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Perceptions of Influence of the Wage Gap on Immigrant Ghanaian Women's Career Aspirations

Daniel Otoo Kwasi Djan
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Daniel Otoo Kwasi Djan

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

Perceptions of Influence of the Wage Gap on Immigrant Ghanaian Women's Career

Aspirations

by

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MSW, Boston University, 2019

MSC, Walden University, 2019

MBA, Russell Sage College, 2001

BA, (Hons) York University, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

Wage inequality and gender-based career advancement barriers have plagued immigrant women in the United States since World War II. The Equal Pay Act was enacted to address wage inequalities but did little to fix the concerns of the wage gap and promotional barriers for women in the United States. This generic qualitative study addressed a research gap about perceptions of influence of the wage gap on immigrant women's career aspirations to address the documented problem of income disparity. The theoretical framework guiding the study consisted of feminist and conflict theories. The main research question concerns immigrant Ghanaian women's perceptions of the wage gap and how these attitudes influence their career aspirations. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used to interview 10 participants from Hartford County, Connecticut. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Data were coded to identify themes. The results showed that participants' accent resulted in wage and opportunity gap, participants' lack of self-promotion resulted in stagnant wages with less motivation for career advancement, the higher concentration of male workers at participants' work place reduced opportunities for promotion, and hiring managers biased promotional decisions narrowed participants earnings and dampened their motivation for career growth. By increasing knowledge of wage inequity and upward mobility barriers among immigrant women, the study's findings may help human services, social work, and pay equity advocates make decisions on designing future policies and models of support that will enhance immigrant women's career goals and bridge the wage gap.

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Dedication

First, I dedicate this dissertation to God almighty whose mercy and favor made this possible despite the enemy's attempt to sabotage everything I worked for. Secondly, I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved mother Agnes Berkoh "aka Agyeiwaa Okoree, (the eagle)." You gave me life and saved me from all kinds of gloom in my childhood. Throughout my life, you gave me unparalleled love and genuine happiness. I would not have gotten through the many hardships in my life and trials, like earning my doctoral degree, without you. Thank you for always watching over me, my miniature angel. I also dedicate this dissertation to my deceased father Otoo Kofi Djan for instilling in me the purpose of having an education and also using your resources as an Assistant Director of Education to promote my schooling. I thank you for all your sacrifices and may your soul rest in perfect peace.

I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my children Bryce and Chloe Djan. As kids, you needed attention but sometimes I had to attend to my dissertation. Thank you for your understanding during this entire dissertation journey, and also for anyone who was made to believe they would never achieve anything and that their life has no value. I am here to say that you can overcome any struggles or adversity to make your dreams come true. Never allow anyone or any adversity to take your dreams away from you, and always remember your life is priceless but perseverance is the gate way to success.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Working conditions and wages for women in the United States have improved over the years (Acemoglu, Autor, & Daron, 2014). The goal of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was to ensure that women's earning rights are protected from wage inequality (United States Government Accountability Office, 2011; United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). However, the Equal Pay Act did little to fix the problem of wage inequality (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). On average, women earn approximately .23 cents less on the dollar than their male counterparts (Bolitzet & Godtland, 2012; Cohen, 2013; Kilgour, 2014; Lyons, 2013). Despite the acquisition of the necessary experience, education, and skills for upward mobility, women are still less likely than men to be promoted (Ellemers, Rink, Derks & Ryan, 2012; Heilman, 2012).

Immigrant women since world war II, have accounted for an increased proportion of skilled workers in the United States with essential knowledge, expertise, skills, training and experience to perform efficiently and competently (Iredale, 2015; Kehinde & Kolade, 2013). Promotional opportunities for immigrant women mean additional income that may help them take care of their children, buy a home, or be able to take care of themselves (Kehinde & Kolade, 2013). Yet immigrant women experience even greater wage inequality and gender-based career advancement barriers than U.S. born women (Iredale, 2015; Kehinde & Kolade, 2013). According to Villines (2016), the wage gap has accounted for an increase in depression among immigrant women. Gutierrez-Vazquez, Flippen, and Parrado (2018) and Carr (2010) also noted that immigrant women's mental

health is affected by the degree to which earlier career aspirations were fulfilled. In addition, immigrant women who fell short of achieving their career goals and aspirations suffered from higher levels of depression (Carr, 2010; Gutierrez-Vazquez et al., 2018).

The outlined literature includes the effect of the gender pay-gap inequalities on immigrant women. In this study, I explored immigrant women's perception of the wage gap on their career aspirations and address the documented problem of income disparity on immigrant women. This chapter contains (a) background to explore the importance of the study topic, (b) the problem statement, (c) the purpose of the study, (d) the research question for the study, (e) a description of the conceptual framework, (f) the study's methodology, and (g) the significance of the study. The final section summarizes the content of this chapter.

Background

Leunig and Stanfors (2014) indicated that wage inequality is been an issue in the United States. Austin and Mason (2016) pointed out that Black immigrant women earned lower wages compared to non-Hispanic White women. Bhatt (2013) studied gender-based labor practices by employers and colleagues against women physicians of Indian origin, and concluded that these women are more frequently denied opportunities for advancement than white women are. McCall (2017) also looked at the association between college and non-college wage gap and key aspects of local economic conditions for women and men. The findings revealed that the college and non-college wage gap among women, compared to that for men, showed that flexible and insecure employment conditions like joblessness, casualization, and immigration were significant in fostering

higher wage gaps among immigrant women than technology, trade and industrial composition (McCall, 2017).

The War Labor Board equal pay policy of 1918 has helped to bridge the wage gap, and employers are now required to pay women the same wages as men (Cooper, 2013). According to Fleming and Klomegah (2014), many women after the Second World War were pushed out of their jobs, and those who remained in the workforce continued to face wage inequalities. Wage disparity practices against women gave rise to the Women's Equal Pay Act of 1945, which passed in June 1964 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This was followed by subsequent bills such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 (Farrington, 2012; National Archives, 2016; National Women's Law Center, 2014).

The goal of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was to regulate commerce among several states and to correct wage standards for employees (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012). In theory, this act ensured that women are paid rates that are equal to the opposite sex for equal work that required equal skill, and effort (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2012). The Equal Pay Act also ensured the punishment of any employer who discriminated against women with respect to compensation or employment (Levine, 2015). Schaffner and Vanhorn (2013) added that the 1963 Equal Pay Act was added to the 1964 Act to correct gender-based wage discrimination. Nonetheless, women continued to face wage disparities in the U.S. labor market (Cooper, 2013).

Problem Statement

Income inequality against women exists in the United States irrespective of professional experience and education (Covert, 2018; Sanders, 2012). Covert (2018), and Kim (2013) posited that women have made gains in educational attainment in the United States, yet have continued to earn only 82 cents on the dollar, compared to men. A woman who holds a master's degree earned .75 cents for every dollar paid to a man with similar qualifications (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2018). The annual median wage for an educated woman with a full-time job is \$41,977 compared to \$52,146 for a man with comparable qualifications (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2018). This results in a wage gap of \$10,169 a year (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2018). According to Perry, (2018) and Alkadry and Tower (2013), the glass ceiling remains an invisible barrier that women must overcome. Several policies and laws have been passed to address wage equality, yet women continue to earn less in wages than their male counterparts (Alkadry & Tower, 2013).

Many women who immigrate into the United States from other countries possess marketable skills from their home countries (Garg, 2014). However, employers often offer immigrant women lower wages than men, even when the women have comparable education and work experience (Sanders, 2012). Boudarbat and Lemieux (2014) reported a decline in the earnings of U.S. immigrant women and emphasized that immigrant women in the United States have a 2.4% wage disadvantage compared to native-born women. According to Gutierrez-Vazquez, et al., (2018), and the Center for American Progress (2017), the wage gap impacts lower earning immigrant women by making them

vulnerable to domestic and physical abuse in other areas of their lives. Azer (2015) confirmed that the lower the wages a woman earns, the less likely she is to leave an abusive relationship.

According to Villines (2016), the wage gap has also accounted for an increase in depression among immigrant women. Immigrant women who made less than their male counterparts were four times more likely to experience mental health issues (Villines, 2016). Gutierrez-Vazquez, et al., (2018), and Carr (2010) specified that immigrant woman's mental health is affected by the degree to which earlier career aspirations were fulfilled. In addition, immigrant women who fell short of achieving their career goals and aspirations suffered from higher levels of depression (Carr, 2010; Gutierrez-Vazquez, et al., 2018). The aforementioned inquiry regarding the impact of gender pay gap inequalities on immigrant women illuminates important findings; I have found no research that explores how immigrant women feel about the wage gap and its impact on their career aspirations in the United States. As such, further research is warranted to address the documented problem of the mental and emotional impact of income disparity on women.

Purpose Statement

Although much research has been done on gender wage inequalities, there are still concerns regarding workplace income disparities such as unequal pay between men and women with equitable qualifications. For instance, Kerby (2014) indicated that women's median weekly earnings in 2012 were \$691 compared to \$854 for men. Also, Asian-American women earned a median weekly income of \$770 compared to \$1,055 for Asian

men of equitable qualification (Kerby, 2014). The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to further explore the perception of women on the wage gap and how these workplace income disparities affect their career aspirations. In addition, the study may contribute to other research and provide a basis for serious discussion on the issues raised regarding wage inequalities. This issue affects human services and social work policies. In this study, my intention was to fill an existing gap in the current literature regarding income disparities. Thus, this research is important for policy change in workplaces and national administration.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of immigrant Ghanaian women regarding the wage gap and their career aspirations?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is located within feminist theory and conflict theory (Bhatt, 2013; Tharenou, 2013). Feminist and conflict theories are consistent with understanding the wage gap disparities (Bolitzet & Godtland, 2012). Bolitzet and Godtland (2012) used feminist theory to distinguish pay differences as a result of work characteristics such as age, experience, race, ethnicity, and treatment based on gender. Bhatt (2013) contended that feminist theory explains the gendered hierarchy and segregated work between men and women. Therefore, even when women perform comparably to men, they have less standing in terms of income and are surpassed in career opportunities and advancement (Bhatt, 2013).

Feminist theorists contend that gender ideologies and occupational segregation structured by the dominant group (men) in society have routed many women into low paying jobs with diverse compensation rewards (Christian, 2015; Huffman, 2013; Rollor, 2014). This study uses feminist theory to explore the perceptions of immigrant women regarding the wage gap and their career aspirations to see if they perceive that plays any role in pay differences among immigrant women in their respective places of employment. Feminist theory framed this study by allowing me to examine how immigrant women feel about such socially constructed roles by men to determine if they perceive these guided roles as having any influences on their low-wage paying jobs with fewer prospects in attaining their career goals.

Conflict theory suggests that economic disparities have given rise to a struggle for power, autonomy, and control between men and women who are competing for scarce opportunities such as promotions in the workplace (Boundless, 2016; Mayor, 2015). Conflict theory posits that the wage gap is best understood as men attempting to maintain power and privilege to the detriment of women (Boundless, 2016; Mayor, 2015). In this framework, conflict theory contends that women are the subordinate group and men are the dominant group that works to maintain their power and status (Pun, 2013). Conflict theory in this study shows how immigrant women feel about the attainment of power and privilege by men in society to see if they believe that men's authority over socially constructed roles is responsible for them being routed into lower paying jobs with fewer opportunities for any career advancement. I also used conflict theory to further explore the participants' interpretations and perceptions about the wage gap to suggest if they

believe that the dominant behavior and attitude of men in the work place impedes their standing in terms of income growth and career goals.

Nature of the Study

I chose a generic qualitative methodology to delve deep into the perspectives of participant's being studied. The selected methodology enabled me to gather information through interviews to understand the participants' viewpoints and interpretations of their experiences in the work place. Generic qualitative methodology also allowed me to ascertain from the study participants how they feel about the wage gap, and how they perceive the wage gap has affected their ability to pursue the career opportunities of their choice. By using this approach, I was able to study the contextual details of the phenomenon, uncover how immigrant women feel about the wage gap, and provide rich, deep descriptions of the findings (DeGange & Walters, 2010; Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016, Sangster-Gormley, 2013). This process allowed me to obtain data that is deeply rooted in the perspectives and understandings of the research participants by investigating everything associated with the phenomenon (Cronin, 2014).

Definitions

In this section I provide brief definitions of all relevant terms associated with the proposed study.

Wage gap is defined as women earning less than men for doing similar work. It is about income disparity, which is the difference between men and women's earning (Kim, 2013).

Immigrant is defined as someone who chose to resettle in the United States either as a naturalized citizen, non-resident alien or permanent resident (Val, 2018).

Career aspirations is defined as one's desire, self-efficacy, hope, and realistic beliefs to attain a career goal (Gushue & Mejia-Smith, 2017).

Assumptions

With this study, I have made several suppositions. The first presumption is that all participants understood and answered all interview questions openly and honestly. Second, I assumed that all participants in this research study were able to reflect on their perception as immigrant women exposed to wage gap disparities. I also assumed that the participants were able to articulate how the wage gap has affected their career aspirations. Finally, I hypothesized that each participant had the ability to represent and express themselves knowledgeably.

Scope and Delimitations

The primary focus of this study is on the perceptions of immigrant Ghanaian women regarding the wage gap on their career aspirations. To control the range of this study the following delimitations have been set. First, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs will not exclude potential study participants. Second, in order to participate in this study, participants needed to be 18 years of age or older. Participants in this age group are considered as mature adults (Prior et al., 2011). This age range was chosen to accommodate participants who are employed and are able to describe, in their own words, their perceptions of the wage gap on their career aspirations in an open and candid fashion.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. One was the specific population of people being studied, which were Ghanaian immigrant women ages 18 and older. Also, trying to solicit willing participants of immigrant Ghanaian women to participate in the study without having any demographic data about this group was another constraint. Furthermore, the sample size of this study was another inadequacy. This study used a small sample size of ten participants until saturation was achieved. A small sample size of 10 participants may not allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Deziel, 2018; Faber & Fonseca, 2014; Hackshaw, 2008; Schumacher, 2010). In addition, participants' reflecting on their perceptions was another limitation to the study. Researchers have established that remembering certain experiences and situations is not accurate over time (Schumacher, 2010; Faber & Fonseca, 2014).

Another potential shortfall of this study relates to the various forms of interviewing. By interviewing participants via Skype and in-person, I the researcher was able to read and identify body language associated with responses (Rahman, 2015). However, conducting phone interviews eliminates the presence of body language which can alter some understanding of the responses provided by participants (Block & Erskine, 2012; Rahman, 2015). The use of one interviewer is a limitation due to the researcher being tired and overlooking pertinent data (Block & Erskine, 2012; Rahman, 2015) In addition, by requiring a participant to commit to long interviews and member checking, I ran the risk as a researcher of losing participants (see Block & Erskine, 2012).

Significance

This research might be noteworthy for a variety of reasons. Insight from this study may lead to awareness regarding workplace income disparities. Human services and social work professionals understanding of their biases within the workplace could result in policies to address workplace inequality. Increased knowledge about positive relations between men and women in the workplace can lead to the development of more effective options for problem solving and conflict resolutions pertaining to workplace wage disparities. The research findings may contribute to the existing knowledge base that addresses issues affecting women's experiences with wage inequalities. The outcome of this study can also be used as a foundation for other research undertakings.

Summary

This chapter provided the reader with an introduction to the study. The problem that addressed in this study was how immigrant women in the workplace perceive the wage gap on their career aspirations. Through the introduction, problem statement, nature of study, purpose, conceptual framework, operational definitions, research question, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations, and significance of the study, I have identified a few key points associated with wage gap disparities and immigrant women's career immobility phenomenon. Despite the educational gains made by women, they continue to earn only 82 cents on the dollar, compared to men (Kim, 2013).

Perry (2013), and Alkadry and Tower (2013) emphasized that the glass ceiling remains an invisible barrier that women have to overcome despite legislation put in place to ensure wage equality. Immigrant women's perception of the wage gap on their career

aspirations will be further discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 will focus on a review of the literature as it relates to wage disparities encountered by women in the United States. Chapter 3 will focus on the study's methodology, which will lead to presenting the results in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, the findings will be summarized and possible future research topics will be presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 contains published literature related to the wage gap. The intent of this literature review is to provide a background of the research regarding the wage gap and, specifically, how the wage gap has affected immigrant women's career aspirations.

Chapter 2 also encompasses the wage gap issue from a historical and empirical context to show how wage inequality has affected women. This will be followed by a deliberation of the wage gap in United States and how income disparity has affected African immigrant women. As part of my review of the literature, the wage gap policies and their influence on the targeted population of the study will be addressed.

Literature Review Strategies

At beginning of the article search, I reviewed many doctoral studies with comparable theoretical frameworks to guide and assist me to gain an increased understanding of how to conduct the literature review. The Walden online library and Google Scholar were the key search engines used to conduct this literature review. Within the Walden online library system and Google Scholar, I used PyschoINFO, EBSCO, and Thoreau Multi-Database search to obtain relevant research material. I searched databases using various terms alone or in tandem using “and” as a Boolean search. The following keywords were used to find significant literature for my subject matter: *workplace, pay gap, disparities; gender, wage gap, foreign born, United States; immigrants, women and inequality; women, wage, disparities; women, occupations, aspirations; occupational, aspirations, wage gap; power and wage gap; wage gap, conflict, theory; history, wage gap and women, United States; wage gap, immigrants;*

wage gap, laws, united states; African, migrant, USA; Wage, penalties, black, immigrant; African ,labor, market; African, immigrant, women, low wages; African, wage differentials, USA; differences, wages, distribution, African women, career aspirations, challenges; barriers, immigrant, occupational, goals; occupational, trajectory, African, and immigrants.

To gain an extensive overview of the available literature associated with the study topic, I initially did not specify a year range when conducting my searches. This strategy helped me to identify seminal research related to the topic under study. I then reduced the year range to 2011-2019 in order to identify current literature. Finally, I reviewed reference lists accompanying key articles to identify other relevant studies that would add to the depth and breadth of the review.

These searches generated over 30,000 articles, and I reviewed them thoroughly during the selection process. The designated articles were published within the last 6 years (from 2011-2017) and from peer-reviewed journals. Articles were excluded from the literature based on their lack of relevancy to the research topic. Each article used for this chapter was mined for additional research literature to add saliency to those previously obtained.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is feminist and conflict theory (Bhatt, 2013; Tharenou, 2013). Disch and Hawkesworth (2016) defined feminist theory as a scholarly practice that brings about new inquiries and evidence that are grounded in the investigation of women's lives. Feminist theory illuminates the limitations of popular

assumptions about sexuality and gender and offers insights into the social production of complex hierarchies of difference between men and women (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016). Conflict theory is a sociological concept that focuses on influence, well-being, and oppression, and contends that people display organizational supremacy, creating disparities which lead to differing interests (Akdeniz, 2016).

Feminist and conflict theory are consistent with understanding the wage gap disparities (Bolitzet & Godtland, 2012). Bolitzet and Godtland (2012) used feminist theory to distinguish pay differences as a result of work characteristics such as age, experience, race, ethnicity, and treatment based on gender. Feminist theorists indicate that gendered hierarchy and segregated work between men and women has exacerbated the wage gap (Bhatt, 2013). Therefore, even when women perform comparably to men, they receive less pay and are passed over in career opportunities and advancement (Bhatt, 2013). Gender ideologies and occupational segregation structured by the dominant group (men) in society have routed many women into low paying jobs with diverse compensation rewards (Christian, 2015; Huffman, 2013; Rollor, 2014). Occupational segregation, gender ideologies, and hierarchies were explored to see if such socially constructed roles by men in society play any role to immigrant women's perception about the wage gap and how such low wage paying jobs has affected immigrant women's career goals.

Conflict theorists have proposed that economic disparities have given rise to a struggle for power, autonomy, and control between men and women who are competing for scarce opportunities like promotions in the workplace (Boundless, 2016; Mayor,

2015). Conflict theorists posited that wage gap is optimally understood as men attempting to maintain power and privilege to the detriment of women (Boundless, 2016; Mayor, 2015; Livingstone, 2018). In this framework, conflict theorists contend that women are the subordinate group and men are the dominant group that works to maintain their power and status (Andersen, Taylor, & Logio, 2014; Pun, 2013).

The attitude of men in the context of power, privilege, and dominant behavior at work was explored to see how immigrant women feel regarding such conduct by men. The goal was to comprehend the participants' interpretations, experiences, and perceptions about the wage gap to see if they feel that the dominant behavior and attitude of men in the work place impedes their standing in terms of income growth and career goals.

History of the Wage Gap in the United States

Eriksson, Karlsson, Leunig and Stanfors (2014) noted that the wage gap has been a global concern. According to Eriksson, et al. (2014), women are paid less to keep them in certain gendered roles such as child care. The War Labor Board equal pay policy of 1918 helped bridge the wage gap by requiring employers to pay women the same wages as men; Nonetheless, women continued to face wage disparities in the U.S. labor market (Cooper, 2013). Fleming and Klomegah (2014) maintained that after the Second World War, many women were pushed out of their jobs, and those who remained in the workforce continued to face wage inequalities. Shah (2015) affirmed Eriksson et al., (2014)'s assertions about the wage gap inequalities in the American labor force and

pointed out that during the 19th century women were paid 60.3 cents for every dollar a male earned.

Such historical discriminatory wage disparity practices against women gave rise to the Women's Equal Pay Act of 1963 which passed in June 1964 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This was followed by subsequent bills such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 (Farrington, 2012; National Archives, 2016; National Women's Law Center, 2014). The goal of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was to regulate commerce among several states and to correct wage standards for employees (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012). In theory, the effect of the Equal Pay Act was to make certain that women are paid rates that are equal to those of men for equal work that required equal skill and effort (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2012). The Equal Pay Act was enacted to correct gender based discrimination and also to punish employers who discriminated against women with respect to compensation or employment (Levine, 2010; Schaffner & Vanhorn, 2013).

Brinlee (2016) maintained that the Equal Pay Act of 1963 had loopholes, making the Act less effective to address the wage gap issues. For instance, the 1963 Act allowed men to be paid a higher wage than their female counterparts on the basis of seniority, merit, and productivity (Brinlee, 2016). Such vague language makes it difficult for women to prove that they are paid less than a male counterpart on the basis of gender and deters many women from filing a lawsuit (Brinlee, 2016). Also, employers found to be in violation of the law go unpunished and, in most cases, the 1963 Act mandates that

employers who break the law to pay 2 years of retroactive pay to a plaintiff (Brinlee, 2016).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, on the other hand, protects employees from wage and employment discrimination at the state and federal level (States News Service, 2015). The 1964 Act outlawed institutional discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and national origin (Civil Rights Movement, 2018). The Equal Pay Act of 1963 also barred gender discrimination by employers and labor unions and brought about the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to help file suits on behalf of aggrieved workers (Civil Rights Movement, 2018). In addition, the 1964 Act through the EEOC mandate, prevented employers from withholding employee wages, and guaranteeing pregnancy leave for employed women (Civil Rights Movement, 2018). The 1964 Act was a success in removing institutional discrimination on the basis of gender and race at the workplace (Civil Rights Movement, 2018). However, the wage gap remains a problem in the United States due to vague wording in the Act that allows men to be paid more than a woman on the basis of merit (Cooper, 2013).

The Paycheck Fairness Act built upon the landmark Equal Pay Act of 1963 to close loopholes that allowed pay discrimination to continue (States News Service, 2013). The Paycheck Fairness Act was introduced to bar employers from punishing employees for sharing pay information with co-workers (National Women's Law Center, 2017). This helped employees learn about pay disparities and be able to determine if they are experiencing wage discrimination (National Women's Law Center, 2017). In addition, The Paycheck Fairness Act ensured that the EEOC continued to have the tools it needed

to effectively enforce laws against pay discrimination by requiring the EEOC to collect compensation and other employment-related data from employers, as analyzed by race (National Women's Law Center, 2017).

Furthermore, the Paycheck Fairness Act ensures that women can come together to challenge an employer's company-wide pay discrimination in court, allowing an EPA lawsuit to proceed as a class action in conformity with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP) (National Women's Law Center, 2017). Class actions are important because they ensure that relief will be provided to all those who are injured by the unlawful practice (National Women's Law Center, 2017). Currently, it is very difficult to bring EPA suits as class actions because the EPA, adopted prior to the current federal class action rule, requires plaintiffs to opt in to a suit (National Women's Law Center, 2017). Under the Paycheck Fairness Act, class members are automatically considered part of the class until they choose to opt out of the class, consistent with the FRCP (National Women's Law Center, 2017).

The Paycheck Fairness Act closed loopholes in the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (National Women's Law Center, 2017). Under the 1963 law, employers can claim that a woman is paid less for a reason "other than sex." For instance, employers can argue, that men have better salary-negotiation skills or received a higher salary at a previous job (National Women's Law Center, 2017). The Paycheck Fairness would require an employer to show discriminatory pay is truly related to job performance (National Women's Law Center, 2017). Despite the enactment of the Women's Equal Pay Act of 1945, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Paycheck

Fairness Act, the wage gap continues to be a problem in the United States. Additional legislation like the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 was ratified to address the wage gap issue (National Women's Law Center, 2017).

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 has advanced the effort to end pay and wage discrimination (States News Service, 2013). It has also opened courthouse doors for women to contest wage injustice (States News Service, 2013). Gould (2017) indicated that the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act allowed workers to file suit 180 days after the last pay violation and not only 180 days after the initial pay disparity. Nonetheless, by 2013, women still earned an average of .77 cents for every dollar made by a man for equal work, which amounts to a difference of more than \$10,000 per year (States News Service, 2013). For instance, black women are paid 65 cents on the typical White male dollar, while Hispanic women are paid .58 cents on the dollar (Gould, 2017).

Douglas (2009) indicated that the Ledbetter Act was not effective because it did not create any safeguards for workers like a prohibition on employer retaliation if workers compared salaries. Also, in the pay context, the 180 days' time limit may be too short and resulted in legitimate cause of actions being deemed untimely (Bilma, 2018). According to Bilma (2018), many employees do not realize there is pay discrimination until the aggregate difference of men and women's paycheck is more pronounced, which tends to take years. Additionally, plaintiffs may not be aware that pay discrimination has occurred because most employees initially do not believe the discrepancy was attributed to their poorer performance, or even because they want to keep their jobs and do not want to sue until much later (Bilma, 2018).

Several states including New York, California and Massachusetts amended the equal pay laws to address the gender pay gap issue (King, 2016). For instance, New York State introduced the New York Fair Pay Act 2016 to prevent employers from paying an employee at a rate less than the rate at which an employee of the opposite sex in the same establishment for equal work requiring the same skills, effort and responsibility under similar working conditions (King, 2016).

In the state of California, the California Fair Pay Act 2016 (CFPA) also prohibited gender pay differences even in the absence of intent or disparate impact (Andrus, 2016). The CFPA barred wage differences either from intentional discrimination or a facially neutral policy causing a wage gap (Andrus, 2016). In addition, the CFPA prohibits paying employees less than that of the opposite sex for performing work that is substantially similar in the context of skill, effort, and responsibility which is performed under similar working conditions (King, 2016).

The Massachusetts Equal Pay Act (MEPA) of 2016 also barred employers from asking applicants to disclose their salary history before offering a job (Nakamura, 2016). According to Nakamura (2016), MEPA is aimed at reducing the wage gap by preventing employers from “low-balling” female applicants during salary negotiations. In addition, the law barred employers from preventing their employees from discussing their salaries with each other (Nakamura, 2016). Andrus (2016) echoed Nakamura’s assertions regarding how MEPA barred employers from preventing employees to talk about their salaries and indicated that it is only states like California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana,

Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Vermont that prohibited employers from firing employees who revealed and spoke about their wages.

There are several challenges to State fair pay laws vis-a-vis federal statutes (King, 2016). For instance, state wage laws call for equal pay for employees performing jobs that require the same skills. However, the EPA required equal pay in jobs with equal skill, effort, and responsibility (King, 2016). Also, female employees alleging disparate impact on their wages must identify the policy or practice causing the alleged disparity and prove that it affects them disproportionately (King, 2016). State fair pay laws do not require an employee to identify any discriminatory policy rather being able to prove a gender pay difference among employees in similar jobs is sufficient to shift the burden of persuasion to the employer (King, 2016).

Tensions arise between state laws on equal pay and federal laws, such as Title VII, that required only equal treatment. The CFPA prohibited paying employees less than employees of the opposite sex performing work that is similar when viewed as a composite of skill, effort, and responsibility (Terman, 2016). Title VII does not require equalizing pay based on such a composite, and the doctrine of "comparable worth" is inconsistent with Title VII (Terman, 2016). The New York Fair Pay Act (NYFPA) 2016 limits comparisons to jobs requiring equal skill, effort and responsibility. This is the same as the federal EPA, but New York required employers to prove that gender pay differences within such jobs are based on job-related factors and consistent with business necessity (King, 2016).

MEPA on the other hand prohibited gender differences in pay between employees performing comparable work, defined as work that is substantially related in skill, effort and responsibility and is performed under similar working conditions (Widmer, 2016). However, Massachusetts explicitly recognized only education, training, or experience as legitimate distinctions among employees performing such work. This excludes consideration of job performance and other qualitative differences among employees deemed legitimate under Title VII (Widmer, 2016). These, and similar provisions of other state equal pay laws are inconsistent with Title VII. These inconsistencies make it difficult for employees to prevail against a claim of intentional wage discrimination (King, 2016).

According to Miller (2017) the Trump administration's reversal of pay transparency may have contributed to the policies ineffectiveness moving forward. Without transparency, employees and regulators cannot obtain evidence that a wage gap issue exists at any particular company (Miller, 2017). In this context employers will have no pressure to address the wage gap problem (Miller, 2017). These aforementioned laws are all designed to ensure wage and income equality in the labor market; however, wage disparity against women continues in the United States (Brinton, 2015).

Wage Gap Defined

Bakas et al., (2018), Boye et al., (2017), and Korkeamaki and Kyyra (2006) defined the wage gap as the difference in the expected wages between men and women. Chen et al. (2012) and Kim (2013) found that the wage gap is prevalent in many countries and stems from a variety of factors. The American Sociological Association

(2014), emphasized that the wage gap issue can be viewed from the perspective of supply-side theorists' such as Becker (1985), and Mincer and Polachek (1974) and demand-side theorists such as Acker (1990) and England (1992). The supply-side theorists argued that the wage gap stems from an insufficient investment in human capital by women (Blau, 2012; American Sociological Association, 2014). According to the American Sociological Association (2014), and Glick and Rudman (2010), employers rely on an individual's work history, knowledge, skills and experience to create a custom compensation package. However, the concept of a division of labor has historically restricted women's roles to housewives and mothers; thus, allowing men to build human capital and perform paid work outside of the house (American Sociological Association, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Such a persistent cultural demand for women to be homemakers and caretakers has created disruptions in developing their human capital and has resulted in fewer raises and promotional opportunities in their careers (American Sociological Association, 2014; Bennett, 2010).

However, Bradley and Charles (2012) disagreed with Bennett (2010), Sandberg (2013), and The American Sociological Association's (2014) argument, and asserted that men and women make career choices based on a gendered personal preference. Bradley and Charles (2012) argued that contemporary workers in both developed and developing countries are more concerned with individual self-expression, choice and quality of life than cultivating wealth, promotions or career growth. Since people draw on culturally normative conceptions of femininity and masculinity to express their individual selves, women have desired to enter into feminized work specialties which usually offer lower

salaries than masculinized jobs; for reduced work schedules to allow them to serve as primary caregivers (Bradley & Charles, 2012). The American Sociological Association, (2014), Bennett (2010), Sandberg (2013) refuted Bradley and Charles (2012) assertions and contended that cultural and gender norms in the work place and in society constrain women from developing and investing in their human capital, not because they desire to enter into professions that pay less.

Cooper (2010) held a different view from Bradley and Charles's (2012) assertions that women enter into feminized work specialties with lower salaries. Cooper (2010) pointed out that many professional men express the desire to spend as much time with their children as their wives do, but the culture and structure of their work organizations limit their ability and opportunity to cut down on their work hours and act as caregiver to their children. Also, some of the obstacles men face when asking for an increasingly flexible schedule to provide caregiving; is the stigma of being branded as an uncommitted worker by colleagues who do not or cannot take advantage of work family policies (Anspurg et al., 2014).

Demand-side theorists contend that gender-based discrimination and sexism are at the core of the wage gap problem (American Sociological Association, 2014; Glick & Rudman, 2010). They purport that the wage gap is about men's antipathy towards women and the different expectations established by society for men and women (Glick & Rudman, 2010; Anspurg et al., 2014). For instance, employers collect statistical data about women who takes time off after becoming pregnant and use that data during wage negotiations to pay women less (Blau, 2012).

Ackerman et al., (2013) noted that trade liberalization unevenly affects companies and has contributed to the wage gap inequity. Ackerman et al., (2013) indicated that competitive labor markets open up trade opportunities. This creates a labor market friction where men and women with the same characteristics are paid different wages by different firms (Ackerman et al., 2013). According to Ackerman et al., (2013) higher productivity firms tend to hire and pay men higher wages than women due to the pressure involved in generating a higher productivity output (Ackerman et al., 2013).

Chen et al., (2012), Bradley and Charles (2012), Ackerman et al., (2013), American Sociological Association (2014) and Cooper (2010) address the wage gap issues with several findings. Chen et al.,'s. (2012) study only captured globalization and lower wages for women. Anspurg et al., 2014, concluded that sexism and insufficient investment in human capital is the driving force behind the wage gap. Bradley and Charles (2012) indicated that the wage gap stems from gendered career choices by women for flexible schedules to be caregivers. Such gaps call for further studies to look at the wage gap issues facing immigrant women. Understanding the structural and gender configurations in society would serve as the point at which to begin resolving the wage gap problem and inform further research (Bhatt, 2013).

Wage Gap Disparities in the United States

Kerby (2014) indicated that women's median weekly earnings in 2012 were \$691 compared to \$854 for men. Women of all major racial and ethnic groups earned less than men of the same group (Kerby, 2014). The largest wage gap was within the Asian-American community where women earned a median weekly income of \$770 compared

to \$1,055 for Asian men. Among Hispanics, the median weekly income for women is \$521 compared to \$592 for Hispanic men. For African-American's, women median weekly income was \$599 compared to \$665 for African-American men (Kerby, 2014).

A study by Yale University revealed an 8% wage gap at the level of full science and engineering professors (Shen, 2012). The wage gap also varied by state and extended across the United States (American Partnership Organization, 2016). According to American Partnership Organization, (2016) full time employed women in the United States lost about \$840 billion dollars in 2016 as a result of the wage gap. Women are one half of the world's population, closing the wage gap would boost United States GDP by 9% and Euro Zone GDP by 13% (World Economic Forum, 2014).

Kim (2013) posited that women have made wage and employment gains in the United States, yet have continued to earn only .82 cents on the dollar, compared to men. In 2015, among all workers ages 45-54, women earned an average of \$780 a week compared to men who earned an average of \$1,011 weekly (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Cooper (2013) echoed Kim's (2013) assertions regarding the gains made by women and highlighted the challenges women must undergo to prove their capability as active participants in the American labor force.

Mandel and Semyonov (2014) reviewed and analyzed a general social survey data that comprised of a sample size of 2,044 respondents to investigate gender wage gap problems between 1970 and 2010. Mandel and Semyonov (2014) also examined women's increased participation in the work force, and acquisition of diverse skills to enhance their occupational and promotional opportunities for higher wages. However,

Mandel and Semyonov (2014) discovered that structural and occupational barriers perpetuated the wage gap between men and women in the United States.

Stanfors et al., (2014) disagreed with Kim (2013), Mandel and Semyonov (2014) and Cooper's (2013) assertions about wage inequalities in the U.S. Stanfors et al., (2014) argued that the optimal way to analyze the gender differentiated earnings is to look within firms and compare individuals who do the same job. To suggest that the wage gap inequality is an implicit assumption that men and women are generally equally productive and should receive equal wages is a misguided assertion (Stanfors et al., (2014). Alkerman et al., (2013) also agreed with Stanfors et al's., (2014) claims and posited that wages can differ across firms because of differences in work force composition. Alkerman et al., (2013) indicated that labor market imperfections and frictions also accounted for men and women being paid different wages.

Besen-Cassino (2016) disagreed with both Alkerman et al., (2013) and Stanfors et al., (2014) claims that wages should differ across firms because of differences in work force composition. Besen-Cassino, (2016), put forward that wage gap inequalities between men and women cannot be complete if only adult employment is considered. The author contended that an understanding of the gap requires an examination of pay patterns among teenagers in the U.S. labor market.

The Government Accountability Office (2011) acknowledged Besen-Cassino's (2016) argument and rejected Alkerman et al. (2013) and Stanfors et al. (2014) argument that there should be a wage gap between men and women due to diverse work compositions. According to the Government Accountability Office (2011) women made

up nearly half of the U.S. workforce, from 41% in 1980 to 49% in 2010. In addition, women have surpassed men in education over the past three decades therefore the wage gap is not justifiable (Government Accountability Office, 2011). Robnett (2016) highlighted the influx of skilled and educated women into the workforce in recent decades. Nonetheless the wage gap between men and women in such areas as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) continued to rise (Robnett, 2016).

Women's Educational Accomplishments and Wage Disparities

Approximately 66% of employed women in the United States have earned bachelor's degrees compared to only 58% of employed men, yet the gender wage gap remains an issue (American Sociological Association, 2014; Kim, 2013). Mandel and Semyonov (2014) indicated that women have surpassed men in college graduation rates and have reached parity with men in rates of earning doctoral and professional degrees. Nonetheless, unequal pay between men and women continued to be a problem in the United States (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015).

Gould (2017) noted that women are paid less than men at every level of education. Among workers with a high school degree, women are paid 78 percent of what men are paid; women workers with a college degree earn .75 percent, and among women workers who have an advanced degree, it is .73 percent (Gould (2017). Gould (2017) noted that one of the reasons why wage disparity still persist among this group is because educated women workers often lack the vital information about their male peers pay to be able to know whether they are being paid fairly or not. Pay transparency would help

reduce wage disparities, giving educated workers more information about what similar workers are paid and whether they're being undercut (Gould, 2017).

Impact of the Wage Gap on Women

Lower wages for women mean less money for women to support their families (Kerby, 2014). Lower wages can also affect women's ability to attain basic necessities such as housing, food, education and health care (Kerby, 2014). Lower paying jobs can force immigrant women to choose between putting food on the table or saving for college education and retirement (Kerby, 2014). According to Kerby (2014) low income women may have to live on one third to 45% less than a man based on the average benefits that are afforded through social security and pension plans.

Rozer and Volker (2016) emphasized that income inequality is also associated with poorer health. The wage gap may lead to stress, poor well-being and poverty which in turn can affect a woman's health (Rozer & Volker, 2016; Villines, 2016; Carr, 2010). The wage gap can cause lower income women to work longer hours to maintain their status and support their families which can result in less time spent with their children (Rozer & Volker, 2016; Villines, 2016; Carr, 2010).

Bates, et al., (2016) indicated that the wage gap between men and women perpetuate differences in opportunities and resources resulting in depressive disorders and generalized anxiety disorder among women. Bates, et al., (2016) noted that structural income inequality is important determinants of mood disorders among low income women. For instance, unfair wage treatment at the workplace on the basis of gender has been proven to account for more variance in depressive and somatic symptoms among

women compared to standard measures of life events and daily hassles (Bates, et al., 2016).

The Center for American Progress (2017) found that the wage gap impacted lower earning immigrant women by making them vulnerable to domestic and physical abuse in other areas of their lives. Azer (2010) confirmed that the lower the wages a woman earned, the less likely she is to leave an abusive relationship. Villines (2016) suggested that, the wage gap has also accounted for higher rates of depression among women. Women who made less than their male counterparts were four times more likely to experience mental health issues (Villines, 2016). Carr (2010) noted that women's mental health is affected by the degree to which earlier career aspirations were fulfilled. In addition, women who fell short of achieving their career goals and aspirations suffered from higher levels of depression (Carr, 2010).

Azer (2010), Villines (2016) and Carr (2010) make several important findings. However, just like other investigators before them, Azer (2010), Villines (2016) and Carr (2010) failed to mention anything about how immigrant women feel about the wage gap. Having found that immigrant women such as Africans, Asians and Latinos are at a disadvantage when it comes to wages and compensation, it would have been interesting had these researchers sought to understand how this group felt regarding the wage gap and how it affected their career aspirations.

Immigrants and the Wage Gap

Val (2018) defined immigrants as persons with no U.S. citizenship at birth. Also, "immigrants" are comprised of naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees,

asylees, persons on certain Visas, and undocumented immigrants (Val, 2018). Schoeni (2012) noted that approximately 42% of immigrant workers in the United States are women. Schoeni (2012) indicated that from 1970 to 1990, the number of working age immigrant women doubled from 2.7 million to 6.4 million. Rienzo (2014) validated Schoeni's (2012) assertions about the influx of immigrant women into the US labor market and indicated that between 1994 to 2008 immigrant women's participation in the employment market increased from 6.7% to 11.6 % in the United States.

Batalova and Zong (2014) noted that the immigrant population in the United States is approximately 42.4 million. The immigrant population represents 13.3% of the total U.S. population of 318.9 million (Batalova & Zong, 2014). According to Batalova and Zong (2014), approximately 51% of all immigrants that moved to the United States in 2014 were women. Garg (2014) also noted that many women who immigrated into the United States from other countries possess marketable skills from their home country. However, employers often offer immigrant women lower wages than men; even when the women have comparable education and work experience as their male counterparts (Sanders, 2012). The Institute for Women's Policy Research (2018) pointed out that the median yearly income for full time immigrant women in 2013 was \$32,000 compared to \$39,000 a year for U.S. born women. For instance, West Indian immigrant women earned 8.3% less in wages compared to U.S. born White women, Haitian women earn 18.6% less and African women earn 10.1% less (Austin & Mason, 2011).

Batalova and Zong, Schoeni (2012), Garg (2014) and Rienzo's (2014) studies captured the role played by immigrant women in the United States labor market. The

researchers focused on the education and skills possessed by this group from their host countries. However, Batalova and Zong, Schoeni (2012), Garg (2014) and Rienzo's (2014) concluded that even though immigrant women possess comparable skills and education from their host countries, employers in the United States offer them lower wages. Dustmann et al. 2013 and Boudarbat and Lemieux (2010) suggested that immigrants in the United States are not only educated, but on average are better educated than native born citizens, yet the wage gap is still a challenge. Carrington and Detragiache (2012) also indicated that African migrants are highly skilled and educated. However, African immigrants face earning gap challenges upon arrival in the United States (Carrington & Detragiache, 2012). These studies did not look at how this group feels about the wage gap in the context of their career goals. My study will explore immigrant women's perception about the wage gap and provide findings that will help contribute to the wage gap issue.

African Immigrants in the United States

Thomas (2011) found that approximately 60,000 Africans immigrated annually into the United States between the years 2000 to 2005. According to Thomas (2011), the immigration flow from 2000-2005 was dominated by highly skilled educated African migrants such as doctors, engineers, nurses and other in related fields who were attracted to the labor market in the United States. Thomas (2016) stated that the influx of skilled African's into the United States has led to the emergence of a new African diaspora population with one of the highest levels of education.

This influx of educated African migration into the United States is also echoed by Elo, Frankenberg, Gansey and Thomas (2015) and they suggested that approximately 1.7 million foreign born migrants from Africa currently live in the United States. Afolayan (2011) also affirmed Elo, et al's. (2015) research and noted that African immigrants constitute approximately 4% of blacks in America, which are approximately 1.6 million people. African immigrants account for approximately 4% of the foreign-born population and are growing at a faster rate than migrants from any other continent (Elo, et al., 2015).

Seck (2015) pointed out that the United States has attracted women from West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Togo and Senegal. From 1970 to 2010, the number of African women in the United States increased by 2,000 %, from less than 100,000 to over 1.6 million (Seck, 2015). Male immigrants who entered the United States on employment visas earned higher wages compared to African women from the same country (Elo, et al., 2015).

Mahdi (2012) also pointed out that African males in the United States earned approximately 20.2% more than their female counterparts. Mahdi (2012) indicated that the earnings of African male workers continued to increase with improvements in their working conditions compared to African women. The aggregate earning gap between African males and females in 2012 was 16.8% (Mahdi, 2012).

Thomas (2011), Afolayan (2015), and Elo, et al., (2015) shed light on the contributions made by African migrant women in the United States labor market. Seck (2015) and Mahdi (2012) also emphasized on the roles played by West African women in the United States. All of the researchers reported that immigrant women have comparable

skills to their male counterparts yet the men are paid higher wages (Thomas, 2011, Afolayan, 2015, Elo et al., 2015, Seck, 2015, & Mahdi, 2012). Exploring how this group perceived the wage gap and their career aspirations will provide an additional outlook on the issue.

Perceived Career Aspirations Defined

Gushue and Mejia-Smith (2017) noted that the degree to which people look at desirable or undesirable factors to attain career goals is referred to as perceived career aspirations. According to Gushue and Mejia-Smith (2017), there are several factors such as gender, ethnicity, financial, and racial barriers that impede career aspirations. Using Social Cognitive Career Theory, Gushue and Mejia-Smith (2017) explored how Hispanic college women's racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural background intermingled with societal ideologies and structures to influence one's self efficacy to shaping career interest and goals. The study outcome showed that career decision self-efficacy was influenced by ones' ethnicity and gender (Gushue & Mejia-Smith, 2017).

Yakushko et al., (2008) added that immigrants moved to the United States to find meaningful work and develop their careers. However, most immigrants experienced a downturn in their career aspirations (Yakushko et al., (2008). For example, Yakushko et al., (2008) interviewed immigrant women living in New York City and found that majority of the women experienced loss of professional status from being a scientist, a teacher or a clerical worker to working as a domestic aid. However, Yakushko et al., (2008) did not address the perception of the wage gap and career aspirations of these selected immigrant women.

Leong and Tang (2016) added that Chinese immigrants for instance encountered challenges and barriers to their career growth. Leong and Tang (2016) utilized Bogardus Social Distance Model to explain the career aspiration challenges encountered by Chinese Immigrants. The theory suggested that the lack of interactions and contacts between Chinese immigrants and native dominant Caucasians led to more cultural misunderstanding and mistrust (Leong & Tang, 2016). The basic premise of Bogardus Model suggested that immigrants with lesser social distance (e.g., Canadians, English, Irish and Australians) from the dominant native Caucasian group would experience an easier adaptation in the United States than those with greater social distance like the Japanese, Hindu, Chinese and Africans (Leong & Tang, 2016). In this context, African's and other immigrant groups were viewed as difficult to assimilate into American society and experienced more significant career barriers (Leong & Tang, 2016).

Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018) indicated that establishing a career is of considerable importance to immigrants in a host nation. According Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018), having a career offers economic stability, promotes psychological well-being and enhances the socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants. Using Social Dominance theory, Dheer & Lenartowicz (2018) explained that host societies consider themselves as superior to immigrants especially those from Africa, China, India and other developing nations. This can result in discrimination against immigrants at the work place (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018). In this context, immigrants face limitations when it comes to career goals and were not considered for promotions (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018). Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018) focused on preferential treatment against

immigrants. The study also looked at how host societies consider themselves as superior resulting in career barriers for immigrants (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018). While this gap in the literature is notable, it would have been remarkable had Dheer and Lenartowicz, (2018) sought to examine immigrant women's perception of the wage gap on their career aspirations.

Summary

From the literature, many researchers such as Cooper (2013) noted that American women have gone through a series of struggles, battles, and tests to prove their capability of being an active part of the American labor force. Kim (2013) posits that they continued to earn only eighty two percent of men's average wages. This disparity represents an almost 20% wage gap which affects women from all backgrounds in the United States (Miller, 2016). Sipe, Johnson, and Fisher (2010) noted that throughout the world, the glass ceiling still persists despite women out earning men in college degree attainment. Langdon and Klomegah (2013) found that in 1963 women earned .59 cents for every dollar a man earned and in 2009 it was .80 cents for every dollar a man earned. According to Langdon and Klomegah (2013), this is a .21 cent change in 46 years which equates to approximately one-half of a cent a year. Langdon and Klomegah (2013) affirmed that the United States constitution states that all men are created equal, yet women are not treated equally when it comes to wages.

Abraham (2017) argued that despite decades of political mobilization and strong public policy, earning comparisons between male and female workers show that women earn substantially less than similarly qualified men working in the same organizational

positions. Tatum (2017) also suggested that pay parity is about the value an employee brings to an organization namely, talent, skill and contributions. Women's contribution to the labor market is comparably equal to men yet the compensation is unequal and unfair (Tatum, 2017).

Yakushk, et al., (2008) emphasized that Immigrants move to the United States to find meaningful work so that they can develop their careers. However, most immigrants experience a downward spiral in terms of their career aspirations. According to Leong and Tang (2016) African's and other immigrants are viewed as difficult to assimilate into American society and experienced barriers to their career goals (Leong & Tang, 2016). Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018) also pointed out that establishing a career is a priority for immigrants in the United States.

However, the host nation utilizes favoritism and preferential treatment to pass over promotions against immigrants at the workplace (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018). Carr (2010) concluded that women who felt short of achieving their career goals suffered from higher levels of depression. In addition, Villines (2016) specified that women who received lower wages than their male counterparts experienced mental health issues.

Elo, et al., (2015) indicated that male immigrants who entered the United States on employment visas earned higher wages compared to African women from the same country. According to Mahdi (2012) African males in the United States earned approximately 20.2% more than their female counterparts. Mahdi (2012) indicated that the aggregate earning gap between African males and females in 2012 was 16.8%. Generic qualitative research methodology approach in chapter 3 will help explore such

gaps to draw more attention to the compensation issues facing immigrant women in the United States.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Immigrant women on their career aspirations in relation to the wage gap. Historically, Immigrant women have faced wage gap issues such as lower earnings and few advancement opportunities that have affected their career goals (Aud et al., 2011). What is not known are Immigrant women's perceptions of how the wage gap affects their career aspirations. The use of feminist and conflict theories provided a framework to discover how immigrant women perceive the effects of the wage gap on their career goals and aspirations. This chapter contains the detailed qualitative method used to answer the following research question: What are the perceptions of immigrant Ghanaian women regarding the wage gap and their career aspirations? I will discuss the research design and provide a detailed explanation of the methods to recruit participants for this doctoral study and what procedures were used during data collection. Finally, I discuss all ethical procedures as they relate to my role as the researcher and the protection of all research participants' rights.

Qualitative Research Design and Rationale

I considered a variety of qualitative approaches for this study prior to choosing generic qualitative inquiry as the research design. For example, grounded theory methodology focuses on the development of a theory (Ralph, Birks, & Chapman, 2015). However, a grounded theory approach would not be able to capture the perceptions of immigrant women within the work force because it focuses on the understanding of a phenomenon in order to uncover social relationships and develop a theory (Noble &

Mitchell, 2016). Case studies require the collection of historical data to understand and learn from the past, and narrative study focuses on the description of the lived experiences of an individual to get meanings (Simmonds, Roux, & Avest, 2015; Dumez, 2015; Center for Innovation in Research, 2012). While case study and narrative study can provide an in-depth look at the lived experiences of an individual, this is not the main goal of this study. The ethnographic approach is a study of a group of people who share and interact within the same culture or system (Kisely & Kendall 2011). This type of study would only be able to show the experience of specific group of people limiting the depth of the study (Kisely & Kendall 2011). Transcendental phenomenology is concerned with putting aside previously held beliefs (epoche) to embracing a new experience through unclouded process and allowing for a true meaning to naturally emerge (Sheehan, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). The task of ensuring that participant's pre-held beliefs are cast aside is impossible to undertake as a novice researcher. As such, this methodology was also not suitable for my study.

Quantitative methods examine the relationship between variables through statistical analysis; however, this study is not about the examination of variables (Center for Innovation in Research, 2012; Christenson & Gutierrez, 2016). For example, descriptive design describes the locus of a variable or phenomenon and does not begin with a hypothesis (Center for Innovation in Research, 2012; Christenson & Gutierrez, 2016). Correlational design explores relationships between variables using statistical analyses and quasi-experimental design to establish a cause-effect relationship between variables (Center for Innovation in Research, 2012). Experimental designs utilize

scientific methods to establish cause-effect relationship among a group of variables in a research study (Center for Innovation in Research, 2012; Dumez, 2015; Simmonds, Roux, & Avest, 2015). While Experimental designs can provide an in-depth look at the lived experiences of an individual and explore relationships between variables through statistical analyses, it does not fit the purposes of this study.

Generic Qualitative Study

Generic qualitative method was chosen because this research approach allows a researcher to delve deeper into the perspectives of the research participants. Auta, Maz, and Strickland-Hodge (2017) emphasized that a generic qualitative research approach seeks to ascertain the views of people involved in a phenomenon. The use of generic qualitative approach was optimal for this study because it enabled me to gather information through interviews to understand the participant's perceptions and interpretations of their understandings about the wage gap in the work place, how they feel about the wage gap, and how they perceive the influence of the wage gap on their ability to pursue the career opportunities of their choice. By using this approach, I was able to study the contextual details of the phenomenon, uncover how immigrant women feel about the wage gap, and provide rich, thick descriptions of the findings (DeGange & Walters, 2010; Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016, Sangster-Gormley, 2013;). This process allowed me to obtain data that were deeply rooted in the perspectives and understandings of the research participants by investigating everything associated with the phenomenon (Cronin, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher for this study, I played a central role in the development of the research question, recruitment and selection of interview participants, and collection and analysis of data. Xu and Storr (2012) emphasized that the researcher is the primary instrument and medium through which the research is conducted. In this context, it is particularly essential to address any biases I may have. Bell (2014) also noted that qualitative research bias should be made explicit. Sangster-Gormely (2013) noted that it is highly essential for the reader of a study to have a clear understanding of the researcher's position to this topic. I, the researcher, am an immigrant from Ghana, employed in an urban community surrounded by a majority of educated, low-income women from the African immigrant population. I explored the perceptions of immigrant women and the wage gap on their career aspirations for the purpose of illuminating the issue and contributing to the existing research literature that might influence human services and social work policies.

I have had first-hand experience witnessing immigrants being paid less despite their education, skills and experience. In particular, I was born in Ghana, and emigrated to Canada and later the United States. I have experienced the feeling of wage marginalization, being passed over for pay raises as well as other wage inadequacies. However, I am aware of my biases. As recommended by Noble and Smith (2015), I used member checking to validate data themes and concepts collected during the interview process. I reviewed findings with peers to address researcher bias, and utilized bracketing

and reflective journaling to record thorough field notes to openly challenge my assumptions and ensure that data interpretations are consistent with findings.

Methodology

A generic qualitative methodology was selected as the research method to study the perceptions of immigrant women and the wage gap on their career aspirations. Sangster-Gormely (2013) and Bell (2014) indicated that qualitative research allows researchers to interpret human behaviors from the viewpoint of those who have experienced them and to help provide an understanding of a phenomenon. The nature of the research question provides a base for conducting the present study with a qualitative approach to explore and illuminate the phenomenon. One reason for conducting this study utilizing a qualitative methodology is to present a detailed view of the study from the perspective of immigrant women who understands wage gap issues in relation to their career aspirations.

Sampling Strategy

The purpose of this research study was to explore the views of immigrant women and the wage gap on their career aspirations. Selected participants for the study were Ghanaian immigrant women ages 18 years and older, who have been employed full-time for at least 6 months prior to participating in the study. With permission, selected participants for the study were interviewed and engaged in audio recorded conversations and discussions to obtain information about their perspectives and understandings of the wage gap in their places of employment.

Schumacher (2010) and DeGange and Walters (2010) emphasized that a sample size of 6-10 participants is adequate for a generic qualitative study to reach saturation, where no new information is obtained. I used purposive and snowball sampling strategies to select 10 participants. Purposive sampling relies on purposely selecting participants who have experience with the phenomenon (DeGange and Walters, 2010). Snow-ball sampling starts with the recruitment of an initial participant who then help researchers identify more potential research subjects (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016). A pool of potential participants was developed using email, social media, and word of mouth.

Procedures for Recruitment

Recruitment and selection of participant's was equitable. This means that, I did not exclude participants on the basis of creed or religion (Office of Research, 2015). I used direct recruitment by talking to people at local Ghanaian restaurants. I also used snowball sampling and post-recruitment flyers at other public Ghanaian community networks such as Ghanaian local grocery stores. Once prospective participants for the study had been identified, I contacted them via telephone to determine basic eligibility for the study, and set up an appointment for the interview. At the time of the interview, I gave each participant a copy of the informed consent outlining the proposed study and addressing any questions or concerns they may have. Each participant was asked to sign the consent form prior to the start of the interview and was reminded of their right to exit the interview at any time. An interview protocol was used to ensure consistency in the interview process. Direct recruitment approach was used to solicit more participants for

the study until the required number of participants was reached. A copy of the list of interview questions is in Appendix A.

Data Collection

The data collection method used for this research study was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. This form of questioning allowed the participants to tell their story using their own words. Initially the background of the participant was the focus of each first interview. The primary intent of the first few minutes of the interview was to build rapport with the participant, to help provide credibility and ascertain all necessary documents signed (Block & Erskine, 2012). In addition, during the interview, I elicited information from the research participants about their views on the wage gap in relation to their career aspirations. This allowed me to put the participants' perspectives in context.

The interview questions focused on asking the participants to recount their perceptions regarding the wage gap in stages, which yielded some context in relation to their career aspirations. The purpose of acquiring this information was to provide me with much needed insight into the multiple environments the participants worked in and navigated in their early years. Interviews were conducted for 45-60 minutes per participant. Data were recorded using a tape recorder. The location of the interviews was a secured reserved room at the East Hartford public library in Connecticut. The East Hartford library was selected due to its central location to neighboring towns in the County of Hartford. Skype or a telephone interview was conducted for participants who were not able to meet with me at the East Hartford public library. Telephone interview

participants were mailed the informed consent form before the interview. At start of interview, I asked if participants had any questions about the consent form and if they agreed to be interviewed and audiotaped.

A gift certificate for \$10.00 was given to each participant as a “thank you” for their participation in the study. A thank you gift was offered at the end of the interview to minimize any potential coercion and undue influence. All information about gift certificates was described in the informed consent document.

Data Analysis Plan

After conducting and transcribing all of the interviews, I organized the data, which allowed me to obtain a general understanding of what type of information the data is providing. NVivo, the qualitative data collection software used in the analysis of the data, helped in coding and identifying themes. The first step in analyzing the data is to read each transcript in its entirety (Ivey, 2012). By reading each transcript completely, a researcher obtains a general sense of the perceptions and views of the participants (Blake, Robley, & Taylor, 2012).

After this step was completed, I began to highlight and list statements from the text that had explicit germaneness to the phenomenon being studied. All statements highlighted and listed were referred to as themes (see Blake et al., 2012). The themes delineated from the data were listed and described separately. As recommended by Blake, et al., (2012), I used the actual language of the participants when recording the findings in order to maintain thick description, as well as accurately present the data and move to the next step.

The next step in understanding the perceptions of immigrant women regarding the wage gap and their career aspirations was labeling the statements into themes. Ivey (2012) theorized that each statement extracted should have the potential to be coded as a theme in order to be used in the findings. The potential themes need to encompass an element of the perspectives of the participants (Ivey, 2012). These themes were representations of the participants' feelings, emotions, and perceptions regarding how they experienced the phenomenon being studied.

Lastly, the data analysis process was concluded by creating individual, and group descriptions of the perspectives of the phenomenon. The purpose of this step was to create a narrative of each participant's experiences, feelings, and perceptions regarding the wage gap on their career aspirations (Ivey, 2012).

Ethical Protection

All participants in this study were adult Ghanaian females ages 18 years and older who volunteered to participate in this study and were employed at the time of the study. By participating in this study there was no known potential harm for the participants. However, in case of harm, that is, if an interview participant felt unfairly treated, I would have stopped the interview, made a referral, and followed up. I had an agreement with the Youth Challenge of Hartford to provide free counseling services. In order to protect the participants, each potential participant completed a consent form. All notes, transcripts, files, videotapes, and audiotapes were locked in a file cabinet in my home, accessible only to me, for 5 years following the completion of the study.

Validation of Findings

The findings of the proposed research were centered on respondent validation rather than verified, since the term verification has some quantitative overtones (Sousa, 2014). According to Schou, Høstrup, Lyngsø, Larsen, and Poulsen (2012), validation of the findings allows for the promotion of the integrity of the qualitative inquiry to remain intact. In qualitative inquiry there are several strategies used to validate the findings of a researcher. These are: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and thick descriptions, and external audits (Schou, Høstrup, Lyngsø, Larsen, and Poulsen, 2012; Sousa, 2014). All interviews were transcribed verbatim in order to provide the researcher with the appropriate and expressive information. To demonstrate rigor, research integrity and validation, I acknowledged researcher bias and used truth value as the lens in this study to validate the findings. Also, member checking and thick descriptions was used as strategies to authenticate the findings of the proposed study. These strategies were chosen due to their effectiveness and popularity among qualitative researchers.

Sousa (2014) noted that member checking consists of presenting the findings and interpretations of the data collected and asking participants to provide their views of the credibility of those findings and interpretations. Member checking was done with each participant in a week or two after the initial data has been transcribed and interpreted into a “polished” data such as themes and patterns compared to the actual transcript to promote plausibility of the findings (Carlson, 2010). Creating rich, thick descriptions is the last step in the validation process of the proposed study. According to Sangster-

Gormely (2013) the purpose of rich, thick descriptions is transferability based on the details provided by the researcher of the proposed study. By creating detail descriptions, which are rich and thick, it may allow a reader to find shared characteristics and possibly replicate the study findings in other settings (Simmonds et al., 2015).

Summary

The researcher for this study considered several qualitative research approaches such as ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research and narrative research (Yilmaz, 2013). A generic qualitative study was selected to explore the views and perspectives of immigrant women and the wage gap in relation to their career aspirations. Auta, et al., (2017) emphasized that the generic qualitative approach allows participants to offer a clear understanding of their views on a phenomenon. Xu and Storr (2012) emphasized that the researcher is the primary instrument and medium through which the research is conducted. This means that as the researcher for this study, I played a central role in the underpinnings of the research question, interviewed participants, collected and analyzed data. In this context, it is particularly essential to disclose and control my biases.

Bell (2014) also noted that qualitative research bias should be made explicit. I acknowledged researcher bias and use truth value as the lens in this study to validate the findings. In addition, member checking and thick descriptions measures embedded in this study do not ensure accurate, correct and objective study. However, as the investigator of this study, who is also the research instrument I take a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon being studied and carry out a balancing act that embraces member

checking and peer examination to deal with researcher bias and ensure research objectivity and results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of immigrant women on workplace income disparities and how such inequalities influence their career aspirations. The findings in this study may help contribute to the existing body of literature and provide a basis for a thoughtful discussion on women's career progress. Furthermore, the findings may help in the development of policies around career strategies for immigrant women. The research question that guided this study was as follows: What are the perceptions of immigrant Ghanaian women regarding the wage gap and their career aspirations? In Chapter 4, I discuss the sampling method and procedure for gathering and analyzing data. I also offer a thorough description of the method and tools used to analyze the data collected to finalize my research study. The data collection time frame is discussed. Research study settings, participant demographics and evidence of trustworthiness are addressed. The results are discussed, and the chapter summary responds to the research question and provides a transition to Chapter 5.

The Research Setting

This study was conducted within the county of Hartford, Connecticut. I limited the study setting to Hartford County due to convenience and because the location was within driving distance from the East Hartford library where the research interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted between May 11, 2019, and June 1, 2019. I reserved the rare books room for each participant at the East Hartford library to conduct the interviews. All the interviews were conducted face to face. The participants agreed on

a specific time to meet for the interview. On the day of the interview, I met each participant at their chosen time in the reserved rare books room at the East Hartford library, a reserved private room where there would be no interruptions. At the beginning of each interview, I sat down with each participant and explained the purpose of the interview, format of the interview, addressed informed consent and confidentiality. Participants were invited to ask questions any time during the 45 to 60 minute interview process. I kept a log of all participants' contact information and used only initials to ensure privacy. Before the interview began, the participants were asked verbally for consent to record the interview and were informed when the recording started and stopped. All interviews were transcribed within 3 days of the interview.

Demographics (Participant Profiles)

An overview of the participants who self-identified as matching the study's inclusion criteria is provided in this section. A purposeful sampling method was used to recruit participants from the county of Hartford, Connecticut. Flyer invitations included the selection criteria for participation in the research study that was posted at local Ghanaian restaurants and retail stores within the county of Hartford. Potential participants who qualified for the research study responded to the flyer advertisement by email and included their contact information. I contacted the potential participants by phone. During the initial phone conversation, I restated the qualifications and advised potential participants that an informed consent form would be sent by email. The first 10 participants who met the requirement to participate in the study, and agreed to sign the

informed consent form were chosen to participate in the study. Upon receipt of the signed informed consent form, I scheduled interview times.

The participants were Ghanaian women, 18 years of age and older, employed full time, and settled in the United States during the last 7 to 20 years. The participants' city information was purposefully omitted to further ensure confidentiality. This allowed for the use of rich descriptions and verbatim quotes without scrutinizing detail (Kaiser, 2015). The participants' aliases were used in the chart as shown below, and it will appear in subsequent texts referring to each participant. The participant profile provides a contextual setting for future discussion. Table 1 gives a summary of revealed information, followed by an account of the participant's profiles.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Years in the United States	Highest degree completed	Current position	Years of employment
P1	44	10	High school	Certified nursing assistant	15
P2	60	12	High school	Employment specialist	20
P3	40	20	Master of Social Work	Social worker	10
P4	31	11	Bachelor of Science	Eligibility worker	5
P5	38	9	Associates in Accounting	Insurance agent	3
P6	50	17	Bachelor of Science	Nursing assistant	10
P7	36	12	Master of Psychology	Counselor	11
P8	40	9	Bachelor of Nursing	Nurse	5
P9	33	8	Master of Finance	Claim specialist	11
P10	39	7	Bachelor of Arts	Insurance agent	10

As shown in Table 1, the average age of the participants was 41. Aliases were used for the participants to ensure confidentiality and to protect their privacy. Data in Table 1 were conveyed by the participants.

Data Collection

I received approval to collect data from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on May 10, 2019. My IRB approval number is 05-10-19-0037974. I began collecting data on May 11; 2019. Before the interview started, I assured participants that I

would use aliases not their real names to uphold confidentiality. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions before the interview started. Expressions and phrases common to Ghanaian language and culture were noted in the transcripts.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were read in their entirety to obtain a general sense of the perceptions and views of the participants (see Blake et al., 2012; Ivey, 2012). I highlighted and listed statements from the text that had explicit germaneness to the phenomenon being studied. All highlighted statements were listed as themes (Blake et al., 2012). The themes delineated from the data were listed and described separately. Blake, et al., (2012) recommended that researchers use the actual language of the participants when recording the findings to conduct the thick description and accurately present the data.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data saturation occurred after the 10th interview. I conducted an interview with an 11th participant to ensure that data saturation was reached. However, participant 11 did not yield new information, so data from this participant were omitted from the study. After reviewing and verifying transcripts for accuracy, I allowed each participant to review the transcribed interview and make changes if necessary. The qualitative data analysis process began after the completion of the verification phase. The data analysis process entailed reducing the data into a manageable dataset and identifying themes in the data (Frost, 2014). From the answers to the research questions, I identified four themes after coding the data, as described below.

Coding

I uploaded the transcribed interviews into the NVivo data analysis software. I analyzed each line by looking for recurring words that were important to the study's research questions. Data were organized, classified, and coded. Coding is an old technique that has been used widely to organize text (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The purpose of the codes is to point out what is highlighted in a section of the text, thus supporting the retrieval of text segments, which in turn can be used to cluster them according to thematic features of the data they hold (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). I used the highlighting tool by NVivo to tag relevant text and then assigned the set of text to nodes. The collection of references relating to a specific category, the cluster of words, themes, or paragraphs is a Node in NVivo.

Word frequency is an NVivo query feature used to corroborate pertinent text classification. I also used constant comparison analysis, which is one of the more frequently used techniques in qualitative data analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). NVivo10 software was used to help me organize and sort the data and interpret the data into thematic representations. Relevant data and coding categories were conducted using Nvivo10 software to form the basis for theme development and to assist in uncovering patterns. During the data analysis, the broad themes had to be coded, and a word frequency query used to help in the finding and coding of the identified recurring words. I translated the audio files into a Microsoft word document. I read each transcript a minimum of three times for coding and identification of common themes. Initially, I

identified the participants' responses to the interview questions. I then identified how their responses answered the research question.

Next, I coded each transcript using an inductive coding approach. Inductive coding allows the researcher to tease out frequent or significant themes from raw data (Thomas, 2016). Thomas (2016) identified a five-step process for using inductive coding:

1. Prepare the raw data files also called data cleaning, where the researcher formats the data files in a similar format.
2. The researcher reads the text with close detail until they are familiar with the content.
3. Create categories.
4. Overlap codes or encode text as needed.
5. Continue with the refinement of the categories and within each category search for subcategories.

The initial coding categories changed several times after reviewing the data. Once a new code was identified or deleted, I went back to each transcript to re-read the data and make the necessary changes. I organized subcategories under the main research question. The subcategories allowed me to differentiate between each participant's responses about how they perceived that the wage gap influenced their career aspirations. The coding process involved reading the transcripts and marking the keywords. Data were verified, and the categories and themes evolved from the keywords. After the researcher identified and outlined patterns, themes developed through a general interpretation of the data. While listening to the audio-tapes, I also created memos with

my initial thoughts on the data, emerging analytical suggestions, or any follow-up work that I needed to do (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, the data were condensed into four themes which were discussed later in this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness and Credibility

For this study to be credible and contribute to the existing literature in the field depends on the quality of the data collected, data analysis, and verification of findings. The goal of generic qualitative research is to focus on experiences in everyday life (Dalbye, Calais, & Berg, 2011). Also, to promote the credibility and trustworthiness of the research study, certain procedures were strictly adhered to throughout the data collection and data analysis process. The credibility and trustworthiness of this study were improved by having participants check for accuracy of transcripts. This yielded improved trustworthiness (Kaiser, 2015).

Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability

Transferability is the degree to which the results of research can apply to a similar situation (Reilly, 2013). With dependability, the data are internally coherent, this means that information brought together from various sources are logically connected.

Confirmability is the degree to which the theoretical implications are supported by the data (Reilly, 2013). For transferability, I ensured that the descriptions of the participant's narratives were detailed enough to aid in the development of the theoretical account and my analyses of the data. To retain the participant's voices, I used NVivo coding, which also helped preserve the participants meaning. Dependability was achieved through dissertation committee guidance. Furthermore, I corroborated my assignment of codes

with some participants to ensure the correct application of codes and verification of meaning. To ensure confirmability in this study I used rich descriptions from the study participants, created an audit trail following the steps delineated in my IRB research procedure. This study included verbatim transcriptions of each interview to provide contextual and detailed data. Notes were taken during the interview, highlighting themes as they emerged. Direct quotes provided rich evidences from the participant's perspective.

Results

The purpose of the study was to investigate immigrant women's perceptions of influence of the wage gap on their career aspirations. I carefully examined the interviews by categorizing significant words and phrases in search of patterns, relationships, and themes both between and within stories of the immigrants (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). After reviewing, categorizing, and analyzing the data, I identified four major themes (Table 2), which include accent resulted in wage and opportunity gap, a lack of self-promotion resulted in stagnant wages with less motivation for career advancement, the concentration of male workers and biased promotional decisions narrowed earnings and dampened motivation for career growth. The themes were noted during the most trying times of the transition process.

Table 2

Summary of Themes

Theme	Supporting phrases
Theme 1: Accent resulted in wage and opportunity gap	<p>Participant 9 said, “My English is okay but I don’t speak like a Native American. There are unequal promotional opportunities at my job. The promotional jobs require fluency in English so I cannot apply because of my accent. I am not paid what I am worth because of my accent. I get depressed, can’t get myself together, my skills are in disarray. Being paid less affects my well-being, and feel less motivated for any career growth with pay parity.”</p> <p>Participant 10 stated, “Being an immigrant with an accent meant that you can’t communicate clearly. Every time I interview for a promotion to get a higher pay to overcome the wage gap, I don’t get it.”</p>
Theme 2: Lack of self-promotion resulted in stagnant wages with less motivation for career advancement.	<p>Participant 6 noted, “My manager advised me that I should pay more attention to bragging about my skills during interviews to receive a promotion so I can earn a higher salary...but often he suggests I do things that totally contradict my values as an employee. I guess not bragging or self-promoting myself means I will remain in my current position for a long time, my income will stay the same which will make me unhappy and less motivated to do anything to advance my career. I just can’t brag about myself.”</p> <p>Participant 4 said “It just doesn’t feel good to self-promote myself as an immigrant woman. It is against the way I was brought up so I guess my income will stay flat, can’t afford a lot of things, my well-being will be affected and I will have no motivation to grow my career”</p>
Theme 3: The higher concentration of male workers reduces opportunities for promotion	<p>Participant 8 cited an incident at her job where a male manager she was talking to about wage inequality had stated: “babe men do hard work compared to women so no equal pay with women.” She corrected him and asked him not to call her “babe” rather her real name. She stated, “Ever since this incident happened, I will apply for a promotion to earn higher pay and I am passed over. I regret to this day. I guess the manager felt like I disrespected him. I feel like in a male-concentrated workplace correcting a man for stereotyping and calling you “babe” results in a woman staying in the same job with a stagnant income, unequal career opportunity with no chance of earning a promotion for pay parity. Pretty sad!”</p>
Theme 4: Biased promotional decisions narrowed earnings and dampened motivation for career growth	<p>P9 stated, “At my first nurse employment, a white male colleague was promoted to a nurse manager in less than 2 years and was paid more than me because I am an immigrant woman who does not talk like a native American’s even though I had 6 years of experience. I feel like promotional opportunities to earn a higher salary are offered to my male colleagues despite my years of experience on this job. The managers who select folks for promotional opportunities are sexist, unfavorable to women and biased. My earnings are less compared to these men who are given these opportunities. Biased decisions by hiring managers have narrowed my earnings compared to my male colleagues and has affected my desire to continue trying for any promotional opportunity for career growth.”</p>

The above summary of themes shows significant statements and recurring expressions that contributed to the four themes. The themes that emerged from the interviews resulted from the data analysis. Each theme is discussed below in the following subheadings in no particular order of occurrence.

Theme 1

After participants responded to Question 16 and 14, the theme that came through indicated that accent resulted in stagnant wages due to the lack of promotional opportunities and stalled career growth. Eight participants shared promotion interview experience where they specified that promotional jobs required fluency in English and they couldn't apply because of their accent. The participants indicated that not being able to talk like a Native American during the interviews resulted in their denial of that promotional opportunity and hindered their career growth for higher wages. Participant 1 stated, "I am not paid what I am worth because of my accent and I feel miserable. Being paid less affects my well-being, and I feel less motivated for any career growth with pay parity."

Participant 3 specified,

"I can get my point across in English during promotional interviews but I feel uncomfortable every time I say something because I am being corrected like I am stupid. How can I consider any career aspirations when the people I interview with consider my accent as a problem and won't give me the opportunity to grow like my male counterparts and earn a higher salary?" "I have been in my current job for over ten years and my income compared to my male colleagues has been

stagnant and narrower. Having such a gap in wages and promotional opportunities with my male counterparts on the job affects my lifestyle and my being as a whole. I feel less motivated for any career growth.”

Participant 4 said,

“When I interview for a promotion, the manager’s look at me as if I am foolish, they look at you as if you don’t know anything you are talking about, I feel like if my accent is considered a problem by hiring managers , how can I achieve pay parity with my male counterparts on the job? How can I earn more money to narrow the wage gap between us women and men?” “Being paid less compared to my male colleagues dampens my soul and I find it very difficult to grasp this income disparity which makes me feel less motivated to continue trying for any career growth.”

Participant 5 pointed out that

“People here in America have a way of making you know you are different because of your accent. I am always unnerved by the idea of not fitting in. I have paid for lessons to eliminate my accent but each time I apply for any career opportunity, I am passed over for the promotion. I have been on the job for three years with no promotional opportunity for higher wages. This does not help with my career goals”

Participant 6 said, “My accent is a stigma. Native Americans use it against us immigrants. You can’t get a promotion because they say they don’t understand you, your

income stays the same, your motivation goes down and your career growth remains in limbo? Not good.”

Participant 8 felt cheated.

“I have a nursing degree with several years of experience but they keep promoting newly hired nurses to nurse managers and other leadership positions. I have interviewed twelve times for a nurse manager position but to no avail. They won’t tell you your accent is the reason, but when you talk to them and they say things like, “I beg your pardon”, “what you say”, these are all code words showing that you don’t speak clearly or it is difficult for them to understand you.” The lack of promotional opportunities for participant 8 has resulted in a wage and opportunity gap between her and the male colleagues. “Being paid less has affected my psyche and I am not motivated to continue trying for any career growth.”

Participant 9 said,

“My English is okay but I don’t speak like a Native American. Most of the promotional jobs require fluency in English so I cannot apply and if I apply and get an interview, they don’t understand a word I say so I continue to wallow in lower wages which affects my desire for any future career growth, very frustrating.” For participant 10, “being an immigrant with an accent meant that you can’t communicate clearly. Every time I interviewed for a promotion, I don’t get it. Not having promotional opportunities amounted to lower wages, opportunity gap, and dulled motivation for any career advancement.”

Theme 2

A second theme to emerge from participant responses was that not being able to self-promote one's skills on the job resulted in fewer promotional opportunities, stagnant wages, and stalled career growth for lack of motivation. This was a theme that came through after participants responded to question 14. Three participants expressed that to bridge the wage gap required the availability of promotional opportunities at the workplace. However, they believed that men are given more opportunities to advance their career goals with higher salaries compared to women and they cover-up. The participants indicated that when they talk to their male colleagues about why women are not given similar opportunities to bridge the wage gap and advance their career aspirations, the men made stereotypical statements.

For example, participant 5 stated,

“I was told to self-promote and showcase more of my “brown skills” to get ahead with my career. Why should I? I guess not bragging or self-promoting myself means I will remain in my current position for a long time, my income will stay the same which will make me unhappy and less motivated to do anything to advance my career. I just can't brag about myself.”

Participant 3 stated,

“I have a master's degree in social work. I have ten years of experience as a clinician but I struggle to get noticed for any supervisory promotion with a higher wage. I have been told several stereotypical comments by my manager to self-promote and showcase more of my “sexy” clinical skills for career advancement.

I find this unethical so I guess I will remain in my current position for a long time with a stagnant income, and do nothing to advance my career”

Participant 2 said,

“I have been told to learn how to self-promote my “brown mulatto” skills to get ahead with my career. I find such comments very disparaging and refuse to brag about my skills. I know my decision not to brag about myself will require me to wallow in stagnant income with no promotional opportunity for career advancement but it’s about the principles you know. I just can’t brag about myself.” The participants indicated that their decision not to self-promote for promotions resulted in stagnant wages, challenged and difficult economic lifestyles which affected their desire to try for any career advancement.

Theme 3

Reduced opportunities for promotion due to the higher concentration of male workers came through as a theme after participants responded to Question 12. Participant 1 indicated, “I started employment on the same day with this co-worker, he made more money than I did doing the same job and he has been promoted twice with higher pay. Men outnumber immigrant women on the job you know, and the concentration of male workers at my place of employment makes promotional opportunities and higher wages narrower for immigrant women.”

Participant 5 stated,

“I work with this male insurance agent, I saw his paystub and I couldn’t believe that he made more money than I did. I felt unhappy. Come to find out he was

hired at a higher salary than I did and we both have five years of experience doing the same job. Men outnumber immigrant women in the insurance profession so it is difficult to navigate around male concentration for promotional opportunities and career growth giving rise to stagnant wages for women, and widening the wage gap.”

Theme 4

A theme that emerged from the participants responses to Question 10 was that promotional decisions are sexist and biased and that these decisions narrowed earnings and dampened motivation for career growth. Participants shared stories on situations where they perceived that promotional decision by managers regarding who they picked for career advancement was sexist and biased. Participant 9 indicated that selecting men who in some cases had no experience, with less seniority made them feel less esteemed or treasured.

P9 stated,

“At my first nurse employment, a white male colleague was promoted to a nurse manager in less than 2 years and was paid more than me even though I had 6 years of experience. I feel like the wage gap has resulted in lower earnings for me, my career is going nowhere, and I am marginalized with no desire to try again for any career advancement.”

Participant 5 pointed out that; when she worked at her first job as a case manager, a male co-worker who was hired the same day was promoted more than four times and she struggled even to get recognition at the job. Participant 6 stated,

“American born males are considered for promotions and higher wages not immigrant women with an accent and funny names.” Participant 4 specified, “My first few initial occupations, men were promoted during the early stages of their career and offered a higher salary compared to immigrant women with an accent who cannot speak clearly.”

Participant 10 also specified, “At my current employment, promotional opportunities are given to Native American white men and are offered a higher salary compared to immigrant women who are seen as incompetent.” Participants perceived that promotional opportunities to earn a higher salary are offered to their male colleagues despite having more years of experience on the job.

Participants perceived that the managers who select folks for promotional opportunities are sexist, unfavorable to women and biased. Participants believed that hiring managers biased and sexist decisions have maintained the wage gap, dampened their motivation and has affected their desire to continue trying for any promotional opportunity and career advancement.

Summary

Most participants expressed difficulties getting a promotion with higher wages and career advancement. Four themes were identified based on their perceptions: accent resulted in wage and opportunity gap, self-promotion resulted in stagnant wages with less motivation for career advancement, the concentration of male workers, and biased promotional decisions narrowed earning and dampened motivation for career growth. An in-depth analysis of each theme was discussed. Participants perceived that the identified

themes demonstrated that they are not paid what they are worth because of their accent, uncompromising desire not to self-promote for promotions, not being able to navigate around male concentration and dominance at the work place and hiring manager's biased and sexist decisions regarding who they want to promote. All these have affected their well-being, resulted in wage inequity which has brought about challenging economic lifestyles that has dampened their motivation to pursue any career advancement. Chapter 5 will conclude the study with a discussion and interpretation of the findings, limitations, implications, and recommendations for future studies, and provide the interpretation of the study in relation to existing literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to examine immigrant women's perceptions of the influence of the wage gap on their career aspirations. Immigrant women have often faced wage gap issues such as lower earnings and fewer promotional opportunities. The research question was, "What are the perceptions of immigrant women regarding the influence of the wage gap on their career aspirations?" Women's participation in higher education and the labor market has increased from 50% in 1978 to 57% in 2016 (Weinstein, 2018). However, there are still remarkable gender differences in career growth and success (Evers & Sieverding, 2014). Organizations consider male model career development as appropriate during career development processes, but doing so disadvantages women (Peter & Lakshmi, 2017). The perceptions of the participants regarding the issues that hindered promotional opportunities are (a) having a non-American English accent resulting in wage and opportunity gap, (b) lack of self-promotion resulting in stagnant wages with less motivation for career advancement, (c) the higher concentration of male workers reduced opportunities for promotion, and (d) biased promotional decisions narrowed earnings and dampened motivation for career growth.

Promotional opportunities are economic stabilizers that would enhance the financial wellbeing of immigrant women (Galindo, 2019). The absence of promotional opportunities brings about despondency and discontentment (Galindo, 2019). Interpretation of findings is recognized and summarized in Chapter 5 together with how this work relates to other studies in the field. I also discuss the clear link between my

conceptual framework and the findings of the study. Additionally, I discuss the implications of this study, limitations of study, and recommendations for future research in this area of inquiry.

Interpretation of the Findings

Theme 1: Accent Resulted in Wage and Opportunity Gap.

The supply-side theorists of the wage gap literature have argued that income inequality between men and women stems from insufficient investment in human capital by women (American Sociological Association, (2014; Blau, 2012). Also, Bennet (2010) and American Sociological Association (2014) indicated that the lack of investment in human capital by women has resulted in fewer raises, stagnant income, and promotional opportunities in their careers. The initial theme of the study, that accent resulted in wage and opportunity gap, implies that the lack of investment by immigrant women to take courses hinders their chances to improve their accent and apply for promotional opportunities that requires fluency in English. This resulted in the wage and opportunity gap that these participants experienced. The finding aligned with feminist theorist's assertions that gender and accent results in stagnant wages due to the lack of promotional opportunities for women (Christian, 2015; Rollor, 2014).

Also, feminist theory contends that accent is stereotyped as less intelligent and untrustworthy (Roller, 2014). Hiring managers have capitalized on such stereotypes and marginalized immigrants with an accent and consider them unqualified for promotional opportunities. Participants reported having a professional position and a university degree from their country of origin but having an accent made it difficult for them to get a

promotion with higher pay here in the United States. The study findings suggest that one's gender as a woman, compounded by their accent, enhances the wage gap and makes it difficult to advance in career goals and aspirations (Christian, 2015; Huffman, 2013; Rollor, 2014).

Agresz (2017) suggested that if a person emigrates from a country that enjoys a similar economic status as the United States, it is more likely that they would be promoted. McGlone (2010) pointed out that accent discrimination is mortifying because employers protect themselves from legal issues and argue that a foreign accent impacts communication skills vital to career growth. The theory of cognitive fluency, which is the ease with which the brain causes people to doubt the accuracy of what was said suggested that managers perceive employees with an accent as less credible (Agresz, 2017). The theory specified that if a foreign accent is heard, cognitive fluency is reduced, making it difficult to be processed by the person receiving the message from the speaker. Agresz (2017) noted that cognitive fluency plays a vital role in decision-making and suggested that managers selecting applicants for promotion favor a native speaker over an immigrant with an accent.

Theme 2: Lack of Self-Promotion Resulted in Stagnant Wages with Less Motivation for Career Advancement.

Bradley and Charles (2012) asserted that men and women make career choices based on a gendered personal preference and that a man and a woman in both the developed and developing world are more concerned with individual self-expression, beliefs, choice, and quality of life than with the cultivation of wealth, promotions, or

career-development. The findings of the study purported that immigrant women believed that bragging or self-promoting oneself for career growth and higher income was considered unethical. The findings of the study confirm the existing literature that certain participants made decisions not to self-promote or their skills based on their personal preferences. These personal preferences of participants stemmed from their belief that self-promotion is unethical and sinful. This belief can result in the promotional gap, stagnant wages, and less motivation for career advancement. A participant's decision not to self-promote for any career opportunity aligns with feminist theorists' assertions about backlash avoidance, which suggests that women's fear of social consequences makes it difficult for them to engage in bragging about themselves (Bradley & Charles, 2012). According to feminist theory if the participants engaged in the behavior of bragging and are unable to acquire those promotional opportunities, they are perceived as aggressive and unwomanly (Bradley & Charles, 2012). Such stereotyping according to feminist theory makes it difficult for women to self-promote for promotional opportunities to narrow the wage gap (Bradley & Charles, 2012).

Clark and Molinsky (2014) emphasized that people from countries where self-promotion is considered unethical cannot bring themselves to engage in that behavior. For example, in Japan, self-promotion is compared to a nail; the professionals that stick their head out and brag about themselves are hammered down and their career destroyed (Clark & Molinsky, 2014). Most cultures have metaphors about what happens to people who are judged by their peers as overreaching. However, in the United States, self-promotion is considered a personal branding and a way to differentiate oneself in the

workplace (Clark & Molinsky, 2014). For immigrant women whose culture perceives self-promotion as bad but who are eager to grow professionally in the United States, it is quite a difficult adjustment (Clark & Molinsky, 2014). The theory of backlash avoidance suggests that women feel uncomfortable to self-promote due to perceived social consequences. Such cultural and social consequences make it uncomfortable for immigrant women to self-promote for any career advancements (Smith & Huntoon, 2013).

Cognitive dissonance theory postulates that women feel uncomfortable when their cognitions do not match their behaviors and are motivated to resolve the inconsistency to reduce the discomfort (Zanna & Cooper, 2014; Cooper, Zanna, & Taves, 2018; Festinger, 1957; Mcleod, 2018;). If a woman believes that she should be modest, but then behaves immodestly (e.g., self-promotes), then she would experience cognitive dissonance (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). In this context, it is possible that when an immigrant woman self-promotes for any career gain, their behavior becomes inconsistent with their cultural beliefs of modesty, which causes cognitive dissonance, and a wage gap with less motivation for career growth (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010).

Theme 3: The Higher Concentration of Male Workers Reduces Opportunities for Promotion.

Immigrant women's concern about male concentration and dominance at the workplace emerged as the third theme in the study. The existing literature described the wage gap as men's attempt to maintain power, control, and privilege to the detriment of women (Boundless, 2016; Livingston, 2018; Mayor, 2015). In this framework of men's

attempt to maintain power, women are considered the subordinate group and men are the dominant group that works to maintain their power, status, and economic resources (Andersen et al., 2014; Pun, 2013.). According to Akdeniz (2016), men display influence and organizational supremacy at the workplace to control women's income. The findings of the study confirm the existing literature and suggest that men outnumber immigrant women on the job, and the concentration of male workers at the participants' places of employment makes promotional opportunities and higher wages narrower, resulting in stagnant wages and immigrant women's lack of motivation to advance their careers. The study findings indicated that men outnumber immigrant women on the job, so it is difficult for women to navigate around male concentration for promotional opportunities and career growth, which contributes to stagnant wages for women, thus widening the wage gap. The findings align with conflict theory, which suggests that women see themselves as subordinates to men (German, 2019). In this context, the participants' expression about difficulty in seeking promotional opportunities in a male-dominated workplace subscribes to conflict theorists' assertions about men's control of social and economic resources (German, 2019).

The participants expressed a feeling of isolation, a sense of hopelessness, and the need for more male support at their various places of employment regarding their career goals. Trust in faith is a core element for immigrants. Also, spirituality influence helps immigrants in situations they consider impossible to address (Wood & Hilton, 2012). From a historical context, when faced with challenges and resulting despair, immigrant women have often leaned upon spirituality as a means of optimism and encouragement

(Wood & Hilton, 2012). Immigrant women who practiced faith-based support felt well prepared to handle male concentration and dominance at their workplace and the barriers they faced with their career goals. Demonstrating faith in God was a common thread that many immigrant women participants relied on during their various experiences with male concentration and dominance at their places of employment.

Participants pointed out that their faith in God and prayer was important. “Prayer” and “faith in God” contributed significantly to how the participants dealt with being passed over for a promotion to a man. According to patriarchy theory, men establish social relations with a material base to create interdependence among men (German, 2019). This interdependency allows them to dominate women at the workplace (German, 2019). It also allows men to control all the social and economic structures and to control women’s labor and promotional opportunities (German, 2019). Participants believed that one potential explanation for male dominance at the workplace is the leadership gap, which shows that women are not advancing into higher positions within their place of employment (Babcock & Weingart, 2018). Dishman (2016) pointed out that women should solicit employment with companies where the culture and leadership consider their abilities before they consider their gender.

Theme 4: Biased Promotional Decisions Narrowed Earnings and Dampened Motivation for Career Growth.

Demand-side theorists maintained that sexism and biased decision-making by men is at the core of the wage gap issue (Auspurg et al., 2014; Glick & Redman, 2010). Researchers have suggested that men have antipathy towards women on the job and have

established different expectations for women (American Sociological Association, 2014; Glick & Redman, 2010). For instance, employers collect statistical data about women and use that data during wage, hiring, and promotional decisions (Blau, 2012). My findings confirmed this behavior of men. Participants pointed out that they encountered such biased and sexist decisions by hiring managers at their various places of employment. This marginalization lowered their income and impacted their motivation for promotional opportunities. The findings indicated that hiring managers' decisions about who they decided to promote were flawed and biased. Implicit unconscious bias of men is partly the cause of such poor promotional decisions against women (Flaherty, 2019).

My findings indicate that it is not a good idea for immigrant women to discuss compensation, or managers' biased and poor promotional decisions with co-workers because of the sensitivity involved. The findings pointed out that there is a high level of resentment, anger, and hurt feelings that easily get ignited among colleagues who shared missed promotional opportunities and salary information. Even worse, the findings indicated that employers label certain employees as trouble-makers and problem employees if they create a stir about compensation and lack of promotional opportunities at the workplace. Doyle (2017) noted that once an employee is aware that they and their colleagues are being passed over for a promotion and are not receiving the same pay for the same job with the same success and experience, they do have a right to address the issue. The employee can let it go, which might be smarter, or they can bring it up with the Human Resources manager (Doyle, 2017). According to feminist theorists, men are sexist and biased (Bhatt, 2013). The sexist and biased behaviors of men have exposed many

women to career mobility difficulties and stagnant wages (Bhatt, 2013). Feminist theorists contend that gendered hierarchy by men have made it very difficult for women to have any promotional standing with men (Bhatt, 2013) It is from such a premise that hiring managers make decisions to exclude women from promotional opportunities, which has brought about lower and stagnant wages, lower motivation, and a decline in career advancement for immigrant women.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation was the demographic characteristics of the study's sample. The study consisted of a small sample of immigrant Ghanaian women from Hartford County, Connecticut. In this generic qualitative study, the sample was limited to a small group of 10 participants; therefore, results from this study are not generalizable. A second limitation was the lack of diversity regarding the viewpoints of immigrant Ghanaian women who participated in the studies and those living in the other parts of New England as well as the rest of the United States. The study findings represented the perceptions of immigrant Ghanaian women from Hartford County, which may have limited the scope of the findings.

The understanding of immigrant women's perceptions was also limited by excluding other immigrant groups from other counties within the state of Connecticut, and the rest of the United States of America. During qualitative data analysis, ambiguities in language or inexact meanings of words may be recognized in the investigation. For example, in this study, the word male concentration and dominance may mean male favoritism but may have other meanings as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, I recommend that further study examines women from other cultures and ethnicities. This study included a small sample of Ghanaian immigrant women from the county of Hartford, Connecticut. A different sampling of women from other ethnicities may provide different viewpoints.

Recommendations to conduct quantitative studies to analyze possible relationships among other variables, such as immigrant women's motivational levels, age, ethnicity, and gender are desired. Furthermore, a third recommendation is that future qualitative research should include immigrant women manager's perspectives regarding the wage gap and their career growth. Based on the study findings, immigrant communities may gain a better understanding of the promotional barriers and wage inequity and how it has affected immigrant women's career goals. This may strengthen the relationship between supervisors, workplace managers, and immigrant women to foster a pathway towards promotional prospects and help bridge the wage gap.

In addition, further studies should focus on immigrant women management organizational leaders as coaching mentors to immigrant women at the various places of employment. Therefore, a quasi-experimental study should be considered in which one immigrant woman at a place of work will be assigned an employment coach, and a second immigrant woman would not be assigned an employment coach. A quasi-experimental study may provide a better understanding of management organizational coaching mentors as support during immigrant women's experience with promotional barriers and wage inequity. The researcher may use findings from future research studies

to help bring awareness of support needed for immigrant women who are trying to enhance their career but find they are struggling due to male concentration, sexism, and promotional barriers at the workplace.

Implications of the Study

Based on the findings, social work, and human service professionals who desire to support promotional opportunities and fair wages for immigrant women must consider communication, training, and the inclusion of women at key positions within the various organizations to address the issue. Also, the support to enhance promotional opportunities must embrace and tap into immigrant women's skill, education, ability to learn and perform new tasks. Responses from participants indicated that making frequent connections with female supervisors and managers was meaningful and valuable in motivating immigrant women during their experiences with barriers to career growth. Communications must include encouragement from supervisors and leaders at the various places of employment.

Though support is available for immigrant women; Ghanaian immigrant women culturally tend to lack full engagement with supervisors and managers on the job for fear of losing their employment and resulting in economic hardship for their families. Management and organizational leaders should be aware of the fact that silence from an immigrant Ghanaian woman at the workplace may be an indication that support is needed. Managers and supervisors may consider conducting an early assessment of an immigrant woman's perception regarding wage inequity on their career growth, and specific action plans should be developed based on individual needs.

The study identifies that support groups for immigrant women may help prevent early abandonment of employment due to male concentration and lack of promotional opportunities. The participants feeling of isolation and tendencies to withdraw from employment are common problems immigrant women encounter when they experience promotional barriers and wage inequalities (Carter-Veale, 2016). A positive change in an immigrant woman, such as increased motivation during the experiences of promotional barriers may occur if male employment managers and supervisors adapt, adjust, and /or encourage leadership among future immigrant Ghanaian women who are employed by these companies.

Also, management should reaffirm the need for leaders and encourage these women. The knowledge and shared experiences gained from study participants may provide insight and awareness to employment managers, immigrant non- profit organizations and dissertation chairs on immigrant Ghanaian women's perception on the wage gap on their career growth and the engagement of support to maintain motivation during their experiences of promotional barriers. The shared experiences presented in this generic qualitative narrative inquiry research study may also help employers make decisions on designing future models of support to enhance immigrant women's career goals and bridge the wage gap inequity.

Human service leaders, social work professionals, employment managers, immigration non-profit agency leaders, charity organizations, and immigrant community leaders may use the findings from this study to encourage, and provide support to immigrant women facing wage disparities and make resources available to this group.

Leaders within the various organizations and communities may use the findings to increase knowledge about positive relations between men and women in the workplace. This may lead to the development of more effective options for problem-solving and conflict resolutions concerning workplace wage disparities and promotional barriers. The various professional leaders may use the findings to address issues affecting women's experiences with promotional barriers and wage inequalities. Also, the study findings may be used by social workers, human services leaders, and professionals to implement interventions that support and maintain motivation during immigrant women's encounter with promotional barriers, wage disparities, and lessen adverse effects of isolation, anger, and frustration that immigrant women may encounter on the job.

Association of Findings with the Conceptual Framework

Two theoretical frameworks underpin these study findings: Feminist theory and conflict theory. Bhatt (2013) contends that feminist theory explains the gendered hierarchy, male sexism, and bias at the workplace. The feminist theory contends that even when women perform comparably to men, they have less standing in terms of promotional opportunities and are overlooked in career opportunities and advancement (Bhatt, 2013). The finding of the study reveals that immigrant women's perception of influence on the wage gap and their career aspirations is based on their personal feelings and beliefs rather than what might be objectively true. The study findings indicated that immigrant women's perceptions about spirituality, faith in God, and the use of female peer support as a means of motivation in dealing with promotional barriers like their accent, their inability to self-promote themselves for career progress, sexist and biased

promotional decision-making by men aligns with feminist theorist, and contends that sexist and biased decision-making by the dominant group (men) in society has exposed many women into career mobility difficulties and low paying jobs. According to feminist theorists, such biases and sexism by men have created the perception among immigrant women that, men have positioned themselves as leaders and supervisors at their workplaces to ensure that immigrant women do not attain any career advancement. Also, the study findings suggest that immigrant women believe that male sexism, stereotypical statements by men and decision-making biases at their workplace as well as the immigrant women's inability to self-promote are barriers that impede promotional opportunities for this group. The study findings according to feminist theorists further suggest that one's gender as a woman compounded by their immigrant accent makes it difficult to advance their career goals and aspirations (Christian, 2015; Huffman, 2013; Rollor, 2014).

Immigrant women's experiences and perceptions of influence about the wage gap on their career aspirations align with conflict theorist's assertions and contend that the dominant behavior and concentration of men in the workplace makes it difficult for immigrant women to be considered for any promotional opportunities and career goals. The findings, according to conflict theorists, suggested that participants perceived themselves as subordinates to men in a male-dominated workplace and men's control of social and economic resources (German, 2019). Immigrant women perceived that the material-base upon which patriarchy rests, lies in men's control which allowed them to deny women access to promotions and economic resources (German, 2019). Participants

believed that having more men at their place of employment made it difficult for immigrant women to be considered for any promotions. This difficulty of promotional accessibility conflicts with equal opportunity laws for income parity and career growth.

Conclusion

The narrative of 10 immigrant women from Hartford County in Connecticut is included in Chapters 4 and 5. The thoughts, perceptions, and opinions of 10 immigrant women from Hartford County regarding their views about the influence of the wage gap on their career aspirations were studied. Volunteer participants were immigrant Ghanaian women who were selected through snowball and selective sampling. The research question that guided this research was what are the perceptions of immigrant Ghanaian women regarding the wage gap and their career aspirations? Four themes emerged from the interview responses: accent resulted in wage and opportunity gap, self-promotion resulted in stagnant wages with less motivation for career growth, the higher concentration of male workers reduces opportunities for promotion, and biased promotional decisions narrowed earnings and dampened motivation for career growth.

Most of the participants indicated dissatisfaction with the relationships established with supervisors and managers. Commonalities in each theme were hiring manager's stereotypes, male domineering attitudes and behaviors, male stereotypes against women, sexism and biased promotional decisions against immigrant women. Participants turned to religious beliefs that "God would see them through difficult times," when trust in managers and employment leaders were lacking.

Furthermore, the finding in this study is consistent with previous research that suggests women's access to promotional opportunities was slim in a male-dominated workplace and that they did not equally receive the same pay for doing the same job. However, participants of this study believed that ending stereotypes, sexism, and biased promotional decisions will allow immigrant women to reach their career growth potential and open up a dialogue with management. Such dialogue will give way for training and development to facilitate promotional opportunities and help bridge the wage gap between men and women (Gasman et al., 2008). Based on these findings, support to address promotional barriers should include training, communications, and socialization with managers. Such an approach will allow managers to value the skills and abilities of immigrant women at their respective places of employment.

Conducting a generic qualitative study to examine the perceptions of the influence of the wage gap on immigrant women and their career aspirations was not an easy task and not one to be taken for granted. Discontentment about the wage gap and promotional barriers made participants feel like men at their places of employment are sexist and biased in their promotional decision-making. Also, participants believed that their accent was used against them by hiring managers making it difficult for them to access promotional opportunities and career growth. On the other hand, the participants were optimistic about the future and believed that opening their businesses will enable them to take control of their careers and income growth. As such, the interview with the selected immigrant women for the study was done with respect and humility. I am grateful to the

Ghanaian immigrant women from Hartford County in this study for entrusting me with their stories. I trust that I did them justice.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. Where were you born?
3. Are you married, widowed, divorced, separated or never married?
4. And how old are you?
5. What town and county do you reside in?
6. How would you describe your socio-political views?
7. What is your religious preference?
8. What is the highest degree you have received?
9. What is your current occupation?
10. How long have you been employed?
11. Are you currently employed full time or part time?
12. If employed, how many hours a week do you work on average?
13. What do you know about the wage gap?
14. How would you describe any experience you've had about the wage gap issue at any place of employment?
15. What are your perceptions about the wage gap experience you had at your place of employment?
16. These days, if a man and a woman are doing the same work, do you think that men and women have an equal opportunity to earn more?
17. Have you experienced any situation where you earned less than a member of the opposite sex who was doing the same job?
18. Have you experienced any situation at the work place where you were paid less because you're a woman?
19. If you experienced any situation where you were paid less, how did that affect your desire to enhance your career aspirations?
20. How would you describe your views and perspectives of the wage gap on your career aspirations?

21. Can you talk about a time in your career that you negotiated with your boss or supervisor for higher pay?
22. Thinking about all the jobs that you have had, did men and women equally had greater opportunities for promotion and advancement?
23. Can you share any experience when you were skipped over or denied for a promotion because you are a woman?
24. Thinking about all the jobs that you've had, did men and women equally had opportunities for management positions?
25. Thinking about all the jobs that you have had, did men and women equally received the same hours for doing the same job?
26. What advice would you give to an immigrant woman such as yourself who is trying to enter the workforce in United States about the wage gap?
27. What could you do to empower yourself regarding your career goals going forward?
28. What would you like policy makers to do regarding the wage gap issue?