van Kaam to analyze data regarding career hindrances in the work environments. This data analysis technique assisted me in examining the data, identifying consistent preliminary themes and generalizations, assigning categories and codes to the data, interpreting the data, evaluating the data, and identifying the study's findings. This section culminated by exploring elements of trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the essence of the lived experiences of women managers and leaders who encountered career obstacles during their professional careers. To explore this topic, the overarching research question for this study was, What are the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impede them from promoting upward? Data were derived from individual semistructured interviews of eight minority middle level managers and leaders who experienced career hindrances. The study targeted women between the ages of 20 and 60. Chapter 4 illustrates an overview of the data collection experience and the data analysis process.

The analyzed data provided a representation of the target population concurred to four constructs: their experiences associated with career hindrances, the challenges faced responding to the career hurdles, the strategies used to overcome career barriers, and the counsel offered to other women to succor their corporate ladder mobility and navigate career obstacles. During the data analysis process, I recognized parallels among the themes and classifications of data. Additionally, I ascertained noteworthy statements, repetitive impressions, expressions, and themes that furnished insight as to how the participants perceived their internal and external career obstacles, the challenges faced responding to career hurdles, the strategies used to overcome career impediments, and the advice they offered to other women regarding career hindrances.

During the data collection and analysis processes, I found the NVivo 11 software beneficial for organizing, managing and coding the interview transcripts, researcher notes, and audio recordings (Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos, & Teixeira, 2016). I ascertained significant statements, themes, and classifications of data using NVivo 11 to create vivid depictions of the participants' experiences. The participants' perceived experiences, associated with general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments, materialize in the final analysis. I differentiated any uncommon variances in the perceptions of the participants relating to career barriers. The SCCT of Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) coupled with the self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1977) reinforced the themes, and repetitive impressions emerged in the data analysis.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the expert panel review, the setting, and an analysis of the participants' demographics. Other components of this chapter include descriptions of the data collection experience, the data analysis process, and the evidence of trustworthiness. The chapter culminates with a review of the study's results related to the research question.

Expert Panel Review

The expert panel consisted of specialists based on their professional attributes such as education, experience, and occupation (Massey, Wang, Waller, & Lanasier, 2015). For this study, my dissertation committee served as the professional specialists on my expert panel. I used the expertise of the expert panel to evaluate the degree to which the interview questions (see Appendix G) framed the constructs and solicited rich responses to answer the research question (Aravamudhan & Krishnaveni, 2015). With the

guidance of the expert panel, I ensured the construction and content of the interview questions aligned with the research design and study's intention (Bourrie et al., 2014). After the expert panel approved the structure and content of the interview questions, I initiated the data collection process.

Research Setting

The participants selected the interview date, time, and location. I emphasized the importance of the interview locations supporting an environment free of distractions and interruptions. The semistructured interviews convened in a conference room, work office, library, and a restaurant. Specifically, I conducted three interviews in an office conference room. I led three interviews in the participant's work office. One interview took place in a library room. I conducted one interview at a restaurant.

Each of the interview sites supported a favorable interview experience except for the restaurant venue. The distractions included the restaurant's subtle background music, and the restaurant's personnel interruptions because the interview extended beyond the restaurant's hours of operation. After completing the interview at the restaurant site, no additional interviews took place at that venue, although the participants requested many.

Demographics

The demographic classifications of the eight study participants appear in Table 1. Each of participants met the study's criteria for participation. The industries represented by the participants included the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region. The research study required the participants to be minority women employed in middle level managerial or leadership occupations.

The eight study participants were of diverse ethnicities. Specifically, four participants were of the Latina/Hispanic descent, and four participants were of the Black/ African American ethnicity. The participant ages varied from 27 to 59. Two individuals represented the 20-29 age range. Two women represented the 30-39 age range. One person represented the 40-49 age range. Three individuals represented the 50-59 age range.

The educational attainment levels varied among the participants. The lowest level of education attained by the participants was a high school diploma. The highest level of education achieved by the participants was a master's degree. Specifically, one participant possessed a high school diploma but did complete some college courses. Two of the participants achieved associate's degrees. Four participants possessed bachelor's degrees. One participant held a master's degree.

Equally important, none of the participants were single (never married). Two participants were divorced, and six of the participants were married. Seven of the participants had children. The number of children per participant varied from 0 to 5. Last, six of the participants were a part of diversity and inclusion groups, networks, or associations.

Table 1

Study Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Marital Status	Number of Children	Age	Age Category	Ethnicity	Highest level of education completed
P1	Married	3	38	30-39	Black/ African American	Bachelor's Degree
P2	Married	5	59	50-60	Latina/ Hispanic	Associate's Degree
P3	Divorced	3	38	30-39	Latina/ Hispanic	Bachelor's Degree
P4	Divorced	0	28	20-29	Latina/ Hispanic	High School Diploma
P5	Married	3	57	50-60	Black/ African American	Bachelor's Degree
P6	Married	3	27	20-29	Latina/ Hispanic	Associate's Degree
P7	Married	4	53	50-60	Black/ African American	Master's Degree
P8	Married	2	40	40-49	Black/ African American	Bachelor's Degree

Data Collection

The data collection phase focused on the quality and richness of the data gathered (Anyan, 2013). In this study, the data collection experience occurred over 88 days. Twenty-seven days lapsed from the date data collection initiated to the first interview date. Sixty-one days lapsed from the first interview date to the last interview date. During data collection, the emphasis of the study was on interpretive hermeneutical phenomenology to capture the participants' interpretation of their perceived experiences. I collected data from eight women primarily through semi-structured interviews to understand the participants' experiences associated with general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could slow down or impede them from advancing in their professional careers.

To recruit participants, I extended research invitations directly to LinkedIn members who possessed a job title of a manager. Additionally, I presented the members

of 10 LinkedIn sub groups and Walden University's Participant Pool the opportunity to participate in the study as a participant. I accepted candidate recommendations through referrals. After receiving notifications of interest, I provided the interested parties the SurveyMonkey.com link to the complete the pre-screen questions. The pre-screening questions ensured the women met or did not meet the minimal criteria participation requirements of the study that included fluency in English, female gender, minority ethnicity, middle level leadership status, and one or more perceived career barriers.

One woman expressed interest in participating in the study but did not complete the pre-screening survey. Fifteen women completed the pre-screening survey. The minimal participation requirements of the study disqualified four women from participating in the research study. I contacted the four women to advise them they did not meet the participant qualifications for the study. Additionally, I explained the reasons why I disqualified them as participants. One woman did not work in the finance and insurance sector. Three women were Caucasians and did not meet the minority ethnicity requirement.

Based on the pre-screening survey results, eleven women met the study's participation requirements. From the 11 viable research candidates, I used purposive sampling as an approach to identify and select the individuals to serve as participants in the study (Lee-Jen Wu, Hui-Man, & Hao-Hsien, 2014). I selected eight participants who best epitomized this research initiative to provide rich data that supported the investigation topic. I selected individuals from different organizations to serve as

participants who possessed varied demographics of marital status, number of children, age, ethnicity, level of education, and perceived career barriers.

I emailed notification of acceptance letters (see Appendix C) to the individuals selected as research participants. I attached the informed consent form and advised each participant to review the terms of the study and to provide an emailed consent of participation. One individual declined participation after reviewing the informed consent form. One candidate did not respond to the acceptance letter or provide informed consent to participate in the study.

Nine women agreed to participate in the study after receiving the informed consent form. I obtained informed consent electronically by email for some participants, and I secured the informed consent signatures in person for others. Everyone provided potential interview dates and times. After agreeing on an amicable interview date and time, each of the participants attended the scheduled interviews except one, who had a schedule conflict and did not reschedule.

During the data collection experience, I gathered data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interviews convened at each participants' preferred time and location of choice that included a library, restaurant, conference room, and office. The interviews ranged from 0:27 to 1:32. The interview statistics appear in Table 2. Before the interview, I reiterated the purpose, scope, benefits, risks, and expectations of the study. I restated the research procedures, processes and addressed questions. I repeated the benefits and risks the participant may encounter by participating in the study. I reiterated there was no compensation for participation in this study. I restated to each

participant that participation was voluntary. I re-emphasized her right to withdraw from the study at any point during the research process without penalty or retaliation. After assurance from each participant of her desire to participate in the study, I initiated the interview.

The in-person interviews created a platform where I observed the participant's body language and facial expressions as she recalled her lived experience. I asked the same interview questions (see Appendix G) of each participant. The foci of the open-ended questions and follow-up questions included the participants' perceived encounters with general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that slowed down their professional careers. I engaged in sensemaking techniques to understand the participants' lived experiences from the participants' perspectives (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). I employed sensemaking strategies throughout the interview as I asked the participants a series of questions regarding their responses, and I allowed them the opportunity to clarify their statement intentions (DeKrey & Portugal, 2014). Throughout the interview, I used member checking techniques such as restating statements for clarification and asking probing and follow up questions to alleviate ambiguity in the participants' responses and my interpretations. I led follow up sessions by email to review the interview interpretations.

Table 2

Interview Statistics

Participant Number	Interview Date	Interview Duration
P1	5/31/2017	1:11:09
P2	6/2/2017	1:32:30
P3	6/30/2017	1:01:50
P4	7/21/2017	0:51:18
P5	8/1/2017	0:27:04
P6	8/2/2017	0:45:40
P7	8/8/2017	1:17:17
P8	8/9/2017	0:42:21

I recorded each interview using an electronic Smart Recorder software application which was transcribed from audio recordings verbatim in preparation for the data analysis process. All the participants agreed to participate in the member checking process. Following the interview, I emailed the interview transcript and my interpretations of the interview to each participant to initiate the member checking process. I asked the participants to authenticate the interview data and to add credibility to the study's findings by reviewing my interpretation of their interview. I requested the participants to communicate back to me if my interpretations captured what they meant to convey in their responses to each question.

Of the eight participants, seven of the participants responded back to me that my interpretations captured what they meant to convey during the interview. Although all the participants agreed to participate in the member checking process, one of the participants did not respond back to my attempts to member check my interpretations. I reached out to

the participant on numerous occasions to solicit her involvement. For the participant that

did not confirm the accuracy of my interpretations through member checking, I used the

analyzed data from her response I received during the interview.

Data Analysis

The data analysis experience helped me to explore the interview data to ensure it

captured the lived experiences of the participants related to general career barriers and

self-imposed career impediments. This study followed an interpretive hermeneutical

phenomenological research design. The data analysis process supported the modified van

Kaam reformed by Moustakas to understand the essences of the participants' lived

experiences (Moustakas, 1994) fully. I explored the data further to ascertain its relevance

to the research question. I submerged myself in the interview data through repetitive

assessments and reviews of the interview transcripts and audio recordings to ensure I

possessed a firm understanding of the findings and interpretations. Saturation in the data

created a platform to review the data from different lenses and perspectives to identify the

emergence of themes (Giorgi, 1975). I employed seven steps of the modified van Kaam

to analyze the phenomenological data. The modified van Kaam process required the

conduction of each step thoroughly on each participant. (Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017).

In accordance with the modified van Kaam, I employed

- Step 1 involved the transcription and notation of each participant's lived

  experience. I acknowledged the technique of horizontalization that accentuated

  the equal value that each statement contributed to the study.

- Step 2 encompassed the identifying and labeling of the emergence of non-repetitive themes.

- Step 3 consisted of identifying any relationships between the themes.

- Step 4 required the grouping of the non-repetitive themes of the experiences and organizing the themes by labels.

- Step 5 entailed creating written descriptions of each participant's experiences, including specific examples from the interview transcription.

- Step 6 involved the review of the interview transcriptions, coupled with the emerged themes, to understand the possible meanings of the lived experiences and the varied perspectives of the phenomena.

- Step 7 entailed creating written descriptions of the meanings and essences based on each participant's lived experience.

I manually coded the interview transcripts, as I interpreted the interview data for the member checking process. This step helped to accentuate the relevant information and to understand the initial emerging themes. Afterwards, I reviewed numerous YouTube videos on conducting qualitative analysis using NVivo 11 to understand the software and its functionalities. In preparation of analyzing the data in NVivo 11, I imported the interview transcripts and documents into the software. Next, I formatted the transcripts to assist in the coding process. Also, I added the participants' demographical data to the project. Using NVivio 11, I organized, managed, coded, and categorized the

data to identify themes, generalizations, and patterns that emerged from the content

(Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016).

I started data exploration by using the NVivo 11's auto-code function to create a

node based on the interview questions by grouping the participants' responses to the

interview questions. The auto-code functionality helped me to complete the

horizontalization process more efficiently by combining the interview transcripts.

Following, I created preliminary nodes based on my previous manual coding to represent

the constructs of general career barriers, self-imposed career impediments, responses to

career barriers, challenges women faced with career hindrances, strategies to overcome

career obstacles, and advice the women offered to others regarding navigating career

hurdles. Using the auto-code feature, I highlighted the relevant data, and I categorized,

grouped, and sorted the data based on the content of the information and its similarities.

To organize the data by topic and themes, I created subfolders for each construct

based on the content gathered. For example, I established subfolders under the construct

of general career barriers of ethnicity barriers, gender bias, financial barriers, conscious

and unconscious bias, personality barriers, lack of managerial support, and age barriers. I

reviewed the interview transcripts several times to ensure I captured the themes that

emerged from the data. As I reviewed the interview transcripts, I identified rich data that

supported the constructs. I selected excerpts and stored data under its respective node or

subfolder. As I coded the data, I discovered the need to create additional nodes and

expanded on existing nodes as new themes emerged based on the content. I exported the

nodes to complete in-depth analyses of the coding summaries and the content by the node.

Once I analyzed the data using the seven steps of the modified van Kaam, I integrated the themes that emerged from the participants' experiences to synthesize the meanings and essences of the lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994) to represent the entire species of women. I used NVivo 11 software's capabilities to illustrate the research data and represent the findings visually. The visual illustrations of the data helped to demonstrate the relationships between the themes.

Additionally, NVivo 11 functioned as a tool I used to understand how the interview data harmonized with the theories of Lent, Brown, and Hackett and Bandura. I evaluated the data's findings against the conceptual frameworks that guided this study. The theoretical structures of the SCCT and the concept of self-efficacy served as lenses to explore the data's meaning and to understand its role in the perception of career hindrances.

<div align="center">**Evidence of Trustworthiness**</div>

Credibility

To establish data quality, rigor, and objectivity, I adopted the strategies of bias accountability, reflexivity, member checks, data saturation, and rich data. Before each interview, I acknowledged personal biases, and I communicated to the participants any personal or professional characteristics or relationships and their significance to the study. Also, I maintained an appropriate balance of positionality. Equally important, I used the technique of reflexivity and reflection to acknowledge my perspectives and

minimize researcher bias. The process of self-reflexivity created a platform to recognize unrealized blind spots (Gilmore & Kenny, 2014).

Member checking was another strategy used to validate, improve, and strengthen the quality of the research data (Harvey, 2015). The purpose of incorporating member checking into the data validation process was to minimize or eliminate researcher bias during the data analysis and interpretation phase of the study (Anney, 2014). In this stage, I provided the participants with an opportunity to review the interpretations of the data and the study's results by email, to ensure the accuracy of interpretations, and to validate whether the interpretations captured what the participants' meant to convey (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

Data saturation was another technique used to certify the trustworthiness of the study's findings. The purpose of data saturation was to validate the replication of the study's findings by another researcher should one desire to repeat or conduct a similar study (Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, & Mueller, 2016). I recognized saturated data when data redundancy occurred and when new theme generation ceased to occur. As I saturated the data, I was not obligated to return to my original participants to continue interviewing them or asking additional probing and follow up questions.

Additionally, I achieved internal validity by using rich, thick data. I used the participants' direct quotations or statements to capture their lived experiences objectively (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). The use of the participants' specific quotations in the study strengthened the credibility of the research findings.

Transferability

The process of transferability validates the versatility of a study's findings as applicable to a new venue as it was in the original setting (Da Mota Pedrosa, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012). In qualitative studies, the reader evaluates the transferability of a study and assesses its applicability (Rocha Pereira, 2012). To establish transferability, I adopted the strategies of rich, thick descriptions and purposive sampling. During the interviews, I encouraged the participants to provide rich, thick, and descriptive depictions of their lived experiences associated with career hindrances. These rich, thick accounts (direct quotes) help the readers decide whether the study's findings allow replication or transferability to other environments (Gheondea-Eladi, 2014).

Another strategy I employed was purposive sampling to assist in the variation of participants contributing in the study. Purposive sampling helped to identify subjectively the individuals who best fit the study's criteria (Valerio et al., 2016). To increase the transferability to other settings, I selected participants who varied in age, ethnicity, education, experience, and employers. Each participant worked for different organizations within the financial and insurance sector.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the replication of a study's findings in a comparable environment with alike participants that yield the same or similar results each time (Oluwatayo, 2012). Researchers consider a study as dependable when another researcher emulates and agrees with the initial examiner's decision-making process throughout the research process (Onwugbuzie & Byers, 2014). To foster dependability, I employed

strategies of member checking to validate, improve, and strengthen the quality of the research data (Harvey, 2015). In the member checking stage, I authenticated the accuracy of the data interpretations and findings by having the participants validate whether the interpretations captured what they meant to convey (Birt et al., 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to a researcher's ability to validate objectively that the study's findings exemplified the participants' perspectives and not the researcher's views (Noble & Smith, 2015). To establish confirmability, I explained in detail how the interpretations and outcomes derived. I demonstrated confirmability by using rich quotes from the participants that illustrated the emerging perspectives, patterns, and themes. To ensure the objectiveness of the interpretations, I employed member checking processes to validate empirically that the study's findings exemplified the participants' perspectives and captured what the participants meant to convey. Also, I used the technique of reflexivity and reflection to acknowledge my thoughts and observations as it related to the participant's voices to avoid overshadowing the participants' perspectives.

<div align="center">

Study Results

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I surmised the essence of meanings articulated by eight minority women managers and leaders through the recollection of lived experiences associated with general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments. I used the interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological research design, supported the modified van Kaam reformed by Moustakas (1994), to understand the essences of the participants' fully lived experiences. Specifically, I used the interpretive hermeneutical phenomenology design to

focus solely on the participants' interpretations of their experiences (Applebaum, 2012). The interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological design helped me to understand the meanings the participants ascribed to their experiences with career barriers in the workplace based on their understanding, intuition, and judgment of the thing, situation, or circumstance. The participants recalled their lived experiences associated with internal and external career obstacles, the challenges faced responding to career hurdles, the strategies used to overcome career impediments, and the advice they offered to other women regarding career hindrances. The data analysis process concluded with the emergence of specific themes and subthemes that materialized from the participants' experiences that respond to the research question.

The overarching research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that impede them from promoting upward?

Using an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological design, the emergent themes of *General Career Barriers, Self-Imposed Career Impediments, Career Challenges, Career Management Strategies,* and *Career Barrier Counsel* arose. I identified the emergent themes by applying the seven steps of the modified van Kaam, detailed interview transcript reviews, member checking clarification techniques, and data examination using NVivo 11. The emergent themes corresponded with the research topic of career barriers as it related to the theoretical frameworks of the social cognitive career theory and the concept of self-efficacy.

The study's findings suggested the participants experienced an array of general career barriers (see Appendix H) and self-imposed career impediments (see Appendix J). Also, the participants articulated the challenges they faced responding to career interferences (see Appendix L) and the strategies employed to overcome the career difficulties (see Appendix P). The study participants advocated advice to other women who encountered deterrents while navigating their corporate careers (see Appendix Q). A detailed examination of the study's findings related to the overarching research question follows.

Emergent Theme One: General Career Barriers

The theme of general career barriers emerged as the participants articulated their lived experiences with external career barriers. The women expounded on their career difficulties and the emotional responses, financial implications, professional relationships, and the life transformations that stemmed from the external career interferences (see Appendix H). The findings associated with this theme include evidence from the interview data supporting the participants' lived experiences with general career barriers. The participants confirmed their statements and my interpretations through member checking clarification techniques.

The theme of general career barriers coincides with the research topic of career barriers as literature confirmed the perception of career obstacles corresponded directly to the career successes of women (Smith et al., 2012a, 2012b). Perceptions exist regarding the domination of men in high levels of leadership that hinder the entrance and the ascension of women in top leadership roles (Cook & Glass, 2014b). Obstacles, associated

with negative career barriers, have caused women to undergo social and economic consequences (Hampden, 2015).

The theme of general career barriers coincided with the theoretical frameworks of the concept of self-efficacy and the social cognitive career theory (SCCT). Researchers' argued contextual obstacles could influence career advancement through factors that can affect the development of self-efficacy and regulate trajectories of an individual's career ambitions and objectives. The SCCT confirmed this notion as the participants' self-efficacy beliefs facilitated how they viewed they their career obstacles and their belief in a positive or negative career outcome.

External barriers. Researchers described external and general barriers as career advancement obstructions in the lives of women (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013; Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein, & Hein, 2015). In alignment with these studies, the research findings depicted the women in this study experienced a plethora of general career hurdles (see Appendix H). Based on the study's discoveries, barriers associated with ethnicity and the perception of others was the dominant general career barriers. Five of the eight participants described ethnicity and the perception of others as other external career hindrances. Four of the eight respondents described general career interferences associated with age, finances, gender, and lack of managerial support. Three of the eight interviewees depicted career obstacles related to education and personality. Two of the eight participants described career impediments agreed with cultural barriers, cultural norms, discrimination, travel, corporate restructuring, downsizing, position elimination, and lay-offs.

Of the external career obstacles articulated, six broad themes emerged from the data that included ethnicity, the perception of others, age, finances, gender, and lack of managerial support. As suggested in the literature, barriers associated with ethnicity, gender, culture, and socioeconomic affiliation have the potential to intermingle with preconceived societal notions to influence his or her self-efficacy (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). Bandura's theory of self-efficacy emphasized an individual's level of self-efficacy could influence his or her beliefs and ultimately affect his or her decisions (Bandura, 1986). In this theory, Bandura suggested an individual's perception of self-efficacy can enrich or prejudice his or her thinking patterns (Bandura, 1989). In the SCCT, the self-efficacy beliefs of the participants facilitated how the participants viewed their career aspirations and their behaviors toward the career selections and goals (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017).

Ethnicity and the perception of others. Researchers described hindrances faced by people of color based on ethnicity and stereotypical assumptions (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017; Deemer, Thoman, Chase, & Smith, 2014). In alignment with these studies, a collective view amongst the majority of the interviewees was ethnicity and the perception of others was the overshadowing barriers that slowed down their careers. P5, who has been in her current role for three years, indicated "I was the second African American to be hired within our division. And then, later on, I found out that I was hired because they needed to meet a quota. They had to have an "x" amount of African Americans within our organization."

P7, who has been in her current role for six years, indicated "what I see is the rules are not the same. I've had to have a master's degree to get jobs that, I'll just keep it real, that cute white girls can get with a high school diploma." P7 continued to say "I believe when people say cultural fit, there is a picture in their mind. So once again, no one is going to say we are looking for a white male to do the job. But whenever a person says cultural fit, they have an idea of what that cultural fit is. And, if it is an environment that is predominately white male dominated, that cultural fit whether spoken or unspoken is that white male. And so, when they are looking at your qualifications, they know how you will fit with the team. They are looking at all of that through a filter of a white male, and that is not a filter that I will ever fit."

P8, who has been in her current role for three years, indicated "I find that my name is a barrier because it identifies that I am an African American woman. I felt that I was overlooked for positions that I was highly qualified for, I believe based on my name, not even a callback. I felt like my name, the way my name is spelled, the way you say my name, initially identifies who I am as a woman. And, I think that has had a negative impact on positions I potentially could have had."

P6, who has been in her current role for seven years, indicated that whenever a client was scheduled to come in the office, her boss would say "straighten your hair and turn your white girl on." P6 indicated "I'd just straighten my hair for when the client comes in and then, I turn my white girl on. Suppress who you are for a little bit. Turn your white girl on and go about your business."

P1, who has been in her current role for five years, indicated "because I am not of the same mindset or demographic, it has hindered my social circle. So, I feel like I have to push a little bit harder to be accepted into that social circle. To be candid, some of the upper leadership circles appear to be more of a white male group. The secondary citizen is not even African American or ethnic male; it is more of white women. So, me as an African American woman, it is hard to break into that circle."

Age barriers. Researchers opined women experience more perceptions of age-related barriers in their careers than their male counterparts (Watts et al., 2015). In alignment with this study, another external career obstacle theme that emerged from the data was age. P4, who is 28 years old and who has been in her current role for 10 months, indicated "I believe that with the same production and with the same level of expertise before getting here, I would have had a higher amount in the base salary if I were a little older." P6, who is 27 years old and who has been in her current role for seven years, indicated "I climbed that corporate ladder very young. I was an operations manager by 23 years old and managing a staff of 75 people. Some people had doctorates. They were older and ultimately more educated, just in different arenas. So, I'm not going to speak out of line, or it is not my time, or it is not my place. I know that my age plays a huge role in it because I won't speak up in meetings. I don't want to speak out of line."

Financial barriers. Researchers described financial barriers as an obstacle in the lives of women (Clark & Bower, 2016). In alignment with this study, financial barriers were a third theme that emerged from the data regarding external career hindrances. P1 articulated, "Men have come in making just a little bit more than I have with the same

criteria. It is not like we both don't have a degree. It just happens that maybe men make a little bit more." P5 stated, "I recently experienced a lay-off. The decision was made by a male who had the choice of removing myself or another male. I was let go and was then asked to return for a lesser salary." P6 elucidated that instead of receiving financial increases or bonuses, "I get moved into positions with more responsibility. They call it a lateral move." P7 explained the financial barriers continue to exist even when someone transitions to another employer. P7 opined, "If people are paid below, they continue to be (paid) below because you have to say what you are currently making (to the new employer) and then they give you a little bit more than that." P8 stated, "I felt that I've made way less than people who did less work than I did but I learned fairly quickly how to negotiate."

Gender barriers. Researchers implied the importance of organizations providing equal opportunities for women as men to avoid career hindrances (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013; Fei, Kuan, Yang, Hing, & Yaw, 2017). In alignment with these studies, the participants echoed their experiences associated with gender inequality in the workplace and how it has caused occupational stress. P1 stated, "You are competing not only against your education, background, and experience but there is something about being a woman that really just kind of holds you back sometimes for certain positions. There is a disproportionate number of women in leadership positions. I feel like that can be a barrier because a lot of the times, from my perspective, hiring managers like to hire people that they are familiar with and that they can relate to so if we have a lot of males in corporate positions maybe they are more comfortable with a male." P4 explained she encounters

gender barriers "because of my personality. (It) is too bubbly. But many people might perceive that as immature or may not perceive that as professional. If a man does it, he is actually fun, but then if I do it, then she is not mature enough." P7 communicated, "If most of the deals are made on the golf course and I don't play golf, or a lot of women don't play golf, that system was not built. Now, we can succeed in spite of, but if we are really serious, we need to dismantle some of this stuff that was not created to give everybody a fair playing field."

   Lack of managerial support. Researchers found insufficient managerial support provided to middle level women managers (Fei et al., 2017; Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). In alignment with these studies, the lack of managerial support emerged as an external career obstacle. P7 indicated, "One of the things that happens sometimes is they can have career ladders and progressions, but they are not always communicated. They are hidden." P8 revealed her lack of managerial support around communication, feedback, and transparency. She stated, "Even when (I) delivered (messages) correctly, it is more of a passive aggressive thing. So even though upper management or other individuals were offended by something that I said or the tone of the message, they won't say anything. It is just I felt it in promotions, in recognitions, in how people dealt with me." P3 explained, "I think because I am so into everything, that's how I got my promotion. It wasn't from my boss. It was from others outside of my department that saw something in me that she couldn't or that she did and she wanted to keep me there." P4 stated, "Out of the people in the management aspects, before me, other managers that were here, I'd say that three quarters of them did not want me to be in this position. Many of them did not believe that

I was the right fit for this and you can say it is because of my age, or because of my hair, or because of my personality."

Emotional responses. The research findings depicted the emotional responses of the participants toward general career barriers (see Appendix I). Two of the participants did not express emotional responses toward external career barriers. Three participants described positive emotions toward general career barriers that included possibility, trusting, agreeing, excitement, and hopeful. There were 20 descriptions that illustrated the distasteful emotions majority of the research participants possessed toward external career barriers. These descriptions included sadness, unfairness, anger, cautious, defeated, devalued, disappointed, fear, feeling misunderstood, financially deprived, frustration, discriminated, hardship, hurt, inadequacy, and loneliness.

P1 stated, "There is a little anger in the structure of the system, I think, and frustrating because you feel like sometimes you can't change it or maybe you feel like the change is slow moving. It's sad because my country, the U.S., is a representation of diversity and the opportunity to be able to grow and develop and accomplish whatever you accomplish. But, I think that sadness comes from when you think about the fact that you have to go through so much hardship in order to get there. Everything has its own set of struggles, but the unfairness in the struggle is sad and frustrating. I am hopeful because I know that I have overcome some barriers. And, I continue to see people raise awareness of the issues, such as yourself. So, I am hopeful in that sense that we will become more aware and get to a place where it's a common place that either more women are at executive levels, minorities are at executive levels, and there's more diversity."

P6 stated her experiences with general career barriers makes her feel inadequate. She stated, "Even when I am giving my all, it still does not feel enough." P6 elaborated on her emotional responses toward her external barriers. She stated, "In the corporate world, I fear because I depend on that stable income at least for now. In my business, I get excited because I understand that it is just another obstacle that I need to pass through."

P8 elucidated her lived experiences associated with external barriers caused her to be cautious. She stated, "When you rise to a certain level in Corporate America, it is really like being in a piranha. I mean really it is. You really don't know who you can trust. It is really a dog eat dog. I am very careful to choose my allies, and I play the part."

Financial implications. Majority of the participants experienced negative financial implications corresponded to general career barriers. P1 stated external career barriers have "a huge impact. When you get passed over for opportunities based on the fact that you have a family or that you are a woman or because you are a woman you are not suited for various roles, obviously, it impacts your earning potential. You kind of get pigeon told into roles where people feel that they are best suited for you." P6 elucidated, "Financially, I can guarantee that I am probably still grossly underpaid to this day for my pay and for what it is that I do."

Professional relationships. A recurring theme in the interviews was a sense amongst interviewees that general career barriers impacted professional relationships, networking opportunities, and future employment openings. P6 stated that she possessed a fear of creating professional relationships. She indicated, "It gets to a point where you

stay away from even creating those professional relationships. That's almost why I feel like there isn't any because if I take a step back, I don't want to create those professional relationships at the fear of letting them know too much. If they know too much, they'll use it against me, and that's just the way I see it in the corporate world." P8 stated she believes her personality hinders some of her professional relationships. She stated, "I had some work-related relationships that were burned because of my directness in the beginning. I think that I have lost true friendships or true business relationships because people are intimidated by me."

Regarding networking opportunities, P1 explained external career barriers hindered her social circle. "I think when an environment tries to smother you, you can either survive or give way. It is like sink or swim. In one perspective, it has pushed me to network more, broaden my horizons, reach out and rage against the machine. P1 stated that she understands networking "holds my key to the better positions. But if I can't break into that network or clique, if you will, it is a hindrance. From my observations, people do have a tendency to hire who they know, and it's hard to get to know someone when the doors are so closed. It's like a secret society almost." P7 conveyed similar thoughts. She stated, "If anybody has to work the net, it's people of color because we really are going to need somebody to speak on our behalf. And, I think that's what is different even though people need that, when you really are different, and you are part of the other, whatever that group is, you really need somebody that is in the group to really say, Hey, she is ok. She is going to be fine. I would hire her myself."

P4 explained the positive impact of external career barriers on her career. "Because of where I am at in management right now, because of my experience, because of the name that I am creating around me, actually, I have been more approached to have opportunities outside of this company than coming without having the experience and before being in management before. It has actually been a good impact more than a negative impact."

Life transformations. After experiencing general career barriers, participants explained how their lives changed. Only a small number of respondents indicated they experienced no life changes. Two informants joined diversity and inclusion committees within their organizations. Some respondents used the external barriers to explore external employment options. One participant stated she no longer depends on corporate for job security. Another participant echoed this view, and she stated she now has multiple sources of income.

P1 alluded to the notion that she possesses a heightened awareness and diversity when she leads employees. P3 stated that she developed more tolerance and empathy toward others. P3, P6, and P7 stated they became more aware, careful, and possessed a mindset change after facing external career difficulties.

Theme associations. Under the theme of general career barriers, the participants articulated their career difficulties and the emotional responses, financial implications, professional relationships, and the life transformations that arose from their external career obstructions. The theme of general career barriers coincided with the research topic of career barriers as research confirmed the perception of career obstacles exists and

could hinder the entrance and the ascension of women managerial and leadership roles
(Cook & Glass, 2014b; Smith et al., 2012a, 2012b). The theme of general career barriers
paralleled to the concept of self-efficacy as hindrances could influence career success
factors that can affect the development of self-efficacy and regulate career paths of an
individual's career aspirations and intentions. The theme of general career barriers related
to the SCCT as the participants' self-efficacy beliefs are the lenses the respondents
viewed their career complications and their belief in a positive or negative career
outcome.

Emergent Theme Two: Self-Imposed Career Impediments

The theme of self-imposed career barriers emerged as the participants
communicated their lived experiences with self-limiting impediments that affected their
careers. The women elaborated on their career difficulties and the emotional responses,
financial implications, professional relationships, and the life transformations that arose
from their self-imposed career interferences (see Appendix J). The findings associated
with this theme include evidence from the interview data supporting the participants'
lived experiences with self-imposed career hindrances. The participants confirmed their
statements and my interpretations through member checking clarification techniques.

The theme of self-imposed career barriers coincided with the research topic of
career barriers as research confirmed some career difficulties stem from the intentional
behaviors of the individual (Dinakaran, 2016). Positive self-beliefs such as determination
and self-confidence are crucial components to assisting individuals to overcome

challenges (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014). However, negative self-limiting ideologies and career thoughts prevent women from appreciating their full potential (Sandler, 2014).

The theme of self-imposed career barriers corresponded to the theoretical frameworks of the concept of self-efficacy and the social cognitive career theory (SCCT). Researchers' opinion negative thinking and self-efficacy directly influences a person's career development (Andrews, Bullock-Yowell, Dahlen, & Nicholson, 2014). Based on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, the decreased self-efficacy adversely influences the participants' thinking patterns and demotivated them as they realized undesired career interferences. The SCCT confirmed this notion as the participants' self-efficacy beliefs and perceived undesirable career outcomes facilitated how they viewed their career obstacles. The participants' negative thinking formed self-induced barriers demotivating them from exercising agency in their career advancement pursuits (Lent et al., 2000).

Internal barriers. In alignment with this perspective, the research findings depicted an abundance of self-limiting career impediments (see Appendix J) the women in this study experienced. Based on the findings of this study, seventy-five percent of the participants described work-life balance as the dominant self-imposed career impediment. Sixty-three percent of the informants reported self-constructed career interferences associated with family and perception. Thirty-eight percent of the interviewees described self-inflicted career obstacles related to the lack of self-confidence, fear, finances, and risk-taking. Twenty-five percent of the participants described their self-induced career impediments as the reluctance to travel and personality. Of the self-limiting career

obstacles articulated, three themes emerged from the data that included work-life balance, family, and perception.

Work-life balance. In the study of Dinakaran (2016), the research findings yielded support that women continue to encounter challenges balancing their work and family responsibilities. In alignment with this study, the majority of the participants acknowledged work-life balance as a dominating self-constructed impediment that slowed down their careers. P8 stated, "I need to learn how to have work-life balance." P1 echoed this view by indicating "work-life balance in corporate environments is a struggle as a mother. There is a perception or an idea that because you are a working mother that you can't advance your career or there is an unspoken feeling that if you attempt to advance your career, then you are neglecting your family." P6 described trying to balance work and life obligations as stressful. She stated, "Being a fulltime employee and being a fulltime mom is like trying to climb this corporate ladder or like finagle my way through a corporate jungle gym because it is not a ladder."

Family. Researchers emphasized an adequate work-life balance is just as significant as family obligations (Dinakaran, 2016). In alignment with this study, an overwhelming majority of the participants stated their commitment to family was a self-limiting hindrance to their careers. P5 stated, "I kind of placed some limitations on myself because I wanted to make sure my family, my girls, were in a good position and I'm always there for them as required." Commenting on family commitment, P2 said, "The impediment was my finances and my family, so that made it really, really, hard for me to be able to say that. Because even if I got promoted, it was still five children under

like 11." P4 stated, "One of the things that in the beginning held me back a lot was actually my husband. As I open my eyes to the things, I understand that sometimes the sexism comes from having a woman that is having success and is actually in the process of building herself. Sometimes, men can feel uncomfortable, if I can, in that aspect but that's when I said… he would always try to drag me down." P1 stated, "I know that at one point in time I was feeding into society's perception of a mother... what traditional gender roles, for the most part. I reviewed my role as a wife and a mother as being able to balance or doing everything myself. I know that there were times where I said ok well I either travel or go for the higher position or I forfeit the time with my family. I believe it was more of a perception more than a reality just listening to people around me because I did not have to choose between the two."

Perception. Perceptions represent the reality of an individual's lived experiences that frame his or her beliefs of a person, situation, environment, or thing (Lent et al., 2000). In alignment with this notion, a prevailing view amongst interviewees regarding self-imposed career barriers was perception. P4 elucidated, "I know that we all have self-imposed barriers and everything is in the mind. Perception is reality." P6 stated, "I understand that every single thing that I want in life, period, if it was put in my heart, it was put in my mind and it is out there for me to get. So, if there is a barrier, it is because I am creating it in my own head."

P1 described her challenges with perception. She stated, "When I come into the workplace, I feel like I am harder on myself than anyone else. Being critical of yourself is an impediment. Obviously, you are not perfect. You look at other people and you are

watching these successes and you feel like if you are not moving up vertically, you feel like that's a failure. And it is not." P7 described her self-inflicted perception barrier as the fear of the future. She stated, "The higher up you are to the decision making the easier it is for you to get gone. I'd probably want to stay at least one level from the fire until we figure it out."

Emotional responses. The research findings depicted a mixture of emotional responses toward self-constructed career barriers (see Appendix K). Twenty-five percent of the participants communicated no regrets regarding their decisions of self-limiting barriers. There were five descriptions provided that described the informants' positive emotions toward self-imposed career barriers that included contentment, courageous, in control, powerful, and liberated. Thirteen imageries illustrated the distasteful emotions majority of the research participants possessed toward their self-induced career barriers. These descriptions include distracted, defeated, scared, fearful, sad, apathy, disappointed, mad, shame, frustration, indecisive, anger, and uncertain.

P4 acknowledged her self-limiting barriers affected her career advancement opportunities. When P4 attempted to address her self-induced hindrance of her husband, she recalled, "I was fearful, and it was very scary. P4 remembered that addressing her internal impediments took courage. She expressed after she divorced her husband, she felt liberated and felt he would no longer affected her career advancement opportunities. She stated, "As soon as I got back to the United States and I made a plan, there was nothing stopping me. I actually felt very powerful. I felt that I was in control of my own life."

P8 stated her self-imposed barriers sometimes caused her to be angry at herself. She stated, "I feel more frustration and anger at myself for constantly over-burdening myself with things that I really should have set more realistic expectations. I mean overachieve but not overachieve to the point where it is stressful for me."

After experiencing her self-induced barriers that directly affected career advancement opportunities, P5 stated she had no regrets. She declared, "My impediments placed on myself were based on my family values, and I would not exchange that for anything in this world. So, there's no regrets. No harsh feeling there at all. I did what I needed to do to make my children happy."

Financial implications. Only a small number of respondents indicated their self-imposed career barriers did not create financial implications. Majority of the participants stated their self-inflicted career barriers negatively impacted their financial situations. On the whole, the participants felt their self-constructed barriers limited their income, dreams, goals, and employment possibilities. In one account, the participant felt self-induced career barriers produced the same impact as general career barriers. In another account, the informant acknowledged her voluntary barriers caused her to be grossly underpaid. Specifically, P7 stated, "the rate in which my income has risen is probably slower because of (my self-imposed career barriers)."

Professional relationships. Thirty-eight percent of the participants argued their voluntary barriers did not affect any professional relationships, networking opportunities, or future employment openings. A recurring theme amongst interviewees was that self-constructed career barriers impacted professional relationships, networking opportunities,

and future employment openings. P1 explained her failure to take risks resulted in her not meeting others and growing her network. Also, she stated her lack of confidence in herself hindered others confidence in her. P6 articulated fear caused her to hold back from seizing professional relationships, networking opportunities, and future employment openings. In contrast, P8 stated her self-limiting career barriers of over analyzing, over commitment, being a perfectionist, and failing to balance work and life obligations opened a new employment opportunity for her.

Life transformations. Only a small number of respondents indicated there were no life changes based on their self-inflicted career barriers. Two of the participants divorced their spouses to resolve their barriers. One individual decided to hire a life coach to help address her self-constructed barriers. Another participant returned to school to complete her college degree that helped her eliminate the education barrier. One interviewee joined a leadership and public speaking professional group to overcome fear.

Theme associations. Under the theme of self-imposed career barriers, the participants articulated their career difficulties and the emotional responses, financial implications, professional relationships, and the life transformations that arose from their internal career obstructions. The theme of self-imposed career barriers corresponded to the research topic of career barriers by supporting the notion that some career difficulties stem from self-limiting and intentional behaviors that affect the career trajectories of individuals (Dinakaran, 2016).

The theme of self-imposed career barriers agreed with the concept of self-efficacy as positive self-beliefs such as determination and self-confidence lead to increased self-

efficacy levels that assist individuals in overcoming challenges (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014). In contrast, negative self-limiting ideologies and career thoughts influence a person's career development as it lowers self-efficacy levels and slows women down from appreciating their full potential (Andrews et al., 2014; Sandler, 2014). The decreased self-efficacy adversely influenced the participants' thinking patterns and demotivated them as they realized undesired career interferences. The theme of self-imposed career barriers concurred with the SCCT as the participants' self-efficacy beliefs were the lenses the respondents viewed their career complications and their belief in a positive or negative career outcome. The participants' negative thinking formed self-induced barriers demotivating them from exercising agency in their career advancement pursuits (Lent et al., 2000).

Emergent Theme Three: Career Challenges

The theme of career challenges emerged as the respondents recalled their lived experiences with career barriers (see Appendix L). The participants described the challenges they faced responding to the obstacles. The participants' accounts of the roadblocks varied significantly. Some of the challenges the interviewees articulated included gender bias, ethnicity discrimination, education, stereotypical assertions, poor management, managerial skills, interpersonal skills, communication, awareness, relationship building, gaining trust, work-life balance, flexible work schedules, family support, spiritual beliefs, self-confidence, and financial resources. Four themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis regarding this construct that included challenges related to education, technology, age, and physical body composition. The findings associated

with this theme include evidence from the interview data supporting the participants' career challenges as it related to career barriers. The participants confirmed their statements and my interpretations through member checking clarification techniques.

The career challenges theme corresponded with the research topic of career barriers as research confirmed some women define employment challenges, complexities, and obstructions as career barriers (Li, 2014). Career challenges inhibit the access and ascension of women to managerial and leadership roles (Raque-Bogdan et al., 2013). Career difficulties and challenges affect his or her career development (Andrews et al., 2014).

The career challenges theme coincided with the theoretical frameworks of the concept of self-efficacy and the social cognitive career theory (SCCT). Researchers' opinion there is a relationship between career barriers and self-efficacy (Andrews et al., 2014). The perception of career barriers has the propensity to encourage women to devalue their capabilities and fail to notice promotional opportunities (Novakovic & Gnillka, 2015). Based on this notion, career challenges have the potential to decrease or increase an individual's self-efficacy depending on his or her perception of the obstacle and how successful he or she believes the obstacle is navigable. The SCCT confirmed this notion as based on the participant's level of self-efficacy; she anticipates either positive or negative career outcomes. An increased self-efficacy level corresponds to higher career aspirations and positive anticipated career outcomes. A decreased self-efficacy level relates to lower career aspirations and negative anticipated career outcomes.

Educational barriers. Researchers indicate minorities perceive educational hindrances when trying to pursue career ambitions that affect life satisfaction (Piña-Watson, Jimenez, & Ojeda, 2014). When asked about current educational challenges, the participants were unanimous in the view that none of them perceived current educational obstacles (see Appendix M). P1 indicated she initially encountered challenges as she lacked a four-year degree. Later, she attained the bachelor's degree and eliminated the threat. P2 indicated she did not face challenges possessing only an associate's degree but feels it was because of her experience. She believes a degree would be a requirement now for her role. She believes the company would have hired her but would have required her to provide an anticipated degree date.

Some of the participants argued that higher education is not needed to move beyond their current roles. P5 believed she could move ahead in her career based on the acquired knowledge. P6 stated, "Where I am trending in my life, I don't (believe higher education is needed). I know that school is set for me to get a job. And, I don't want a good job. I want a good life."

In contrast, some participants opined the need of formal education beyond a four-year degree. As a minority P1 opined, "Yes, the four-year degree is great, but I will always feel like I have to do 10 times more." P2 possessed an associate's degree, but she stated to move beyond her role, she would probably need a master's degree.

Only a small number of respondents argued the necessity of informal education to move beyond their roles. P4 indicated her industry requires licenses for sales and managerial occupations. To navigate beyond her role, she requires the attainment of

various licenses such as a Series 63 license and a Series 7 license. P8 echoed this view by stating she believes certifications are equally important. According to P8, "It is very important to stay relevant, be able to roll with whatever the trend is and be able to adapt to change. I think really the only way in technology to adapt to change is to stay with whatever is current in the market. I think certifications is always something. I do think higher education is very important to stay relevant and toward your challenges."

Technological barriers. Researchers note that technology is a barrier for some adults based on the individual's age, desire to use technology, support needed to use the technology, the context and the usefulness of the technology (Lee & Coughlin, 2015). In alignment with this study, the participants' responses varied in their perceptions of technological challenges (see Appendix N). The research findings indicate the participants classified as millennials did not encounter technological challenges. Of the four Generation X participants who interviewed, just over half embraced technology and did not face challenges while the remaining 25% limited her use of technology to general application. Fifty percent of the Baby Boomer participants communicated computer savviness while the remainder 50% struggled with technology.

Age barriers. Potential blockages to the career of an individual are age barriers (Santos, 2016). In support of this study, the participants' faced diverse experiences associated with age hindrances (see Appendix O). The ages of the participants ranged from 27 to 59 years old. P1 opined, "It is harder to move into certain roles when you are a certain age. When I was younger, I think people think that you are young, dumb, and inexperienced. When you start to learn things, and you've learned lessons, you have to

prove to people that you have grown." Additionally, "Having people take you seriously as a young leader especially if you are leading people who are older than you, that is a challenge." P3 echoed similar views as she experienced reluctance from her direct reports as they were "really hesitant to report up to somebody that they could be their parent. People oftentimes see the younger person as the least knowledgeable which is not always the case." P1 stated, "Or, sometimes it is a challenge leading people who are younger than you too because they probably think you are old and senile."

P7 argued that she see age discrimination during many hiring processes. She recommended people remove the year they graduated from high school and college. P7 stated, "Fifty is not young anymore. Forty is not young anymore. You should even take off some of your experiences because if you got 30 years of experience, you didn't start when you were 10. As you change jobs, you have a little bit of a concern because are people saying how much earning potential or how many years is she going to stay with us."

Physical body composition barriers. Researchers noted there is a prevalence of physical body composition based discrimination in the work place (Flint & Snook, 2014). Equally important is that researchers state people encounter weight-based discrimination during the employment hiring process (Flint et al., 2016). With this notion in mind, there is a perception that obese individuals are less competent than others (Levine & Schweitzer, 2015). In alignment with these studies, the participants' articulated their experiences with discrimination based on their physical body compositions (see Appendix O).

P1 believed that weight-based discrimination negatively impacts her career and performance in the work place. P1 described herself as above average in weight based on societal standards. She stated, "In a corporate environment, there is an association with your physical health and your perceived ability to do certain things, or your perceived ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle (and the) decisions you make. But if I am a little bit above average in weight, the assumption is that I don't care about myself or that I'm not disciplined enough, or I don't have the understanding of how health plays a factor into me being of a healthy mind, sound, and body." She further explained that people who are above average in weight "have to work a little bit harder to prove themselves as equals to the person who looks good, has a perfect smile, and a perfect body makeup."

Some of the participants experienced other challenges associated with their body composition. P6 stated her supervisor communicated to her that her work slacks were inappropriate. She stated her thighs are thicker than average and she purchased new attire to avoid his concern. P4 uttered that she has received unwanted advances from men based on her prominent rear and bust. P4 stated, "I feel like I am looked at in a sexual way a lot." P3 described her physical body composition as busty. She indicated, "I have noticed that women are uncomfortable if I get male attention."

Theme associations. Under the theme of career challenges, the participants described the challenges they faced responding to the obstacles that included challenges related to education, technology, age, and physical body composition. The theme of career challenges paralleled to the research topic of career barriers as research confirmed some women define employment challenges, complexities, and obstructions as career

barriers that inhibit the access and ascension of women to managerial and leadership

roles and, ultimately, affect her career development (Andrews et al., 2014; Li, 2014;

Raque-Bogdan et al., 2013).

The career challenges theme corresponded with the concept of self-efficacy as

negative perceptions of career challenges have the propensity to encourage women to

devalue their capabilities, fail to notice promotional opportunities (Novakovic & Gnillka,

2015), and decrease or increase her self-efficacy depending on her perception of the

obstacle and how successful she believes the obstacle is navigable. The theme of career

challenges related to the SCCT by supporting the notion that an individual's level of self-

efficacy helps to determine whether a he or she anticipates positive or negative career

outcomes. An increased self-efficacy level corresponds to higher career aspirations and

positive anticipated career outcomes. In contrast, a decreased self-efficacy level concurs

with lower career ambitions and negative anticipated career results.

Emergent Theme Four: Career Management Strategies

The theme of career management strategies emerged as the respondents recalled

their lived experiences with internal and external career interferences (see Appendix P).

The participants elaborated on the strategies they exercised to travel through the career

difficulties. Five themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis regarding career

management strategies that included networking, mentoring, education, corporate

training, and physical exercise. The findings associated with this theme include evidence

from the interview data supporting the participants' career management strategies as it

related to career barriers. The participants confirmed their statements and my interpretations through member checking clarification techniques.

The career management strategies theme corresponded with the research topic of career barriers as research confirmed intervention programs and resources could significantly assist women with leadership opportunities (DeFrank Cole et al., 2014). Individuals view strategies as viable options that enhance his or her capability of steering through the perceived career impediments (Nordbakke, 2013). In fact, people employed career management strategies to cope proactively with obstacles in their careers (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014). Employees embrace self-management career strategies to cultivate their skills and to enhance their organizational performance (Wong, Mohd Rasdi, Abu Samah, & Abdul Wahat, 2017).

The career management strategies theme coincided with the theoretical frameworks of the concept of self-efficacy and the social cognitive career theory (SCCT). Researchers' opinion career intervention tactics increase self-efficacy and diminish the negative effects of career barriers by assisting individuals to navigate through the hindrances (Hirschi & Freund, 2014). Bandura argued an individual's level of self-efficacy can influence a person's beliefs and ultimately affect his or her decisions (Bandura, 1986). Based on this notion, an increased self-efficacy enriched the participants' thinking patterns and inspired them to employ career management strategies to navigate through the career interferences. The SCCT confirmed this notion as the participants' self-efficacy beliefs facilitated how they viewed their career obstacles and employed strategies that helped them to steer the difficulties and realize their career

aspirations. Through the deployment of career management techniques such as networking, mentoring, education, corporate training, and physical exercise, the participants ascertained their ability to navigate through career difficulties.

Networking. Researchers argued women managers use networking principles to gain social capital that helps them to enhance their leadership skills, career growth, and personal development (Klerk & Verreynne, 2017). In alignment with this study, seventy-five percent of the participants were members of diversity and inclusion groups where they networked. P5 explained she understands that networking is a necessity in today's world. P7 elucidated, "As a person of color, minority, you have to network even more." P6 stated, "I know that in the corporate world, it is not what you know, it is who you know. You just got to learn how to drink the Kool-Aid in the corporate world." P2 stated, "Through networking, I've learned how to overcome a lot of things where necessarily I was not in a network to do that." P3 had a similar view of networking. She stated networking "is how I have gotten my exposure within my organization as a professional. I have been afforded opportunities to network within my career. I didn't even know that I was networking when I was. So, when I would reach out to Human resources for support or when I would reach out to my older manager from my first department I would work in, I think they're the ones that behind the scenes gave me the boost."

Mentoring. Researchers found that some women support their careers through mentorships and sponsorships to assist them in their personal development, advance their careers, and increase their visibility in organizations (Kiaye & Singh, 2013). The lack of mentorships and sponsorships affect prospective promotional opportunities and personal

development (Tomlinson, Muzio, Sommerlad, Webley, & Duff, 2013). In alignment with these studies, the participants expressed their perspectives on mentoring. When asked about mentorship, the participants were unanimous in the view that mentoring was a necessary component of career advancement and growth.

P1 stated, "I wouldn't be where I am without mentorship. I don't think I could tolerate or maneuver through the obstacles and the barriers without mentors. I think in order to maneuver through obstacles you have to be deliberate and strategic. It's not something that you just know. You learn by experience. So, they (mentors) have been the foundation to my success for sure. If people don't share their knowledge with you, then you got to learn the hard way. I think the guidance of my mentors has really prevented me from making some huge mistakes."

P4 echoed similar thoughts about mentoring. She stated, "Without mentoring, I would be maybe in the same spot. I would only have my own opinions to see things, and I can only have one voice at the same time. I have a Board of Directors that I call people that I trust and that care about me. So, I constantly go to only those people for advice or what is your opinion on this so I can make better decisions based on what other people see around me." P6 stated, "I think that's 90% of the reason why I am where I am. I've found the right people to teach me the right things." P7 stated, "Mentoring helps because it gives me a sounding board and an objective person to kind of tell you what they think. Because if you are your own mentor, advocate, whatever, you are just going to agree with everything you do."

Educational attainment. For some women, a formal barrier to career growth is the lack of education and experience (Kiaye & Singh, 2013). The findings corroborate other results in the literature, which found that organizations offer women managerial opportunities based on their educational attainment and experience (Fei et al., 2017).

P1 opined formal education adds value and personal growth. P1 stated her educational experience expanded her horizons and allowed her to embrace diverse perspectives. P5 explained she used her education as a platform to navigate her career. P5 asserted that "Education is key to everything. Use it as a platform." P3 explicated, "Education gives you a better foundation. It teaches you discipline. It teaches you hard work. It teaches you that it's okay. You can fully function on four hours of sleep. It teaches you that the more you learn, there is so much more." P8 communicated her technical degree created additional employment opportunities for her.

Corporate training. When asked about corporate training, P1 and P8 opined corporate training did not assist them in passing through career difficulties. In contrast, the other participants viewed corporate training and learning workshops as a benefit and resource. P3 explained training initiatives "opens your eyes to more training that you need or think that you are good at because you don't necessary know." P7 believed, "Training helps of knowing more about yourself." P4 argued that "If we go to the barriers of promotability and the barriers of performance, then if you don't get those trainings, if you don't learn something new, you are stuck with your education and what you have in your mind."

Physical exercise. When asked about how the participants used physical exercise as a career strategy, the respondents were unanimously described physical exercise as a technique used to provide energy, manage stress, build confidence, and lose weight. P1 explicated, "It is almost essential if you can physically be able to incorporate in your life. It will help release endorphins, help you lower your blood pressure, (and) put you in a place where you are able to be more equipped to be able to encounter these things. I think in your natural state when you are enduring these obstacles; it increases your stress levels, so the exercise definitely helps decrease it for sure." P4 elucidated, "It actually helped me to have more confidence in myself because of how I was talking to myself to keep striving into what I was doing number one. And, number two because I was losing weight and as I said one of the things that was uncomfortable for me (was) that I gained weight. So, the fact that I was losing weight, for me, was I was feeling more confident. Exercise equals confidence to me." P6 stated "When we start to look good, we start to feel good when we look good. And, when you feel good and look good, you act better."

P7 communicated that physical exercise did not assist her in navigating her career barriers. She stated exercising her faith helped her to relieve stress. "My spirituality is very important to me. My faith, praying about things, and really just getting still and getting clear means more to me right now than exercising not that I couldn't add the two together."

Theme associations. Under the theme of career management strategies, the participants elaborated on the tactics they exercised to travel through the career difficulties that included approaches related to networking, mentoring, education,

corporate training, and physical exercise. The career management strategies theme corresponded with the research topic of career barriers as research confirmed intervention programs and resources could significantly assist women with managing their careers proactively and providing them with viable options that enhance their capability to steer through the perceived career hurdles (DeFrank Cole et al., 2014; Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Nordbakke, 2013; Wong et al., 2017).

The career management strategies theme related to the concept of self-efficacy as career intervention tactics increase self-efficacy and diminish the negative effects of career barriers by assisting individuals to navigate through the hindrances (Hirschi & Freund, 2014). An increased self-efficacy enriched the participants' thinking patterns and inspired them to employ career management strategies to navigate through the career interferences. The theme of career management strategies corresponded with the SCCT as the participants' self-efficacy beliefs facilitated how they viewed their career obstacles and employed strategies that helped them to steer the difficulties and realize their career aspirations. Through the deployment of career management techniques such as networking, mentoring, education, corporate training, and physical exercise, the participants ascertained their ability to navigate through career difficulties.

Emergent Theme Five: Career Barrier Counsel

The theme of career barrier counsel emerged as the participants offered advice to other women who faced career obstructions in their corporate career paths. The findings associated with this theme include evidence from the interview data supporting the participants' advice regarding navigating career barriers based on their lived experiences

with career difficulties (see Appendix Q). The participants confirmed their statements and my interpretations through member checking clarification techniques.

The career barrier counsel theme corresponded with to the research topic of career barriers. Research supports some women ascend above the glass ceiling and realize promotional leadership opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2014a). Women who transcend beyond the career impediments possess personal drive, impactful leadership aspirations, networking influence, adaptation to change, and a relentless focus to overcome challenges (Weidenfeller, 2012). Other strategies women used to cope with barriers included delineating relationship boundaries, being positive, remaining silent, ongoing commitment, and hard work (Irem et al., 2016).

The career barrier counsel theme concurred with the theoretical frameworks of the concept of self-efficacy and the SCCT. Researchers' found that women leaders who were successful in their professional lives surpassed the career hindrances based on their perception of success, highly valued traits, and the possession of certain influential factors (Macarie & Moldovan, 2013). Based on the concept of self-efficacy, the counsel the participants provided to other women has the potential to foster a perception of success and ultimately increase their self-efficacy. The SCCT confirmed this notion as the participants' increased self-efficacy beliefs make it possible for the other women to act on the advice provided by the participants to assist them in handling career complications. Their perceived perception of success based on their professional performance, work life balance, social esteem, recognition, role model qualities, and

successfully navigating career disturbances creates a platform for them to target their career aspirations.

Although general career barriers and self-imposed career obstacles occur, the upward mobility of women is conceivable. P1 stated, "Be aware that there are impediments out there, but do not allow the fact that they are out there govern your ability to advance." P8 wanted to advise other women that "it is all about creating your own universe. You can't allow people to dictate what your life is going to look like for you. You got to stay focused on what the goal is…what do you want to achieve. "Don't let your minority be your story."

Theme associations. Under the theme of career barrier counsel, the participants offered advice to other women who faced career obstructions in their corporate career paths. The career barrier counsel theme supported the research topic of career barriers as literature confirmed women, who ascend above the glass ceiling, realize promotional leadership opportunities, and transcend beyond the career impediments, possess attributes such as personal drive, hard work, positive mindset, commitment, leadership aspirations, networking influence, adaptation to change, a relentless focus to overcome challenges, a perception of success, and delineation of relationship boundaries (Cook & Glass, 2014a; Irem et al., 2016; Macarie & Moldovan, 2013; Weidenfeller, 2012).

The career barrier counsel theme corresponded with the concept of self-efficacy as the counsel the participants provided to other women has the potential to foster a perception of success and ultimately increase their self-efficacy. The theme of career barrier counsel coincided with the SCCT as the participants' increased self-efficacy

beliefs make it possible for the other women to act on the advice provided by the participants to assist them in handling career complications. Their perceived perception of success creates a platform for them to target their career aspirations.

Summary

In this section, I reiterated the purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that slowed down their professional careers. Chapter 4 included a detailed description of the expert panel review, the setting, and an analysis of the participants' demographics. Additionally, I illustrated a detailed overview of the data collection experience and the data analysis process.

The data collection experience occurred over 88 days. I collected data from 8 women between the ages of 20 and 60. To recruit participants, I extended research invitations through the LinkedIn and Walden University's Participant Pool. Also, I accepted candidate recommendations through referrals. Fifteen women expressed interest in participating in the study, but only 11 women met the study's criteria. I used purposive sampling to identify and select the individuals to serve as participants for the study. I collected data through face-to-face semistructured interviews. I initiated member checking after I transcribed and interpreted each interview.

The data analysis experience followed an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological research design. I employed the seven steps of the modified van Kaam to analyze the phenomenological data. I used NVivo 11 to organize, manage, code, and

categorize the data to identify themes, generalizations, and patterns that emerged from the content. I provided visual depictions of the experiences minority women managers and leaders encountered associated with career hindrances, the challenges faced responding to the career hurdles, the strategies used to overcome career barriers, and the counsel offered to other women to support their corporate ladder mobility and navigate career obstacles.

I explored the elements of trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations. This chapter culminated with a review of the study's results related to the research question. Chapter 5 begins by summarizing and interpreting the research findings. Also, I disclose the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. I reveal the implications and recommendations for action. I conclude the chapter by providing recommendations for further research opportunities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders who confronted general and self-imposed career interferences that slowed down their professional careers. Data were derived from eight women primarily through semistructured interviews to understand their experiences associated with career barriers. The data analysis experience emphasized the interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological design to understand fully the essences of the participants' perceived lived experiences.

Five key themes emerged from the data: (a) general career barriers, (b) self-imposed career impediments, (c) career challenges, (d) career management strategies, and (e) career barrier counsel. Under the theme of general career barriers, five subthemes emerged from the data that included external barriers, emotional responses, financial implications, professional relationships, and the life transformations. Similarly, under the theme of self-imposed career impediments, five subthemes emerged from the data that included internal barriers, emotional responses, financial implications, professional relationships, and the life transformations. Under the theme of career challenges, four subthemes emerged that included education, technology, age, and physical body composition. Under the theme of career management strategies, five subthemes emerged that included networking, mentoring, education, corporate training, and physical exercise. Under the theme of career barrier counsel, the participants advocated advice to other women who encountered deterrents while navigating their career paths. The emergent

themes supported to the research topic of career barriers as it related to the theoretical frameworks of the SCCT and the concept of self-efficacy.

Chapter 5 begins by interpreting the research findings. Additionally, I disclose the limitations of the study. I reveal the recommendations for further research opportunities. The chapter concludes with implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

The inclusion of women in positions of authority roles adds diverse perspectives to the leadership team, influences the effectiveness of the management, and affects the execution of organizational goals and objectives (Milenkovska, Markovska, & Nikolovski, 2017). The number of women advancing into middle level managerial and leadership roles is lacking, and possible causes are occupational stresses and career barriers (Fei et al., 2017). The study's results reflect those of Li (2014) who also found that employment complexities and obstructions serve as career barriers in the workplace. Women believed their perspectives toward employment barriers influenced their career success views and career advancement through factors that affect the development of self-efficacy and regulate trajectories of their career ambitions and objectives (Smith et al., 2012b). The women's self-efficacy guided their behaviors regarding their career paths (Bandura, 1977). The women who possessed increased self-efficacy and positive career related results achieved successful career aspirations and performance fulfillments (Lent et al., 1994). In contrast, the women who possessed decreased self-efficacy and adverse career related results realized undesired career ambitions and performance dissatisfactions (Lent et al., 1994).

General Career Barriers

Many women opined the career trajectory and development of women is not a linear progression intended to assist their advancement (Hertneky, 2012). Instead, the career development of women resembles a snakelike form or a nonlinear path. Aligned with Evans (2013) and Carli and Eagly (2016), women perceived their leadership career paths differed from that of men, and there are significant differences between the obstacles that women face as opposed to men in leadership occupations. This finding is consistent with that of Araújo-Pinzón, Álvarez-Dardet, Ramón-Jerónimo, and Flórez-López (2017) who found that authority figures place women into horizontal segregation managerial positions that are socially related to stereotypical gendered attributes of women instead of placing women into vertical managerial positions of authority. The researchers found that horizontal segregation did not offer women access to control-based managerial occupations.

The findings of the study emphasized the emergence of six themes associated with general career obstacles that included ethnicity, the perception of others, age, finances, gender, and lack of managerial support. Women find that they encounter career difficulties based on their ethnicity and the stereotypical assumptions of others (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). Women believe they received different treatment and are singled out based on their racial/ethnic affiliation (Kong, 2016). The perceptions and stereotypical assumptions of others adversely affect women's career experiences and performance (Deemer et al., 2014).

The barrier of age was another subtheme of external barriers that emerged during this study. Potential blockages to the career of an individual are age barriers (Santos, 2016). The perception of age discrimination adversely affects an individual's well-being, perceived longevity, and life expectancy (Avidor, Ayalon, Palgi, & Bodner, 2017). Women experience more perceptions of age-related barriers in their careers than their male counterparts (Watts et al., 2015).

The financial barriers were another subtheme of external barriers that emerged during this study. Gendered salary differences occur across industries and professions (Carvajal, Armayor, & Deziel, 2012). The rising salary inequality issue imposes on disadvantaged categorizes such as single mothers and minorities (Merluzzi, & Dobrev, 2015). The concern regarding wage inequalities is that it creates financial barriers for women on macro and micro levels (Clark & Bower, 2016). Possible explanations of the salary differences are gendered based salary decisions, the lower salary expectations of women, negotiation limitations, career interruptions, work experience, and the claim of male-wealth stereotypes (Evers & Sieverding, 2014).

Gender bias and discrimination was another subtheme of external barriers that emerged during this study. Female managers perceive gender inequality more than men (Tominc, Šebjan, & Širec, 2017). Gender norms shape and influence the perceptions of others and ultimately, affect the treatment of men and women (Overbeke, Bilimoria, & Perelli, 2013). Researchers believe it is crucial for organizations to provide equal opportunities for women as men to avoid career hindrances (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013). Efforts of gender parity provide women with a platform to emphasize their skills, talents,

and capabilities (Othman & Othman, 2015). Women believed they faced challenges when they demonstrated agentic emotions or behaviors without authorization as their ethnicity and gender were not congruent with the socially accepted characteristics of the role of a woman manager or leader (Livingston et al., 2012). Women voiced frustrations regarding the treatment of their male counterparts as it was not the same as themselves (Johnston & Lee, 2012). Some women felt men were subject to different rules, requirements, and expectations even when there was the same level of education and experience (Johnston & Lee, 2012). Also, some women opined they did not fit the prototype of a manager because of the perception of gender stereotypes (Othman & Othman, 2015).

The lack of managerial support was another subtheme of external barriers that emerged during this study. Managerial support is the most effective technique used to minimize career interferences and occupational stressors (Fei et al., 2017). In the study of Bellou et al. (2015), the researchers found that women value the quality of workplace relationships and managerial support more than their male counterparts. Conversely, Hafeez and Akbar (2015) noted leaders provided insufficient support to middle level women managers.

Self-Imposed Career Impediments

Some career interferences result from self-limiting and intentional actions of an individual (Dinakaran, 2016). Although some positive self-induced behaviors such as determination and self-confidence complement a person (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014), negative self-limiting ideologies and career thoughts prevent women from appreciating their full potential (Sandler, 2014). Negative thinking and self-efficacy directly influence

a person's career development (Andrews et al., 2014). Based on the concept of self-efficacy, the decreased self-efficacy adversely influences the participants' thinking patterns and demotivated them as they realized undesired career interferences. From the SCCT perspective, the decreased self-efficacy and perceived undesirable career outcomes dictated how the individuals viewed their career obstacles.

The findings of this study included the emergence of three themes associated with self-limiting career obstacles that included work-life balance, family, and perception. Women believed they experienced challenges balancing their work responsibilities and family obligations (Myers & Major, 2017). This finding is harmonious with Kolade and Kehinde (2013) who found that less than 50% of their respondents claimed they possessed an adequate work-life balance without conflicts. Based on this notion, the researchers ascertained the importance of finding a continuous supportive balance between work and family responsibilities to avoid conflicts (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013).

Family was another subtheme of internal barriers that emerged during this study. Some women confirmed that their commitment to family obligations was just as significant as work-life balance (Dinakaran, 2016). This study produced results that corroborate with Gbadamosi, and Osabutey (2013) who found working mothers face complications balancing parenting responsibilities with career aspirations. Also, women communicated unsupportive spouses and family responsibilities were significant challenges that affected their careers (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013). In the study of Mekonnen Tadesse (2017), the researcher argued family affairs influence the work

performance of women as women were socialized to focus more on family responsibilities. Women alleged that they needed support from their families to develop, pursue, and execute professional career aspirations (Mekonnen Tadesse, 2017).

Perception was another subtheme of internal barriers that emerged during this study, specifically, the perception of others and the perception of oneself. In alignment with Lent et al. (2000), perceptions represent the reality of an individual's lived experiences that frame his or her beliefs of a person, situation, environment, or thing. An individual's perception inclines to encourage the person to devalue his or her capabilities and fail to notice promotional opportunities (Novakovic & Gnillka, 2015). There is a link between the individual's perception and his or her career successes (Smith et al., 2012a; Smith et al., 2012b). This finding is harmonious with Andrews et al. (2014) who argued the individuals' perception of themselves, their career growth, and career development influenced their thoughts and affected self-efficacy. Based on this notion, Creed and Hood (2014) argued the significance of self-efficacy and portraying an optimistic and positive view of his or her future as he or she navigated through career distractions and hindrances.

Career Challenges

Career hindrances slow down the access and ascension of women into managerial and leadership roles (Raque-Bogdan et al., 2013). The findings of this study emphasized the emergence of four subthemes associated with career challenges that included education, technology, age, and physical body composition. This study produced results that corroborate the findings of Piña-Watson et al. (2014) who found minorities perceive

educational hindrances when trying to pursue career ambitions that affect life satisfaction. Some career challenges in the workplace stem from subtle prejudices toward employees (Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, & Lindsey, 2017). Discrimination in work environments epitomize threats to an individual's psychological well-being. Some threats represent subtle discrimination such as undermining the learning or educational achievements in academic settings (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014).

Researchers note that technology is a barrier for some adults based on the individual's age, desire to use technology, support needed to use the technology, the context and the usefulness of the technology (Lee & Coughlin, 2015). Technology barriers related to implementation stem from technology anxiety, the comfort and willingness to use technology, and trust in the security of the technology (Neyens & Childers, 2017). There are late adopters of technology that may have limited access to technology at work and home and may be less interested or willing to adopt technological advancements (Neyens & Childers, 2017).

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) made it illegal for employers to discriminate against anyone who is 40 years of age and older but does not offer protection to individuals less than 40 years of age (USA.gov, n.d.). This law helps to guard against overt age bias but encounters difficulties regulating subtle age inequity. The study's results reflect those of Stypinska and Turek (2017) who found that age prejudice in the workplace takes the form of hard and soft discrimination. In their study, approximately 29% of their respondents believed they experienced soft bias more than hard discrimination. In contrast, approximately 16% of the informants believed they

experienced hard discrimination more than soft bias. Hard discrimination refers to overt and illegal behaviors that influence the development of the employee (Stypinska & Turek, 2017). In contrast, soft discrimination refers to the subtle but legal behaviors that negatively impact the employee (Stypinska & Turek, 2017).

Age discrimination, whether overt or subtle, whether soft or hard, are potential blockages to the career development of his or her career (von Schrader & Nazarov, 2016) and adversely affect his or her well-being, perceived longevity, and life expectancy (Avidor et al., 2017). Consistent with this notion, researchers found some people's views toward ageing unintendedly operated as self-fulfilling predictions by prejudicing them to classify the behaviors of others as age discrimination (Voss, Wolff, & Rothermund, 2017). Equally important, these researchers found that people who possess negative perceptions of age unfairness may act in a manner to solicit responses and behaviors that support age discrimination (Voss et al., 2017).

Another career challenge women encountered are weight based biases in their places of employment. My results reflect those of Flint and Snook (2014), who found a prevalence of physical body composition based discrimination in the workplace (Flint & Snook, 2014). This finding is harmonious with Levine and Schweitzer (2015) who argued weight based inequality stem from the perception that obese individuals are less competent than others. With this notion in mind, Flint et al. (2016) argued that physical body composition based discrimination occur as early as during the employment hiring process.

Career Management Strategies

Career management intervention programs and resources have the propensity to significantly assist women with leadership opportunities (DeFrank Cole et al., 2014). Women envision career management strategies as viable options to enhance their navigation through the perceived career impediments (Nordbakke, 2013), to cope proactively with obstacles in their careers (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014), and to enhance their organizational performance (Wong et al., 2017). Career intervention tactics increase self-efficacy and diminish the adverse effects of career barriers by assisting individuals to navigate through the hindrances (Hirschi & Freund, 2014). An increased self-efficacy enriched individuals' thinking patterns and inspired them to employ career management strategies to navigate through the career interferences. Through the lens of the SCCT, the individuals' self-efficacy beliefs facilitated how they viewed their career obstacles and employed strategies that helped them to steer through the employment difficulties and realize their career aspirations.

Under the theme of career management strategies, five subthemes emerged that included networking, mentoring, education, corporate training, and physical exercise. The study's findings revealed women affirmed that networking was an essential component to navigating through career hindrances. Women managers use networking principles to gain social capital to help them enhance their leadership skills, career growth, and personal development (Klerk & Verreynne, 2017). Networking fosters the creation of new connections that expand the scope and influence of an individual's social circle (Merluzzi & Dobrev, 2015). Women seek networking opportunities to expand their social

circle into male dominated networks as a tool to gain insight into promotional opportunities (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014). In the study of Weidenfeller (2012), the respondents articulated there is an added value when women network through strategic relationships by creating a web of personal and professional connections and relationships that allow influence in a collaborative manner across the organization to extend mobility and promotional opportunities.

Another career management technique used is mentoring. Establishing mentorship partnerships support women in their development pursuits, advancement of their careers, and increases their visibility in organizations (Kiaye & Singh, 2013). In contrast, the absence of mentorships and sponsorships affect prospective promotional opportunities and personal development (Tomlinson et al., 2013). In the study of Tolar (2012), the participants described their mentors as role models and sources of inspiration. The respondents felt their mentors lead them to career options in leadership, troubleshooted problems, removed career hindrances, helped to define personal and professional visions, and encouraged them to follow their passions. Women viewed the enrichment of their lives is a result of the presence of formal and informal mentors.

Pursuing higher education is another career management strategy. Organizations offer women managerial advancement opportunities based on their educational attainment and experience (Fei et al., 2017). Similarly, Hurley and Choudhary (2016) noted that the years of education significantly influences advancement opportunities. To overcome educational barriers, women returned to school to achieve higher educational degrees (Kiaye & Singh, 2013).

Consistent with the literature, women employed corporate and professional training as a career intervention strategy. These findings support Cook and Glass (2014b) who opined women attain positions of authority based on their credentials and training profiles. Women pursued specialized managerial and leadership courses, continuing education classes, and leadership training as intervention techniques (Macarie & Moldovan, 2013). Women expanded their network of influence that also provided them access to training and development opportunities that helped to navigate career interferences (Tlaiss, 2014).

Physical exercise is another technique used to as a career intervention strategy. Women employed health interventions such as eating healthy and engaging in physical exercise (Turner & Lingard, 2016). In the study of Johansson, Tiernari, and Valtonen (2017), researchers noted that managers, driven by wellness, structure their lives toward healthy eating and physical exercise. Aligned with Sandler (2014), the participants engaged in physical exercise as a tool to enhance their self-image, self-esteem, and to relieve stress.

Career Barrier Counsel

Specifically, under the theme of career barrier counsel, the participants advocated advice to other women who encountered deterrents while navigating their career paths. Aligned with Mishra and Mishra (2016), career hindrances were undetectable barriers that slowed women's ascension into advancement opportunities. Lee-Gosselin et al. (2013) argued overcoming career interferences and shattering glass ceilings is an attainable strategy.

Successful women leaders employed techniques for dealing with and overcoming the career hindrances such as empathetic intelligence, self-efficacy, endurance, hope, perseverance, patience, and passion (Irem et al., 2016). Women who ascended above career obstructions implemented strategies such as delineating relationship boundaries, being positive, remaining silent, ongoing commitment, and hard work (Irem et al., 2016). Equally important, women who transcended beyond the career impediments possessed personal drive, impactful leadership aspirations, networking influence, adaptation to change, and a relentless focus to overcome challenges (Weidenfeller, 2012). Successful women who advance in managerial and leadership occupations possessed perceptions of success, highly valued traits, varied experiences, higher education, and specific influential factors (Macarie & Moldovan, 2013). Empowered women in leadership positions emphasized attributes such as self-determination, professional growth, impact, purpose, trust, self-efficacy, and independence (Mehta & Sharma, 2014).

Consistent with the concept of self-efficacy, the counsel the participants provided to other women could foster a perception of success and ultimately increase their self-efficacy. Aligned with the SCCT, an enriched level of self-efficacy beliefs increases the individual's ability to act on the career counsel to assist them in handling career complications. Their perception of success creates a platform for them to aim at their career ambitions.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation section of a study outlined the potential weaknesses of a research initiative and framed the research effort (Brutus et al., 2012). In Chapter 1, I anticipated

one limitation to this study. I communicated the sheer nature of this investigative work and the number of minority middle level managers and leaders employed in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region might limit the access to a larger population of women leaders. As I anticipated, I did encounter challenges attracting minority women employed in middle level managerial and leaderships roles within the venue scope to participate in this study. Over the data collection experience of 88 days, 15 women expressed interest in participating as a participant. Four women were disqualified as participants. One woman did not work in the finance and insurance sector. The other three women were Caucasians and did not meet the minority ethnicity requirement.

In this study, I aimed to attract a group of diverse minority women to understand their lived experiences with career barriers. The study's findings were limited to the experiences of Black/ African Americans and Latina/ Hispanics. Limitations of this research study should take into consideration future research initiatives to include women of all ethnicities. Future research projects should include a more extensive participant pool with a greater diversity of ages, experiences, ethnicities, education, and perceived career barriers. A more significant level of diverse cultural participants could lead to further insight and varied perspectives of the emergent themes.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although researchers argue inclusion and diversity are significant components of organizational success (Douglas, Williams, & Walsh, 2017), there continues to remain an underrepresentation of ethnic minority women in positions of authority (Michailidis et

al., 2012). Minority women confront career interferences that have the propensity to discourage them from advancing into greater authoritative positions (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). A limitation of this study was the number of minority middle level managers and leaders employed in Central Florida and the finance and insurance sector. The venue and industry limited my access to a larger population of women leaders. A future recommendation is made to expand the research industry and venue to include a more significant number of participants for the study.

Although this study aimed to explore the lived experiences associated with career deterrents of a diverse group of minority women, the study's findings were limited to the experiences of Black/ African Americans and Latina/ Hispanics. A future research recommendation is made to include a higher diverse mix of minority women managers and leaders, including Asian women, to understand their internal and external employment hindrances that slowed down their careers. I recommend the equal representation of the participants, based on ethnicity, for a more inclusive exploration.

Results found in this study point to the recommendation of further research into the career obstructions women in managerial and leadership position encounter in all ethnicities. Future research projects should include a broader participant pool with a greater diversity of ages, experiences, ethnicities, education, and perceived career barriers. A more significant level of diverse cultural participants could lead to further insight and varied perspectives of the emergent themes.

Further research on internal and external employment hindrances women encounter in various levels of management is recommended. Specifically, I recommend

future research initiatives that explore how general and self-imposed employment interruptions impact women at various levels of management. Most studies in this area (Cain, 2015; Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016; Li, 2014; Rowley et al. 2015, Sabharwal, 2015; Sandler, 2014) focused on specific management levels, but I conclude that completing a study that explores how career barriers affect women at various levels of management would be a good area of research.

Implications

The study's results revealed the potential to contribute to a positive social change from various perspectives. The study can weigh in from an individual and family viewpoint. Also, this study can contribute to the field of management through its application in business practice. This research endeavor can add value to the body of knowledge from a theoretical perspective by influencing and promoting social change, educating organizational managers and leaders, and enhancing the wellbeing of others.

Individual and Family Implications

From an individual perspective, each participant recalled lived experiences associated with career interferences. Some of the experiences appeared to be painful memories while others seemed to be triumphant feats. Positive social change can occur when the individual becomes more aware of the career barriers and makes a choice to accept the existence of the obstacle or to fight for a different reality. As the participants recalled their lived experiences, I observed that the respondents did not discount their days of small beginnings with career hindrances. In fact, instead of allowing the career

distractions to derail their careers, many of the participants took control of their lives and modified their career paths.

From a family perspective, as women become more aware of career hindrances, they can use this topic as a conversational piece with their children and with loved ones to share their experiences and knowledge of career difficulties. As people raise more awareness to career impediments, others may become more aware of its potential to slow down career paths and learn how to maneuver through these interferences. Women can articulate the strategies they employed to overcome career impediments and the advice they received to navigate through the career distractions. Additionally, women can learn to be a source of support and guide other family members through career difficulties.

Implications for Management Practice

Gender imbalance and inequality in authoritative positions can limit the benefits of gender diversity in a work environment (Cook & Glass, 2014b; Hampden, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2015; Powell & Butterfield, 2015b). There is an added value when organizational figure heads understand the behaviors of women managers and leaders and its connections to internal and external barriers. When organizational managers and leaders become more self-aware of the perceived impassable career glass ceilings and obstructions, they can initiate sensitivity training, diversity training, and personal development training to help their employees maneuver, overcome, and navigate through career difficulties. The knowledge of these perceived impenetrable career obstacles and the navigational training and tools provided to employees may minimize the deceleration

of women managers and leaders from advancing into higher management and leadership roles.

Theoretical Implications

Research indicates the upward mobility of all women, including minority women into higher authority roles, significantly decreases as they advance up the corporate ladder as a result of career barriers (Addai, Ofori, Bioh, & Avor, 2017; Daldrup-Link, 2017; Rowley, Lee, & Lan, 2015; Sandler, 2014). This study contributed to theory by adding to the more substantial body of scholarly knowledge with insight and a more in-depth understanding of the general career barriers and the self-imposed career impediments minority women in authority roles faced. Specifically, this study explained how the concept of self-efficacy and the SCCT could enrich or prejudice a person's beliefs toward career obstacles and ultimately affect her decisions regarding their career aspirations, career paths, and potential advancement opportunities. The results of this study can assist women in recognizing proactively potential internal and external career interferences. Additionally, this research effort elucidated the strategies and techniques the participants used to maneuver, overcome, and navigate through career difficulties. Equally important, this study included advice to other women who faced career obstructions in their professional paths. The career barrier counsel may equip women with the knowledge of how to surpass the employment hindrances and navigate a path through the perceived impenetrable career difficulties to realize socioeconomic parity.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The involvement of women in the labor market remained the same in 2015 and 2016 with 46.8% of women occupying the workforce (U.S. BLS, 2017). Specifically, in 2016, women occupied 39.1% of management occupations where 7.5% were Black/African American, 6.1% were Asians, and 9.9% were Latina/Hispanic descent (U.S. BLS, 2017). This gender inequality and ethnic imbalance in authoritative positions can limit the benefits of gender diversity in a work environment (Cook & Glass, 2014b; Hampden, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2015; Powell & Butterfield, 2015b).

The findings of the study contributed to positive social change as it furnished organizational managers and leaders with the acumen to recognize career barriers, identified strategies and techniques to overcome occupational hurdles, provided tools to shield against professional career hindrances, and offered advice on navigating internal and external career barriers. The insight gained from this effort can equip both the male and female species with the knowledge of perceived interferences that limit career opportunities and describe techniques to manage better impediments in the workplace. The knowledge gained from this study can help others to become self-aware and understand the behaviors, actions, and impediments that have the propensity to hinder them from realizing their career aspirations and full career potential.

<div align="center">

Conclusions

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There is an underrepresentation of women in every managerial and leadership rank in both public and private sectors. Research revealed only 39.1% of women occupied management and leadership occupations in 2016 as opposed to the 60.9% of

men employed in management and leadership roles. A possible explanation of the underrepresentation of women in authoritative positions is discrimination. Discrimination, whether overt or subtle, whether soft or hard, are potential blockages to the career development of women (von Schrader & Nazarov, 2016) and adversely affects their well-being, perceived longevity, and life expectancy (Avidor et al., 2017).

The core concern is the absence of women in leadership occupations minimizes career aspirations, reduces the benefits of gender diversity, and lowers growth opportunities for women in the work environment (Cook & Glass, 2014b; Hampden, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2015; Powell & Butterfield, 2015b). Although researchers argue inclusion and diversity are significant components of organizational success, there remains an unresolved quandary of internal and external career interferences that minority women confront that slow down their access and ascension into managerial and leadership roles. While this study's findings focus on minority women managers and leaders, its findings could easily relate to any woman, regardless of ethnicity.

In my study, I reveal some career interferences are created by external influences while some individuals create career obstacles themselves. It is vital for leaders to become self-aware of the perceived impassable glass ceilings and the self-limiting behaviors that can serve as career hindrances to women leaders and discourage them from advancing into higher management and leadership roles. Regardless of the type of career hindrance, women can employ career management intervention strategies to help navigate themselves through the employment hurdles and create platforms for them to target their career aspirations.

Organizations can benefit from the diversity, array of management skills, and varied leadership styles that women contribute to businesses (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). A diverse leadership team inclusive of men and women can foster corporate governance, increased organizational performance, and enhanced decisions (Evans, 2013). The inclusion of women in positions of authority roles adds diverse perspectives to the leadership team, influences the effectiveness of the management, and affects the execution of organizational goals and objectives (Milenkovska et al., 2017). The integration of women in decision making authority positions could increase the representation of women in organizations, open the door of promotional opportunities for other women, and extend the tenure of women in authoritative roles (Cook & Glass, 2014b). When women see organizational efforts of gender parity, it has the capability of creating platforms for them to emphasize their skills, talents, and capabilities (Othman & Othman, 2015).

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Appendix A: Solicitation for Study Participants

Research Project: Exploring Career Barriers and Self-Constructed Impediments of

Minority Women Managers and Leaders

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, and I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The study explores the lived experiences of minority women managers and leaders who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career impediments that could impede them from advancing forward in their professional careers. The study will consist of 45 to 60-minute interviews to gather data for my research study. Participation in the study is voluntary, and if you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. Your name and any person information will not be used in the research study and any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

The requirements for this study are that you must:

- Be a fluent English speaker

- Be a minority woman between the ages of 20 and 60

- Be employed in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida region

- Be a manager and leader in a middle level authoritative positions

- Have current or previous experiences with career hindrances

Your participation will not pose a risk to your safety or wellbeing. Benefits of being in the study may lead to a greater understanding of the career barriers women face in the workplace that could impede career advancement.

Please note that not all volunteers will be asked to take part in this research study. The researcher will follow up with all volunteers to let them know whether or not they were selected for the study. I seek to recruit three participants to interview in each age category of 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-60. I will determine the participants to interview based on the pre-screen responses and the diversity the participant can bring to the study. I will evaluate the participants on a first come first serve basis.

If you interested in participating in the study or have questions regarding this study, please contact Octavia Harris at xxxxx or via xxxx.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Octavia A. Harris

Ph.D. Student Walden University

Appendix B: Email Request to Prescreen Potential Study Participants

Research Project: Exploring Career Barriers and Self-Constructed Impediments of

Minority Women Managers and Leaders

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, and I would like to invite you to

participate in my research study. The study explores the lived experiences of minority

women managers and leaders in the finance and insurance sector in the Central Florida

region, who perpetually encounter general career barriers and self-imposed career

impediments that could impede them from advancing forward in their professional

careers.

Please note that not all volunteers will be asked to take part in this research study.

The researcher will follow up with all volunteers to let them know whether or not they

were selected for the study. I seek to recruit three participants to interview in each age

category of 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-60. I will determine the participants to interview

based on the pre-screen responses and the diversity the participant can bring to the study.

I will evaluate the participants on a first come first serve basis.

If you interested in participating in the study or have questions regarding this

study, please contact Octavia Harris at 407-417-1867 or via email,

octavia.harris@waldenu.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Octavia A. Harris

Ph.D. Student Walden University

Study Participant Pre-screening Questions

Research Project: Exploring Career Barriers and Self-Constructed Impediments of

Minority Women Managers and Leaders

1. What is your full name?

2. What is your gender? (male or female)

3. What is your date of birth?

4. What is your ethnicity?

   White

   Black/ African American

   Asian

   Latina/Hispanic

   Other: _____

5. Are you a fluent English speaker? If not, what is your preferred language of

   choice?

6. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

   Some High School

   High School Diploma

   GED

   Associate's Degree

   Bachelor's Degree

   Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

7. What is the name of your employer?

8. How long have you been employed with your current employer?

9. What is your leadership rank?

Front-line supervisor

Middle-level manager

Top-level manager

Executive

10. What is your job title?

11. How long have you been employed with your current role?

12. What are some of the perceived career barriers that you have experienced in the workplace?

Appendix C: Study Participant Notification of Acceptance Letter

Research Project: Exploring Career Barriers and Self-Constructed Impediments of

Minority Women Managers and Leaders

Thank you for your interest in this research project. Please allow this email to serve as an acceptance notification for you to partake in this research initiative as a research participant. For your convenience, I have attached an Informed Consent Form that contains all the information about the study. Your signature or Email acknowledgement confirms that you to agree to participate in this research endeavor, and you agree with the terms of the study. Please read the form carefully and do not hesitate to reach out to me regarding any questions or concerns.

In addition, please allow this email to serve as a formal request for an in-person interview that will consume approximately 45 to 60 minutes of your time at a venue of your preference. Your participation in the study is voluntary and all information collected will be kept confidential.

First Choice:

- Date: _____

- Time: _____

- Interview Location: _____

Second Choice:

- Date: _____

- Time: _____

- Interview Location: _____

Third Choice:

- Date: _____

- Time: _____

- Interview Location: _____

I look forward to our meeting and learning about your experience as it relates to career obstacles in the work place. Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns about the details of the study and your participation in the study, please contact me at xxxx or via xxxxx.

Sincerely,

Octavia Harris
Ph.D. Student Walden University

Appendix D: Recruitment Process

Communicate
research initiative
using various engines

E-mail Request to
interested volunteers
to participate in a
prescreening

Purposive sampling
used to identify and
select research
participants

**Notify selected
research
participants by
an acceptance
letter**
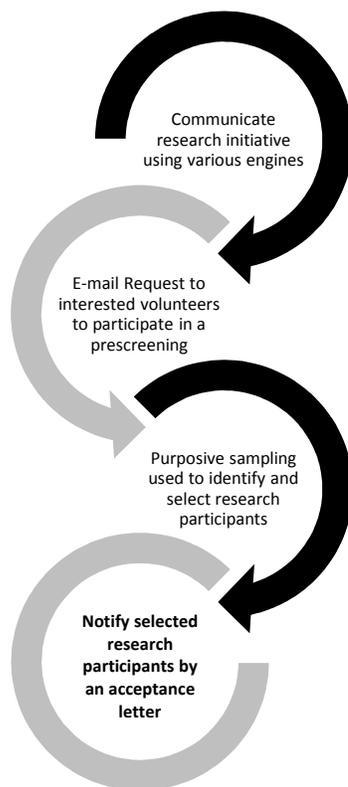
Appendix E: Data Validation and Authentication

Member Checking
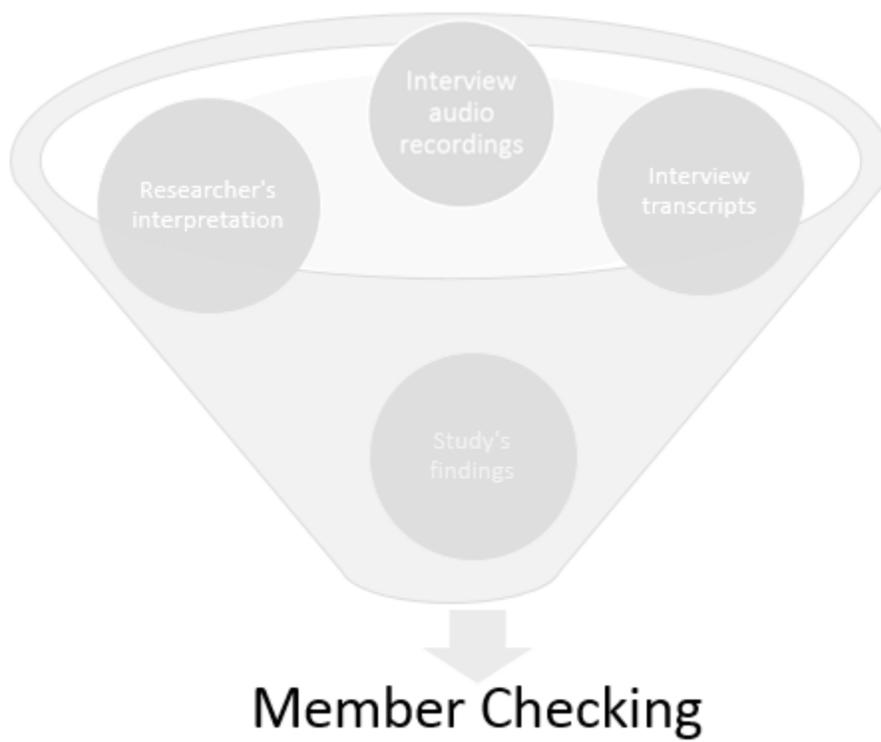
Appendix F: Data Evaluation and Review Phase

Data evaluation | Identification of generalizations and themes | Assignment codes to data | Data interpretation | Data Analysis | Identification of study's results
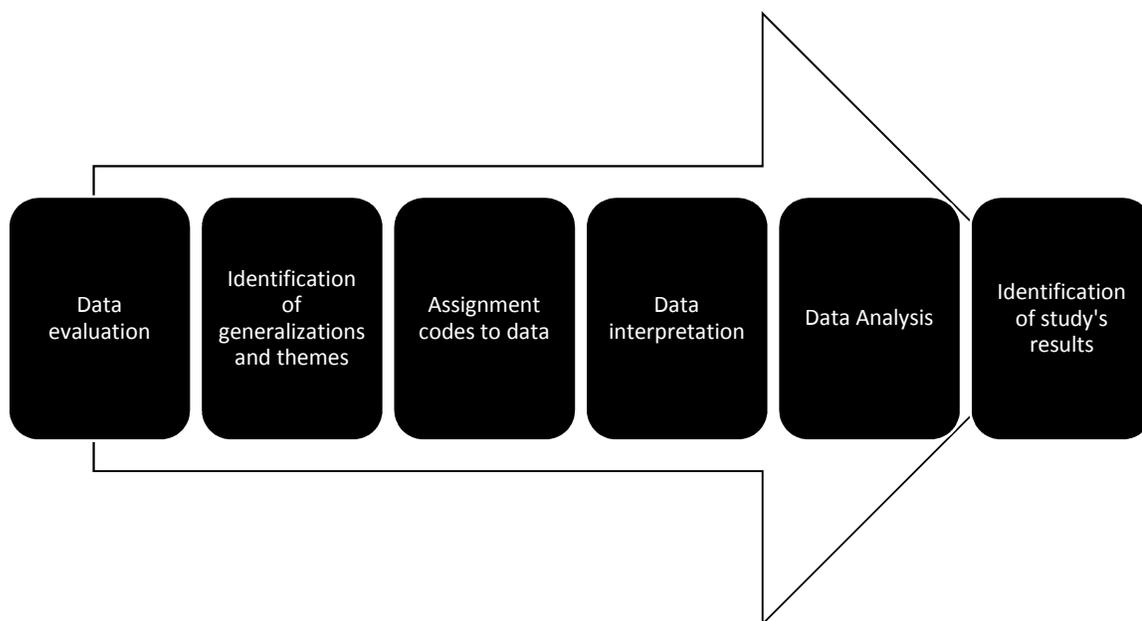
Appendix G: Interview Questions

Research Project: Exploring Career Barriers and Self-Constructed Impediments of

Minority Women Managers and Leaders

Question 1: How do study participants you describe the general career barriers in the

workplace that impeded you from promoting upward?

Probes:

- How would you describe the financial implications of the career obstacle?

- What circumstances changed, if any, in your life as a result of the career

  hindrance?

- What has been the impact, if any, relating to the professional relationships,

  networking opportunities, and future employment openings, and as a result of the

  career hindrance?

Question 2: How do study participants describe the self-imposed career impediments that

impeded you from promoting upward?

Probes:

- How would you describe the financial implications of the self-imposed obstacle?

- What circumstances changed, if any, in your life as a result of the self-imposed

  hindrance?

- What has been the impact, if any, relating to the professional relationships, networking opportunities, and future employment openings, and as a result of the self-imposed hindrance?

Question 3: How did study participants respond to the career barriers?

Probes:

- Please take a moment to describe the emotions you felt after experiencing the career barrier.

- Please take a moment to describe the emotions you felt after experiencing the self-imposed career impediments.

Question 4: How did the study participants describe the challenges they encountered responding to the career barriers?

Probes:

- What roadblocks or challenges, if any, have you experienced with career barriers?

- What technological challenges, if any, have you experienced that could create a career hindrance?

- Please tell me about any educational or skillset changes, if any, that you have possessed.

- What challenges, if any, did you experience relating to your age?

- What challenges, if any, did you experience relating to your body composition?

Question 4: How do the study participants describe the strategies they employed to overcome the career obstacles?

Probes:

- Please describe the methods or strategies you employed to overcome the career obstacles.

- How did networking assist you in navigating through career hindrances?

- How did mentoring assist you in navigating through career hindrances?

- How did education assist you in navigating through career hindrances?

- How did training assist you in navigating through career hindrances?

- How did exercise assist you in navigating through career hindrances?

Question 5: What advice would study participants give to women who are trying to navigate up the corporate ladder but face career hindrances that impede their advancement?

Appendix H: General Career Barriers

Participants	General Barriers	Emotions Experienced	Financial Implications	Professional Impact	Life Changes
P1	Age	Frustration	Grave impact her earning potential	Hindered social circle	Used it as a catalyst to explore external options
	Credibility	Anger	Detrimental financially	Pushed her to network more and broaden her horizons	More open to communicate biases to children and make them self-aware
	Racial barriers	Sadness		Pushed her to reach out and rage against the machine	Heightened awareness and diversity when leading others
	Gender bias	Hardship			
	Societal stereotypes of gender attributes	Unfairness			
	Work-life balance	Hopeful			
	Child-bearing years				
	Discrimination				
	Education				
P2	Corporate restructuring, downsizing, position elimination, lay-offs	Trusting	No financial implications	No impact	No life changes
	Travel	Agreeing			
	Relocation				
	Lack of managerial support				
	Uncertainty				
P3	Age	Anger	Lack of promotional opportunities because of lack of experience	Superficial relationship with manager	Joined diversity and inclusion committee within her organization
	Personality	Defeated	Huge financial impact	Lack of collaboration with manager	Developed more tolerance and empathy
	Lack of managerial support	Hurt	Under paid		More aware
	Racial barriers	Disappointed			
	Lack of trust	Devalued			
	Experience				
			She believes she would have had a higher amount in the base salary if she were older	She has been approached with more employment opportunities outside of her company	No life changes

(table continues)

Participants	General Barriers	Emotions Experienced	Financial Implications	Professional Impact	Life Changes
P5	Corporate restructuring, downsizing, position elimination, lay-offs	No emotions emphasized	No impact	No impact	No life changes
	Outsourcing				Advocated others to network
	Ethnic quotas				Joined diversity and inclusion committee within her organization
	Travel				
P6	Ethnicity barriers	Fear	Grossly underpaid	Fear of creating professional relationships	Mindset change
	Sexism (sex barriers)	Loneliness			
	Higher (or different) expectations than others	Inadequacy			
	Cultural barriers				
	Age				
	Managing people older than her age				
	Financial barriers				
	Wage disparity				
	Gender bias				
P7	Unconscious bias	Financially deprived	She believes that she was paid below and continued to be paid below because to enter a new employer she had to say what she was currently making and the new employer paid her just a little bit more than her current pay.	The lack of networking with others cause future employment opportunities to be delayed.	More careful
	Gender Bias/Racism	Anger		She feels some cultural norms on networking and being a little more transparent to others is a hindrance for a lot of people.	Perception change: She no longer depends on corporate occupations for job security. She now has multiple sources of income.

(table continues)

Participants	General Barriers	Emotions Experienced	Financial Implications	Professional Impact	Life Changes
P7	Cultural Norms (Lack of openness or transparency with sharing personal information) Retaliation Past Mistakes and Failures Work-life balance Personality (directness) Family upbringing Cultural barriers Financial barriers Communication/ transparency of career ladders and progressions Corporate politics	Sadness Frustration Joy Excitement Possibility			
P8	Personality	Hurt	She has made less money than people who did less work. She learned fairly quickly how to negotiate.	She had some work-related relationships that were burned because of her direct personality.	She learned how to communicate in a more a more political way.
	Verbal Communication	Feeling misunderstand	Within the last 10 years, there has not been much of a financial impact because there was a need for her skill set.	She is very careful with how she deals with passive aggressive people because of her directness. She believes passive aggressive people never really show their true feelings and can-do hold malice towards her because they are intimidated by her. She believes she has lost true friendships and business relationships because people are intimidated by her. She feels her personality does hinder some of her relationships.	She is still very direct but she thinks before she speaks.
	Higher expectations than others	Cautious of allies			
	Ethnicity Barriers Gender Barriers Financial Barriers Discrimination	Gender discrimination (unequal treatment regarding gender)			

Appendix I: Emotional Perspectives of General Career Barriers

Appendix J: Self-Imposed Career Impediments

Participants	Self-imposed Career Impediments	Emotions Experienced	Financial Implications	Professional Impact	Life Changes
P1	Perception (overly critical of oneself)	Shame	Same impact as corporate barriers	Lack of confidence in herself hindered others confidence in her	Personal growth
	Perception (mindset of traditional gender roles)	Defeated	Dreams and goals limited by herself	Failure to take risk resulted in her not meeting others and growing her network	
	Perception of others Work-life balance Lack of assertiveness Lack of confidence Avoidance of risk	Frustration Anger			
P2	Finances	No regrets	Could have made more money	No impact	No circumstances changed
	Family Family (spouse laid off so she was the breadwinner) Flexible work schedule needed Reluctance to relocate Reluctance to travel Work-life balance Education Perception (View of oneself)				
P3	Personality	Uncertain	She may have lost some career opportunities because of self-doubt	Reached out to people as a tool for guidance	Further education by completing bachelors
	Lack of self-confidence (Self-doubt)	Defeated	Returned to college to complete degree (increased financial responsibility)		Joined Toastmasters (public speaking and leadership group)
	Lack of self-confidence (Quietness-Less vocal)	Sad			Divorce
	Avoidance of risk Fear (of unknown) Fear (of instability) Frustration (mentally shutting down)				
	Lack of self-confidence	Distracted	Did not have the encouragement of her spouse; spouse caused friction when she went out to complete sales transactions that were needed for her job	No impact	Decision to hire a life coach

(table continues)

Participants	Self-imposed Career Impediments	Emotions Experienced	Financial Implications	Professional Impact	Life Changes
P4	Family (lack of spousal support)	Fearful	Unable to make the sales need to increase company production because of the situations in her home		More Awareness
	Cultural barriers	Scared			Divorce
	Perception (sexism)	Indecisive			
	Family (competitive jealousy from spouse)	Courageous			
	Work-life balance	Liberated			
	Finances	Powerful			
	Finances	In control			
	Perception				
P5	Family	No regrets	No impact	No impact	No impact
	Reluctance to travel				
P6	Company loyalty		Grossly underpaid	Fear caused her to hold back from seizing professional relations, networking opportunities, and future employment openings.	No life changes
	Perception (internal thoughts)	Anger			
	Fear				
	Lack of self-confidence (self-doubt)				
	Lack of self-confidence				
	Procrastination				
	Lack of will or desire				
	Work-life balance				
	Family				
	Finances				
	Comfort zone				
	Lack of confidence (reluctant to speak up)				
P7	Personality	Disappointed			
	Lack of trust in Corporate America	Apathy	She describes the financial implications as huge.	She networks more.	She does not trust in the Corporate American system that she will always have a job role and that she will consistently get raises and increases.
	Family/ Work-life balance	Contentment	The rate in which her income has risen is probably slower because of the financial implications.		She lives below her means so that she can save and invest. She also has multiple streams of income.

(table continues)

Participants	Self-imposed Career Impediments	Emotions Experienced	Financial Implications	Professional Impact	Life Changes
P7	Awareness				She kicks the doors of career barriers down. She feels that she may not walk through the ones she kicks down, but the barriers will no longer prevent others from moving ahead.
P8	Personal values Authenticity Time commitment to others Avoidance of risk Perception/ Fear of job instability Over commitment to tasks and projects	Mad	Her experience allowed her to transition into another business without any loss of income.	She was able to get back into her prior company based on her reputation from the previous position. Her reputation opened the door for a new position.	Her experience allowed her to transition into another business without any loss of income.
	Over analyzing	Disappointed			She is more aware of people who may have preconceived notions about her. She makes it a point for that person to see the difference in her.
	Perfectionist	Frustration			She caters a little bit more to those who may feel that she is intimidating until they get to know her.
	Work-life balance	Anger			Her skin is tougher. She communicates to people in advance that she is direct.

Appendix K: Emotional Perspectives of Self-Imposed Career Impediments

Appendix L: Overall Career Challenges

Participants	Overall Roadblocks	Overall Roadblock Quotes	Skillset Changes
P1	Lack of a four-year degree Societal perception of a gender roles	"I've been told not to rock the boat, tread softly, give a pray for peace." "If I am not extremely careful as to how I speak up I am an angry black woman. If you do the same thing, it is not always received the same way or if I speak up or if I show any type of emotion, I am an emotional woman whereas my male counterpart is just a little frustrated." "The advice you get is contingent upon the person's experience, as well, in the workplace… what their career experience has been. If you are getting advice from someone who has not overcome barriers or feel like they are coming up against a lot of different obstacles internally or externally, they might be more inclined to give you the advice to go with the status quo. Whereas if you have someone who has overcome some barriers and may have seen some successes, they might tell you that it is accomplishable… it's going to be tough, then you need to fight. It just really depends." "When I was young, I used to think to myself or I had to feed into society's perception of the gender roles. So, either I worked and took care of my family, but I could not work, take care of my family, and go to school because that is a no… no… because you are going to be spending too much time from your family or you could not do your job adequately. That's a misconception because I finished it and I don't feel like I neglected anybody."	Enhanced credibility Removal of educational roadblocks "I've definitely learned a lot during integrating my degree but my thought process or my ambition, drive, motivation… that did not ever change. I did not become more motivated or more determined or more ambitious because I had a four-year degree". "But in my corporate life that was always a hindrance… always something over my head, I guess that is a simple way for me to say it as to why I could not advance. So, since I've gotten the degree, honestly, I feel so freed. I feel like someone can never tell me, hey you didn't get this job because you didn't have the education requirement." "Me possessing the four-year degree has opened up the discussion, not necessarily opened up opportunities, but opened up the discussion or the eligibility for me to be almost somewhat equal."
P2			"No, because I have been fortunate. I have not been back to school. And I've still been promoted. So, I haven't, but to go beyond this role, I would have to go back to school." "I haven't faced one where I really wanted it and I didn't get it because I didn't finish my degree. I haven't faced that." "They would probably want a Masters… if you wanted to be…because the next role would need to be a VP."

(table continues)

Participants	Overall Roadblocks	Overall Roadblock Quotes	Skillset Changes
P3	Education Awareness Lack of managerial skills Communication Developing relationships Gaining trust of others which yields dialogue Poor management	"Learning their personality types. Learning what makes them tick. Learning what motivated them. Showing them that I have their back. So, the challenge is more earning respect. Showing them that I am a fully capable manager. Showing them that I am equipped with the tools that they need to succeed." "My challenge is also that it is really hard to deliver bad news to any employee. So that communication piece is really hard to do. You can mean the best, but if you don't communicate it the best, it takes on a life of its own." "I think it was just poor management because it causes a ripple effect."	Toastmasters Attainment of a Bachelor's degree "There is no class that teaches you how to deliver bad news. That's a skill that's hard and that comes with experience" still challenge with the dialogue surrounding difficult conversations
P4	Work-life balance Spousal support Spiritual belief system Family impressions Lack of Self-confidence	"…I wanted to have the best of two worlds. I wanted to have my career set. But, I also wanted my marriage to work." "I looked a lot for God. Right, we call God as this supreme being. It was telling me the opposite me of what I really felt like doing. It was telling me that women should be submissive and you should just trust the Lord and just let it… But, at one time, I was like just let me receive and see if that works, right? But, it was the challenge of your role in the house." "Do you really want to go for this or do you want to be like the role of the woman, wife, as the Bible says?" "… my grandma was like you are a woman of one man. I was like, I already made a commitment to the marriage. So, the challenge came more of me confronting myself back to the same thing of am I really following the role of a woman." "That confrontation of the separation of the personal marriage, family-part, to the professional corporate manager… fusing those two." "I believe that I didn't believe as much in myself. I didn't have the confidence in myself. So, in one point in time, I was really relying on what my boss said or what my husband said in order to get my own feedback to then do my performance."	Educational changes: There was no higher education, as in college education, changes. *Self-education: "I read books depending on what I am trying to achieve. So self-education in that aspect." "But for what I am looking to build and what I am looking in this company and this industry, it is more important to get licenses." "There are different licenses in this industry to do sales and do management. There is Life and Health, a 215. I have my Series 6 which is the one that allows me to work with the variable market doing investments …" "Right now, I am currently studying for my Series 63. Series 63 really allows me to sell in all states the variable market and to oversee people that use Series 6. In order for me to be able to develop them, I need to have a license for me to oversee their practices. So that's what the Series 63 license is needed for it. The Series 6 is only for mutual funds and planning that other people have done that it already come packaged and this is for this kind of person." "In the next year, I am taking the series 7. Series 7 license allows me to work with the variable market as well. Series 7 would allow me to do my own portfolio and be a financial advisor or oversee financial advisors." "My next opportunity will come in the next two years to be a partner. We need those licenses in order to be a partner but it is more about accomplishing in order to get more into the corporate management realm." Skillset/ mindset changes: "But I what I found is that I don't want to live life following numbers anymore even though they are very interesting to me. I found that as I've known myself more, and I've known my skills, and I've known my strengths, I see that I am more about empowering people. I want to know human behavior. I want to know how can I listen to you and communicate to you in your own language. So, it has changed. It has changed to another route and I am developing myself in that other route."

(table continues)

Participants	Overall Roadblocks	Overall Roadblock Quotes	Skillset Changes
			Enhanced educational drive
P5	No roadblocks or challenges	"I just kept climbing that ladder." "I earned every step of the way of where I wanted to be and where I am today."	"I mentioned I graduated and started my career with an associate's degree." "I was able to go back and I got my bachelor's and I am thinking about doing my master's."
P6	Lack of financial resources Gender Bias Ethnicity barriers	"Because a man can say, hey, listen, no, that is what I've done and I've been able to increase revenue in this aspect and I was able to x, y, z. These are the things I've done. This what I've managed. And a man would get that raise without a question. If a female says it and I come off with same tone and I say the same things, I come off as a b**** or she comes off as standoffish. So, she's not approachable." "…I have to put this smile on my face at all times because people are constantly judging that. I am always smiling. The moment I am not smiling…what's wrong with you? Why are you so upset?" "I just turn my white girl on at Corporate America."	Black Belt 6 Sigma Education
P7	Stereotypical assertions Angry black woman We don't know if we can trust you… You're supposed to be objective… Flexible work schedules	Flexible work schedules "I think I would have experienced more because I was a single parent for a while but I was fortunate and by the time I became a single parent I had moved past like the first level managerial role so I had flexibility." "A lot of places they schedule managers 10-hour days." "Most daycares are only open 12 hours max. Do you really want your kids there for 12 hours?" "I was fortunate that at the time I had a flexible schedule. But I thought about the people that didn't and how would you maneuver? What guilt or self-imposed barriers would you feel about having your child in daycare 11 hours a day."	Continuing education

(table continues)

Participants	Overall Roadblocks	Overall Roadblock Quotes	Skillset Changes
			None
P8	Challenges with the delivery of verbal communication Learning how to deal with people of different personalities Learning to have patience with self Challenges with ethnicity bias with her biological name	"I have also learned to give myself a break. If I am not where I want to be, I don't over analyze it like I used to or try to over compensate. I think I just kind of roll in where I am." "I would probably say my name is probably the biggest roadblock. They hear my name and say, Ugh, it is a black girl. And then they meet me and they are pleasantly surprised which is always shocking to me." "You can almost see the barrier melt away as they get to know me."	"I feel like women go through a transition period and I think how they survive is really being able to adapt to what the new thing is." "For me, it is very important to stay relevant and being able to roll with whatever the trend is and being able to adapt to change. I think really the only way in technology to adapt to change is to stay with whatever is current in the market." "I do think higher education is very important to stay relevant and toward your challenges. I think that anyone, or any minority, or someone who has disadvantages they have to always provide what their advantage is… what do they stand to lose if they let you go…what do you bring to the table?" "For me, I have been very good figuring out where the hole is and living there." "I am not the one that is transitioned out. I am always the one that is transitioned up. I think it is because I am very much a process improvement person. I go in and I see chaos and figure out where I am best suited in any company and any facet and that's where I sit."

Appendix M: Education Challenges

Participants	Education Challenges	Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Higher education needed
P1	Lack of a four-year degree	Bachelor's Degree	"Yes, the four-year degree is great but I will always feel like I have to do 10 times more. Here, in my current role, I'm always raising my hand for extra-curricular activities or giving more … working more… making sure my work product is as close to excellence as much as possible. Now, I know enough to know that nothing is perfect but I do feel like a meets (performance rating) is not good enough for me. "
P2	no challenges- "I don't think so because of my experience. I don't think its hurt me this far because I am so active in whitepapers and articles. So that has helped me a lot because I am always on the edge of what's happening even though I can't do much here anymore with it." "Yes… I think education… I think a degree would have been required now. I think that would have been my biggest barrier because my experience would have been there but I would not have the degree. So, I think they still would have hired me with a degree date to make sure that I would do it…"	Associate's Degree	"I think the struggle is very real." To move beyond current role, "They would probably want a Masters… if you wanted to be…because the next role would need to be a VP."
P3		Bachelor's Degree	
P4		High School Diploma	
P5	no challenges	Bachelor's Degree	"No… I can move ahead with what I have right now easily based on my knowledge." "I am comfortable with moving ahead with what I have acquire within the past few years." No
P6	no challenges	Associate's Degree	"In corporate America, I don't. Higher education is funny to me. If there was something very specific in Corporate America that I wanted to accomplish, yes, I believe I would have gone back to get a bachelor's, master's, etc." "Where I am trending in my life, I don't. I know that school is set for me to get a job. And I don't want a good job. I want a good life. So, no."
P7		Master's Degree	Higher education more than a four-year degree is not needed
P8	no challenges	Bachelor's Degree	"For me, it is very important to stay relevant and being able to roll with whatever the trend is and being able to adapt to change. I think really the only way in technology to adapt to change is to stay with whatever is current in the market. I think certifications is always something." "So, yes, I do think higher education is very important to stay relevant and toward your challenges."

Appendix N: Technological Career Challenges

Participants	Generation Differences	Technological Challenges
		"The one area and I think is an area for a lot of us is that I probably could have embraced Excel and those type of platforms a little bit better. Because that could have given you a competitive advantage."
		"One area that I never really familiarized myself with, because I try to be well rounded, is really immersing myself in IT language. My inability to understand the jargon and the overall industry etiquette was a hindrance to me. I felt like I was behind the eight ball, and so I was less confident in my ability to share my ideas because I was just trying to play catch up and really understand how things operate in that business environment so… I would say you really have to, from a technical aspect, in a corporate environment, be able to know a little bit of everything over there. Not to know it in completion but familiarize yourself with it."
P1	Generation X	"When there is another piece of technology, I want to know the latest and greatest because I want to figure out what makes my job easier. I embrace it."
		"I think that is how you keep a competitive edge. Not only in a business sense but personally."
		"I try to stay up on the latest trends. I do not limit my use, technical use, to a general user."
		"One of the most recent challenges, at this point in time, is being able to shift your mindset to understanding that people communicate in a different way. For example, the social media networks, I kind of wanted to pull away from that. I did not see the value of that but now everybody communicates through those networks so you really get to understand and know a person in a limited kind of way but that soft introduction could be the segway or introduction into you being able to open a relationship. So now I try to use all kinds of media outlets and to network."
P2	Baby Boomers	"So yes, that is… but it hasn't caused yet a problem but the day they say Directors no longer have admins or… it will cause one. Because today the expectation is that you really do it all. And today admins are really few and far between. And if they are just to keep executives on tasks."
		"Oh like, excel and stuff like that. I do it but takes me forever… reporting, analysis, and things of that nature."
P3	Generation X	no challenges
P4	Millennial	no challenges
P5	Baby Boomers	None
		"I always look for the technical innovations and things that are out there in light of technology and enhancements to make sure that I am aware of what's going on in the company."
P6	Millennial	no challenges
		"I think I am average at best but just picking up things and really just knowing how to maneuver everything."
		"And so not being as computer savvy, it does create barriers because it slows you down."
P7	Generation X	"I mean I able to still get stuff done. I mean I a pretty good at kind of cutting and pasting and I am good at maximizing… so not reinventing the wheel… taking an old presentation that had some good stuff in it and changing it and moving stuff around. I can do that. But as far as creating somethings from scratch, yeah, that technology will kick your bootie."
		"A lot of people don't have a lot of administrative support. Like at a lot of companies, you do not have administrative support unless you are a VP or above."
P8	Generation X	no challenges

Appendix O: Age and Physical Body Composition Challenges

Participants	Age	Physical Body Composition
P1	"When I was younger people, I think people think that you are young, dumb, and inexperienced. When you start to learn things and you've learn lessons, you have to prove to people that you have grown." "I think it's harder to move into certain roles when you are a certain age." "But if I was to move into an entry level position right now at my age, I think people would look at me strange. Like why the career change… where I should be at a certain place… so that plays in and impact as to what I do with my career at my age. Now as opposed to if I was younger, I would look to a hiring agency as a more viable candidate, more bendable, or a more moldable candidate. When I feel like, even at this age, that I am pliable and I can learn. I think the stigma around age and a little bit of ageism can have an adverse effect either from a young standpoint or from an older standpoint." "I think you just have to know how to market yourself accordingly too." "Having people take you seriously as a young leader especially if you are leading people who are older than you that's a challenge." "Or, sometimes it is a challenge leading people who are younger than you too because they probably think you are old and senile."	"physically, I am above average weight. I think that is definitely a hindrance. In a corporate environment, there is an association with your physical health and your perceived ability to do certain things, or your perceived ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, decisions you make. There are judgements on that." "… but if I am a little bit above average in weight the assumption is that I don't care about myself or that I'm not disciplined enough or I don't have the understanding how health plays a factor into me being of a healthy mind, sound, and body." "I understand how important it is to maintain a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally and I know how that impacts me in my performance in the corporate world." "I think that being above average in weight has a negative impact on your career, definitely." "… have to work a little bit harder to prove themselves as equals to the person who looks good, has a perfect smile, and a perfect body makeup." "It's unfortunate that your physical make-up plays such a negative impact on what you do, but that's the way of the world… that's how it is."
P2	No current challenges	"None, but my own. I still struggle in that area, personally, but I've never felt it from other people." "I have to work hard to look nice. Normally, because I just can't throw anything on and go… that's cute." "… I don't want to look sloppy. So, I have to work at it a little bit more. That has been my own barrier." "It doesn't bother me, but I have to work a lot harder at it and to look like everybody else does."
P3	"I manage a group who prior to a year ago, I was the youngest one." "…adults, really hesitant to report up to somebody that they could be their parent." "So, you have to find a way to make yourself stand out and not in a bad way." "Trying to stand out in a professional and respectful way and not always viewed as the expert when you may know more things than your counterpart." "But having the patience that people oftentimes see the younger person as the least knowledgeable which is not always the case."	"I am pretty busty." "Male attention I always get. I am used to it." "I have noticed that women are uncomfortable if I get male attention." "Yeah, I think more with women, not all women, just the ones that seem to be more insecure."

(table continues)

Participants	Age	Physical Body Composition
		Insecurity of weight gain Unwanted advances from males
		"I faced a lot of insecurities in that aspect like learning to live with my new body or the body that is a result of the years of how everything has gone."
P4	Lack of experience because of age "Quite honestly, you cannot fake experience and you cannot just take a course on how to be a 20-year manager. So, there is a lot of experience that I do not have. I really came to experience and learn this from scratch in this company."	"Sometimes, I would get appointments only because they wanted to see my body again… you know my bootie more than anything. They would be like… Oh yeah, come. You know, so it was a challenging time too. Oh Man, like listen. I come here to do business. I am not here to flirt with you. I am not here to date you. I am here to do business. Are you interested or not? So, the way I overcome that is by bringing a man with me… bringing another agent with me so we can do business to business prospecting together and that way I still do what I do but it was more respectful."
P5	None " I feel comfortable around any age group"	None "I try to eat healthy."
P6	Self-doubt "People are looking at me like who is this chick and why is she so privileged?" "I've actually had rumors about me. She is the new pretty girl in town and she must be sleeping with this person." "And then, I started doubting myself. Did I get this job because I am pretty? I started doubting myself and I hate that. I don't like doubting myself because I walk around feeling confident. So, the fact that I have to doubt myself because the naysayers are doubting me." "It was because I was a young kid and everyone else was older than me so they knew more. Right? That's how it is perceived to be."	Appearance Figure Attire "People are like oh… you are pretty girl so you got the job because you are a pretty girl." "I am a thick Dominican Polish girl." "He was above me in management. He was like I don't think those pants are really appropriate. They were slacks. I was like, is it my pants or is it my thick thighs?"
P7	no influenceAwareness as it could hinder future employment opportunities."When I do resumes' now and I do my friends resumes' I'm like take the years that you graduated from high school (and college) off.""You know, 50 is not young anymore. Forty is not young anymore. Even you should take off some of your experience because if you got 30 years of experience, you didn't start when you were 10. So, I think it makes a difference.""As you change jobs, you have a little bit of a concern because are people saying how much earning potential or how many years is she going to stay with us."	No influence"I have a lot of confidence. Being African American, we can be a more curvy.""Now, I am not saying that other people look at it positive.""There's a lot of studies that say people discriminate against what they consider fat people. They feel like if you are overweight, that shows some level of not having self-control. So, I know it's alive and well. I guess I am oblivious to it. And when I say I'm oblivious to it, I've never had a lack of self-esteem because I am kind of a curvy girl.""I think things are shifting and not just from a cultural perspective but just there is more acceptance of body types and I don't think it is as much as a hindrance as it probably used to be."
P8	no challenges	Sexual advancements "… my male counterparts do make me feel uncomfortable in that aspect." "I have a big rear and a big bust and I feel like I am looked at in a sexual way a lot."

(table continues)

Appendix P: Career Management Strategies

Participants	Networking	Mentoring	Education	Corporate Training
P1	Diverse network and resources "I keep a diverse network. I think that is extremely important. And I do not limit my network to my only internal corporate network. I think that is also important as well. And then you have to have different levels. You need some executive leaders, professionals to work with, but you need people who are on the front level too because you need perspectives, diverse perspective. Having a diverse group is super important. If it was not for my network I don't think I'd be able to maneuver through as far as I have, right now, because I needed people to guide me who have gone through it before." "If it wasn't for the network, I would not have the resources that I've had." "It's just that having a network is extremely important. It is vital."	"I wouldn't be where I am without mentorship. I don't think I could tolerate or maneuver through the obstacles and the barriers without mentors. I think in order to maneuver through obstacles you have to be deliberate and strategic. It's not something that you just know. You learn by experience. So, they have been the foundation to my success for sure." "If people don't share their knowledge with you, then you got to learn the hard way. I think that has really prevented me from making some huge mistakes…. The guidance of my mentors."	"I think my education has broaden my horizons. The experience really opened me up to understanding that people have diverse perspectives. It's given me the tools I need to be able to have credibility when I come to the table. It's really expanded my critical thinking skills and opened up my perspective to different things." "One of my life goals to is be able to help people live their full potential and have happiness with the time they have on this earth and in the workplace. So, I felt like the education really created me with a platform to be able to advocate for other people through leadership."	"Training did not exactly help me to navigate through career barriers. It hasn't been my experience that the training that I have received has had an impact on helping me maneuver through those hindrances."
P2	"Yes. I have always been a part of some type of network. I got very involved here with the mentoring part. Super involved with that because I love career progression." "I would network and build relationships that you're trying to get into." "Through networking, I've learned how to overcome a lot of things where necessarily I was not in a network to do that. Like here, where I actually do mentor people and I do that. For me, it wasn't something formal but I use to go to a lot of stuff."	Formal mentorship from prior Director " But she helped me to navigate through that because she had real examples that she would live through… it was not just talking…she made me apart of … It was not just read a book and let's discuss the book… it was really real on property that we could see that. "	"No formal education, but I took lots of training classes. I've taken a lot of courses. I have been certified." "So, reading … doing self-help, learning how to influence other people. I have obtained a lot of leadership classes." "So, I've educated myself making sure I am always on the edge of understanding that and then being able to take it to an Allen or something without really offending."	"By always taking some training classes on getting better like little things… training on leadership or training on Microsoft Office. I am always finding ways…I go to courses. I do studies." "I have a real open spirit to learning from others and I am not afraid to tell you what I don't do well. And I am really grateful for that and then I don't want you to do it for me and then I take off from that."

(table continues)

Participants	Networking	Mentoring	Education	Corporate Training
P3	Referrals to management and leadership classes and resources "Networking helps a lot." "I've networked under diversity and inclusion." "That is how I have gotten my exposure within my organization as a professional. Within the past year, because I am under my VP and under her guidance and the dotted line goes from me directly to her, I have been afforded opportunities to network within my career, within the audit function." "I didn't even know that I was networking when I was. So, when I would reach out to Human resources for support or when I would reach out to my older manager from my first department I would work in, I think they're the ones that behind the scenes gave me the boost."	Advice from an unofficial mentor: "She just told me to chill. Things don't come immediately and it is for a reason. Sometimes you have to let things play out a different way than you want it." "When you are at that point where you are so passionate, or upset, or feeling a certain kind of way that is not necessarily a positive way, that's when you have to step back." Mentored under diversity and inclusion group within her company. "We work with the Y-achievers (middle school and high school students) with the public speaking skills, with the presentation skills, with their essay writing." "Without mentoring, I would only have my own opinion to see things and I can only have one voice at the same time."	Further education by completing bachelors Joined Toastmasters (public speaking and leadership group insurance certifications Steps to Success which is a leadership preparation "…they encourage you to further your education whether horizontally or vertically. So, if you are like a senior in your role and you are not looking for management, there are other things to do like volunteer in the community." "It gives you a better foundation. It teaches you discipline. It teaches you hard work. It teaches you that it's okay you can fully function on four hours of sleep. It teaches you that the more you learn, there is so much more."	"Preparation. Confidence. When you are prepared, you are so confident. And training opens your eyes to more training that you need or think that you are good at because you don't necessary know."
P4	no influence	"I have a Board of Directors that I call people that I trust and that care about me. So, I constantly go to only those people for advice or what is your opinion on this so I can make better decisions based on what other people see around." "Without mentoring, I would be maybe in the same spot." "So, I chose well my mentors, but definitely, I would not be where I am without them."	"The university education did expand my mind." "But the self-education has been the one that has changed me the most."	"If we go to the barriers of promotability and the barriers of performance, then if you don't get those trainings, if you don't learn something new, you are stuck with your education and what you have in your mind." "The trainings are crucial to be better every day and not have as many roadblocks and a smarter mentality to whatever you want to do next."

(table continues)

Participants	Networking	Mentoring	Education	Corporate Training
P5	no influence "Again, today's world is who you know." "As far as for my personal accomplishments, I have not had to network to get to where I am. But I see that it's a necessity today."	Emulated unofficial mentors based on their attributes and qualities No formal mentorships "I've never really had an official mentor. I just recognized people for who they were. They were my mentors without them knowing that I was their mentee so to speak. I would pick the qualities within them." "I always admire their strength, straight forwardness, and the way that they conducted themselves within our organization. I kind of patterned from that. So, they were my mentors without them even knowing it."	Education was a key to career path and it was used as a platform. "Again, education-wise is not a requirement of what I do today." "But again, it is always good to have certain aspects of that as a ground… as a base. Education is key to everything. Use it as a platform."	Corporate training and management training teams have been helpful. "I try to make sure, like I mentioned, I am on top of all anything that is out there in light of training." "We have management training teams that come in and help us. And they are helpful workshops because you do get a sense of different things when you attend these workshops."
P6	"I know that in the corporate world, it is not what you know, it is who you know. I've learned that it is who you know." "…you just got to learn how to drink the Kool-Aid in the corporate world." "It's not what you know, it's who you know. I still stick to that. I drank the Kool-Aid. I still get to know people. I smile. I wave…very friendly." "That's just how Corporate America works. It's not because I have a fancy resume. It's because I talk a good game." "Suppress who you are for a little bit. Turn your white girl on and go about your business."	"I think that's 90% of the reason why I am where I am. I've found the right people to teach me the right things."	no influence	personal development training on the job training "When it does come to having a resume', they do look at those things. They look at that more than they would look at a degree."

(table continues)

Participants	Networking	Mentoring	Education	Corporate Training
P7	"I would say as a person of color, minority, you have to network even more. You have to network." "If anybody has to work the net, it's people of color because we really are going to need somebody to speak on our behalf. And, I think that's what is different even though people need that, when you really are different and you are part of the other, whatever that group is, you really need somebody that is in the group to really say, Hey, she is ok. She is going to be fine. I would hire her myself." "A lot of it is about branding and people talk about building a brand for yourself and you build that brand based on the work that you do but also through networking. And networking isn't just through work, but it also through volunteer events and social activities. You want to feel like everybody is going to say the same thing about you." "It's just meeting the right people at the right time that can speak on your behalf." "As you interact, you are building a brand and you want to be consistent so that brand is positive." "You got to think ahead of where you currently are. You got to think about where you want to go and you have to move into that direction relative to your networking and be strategic about who you network with."	"You have to mentors and you just got to get outside of yourself." "Mentoring helps because it gives me a sounding board and an objective person to kind of tell you what you think. Because if you are your own mentor, advocate, whatever, you are just going to agree with everything you do." "But she has taught me a lot about quiet courage. She's kind of like the opposite of me. She is very quiet, very unassuming. When it comes to it, she will make tough decisions." "It just kind of helps you to see yourself because sometimes you think you know what you see but other people sometimes see it differently and sometimes bigger better and sometimes not so much. But regardless, that vantage point from somebody else that you trust helps a lot."	"I've kind of weighed the options like getting my SHRM certification." "I have toyed back and forth about what kind of additional training I could get and would it help me. I don't think it would hurt, but I don't know if it would help." "You have to do the education because you are doing it as a personal growth thing and not necessarily as a money earner because in a lot of cases, a lot of jobs, as you would know don't necessarily require a Ph.D. or a master's degree." "Education is relative to me. I don't think it was the formal education because I don't think formal education helps you navigate, but formal education may help open the door." "The education that I think is most helpful is the corporate culture education, understanding that corporate culture where you are, and understanding the corporate culture of the company you think you want to go to. All of those things are the things that help you navigate the most."	training in having difficult conversations Myers Briggs personality assessments recognizing the strengths of others and yourself (Gallup Strength Finders) "Training helps of knowing more about yourself." "That (Myers Briggs personality assessments) and Strengths helps a whole lot because a lot of it is really understanding the different personality types and what's the language that you need to speak to speak to that person." "…people do things based on their natural inclinations and strengths and they're not often the same as yours." "Things with the personality type and that kind of training is huge because if you can read people and know their strengths and how they like things, you can figure out a way to satisfy that. But, exercising my faith is how I have been able to deal with things."
P8	Networking allows the inhibitions of others to come down in the social settings. "I found that I've build better relationship that way by networking."	Mentors provided tips on how to deliver messages, deal with conflict professionally "She gave me lots of tips of how to deliver my messages without the extra… on it. How to deal with conflict." "I'd rather get that constructive criticism to improve versus being left in the dark. So, I think my mentors have been Godsend for me, two of them specifically."	Education did not assist in her first career. However, the technical degree opened the employment doors for the current position.	No impact

(table continues)

Participants	Physical Exercise
P1	"It is almost essential if you can physically be able to incorporate in your life. It will help release endorphins, help you lower your blood pressure, put you in a place where you are able to be more equipped to be able to encounter these things. I think in your natural state when you are enduring these obstacles, it increases your stress levels so the exercise definitely helps decrease it for sure."
P2	Did not exercise
P3	Provides energy Relieves stress Builds self-confidence (feel sexy)
P4	Lost weight Manage stress Helped to manage mind Built self-confidence "The way I was managing my mind, using it as a muscle." "It actually helped me to have more confidence in myself because of how I was talking to myself to keep striving into what I was doing number one. And number two because I was losing weight and as I said one of the things that was uncomfortable for me that I gained weight so the fact that I was losing weight for me was I was feeling more confident. Exercise equals confidence to me." "So always look for options if this is not working for me, how can I move to get something better."
P5	Helps to relieve stress and clears your mind "If I feel like I am a bit stressed, I would go down and just walk on the treadmill for a little bit… put my music in my ear, watch a little television, and just walk. So yeah, I would say it helps to clear your mind, I would think, at least my mind."
P6	Stress relief. "Zumba is life because I can dance away all the stress." When "…we start to look good…we start to feel good when we look good. And when you feel good and look good you act better."
P7	Physical exercise did not assist. Exercising her faith helps her relieve stress. "My spirituality is very important to me. My faith, praying about things, and really just getting still and getting clear means more to me right now than exercising not that I couldn't add the two together."
P8	Relieves stress Centers oneself "I am an advocate of exercising being a part of your regime not just your physical but your mental." "It really blocks you off to allow your brain to have a moment."

Appendix Q: Advice on Career Barriers

Participants	Career Barrier Counsel
	"Be aware that there are impediments out there, but do not allow the fact that they are out there govern your ability to advance."
	"If you accept it, that's what it will be. If you accept the fact that someone is trying to hinder you, then you have already lost the battle. Never accept the fact that things have to be this way."
	"You may not be able to make an immediate change, but you can impact and influence change."
	"Trust yourself and trust your gut. If you know deep down inside that you are capable and that you've given everything that you've got and that you have honestly and with integrity done the best job that you can, never let anybody diminish that. I think that's extremely important."
	"You got to come to the table. "
P1	"Educate yourself and get the technical skills. Do not allow the technical piece to be put by the wayside because you will be behind the game. You have to be able to stay on top of technology."
	"Technical skills…you have to be able to continuously invest in yourself. If you don't invest in yourself, you can't complain about someone else who is hired with better qualifications. Make sure you are qualified for the job."
	Communicate your aspirations…don't sit there and assume that people know what you are thinking and what your desires are."
	Be good to yourself. "If you are not accepting of yourself, if you put these unreasonable pressures on yourself, if you fall into what society expects of you in terms of general roles, you're going to be hurting yourself. So, do what's best for you and your family and do what's right."
	"Always act with integrity."
	"Try to be fearless to a certain extent and take risks."
	"… if you are scared of everything you will never know what you are missing out on."

(table continues)

Participants	Career Barrier Counsel

"I think I would tell women to start with themselves as far as something like EAP (Employee Assistance Program) or some counseling or stuff. I really think that that level sets a lot of things."

"So, there are true barriers that are out there whether they're because of diversity or because we're women or because whatever. But, I think if you really first work through your own issues…"

"So, I wanted to say in every step of your life there has been injuries. There has been unforgiveness whether it's been work related or because of our culture or whatever. So, I would highly always and not once because you are always going to go through things different in your life. Because you evolve as a person…"

"… if you go to someone and you are not connecting, don't keep going. Give them at least a chance twice, but you need to seek that because once you get healthy minded, those barriers start to dissipate because you are able to understand why you feel the way that you do and why you react the way that you do."

"…there is powerless people and there are powerful people." And what are you surrounding yourself with?"

"… you don't throw the baby out with the dirty bathwater." Learn to balance the use of spiritual and no-spiritual counselors." There is a lot they can give you."

"… they are really out there and you kind of go your second visit and say umm no. But then there are some…very good willed and have studied and understand the brain and understand how you react and it really can be very helpful."

P2

"… when you work through that you are still going to have barriers but you are going to be able to recognize them, overcome them, or move on. You are not going to stay stuck. It is kind of like you just see it and you know it and then you just go."

"… there are just some barriers that it is not the barrier here. The barrier is that you are allowing that barrier… you are not taking a step to do something else."

"I am very careful of who I surround myself around. And I am always careful of people who talk only about people. Because that really affects me.".

"… if you want to really lead high and you really want to be successful… look at who's around. You really have to look who's around you and even at work, you need to be polite but keep going."

"If a leader, you should also think about how others feel when you say that and how you say that. We have to acknowledge how people feel."

"The higher up you go… is the more you serve. It is not a power trip."

"What I am saying is that you need to always have a spirit of service because the higher you go the more you have to influence and help people. If you get power crazy you are going to lose. You are not going to have a following because you become so powerful. Always remember this… "You may have the power to do something but you do not have the right to do it."

"You're are not alone."

Self-observe and reflect to make yourself better and to grow.

"Look at the people that you do not want to be and make a conscious decision of the things about them that you don't want to pay that forward when you get in those positions because it is only a matter of time."

"Find mentors."

P3

"Things that you find are your strengths, work on those. The rest kind of falls into place."

"It is hard sometimes to be who you are, but you are only going to frustrate yourself if you are going to try to be who you are not."

"Challenge yourself."

"Take time off to be with your family."

"But if you are going to be in a career, do a d*** good job because at the end of the day, it will show and you will feel good for it."

(table continues)

Participants	Career Barrier Counsel
	"If you find that the company where you are at is not supporting your efforts… is not supporting what you are bringing to the table your results, your opportunities to grow, move! There are other companies that want your effort. There are other companies that are willing to give you that opportunity."
P4	"Take care of yourself first and also start with the end in mind."
	"Always have a bigger vision, a longer vision for what your goals are. And for that you need to have goals. You need to sit down and take care of yourself and have goals for you, not for your parents, not for your husband, but for you… what fulfills you first."
	"Be yourself."
	"Don't try to let anyone tell you that you cannot do something. Because most people just defeat themselves thinking they can't move ahead because of whatever reason."
P5	"Be truthful to yourself…"
	"Know who you are."
	Find a mentor- "Find someone who you admire and get that positive feedback from them. Pinpoint their perks and make sure that you pattern from that. Use it to your advantage."
	"Success to me is doing what I want, when I want, with whomever I want, for as long as I want. It's that time and freedom."
	"All these barriers, they are a lie."
	"I make my own walls sometimes and it's in my own head."
P6	"I would say just understand that what you want in life is out there for you to just go and get it."
	"Be relentless in getting what it is that you want."
	"Nobody else is going to go fight your war for you."

(table continues)

Participants	Career Barrier Counsel
	"Tell yourself the truth about who you are and what your priorities are."
	"Network with women that are like you. In other words, get with some women that are a little bit older that have made it and get their advice because you don't get there without some challenges but the challenges don't have to stop you."
	"Get with people who have had some success in the areas you want to be in and create some goals but also be content."
	If you are not being promoted, "Either accept that this is where you are and you are going to get the little 2% or 3% raises for the rest of your life or go somewhere else because you can recreate yourself."
	"Because when you start a new job, two things can happen. Number one you may be able to get more money because you may have been underpaid. Number two, you can take a look and get some information about what has been your career things that have held you back and make sure that you don't do those things."
	"Organizations have really long memories." Sometimes they won't people because they didn't forget what they did years ago. "Sometimes you got to leave."
	"Learn what you need to learn. Grow how you need to grow and take yourself and your skills somewhere else so you can start over."
	"Leave! Go to another job! Start fresh and implement the lessons you've learned."
	"Because some people won't let you change. They will always remind you of the mistake you made."
	Don't be afraid to leave.
P7	"You can't get so complacent."
	"Complacency is like I ain't looking for nothing. I'm good. You can't get good. You can't relax that much. Always keep networking. Keep your resume' update."
	"Knowledge is power."
	"Know what your value. Know your worth."
	Practice negotiating
	"I always say pray and prepare." "Prepare because you don't want to have an opportunity and you not be prepared for it." "But pray, because I don't want to be out of order. I mean there are certain things I cannot see. But God or the creator, can see it. So, I want to make sure I am line with that." If I prepare and pray, "and I don't get it, I wasn't supposed to have it."
	If I prepare and pray, "and I do, then I get to kind of decide whether or not it is something that I want to do."
	Barriers are there. "But what are you going to do? You got to run fast and you got to jump higher."
	"So, recognize they are there and figure out how to maneuver them. You can't necessarily move them but you can move yourself around, over, up, under. And you just keep pushing."
	"If you got to go over it, if you got to go around it, if you got to do more do more because at the end of the day, the higher up you get and the more you can have a seat at the table, the more you can help other people."
	"…you are who you are…except that."
	"…you need to find your value add."
P8	"…you can't allow people to dictate what your life is going to look like for you. You got to stay focused on what the goal is…what do you want to achieve."
	"Don't let your minority be your story."
	"It is all about creating your own universe."