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Breaking The Concrete Wall: The Challenges Facing African-American Women In The Workplace

Fredna Pierre

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BREAKING THE CONCRETE WALL: THE CHALLENGES FACING AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

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By

Fredna Pierre

Dr. Ken Mullane
Faculty Advisor
Department of Management

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Abstract

The glass ceiling is a term that refers to the barriers that prevent women from attaining top corporate positions within a company. This business term is used to describe the difficulties that all women face. In particular, the barriers that inhibit black women from advancing in their careers are so significant that they have been described as a concrete wall rather than a glass ceiling. The purpose of this research is to identify factors that exist within the corporate hierarchy that have led to the glass ceiling and to compare these factors with those that contribute to the concrete wall and negatively affect African-American women from attaining top managerial positions. Through an extensive literature review, this research intends to explain the work and efforts being done to reduce the disadvantages faced by black women.

Keywords: Concrete Wall, Black women, management, Glass ceiling, barriers, corporate
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Acknowledgement

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Introduction

The glass ceiling continues to be a relevant issue women and minorities face in their career paths. The research and studies on this phenomenon are extensive. Looking at a number of top companies and firms leading the country today, very few women occupy top executive positions and a smaller number of women oversee top management roles. This phenomenon is known as the glass ceiling, which is a metaphor describing the invisible barrier that creates a challenge for all women and minorities to ascend into high level management positions in a company (McGregor J., 2016). The glass may be crystal clear, which is why some may not be aware women it. Some women may not be aware of the ceiling until one “hits” it and their upward progression is stalled or even stopped. Some people continue to believe the ceiling does not exist while others are more interested in the factors that may control it.

The lack of diversity within the corporate elites is becoming more and more apparent today. Much of the discussion around the glass ceiling pertains to women and the obstacles they face in the workforce. Yet, very few discuss the challenges that minorities face, especially black women. Black women are graduating colleges and universities at a higher rate than ever before, but still remain disproportionately represented in entry-level and menial positions within companies. Instead of the “glass ceiling,” the hurdles for black women are represented by a concrete wall due to the challenges being so much greater and difficult to overcome. Thus, there continues to remain a lower percentage of black women in top managerial positions than any other racial counterparts over the past decade (Frye, 2018).
There is a direct link to success when a company commits to a diverse leadership and not one solely based on profit and revenue. Organizations and firms hold a large influence power over the public, which is why it is imperative that corporations promote an inclusive workforce. The government and several companies are taking various steps to strengthen their focus on creating a more diverse workforce. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to define & explore the barriers of the concrete wall and examine the effects on black women and their career advancements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Glass Ceiling

During World War II, the United States saw a large increase in the number of women entering the workforce (Khan Academy). As men were fighting overseas and leaving their jobs at home, women in large numbers were being hired by employers and occupying positions that were once exclusive to men. This change has created lasting effects in the role women hold in the workplace and their potential career advancement. As women became active participants in the labor force, many aimed to further their education and fulfill more of the demands for workers at all skill levels in the country. Some research suggests that the increased educational attainment by women around this time paired with the falling fertility rates are key elements in the drastic increase in women’s participation in the economy (Wirth, 2001). Further trends reveal that women are remaining more productive in the workforce and less periods of time are spent for child birth and care in a women’s life (Wirth, 2001).
The workforce almost doubled from 34% of working age women (age 16 and older) in 1950 to about 57% in 2016 (Weinstein, 2018). Even with the increase in participation, women dealt with many forms of discrimination and were subject to harsh stereotypes, which are still prevalent today. After the war when men came home, women were pushed aside and left with menial roles in organizations or simply fired. This discrimination has contributed to the occupational segregation, where women are bound to the so-called “women’s position” and are too often assigned a lower pay, even if they possess similar qualifications to men (Weinstein, 2018).

Some of the industries dominated by women are teaching, nursing and social work among others, while men control positions in law enforcement, law and STEM (The American Association of University Women, 2018). The separation of industries demonstrates the continued stigma for how women should work and be paid, since the women-dominated industries tend to be lower paying than those of men. Society assumes that the role of women is trivial and menial and that men should hold more positions of power and control. Yet, there has been an intriguing recent trend. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan fact tank, the gap in gender pay has been narrowed since 1980, but the disparity is still apparent (Graf, Brown, & Patten, 2018). With the change in the past century regarding household
earners, women working today is seen as a new norm, the regular way of life. In a 2018 report from Catalyst, an independent consulting and research organization that focuses on women in business, it discovered women have earned more educational degrees than men since 1982 and as of last year, there were 75 million females in the labor force (Catalyst, 2018). Even though men are still the highest income earners in households across the country, women have made significant strides in closing the wage gap and furthering their education. The United States labor market reveals that the annual earnings for men between the years 2001-2015 is almost two times the number of women (Niall, 2018). Women earning $28,683, with men earning on average $50,442 (Niall, 2018). The pay disparity reflects the perception society still holds of a woman’s role and the value they bring to company.

Only twenty-four of Standard & Poor’s 500 companies are currently led by women, while men control an overwhelmingly large majority of those companies (Catalyst, 2019). Very few women attain top managerial roles within organizations and the select few who do are nearing the end of their career and face issues with being accepted by their colleagues. Women in higher-ranks often complain of feeling socially isolated (Jacobs & Schain, 2009). Social isolation is detrimental to women’s health and well-being, which can prevent women from reaching their full potential. For the past two decades, women occupying executive senior level positions in United States companies remain significantly low, at around 5% currently (Catalyst, 2019). Yet, this percentage is the highest number seen in past decades, even though women make up a total of about 50% of the work force today. Thus, there continues to be a clear division in women and
men in leadership positions and the access to top roles in firms. Women are less likely to be hired over men, even with the same qualification because employers have a perception that men perform better on average at certain tasks (Gerdeman, 2017). For example, corporate America promotes men at 30 percent higher rates than women during their early career stages, and entry-level women are significantly more likely than men to have spent five or more years in the same role (McKinsey & Company; LeanIn.Org, 2016). This results in the very few number of women in top corporate positions. In a Pew Research study, researchers described that women would need to work an extra 47 days to earn what men did in 2017 (Graf, Brown, & Patten, 2018).

In addition, the views of a working American family have changed in society. Women are now seen as active members of the labor force and are expected to divide their time, which can be a challenge. Women must balance the needs of their family responsibility, which heavily remain on the woman, while maintaining a successful career. Studies have described that mothers who enter the workforce are likely to experience burnouts due to increasing demands of their time (Jacobs & Schain, 2009). This burnout can lead to extreme exhaustion and prolonged stressed affecting their job performance.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles across United States corporations is clearly visible. This phenomenon has led researchers to define the invisible barrier that women experience in the workplace as the “glass ceiling.” With only a few references in books and others in news articles, the exact origin of the term is not entirely clear. But there is an acceptance of it being developed in the late 1970s in the
United States to describe the artificial obstacle, created by attitudinal and organizational prejudice, which blocks women from attaining senior executive positions (Wirth, 2001).

The two individuals that helped propel the phrase into popular use and garnered media attention are Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt in their special report titled “The Glass Ceiling: Why Women Can’t Seem to Break the Invisible Barrier that Blocks Them from Top Jobs” published in the Wall Street Journal in 1986 (McGregor, 2016). The report, which captured the frustration of many, details issues involving organizational hierarchy that prevent women for gaining top executive management roles. The term “glass” describes the invisibility of the barrier and “ceiling” that blocks a woman’s upward career progression. It is based on the fact that women during the 1970s and 1980s were rarely promoted to top management positions in large companies (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In other words, women aiming to reach positions within the corporate elite are stopped by an impenetrable barrier at a similar point in their career advancements.

Experts suggest that societal behavior, cultural biases, and gender structures in the United States have resulted in a glass ceiling that prevents a women’s hierarchical progression in the workplace. The systematic institutions across the county have influenced norms and rules for women and men. Women must place greater effort into proving to others their capability to lead and hold senior executive positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Repeatedly, women are confronted with stereotypes and discrimination at work. Women and men for centuries have been expected to hold different roles in society due to their gender. “A woman’s place is in the home” has been a traditional statement made by many men to signify the duties and responsibilities of all women and nothing
more. These and similar gender-based stereotypes fuel many sexist beliefs that women must face, such as being considered less than or inferior to men. The impact of these stereotypes perpetuate the image of the traditional woman in society and block any progress or change to their roles and value in society, including the workplace.

Researchers have suggested that unconsciously, femininity is associated with incompetence (Oakly, 2000). Therefore, successful corporate leaders are only being seen as men due to their masculinity (Oakly, 2000). This idea makes it almost impossible to separate a woman from her gender at work, even if her performance and abilities are superior to a man.

Today, researchers continue to move away from the biological model approach to explain gender role differences and have generally accepted the structural/cultural model and socialization model for having shaped the gender role difference (Weyer, 2007). Gender difference in regard to leadership in the United States is now a social construct. In other words, society has created an expectation and role that are seen as the ideal for women and men. The structural/cultural model suggests that societal structure for gender differences are based on systems that set-in place status and power to one sex over the other. Authors of the socialization theory explain that differences in gender identity are reached through the various developmental processes in one’s life such as education and home life (Weyer, 2007).

Family factors continue to significantly affect women’s career advancement to top management roles. As with many views on gender, many of the roles women hold are those that possess traits of being a caretaker and being nurturing. Before the passage of
the Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978, also known as PDA, employers had the ability to fire a woman if he/she believed she was pregnant (Cabeza, Johnson, & Tyner, 2011). At the time, pregnancy discrimination prevented women from telling employers if she was having a child and made a number of women keep their pregnancy a secret, which can be very dangerous. As previously mentioned, family obligations remain largely in a women’s domain, which creates a barrier for promotion at work (Jauhar & Lau, 2018). Women hit a ceiling during this time due to their time away from the office and commitment to things at home rather than in their field. Maternity leave policies in the United States have been cited as being an outlier in comparison to other countries (Deahl, 2016). The labor force pattern for women have been depicted graphically by the letter M (Wirth, 2001). Women, as they enter the labor force, demonstrate a steady incline, but begin to decline and leave the workforce to care for children. Motherhood has become one of the many issues’ women face in attempts to advancing in their career.

Finally, some studies have described the barriers for women as being microinequities that further contribute to the glass ceiling (Rowe, 1990). Microinequities are the small, subtle actions and behaviors that may overlook and single out an individual, specifically women, based on unconscious biases rooted in gender roles and individual beliefs. (Rowe, 1990). Microinequities, very similar to microagressions, are unintentional indirect actions or opinions that hold a negative prejudice towards an individual. These actions can hinder career growth for women. Microinequities are another form of discrimination that is at times invisible and can be done unconsciously by a person. A micro inequity could be as simple as a manager continuously assigning tasks that are gender-specific according to an individual’s sex. The unconscious action ignores
assigning a project based on ability and skills. Microinequities are often unnoticeable to the person committing them, so a manager may not even notice their own actions or behaviors and the effects they have on their employees. Microinequities are a contributing factor in the lack of opportunity for recruitment and promotion of women in the workplace. When employers see women as inferior, they are less likely to hire and promote them into top managerial or decision-making positions.

With the various institutions that reiterate gender and behavior roles, women face what is known as the “double-bind.” This form of discrimination continues to hinder the opportunities and status available to women and has been used to explain the extremely low number of women in top corporate positions. Introduced almost two decades ago, the double-bind creates a situation (i.e., behavioral norm) where a person cannot win no matter what she does or how hard she tries. Women encounter a number of situations where a double-bind prevents them from ascending the corporate ladder. For example, the value America (and its businesses) place on masculinity and characteristics commonly seen in men, provides them greater opportunity for leadership roles, while women who portray more dominant traits such as being authoritative and tough now become “bitchy” or “too bossy” when they demonstrate aggressiveness or assertiveness (Oakley, 2000). The societal norms and systematic institutions collide as women attempt to climb the never-ending ladder. Those who hold power have historically employed a double-bind to oppress those without power. Discriminatory practices and unconscious biases have been used to separate women and men into distinct societal roles. In the next section, the paper will explore how race can exacerbate the effects of the double bind and limit career opportunities for women of color.
The Concrete Wall

As many studies have concluded, the glass ceiling is a hurdle for women and their progression to senior executive positions and top decision-making roles within a firm. In many of the studies conducted on the glass ceiling and the limitations placed on women, research tends to focus on the general disadvantages of all women and disregard an analysis of how different minorities experience these blockers and their effects. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, black females would need to wait until the year 2119 for equal pay compared to the wait of 36 years for white women. (Institute For Women’s Policy Research , 2018). The shared experience of women of color and their white counterparts are drastically different, as evidenced by their disparity in pay, top corporate representation, and the lack of opportunities for them (Tan, 2016). There is also great disparity seen in women of color across the globe, for example, women of African descent are disproportionately affected by the barriers of the glass ceiling due to an additional barrier of race that creates a substantial challenge to overcome (Clay, 1998). In fact, these inequities for women of color are so significant that they have been described as a concrete wall rather than a glass ceiling. In this section, the paper will explore the origins of the concrete wall and its effects on black women as they advance in their careers.

As the glass ceiling encompasses the barriers and challenges of women, new studies have characterized the obstacles black women face in their career advancement as being in a category of their own (Tan, 2016). While glass is easier to break, a concrete wall signifies the impenetrable barriers black women experience. The solid structure of the concrete wall allows very few women of color to break through it. Although scholars
are unclear of its exact origin, the term was brought to public attention within the last ten years. Major media and news outlets, as well as scholarly writings have introduced the term and placed it on the agenda for discussion. In addition to the concrete wall, this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as a “black ceiling” (Sepand, 2015) or “concrete ceiling” (Catalyst, 1999). In either case, the discrimination surrounding both gender and race identities that black women hold, creates an obstacle greater than a glass ceiling. In other words, the glass ceiling becomes an ineffective description of the challenges of black females in their professional career, which is why the stronger term of concrete is used to describe this barrier affecting women of African descent.

The United States has a long history of racial tension, due to the structures and institutional systems of white supremacy the country was formed on. People of African descent continue to be viewed as inferior (Coates, 2014). In a recent study conducted by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, it cites that some of the barriers for African American women’s advancement in their career are racism and sexism. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, racism is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human trait and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Sexism is the behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The intersecting identities of race and sex hold very different experiences for women of color and white women. While sexism and racism are distinct forms of discrimination that manifest differently, their effects are compounded when a person experiences both at the same time. This type of intersectional discrimination perpetuates the racial and gender wealth gaps, limits black women’s access to educational opportunities, and negatively
impacts their career advancement (The American Association of University Women, 2018). Both racism and sexism can lead to discriminatory hiring practices, and how an individual is treated and dealt with in the workplace. Racism and sexism combined creates a marginalized group of people that suffer greater effects of stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination in the workplace. Thus, the two identities of race and gender have shaped and restricted the progress and opportunity given to black women seen today. Black women continue to experience limited career mobility and endure discrimination not only based on their gender, but also their race. Compared to their white peers, studies have suggested that women of color are the most underrepresented racial group in the senior and upper ranks of companies (McKinsey & Company, 2018).

As previously mentioned, there exists a large pay and wage disparity in black women compared to white men and women. According to the National Women’s Law Center, a non-profit organization aimed at protecting and advancing the progression of women and girls, researchers discovered that in 2017, black women who were employed full-time year-round made on average 61 cents for every dollar made by white men, as compared to white women who make 79 cents (National Women's Law Center, 2018) (Lockhart, 2018). This results in a wage gap of $23,653 for black females that is an annual loss and results in an emotional and financial burden for black women, who are a majority of key breadwinners for their families (National Partnership for Women & Families, 2019).
Equity Theory developed by Stacy Adams in 1965 explains that employees who believe that they are underpaid compared to their qualifications, deprivation and feelings of being cheated, leading to less of a commitment to an organization (Buttner & Lowe, 2016). Since black women’s pay is so much less for similar work being done, this could lead to further stress because the value of their work is being considered worthless by their employers.

Black women earning less than their white counterparts will result in providing less financial support for their families, themselves, and savings for the future, thereby continuing the cycle of poverty black women endure. The systemic barriers and unconscious bias of society, which affect the multidimensional identities of race, gender and class, greatly affect black women and are directly responsible for the pay gap. As a result, black women and other minorities often experience this burden as an “emotional tax,” that challenges their well-being and attempts to successfully navigate through their careers (Carpenter, 2018). An emotional tax is the heightened experience of being different from peers at work because of gender and/or race/ethnicity and the associated detrimental effect on health, well-being, and the ability to thrive at work (Travis, Thorpe-Moscon, & McCluney, 2016).

An additional systemic issue confronting black women is the intersectionality of their own identities, which creates an inferiority that is twice as hard to break through. Intersectionality is the overlapping of identities of an individual and the interdependent systems formed, which often results in discrimination or disadvantages (YWCA, 2017). This term was coined 30 years ago by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of law at Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and has
resurfaced today to discuss the effects on women of color in the workplace. (Tugend, 2018). Black women are interconnected by their race and gender, which both have historically been regarded as inferior. Some researchers have made the argument of necessity to include social class of black women due to poverty existing more in women and the black race (YWCA, 2017).

According to the Wall Street Journal (2016), women of color make up a total of twelve percent of first-level managers, compared with forty-five percent of white male peers. The article continues by detailing the racial disparity of women of color and states that only three percent are occupying the C-suite level compared to seventy-one percent of white men (Piazza, 2016). The C-suite level describes a corporation’s most important senior executive titles beginning with the letter C. However, that three percent might be an overestimate since Ursula Burns, the first African American women to run a Fortune 500 company, stepped down as CEO for Xerox (Kauflin, 2017). There is currently no black female CEO leading companies in the Standard & Poor 500 index (McGregor, 2018). This large disparity in the representation of black women in the upper echelon of corporate America, has led researchers to conclude that this phenomenon is more than just a problem about women equality. An examination by race of all women is necessary to understand the root of the problem.

Further complicating the issue of underrepresentation of women of color on corporate boards is a lack of mentorship provided to black women. Coaching and mentoring are increasingly recognized as effective leadership development methodologies and accepted as best practices (Beeson & Valerio, 2015). In a Marketplace interview, Ella Bell Smith from Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth
discussed the lack of black women in executive roles and the institutional barriers that are preventing them from ascending to the upper echelon of corporations. Smith states the need for black females to build positive, constructive relationships with managers and executives in a company (Smith, 2017). Mentoring and sponsorship offers individuals directions and support for their aspirations and career advancement.

Nearly all black women who reach the top of the corporate hierarchy are alone and have done it with little to no mentoring, personal support is a key component of the mentoring relationship. Many black females do not have familiar faces that surround them or others who encourage them, since there are so few in their shoes. This is one of the many problems seen today - black women lack proper mentorship opportunities to help them ascend to the top management roles of an organization. In an extensive research study of twenty African American female executives, mentoring was the most significant factor in the lives of a majority of the executives (Clay, 1998). Black females require a positive mentorship by an individual that looks like them (i.e., those who are black and a woman). Mentorship and experience-sharing are keys to building the expertise of women and minorities (Beeson & Valerio, 2015). Thus, there is a direct correlation to mentorship and the representation of women of color in executive positions. With the lack of black women at the top, very few have mentors that share the same experience as they do.

This lack of representation makes it difficult for women to aspire to a role within the top of a corporation. Black women are more likely to work in lower-paying service occupations (like food service, domestic work, and health care assistance) than any other industry and less likely to work in the higher-paying engineering and tech fields or
managerial positions (The American Association of University Women, 2018). On one hand, the very few black women in top corporate positions can be seen as an inspiration and an important example for some. The select few that are chosen to represent a firm at its highest-level act as a beacon of hope for others or external groups. On the other hand, the relative lack of black women seen within the C-suite levels of corporations is a strong deterrent for other black women due to there being very limited opportunities and possibility for career growth.

Finally, another barrier apparent today is the amount of people who may associate the representation of one black individual at the top executive level as being enough and an end to inclusion and diversity initiatives. If an organization no longer values such initiatives or pressure to continuously change, this may result in a lack of emphasis and resources devoted to assisting black women in furthering their career. This results companies overlooking or simply ignoring black women’s aspiration to the top corporate management. In testimony made by an educator during a workshop targeting black professional women states, “…No one has brought up tokenism. There was a time when certain companies practiced years of overt racism, but it’s not that way anymore. Now, the racism is subtle and practiced by individuals. There’s also economic racism. There are people who don’t want some black person or immigrant to take their job away, when that job is what feeds them (Wirth, 2001).” Being used as a token or a representation of a whole group or race is an experience many black female professionals are familiar with; this occurrence is known as tokenism. Tokenism is the practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly (Merriam-Webster). Many firms and
organizations use this as a tactic to silence any major protests of the company or use it as their introduction to further inclusion. This practice is very subtle and hinders any actual growth for black women and perpetuates the existence of the concrete wall. Since a company has made a first step initiative to “solve” their race and gender problem, they disregard any further actions needed. This ignores many of the other black women seeking to climb the corporate ladder.

**Institutional Responses**

Firms and organizations begin to change with the demands of the marketplace and consumers. As our nation becomes more globalized the demography of available talents change. Companies that want to remain as leaders need to reinvent themselves to stay current. More and more companies are realizing that they need to have a demographic that represents the rest of the world. Diversity and inclusion have become an integral role in driving business sustainability and improving it overall firm performance (TradeArabia, 2019). Workplace diversity and inclusive efforts are important for a number of reasons, including that is it better for overall business, increases investment returns, lower volatility and drives innovation (PR Newswire, 2019). McKinsey & Company’s global study of more than 1,000 companies revealed that organizations with the most gender-diverse leadership were more likely to outperform on profitability (21%) and value creation (27%) (Einhorn, 2019). In this section, the paper will discuss what is currently being done to neutralize the existence of the glass ceiling and concrete wall. The institutions that will be examined are society, government, and businesses.
**SOCIETY**

The women’s right movement has been a tremendous effort to bring awareness to the challenges all women face in the 19th and 20th century. The women’s right movement sought equal rights and opportunities as well as greater personal freedom for women (Burkett, 2019). The movement aimed at drastically changing the traditional perception of all women. The movement today is commonly known as a feminist movement. Feminism is the range of political movements, social movements, and ideologies that aggregate together with the motif to eradicate political, economic, personal, and social inequality of genders (The Financial Express, 2018). Equal opportunities in both the educational and professional platform is a common goal in the movement.

**BUSINESSES**

Innovation is a driver for continued success for companies. Innovation generally refers to changing processes or creating more effective process, products and ideas (Department of Industry and Science, 2018). Innovation is a common goal for all business models and looks different for each company. In 2015, sixty-six percent of respondents in The Deloitte Innovation Survey described innovation as important for growth in a firm (Deloitte 2016). Including a workforce demographic of individuals from different backgrounds, companies become leaders and stand out from competition. Individuals with different backgrounds and experiences often see the same problem in many ways and come up with a variety of solutions, increasing the odds that one of those solutions will become the right one to the problem. In a fast-changing business environment, such responsiveness leaves companies better positioned to adapt.
GOVERNMENT

Federal equal employment regulations and affirmative action have promoted organizational diversity practices, but very little research shows further commitment by top management besides compliance with the law (Ng & Sears, 2018). Top executives in companies control how issues are handled and hold crucial roles in change. While a number of firms brand themselves as inclusive, many fail at implementing solid policies to help increase continued diversity. More than 90% of companies surveyed by McKinsey & Company, a leading management consultant firm, have gender diversity programs in place, but only a quarter of employee in a diverse group believe that they have personally benefited from them (McKinsey & Company; LeanIn.Org, 2016). The lack of initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion continue the cycle of companies not reaching for the root of the problem. Created in 1991, The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission was in charge of investigating organization discrimination against women and minorities as a whole and form recommendations (The U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The creation of this commission was to address disparity and inequality that women and minorities experienced in the workplace and the affects that created an “invisible ceiling” to further career opportunities and advancements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research highlight the need for policy intervention that improve black women’s earnings, access to quality jobs that allow for upward progression, and a redesign of organizational efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. After an extensive literature review, black women are continuing to find difficulty today
to ascend within the top corporate realms. Paying all workers fairly means more black women can support the people relying on them and remain the head of household, while also contributing to and further improving the economy (The American Association of University Women, 2018).

Many of the findings discovered that firms lack direct initiatives that focuses on diversifying the workplace and educating employees on unconscious biases. For example, policies such as blind applicant screening would be beneficial in reducing such biases. This will allow hiring managers to solely review an applicant’s qualifications. Companies need more quantitative feedback and results to examine strengthens and weaknesses to further improve. Allocation of resources and training is necessary to attract the employees with the best skills. Diversity and inclusion increase productivity and revenue for a company and aid in the global market place. The purpose of this paper was to identify the origins of the glass ceiling and discover the distinction between women of color and their racial counterparts that form a concrete wall. The researched focused on addressing the phenomena affecting all women, but especially black women and to highlight what needs to be done to mitigate the effects. After taking such steps it may one day be possible for all women, including those of color, to freely advance up the corporate ladder and earn wages equivalent to men.
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