2017

The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Leadership in the Legal Field

Jordan Giles

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.emich.edu/honors

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

Recommended Citation

Giles, Jordan, "The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Leadership in the Legal Field" (2017). Senior Honors Theses. 529.
http://commons.emich.edu/honors/529

This Open Access Senior Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at DigitalCommons@EMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@EMU. For more information, please contact lib-ir@emich.edu.
The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Leadership in the Legal Field

Degree Type
Open Access Senior Honors Thesis

Department
Leadership and Counseling

First Advisor
Cheyenne Luzysnki

Second Advisor
Cory Hamilton

Subject Categories
Educational Leadership

This open access senior honors thesis is available at DigitalCommons@EMU: http://commons.emich.edu/honors/529
THE INTERSECTION OF RACE, GENDER, AND LEADERSHIP IN THE LEGAL FIELD

By

Jordan Giles

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with Honors in Interdisciplinary Leadership in the Department of Leadership and Counseling

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan, on this date December 1, 2016
Table of Contents

III. Introduction
   a. Statement of the Problem
   b. Research Question
   c. Significance of the Research
   d. Definition of Key Terms

IV. Review of Literature
   a. Studies on Women in the Legal Field
      i. Women Attorneys and the Changing Workplace: High Hopes, Mixed Outcomes
         Kitzerow
      ii. Gender Trials: Emotional Lives in Contemporary Law Firms
      iii. Women in Law, Second Edition
   b. Studies on Women of Color in the Legal Field
      iv. Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms by the American Bar
         Association Commission on Women in the Profession
      v. From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful: Strategies for Law Firms and
         Women of Color in Law Firms by the American Bar Association Commission
         on Women in the Profession
      vi. Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments
      vii. Alone on an Island: The Realities of Practicing Law for Women of Color
   c. Leadership Theory and Practice Overview
      i. Leadership Theory and Practice, Sixth Edition

V. Methods
VI. Results

VII. Discussion

VIII. Appendix

IX. Bibliography

- Introducing the Women of the Study
  - Ashley: African American 59 year old shareholder at her firm. Graduated law school in 1992 and received a scholarship for her studies. Raised three kids with a spouse and attended law school later in her career out of partial need for a better financial future. Moved several times primarily due to husband’s job. Notable as the first black female clerk in a state outside of Michigan and works in a primarily Jewish male dominated firm.

  - Bianca: 48-year-old African American year old partner at her firm. Graduated law school at 33. Has a daughter and maintains a primarily single-mother household. First Black female partner at her current firm. Primarily concerned with family in early stages of work, based on peer suggestion throughout career began working with motto “If not me, who else” in terms of working to help other women of color.

  - Christina: African American female who is 39 years old. Christina graduated in 2013 at 36. Currently an assistant prosecuting attorney in the juvenile division. Went to law school while caring for her son who was in school, and waited nearly until her LSAT scores expired due to wanting her son to be settled and taken care of before taking on class. Worked as a paralegal before entering law school and went to law school at night. Spear headed group to practice peaceful protesting.
Diana: 33 year old African American female who worked as a paralegal for a university. Diana is the only subject who is a paralegal and did not attend law school. First paralegal at the university and built her own mentorship initiative mentoring young women of color. Helped build network of university paralegals in order to effectively communicate and share ideas.

Emma: 47 years old African American associate general counsel of a university. Emma graduated law school at 24 years old from the same school as Felicia. Mother of 3 children with supportive spouse. Actively addressed wage disparities in previous places of work, which she deemed as not knowing specifically whether it was race related, gender related, or neither. Served on Women of Color discussion board with various other women of color.

Felicia: 40-year-old African American senior attorney at current law firm who went to law school with Emma and graduated in 2001. Has a supportive spouse and chose to homeschool children. Left the practice for a while to be a stay at home mom with her kids and after a year returned to work full time. Had the added struggle of being perceived as younger than what her age was while practicing.

Gloria: Law school graduate of 1992, African American Female who is the founding member of her own law firm. Has two children and started law school when her first child was 9 months old. Had on and off support with her children throughout her career. Found interest in the law as father had not completed primary education and had always wished he had been a lawyer. Had experience running for judge and has sat on various committees and boards.
➤ Heather: 68-year-old African American shareholder at a law firm. Went part time to law school with 5-year-old child at the time due to divorce. Passed the bar in 1980 and chose law school due to mother who actively pushed higher education. Has held several formal leadership positions at the firm with 35 plus years of legal experience and has been the recipient of various awards.

➤ Irene: 43-year-old African American partner at firm as well as pro bono attorney. Graduated law school in 2001 at age 28. Has two daughters and had spouse to rely on with career. Early on worked with women of domestic abuse and thus has a special affinity toward the work. Strong advocacy against domestic violence due to previous work as well as working on diversity committee at firm.
I. Introduction

The first black male (Black Genealogy Research Group), first woman ("Famous Firsts by American Women, 1587-1900"), and first black woman ("Charlotte Ray (First African American Woman Lawyer)") graduated law school and were admitted to the BAR in the mid to late 1800s. Although these individuals were the exceptions to the rule it was not until the 1960s and 70s that women and women of color were consistently represented in graduating law classes. In fact, one early study suggests that women in 2016 make up just 36% of the legal profession when compared to men (From Visible Invisibility 2). The social hierarchy of society has predominately been organized and structured by the majority in power, historically the white male. Although societies views on women in the work place have changed dramatically in the last hundred years since the first woman and black woman become BAR members the disparity between men and women practicing and pursuing law still exists. The present inequality tends to be greater among black women and minorities (From Visible Invisibility 2). Most statistics focus on women of color and does not differentiate women by race or ethnicity. In fact, in 2008 minority women, who include African American women, only hold 1.5% of positions in major law firms (From Visible Invisibility 5). Most documentation on women of color consistently focuses on high attrition rates as well as low advancement in this field (From Visible Invisibility 5).

Researchers have attributed these phenomena to a lack of equal opportunities compared to their peers. These lacking opportunities were noted in the study from Invisibility to Visible Successful: Success Strategies for Law Firms and Women of Color in Law Firms. Roberts, the chair of the Commission on Women in the Profession, mentioned the challenges that women of color may face in the legal profession, which include:
Demeaning comments or harassment; a lack of networking opportunities; denial of assignments; a lack of access to billable hours; limited client development opportunities; unfair performance evaluations; and lower compensation. Not surprisingly, these and other barriers have impacted the retention and advancement of women of color, particularly into the partnership ranks of the nation’s major law firms. (From Visible Invisibility 5)

Authors from this study identified a number of barriers confronting women of color, suggesting that removal of such barriers may lead to increased representation. These studies, in combination, show that parity in the legal field would occur when males of all races and women of all races no longer lack access to billable hours, assignment opportunities, client development, fair evaluations, and fair compensation simply based on assumptions about capabilities or potential barriers due to gender or race.

Purpose of the Study

Scant literature and research on minority women in the legal field exists. Research has illustrated the challenges of women in law and women of color in other professional fields, but few studies focus on the success strategies and experiences of women of color in law. In 2003 the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Women launched its first study on women of color titled the Women of Color Legal Professional Research Initiative (Visible Invisibility). It is for these reasons that further scholarship may need to be conducted on women of color pursuing law. The purpose of my study is to address a gap in literature and research by focusing on women of color and their experience within the legal field. The study concentrates on their path into law, leadership, and strategies of success. A focus on women of color and their leadership styles coupled with success qualities may contribute positively to the literature.
This study employed an anti-deficit approach to integrate minority women into the legal field whereas the focus is on successful strategies versus barriers. Additionally, this study recognizes barriers that exist, but focuses on how women of color have experienced such barriers and moved beyond them, while also adding value to their current work environment for other minority groups.

Background of the Study

Barriers women of color faced ranged from those already mentioned by the ABA study as well as a range of barriers based on familial expectations of women (Epstein), expectations of women of color to perform at a higher level in order to prove one's self (Epstein), as well as the assumption many faced of being a paralegal or legal assistant at face value rather than attorney (Pierce). Roberts introduced the notion of the “double bind” women of color may face. Double bind was explained as experiencing “a double whammy of gender and race, unlike white women or even men of color who share at least one of these characteristics (gender or race) with those in the upper strata of management” (Visible invisibility 5). The ABA study, suggested “women of color may face exclusion from informal networks, inadequate institutional support, and challenges to their authority and credibility,” and that women of color, “often feel isolated and alienated, sometimes even from other women,” (Visible Invisibility 5). These findings combined with the literature exemplified an experiential difference of women of color when compared to men, men of color, and white women. Research emphasized that there are likely barriers women of color face and that are unique to other populations due to the double bind phenomena.

Epstein (1973) and Simpson (1977) focused on women of color in the professional setting throughout the 70s. While Epstein only conducted one study of women of color that
focused on lawyers in the field, Simpson’s dissertation comprised a small portion of Epstein’s piece on Women in Law as a whole. The work Epstein comprised in Women in Law (1993) illustrated some challenges/obstacles women of color faced in law citing similar barriers to the ABA study. “There are cases in which the negative status in some women’s ‘status set’ tend to cancel each other. In the study of older women lawyers, interviews with some black women suggested that by hiring a black woman a law firm could fulfill two debts to society’s ‘current call for equality, without any great threat to the firm’s continuing internal structure” (Epstein, 87). While this could be attributed to negative feelings, Epstein’s work found that black women accepted this position primarily because despite the negative connotation, it was an advantage none-the-less (Epstein 88). Primarily, this highlighted that it was likely that women of color may not be seen as a threat to white men to the extent men of color may be perceived as a threat due to the fact that “a women could be kept in her place” (Epstein 88). Additionally, this portion of the 1972 study highlighted that in some cases women of color may have a leg up by emphasizing their distinction from the white population of the legal field as, “white men suspected women were looking for husbands and would drop out of the profession as soon as they married,” (Epstein 88). Epstein mentioned these hidden benefits among the barriers women of color face, which highlighted that there is potential for strategic use of the barriers women of color face in the legal field. Based on this study Epstein opened the door for an argument that women of color could be the “sleeping bear” of the legal profession in that they appear to be harmless to those who are “suited” for the “old boy” structure of the profession, yet when awoken women of color could be capable of taking on much more than what is expected of them.
This may be compared to the ABA study title Visible Invisibility that alluded to the invisibility of women of color yet throughout research we now know the benefits women of color bring to the table in this profession. In order to tie these factors together, barriers and success of women of color may need to take on anti-deficit approach, yet research has often focused primarily on the deficits of women of color. For example Simpson’s research took a deficit approach to women in law by focusing on the social factors, which allow a women of color to enter an atypical profession rather than focusing on how women of color break down the notion of the legal profession as an atypical profession for women of color. While it is valuable to know how women of color enter the legal profession when presented with or without barriers, it is just as valuable to understand how women of color transform and benefit the legal field by turning the field into a typical setting for women of color.

Researcher’s Experience

As a woman of color seeking to enter the legal field, I am interested in learning from the experiences of others. While I am multiracial and thus may experience different experience than woman who identify primarily as African American or Black, there is value in understanding what leadership qualities are beneficial to their advancement. As the researcher I have an interest in the leadership qualities of these women due to my experience minoring in Interdisciplinary Leadership at Eastern Michigan University. My understanding of the leadership practices that exist and the ways in which leadership changes depending on the position the leadership calls for, all are instructive in forming my understanding of how these women lead and how these women consider the followers they influence in their leadership. My knowledge in this field has lead me to seek information on how women of color lead in the legal field, and whether there are particular leadership practice that work for women of color and may
even be required by the legal field in order to succeed. It is with this study that I see potential for
the chance to contribute to scholarship in the field regarding women of color who are working
or seeking to work in the legal field.

Statement of the Problem

There are a handful of studies, which help us to understand what women in the legal
field face in terms of barriers and discrimination some of which include but are not limited to
studies by Kitzerow, Pierce, as well as several studies by Epstein. However, there are just a few
studies on women of color in the legal field that help to better understand the problems that
women of color face in the legal field. These studies include the group of studies conducted by
the American Bar Association and the study by Epstein and Simpson, which focused primarily
on black women generally in the professional field. Previous studies have presented survey
research, focus group commentary, and or personal interviews, with most concluding with
suggestions to better the environment of women, and in the few cases specifically what can be
done for women of color. While these studies add value to the conversation about the potential
double bind women of color face, many of these studies lack in depth interviews with women of
color. Herein presents an opportunity to focus on the ways in which these women of color
practice in their profession while overcoming these barriers, and highlights whether these
practices require particular sets of leadership skills in order for women of color to succeed.

Developing an understanding of how women of color pursue their work and the ways in which
they lead in the field will help to instruct others on what practices have worked to the advantage
of these women and what this means for others entering the field. A study of this nature would
allow the researcher to understand how select samples of women of color succeed in the legal
field as well as how they lead.
Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the successful strategies and leadership qualities of women of color in the legal field. In order to do this, the following questions have guided my study: 1) Do women of color implement leadership strategies in the legal field? 2) What, if any, leadership qualities do women of color share in the legal field? 3) Do these leadership qualities benefit women of color in their work within the legal field?

Significance of the Research

These research questions are significant as they seek to discover the pathways of successful women of color in the legal field. Unlike previous studies, which emphasize the barriers women of color encounter or framing successful women of color as the exception to the rule, this study focuses on a pattern of success for women of color and the implications of those patterns. Understanding the leadership qualities and success strategies of these women may inform this research on how women of color work beyond the “old-boy” system of the legal field, as well as suggest effective leadership practices in order to create and recognize the abilities and value of women of color in the legal field.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Women of Color: Women who racially or ethnically define themselves as Black or African American. These women could have been multiracial, but all the women of this study identified as African American and or Black.

2. Legal Field: Careers that qualify either by having attended law school, passed the BAR, and currently work in some legal line of work pertaining to a doctorate of jurisprudence or work as a paralegal.

3. Double bind: Reference between the quandary women of color face by confronting issues of gender as well as race, which in some cases can be faced singularly and other times can be faced with both factoring in on discrimination and bias.
4. Glass Ceiling: “An unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities” (Webster’s Dictionary)

5. Sticky Floor Effect: When occupational sex segregation in lower management creates an environment where women do not gain adequate skills necessary for advancement. (Wright and Baxter 2000). Therefore women remain clustered at the bottom of the work rank.

II. Review of Literature

Studies on Women in the Legal Field

Kitzerow’s (2014) work aimed to describe the life paths and careers in law of sixty-five women. The author concentrated on participant experiences, and how experiences differed between generations. Each generation was broken into three categories either the “Pioneer Group”, which includes law school graduates who graduated by 1963, the “Transition Group” which included women who graduated between 1964 and 1972 from law school, as well as the “Modern Group” which focused on women who graduated from law school between 1973 and 1975 (Kitzerow). Kitzerow emphasized the struggles faced throughout these women’s careers and compared such struggles between the Pioneer Group to the other groups. Findings illustrated more significant struggles for the Pioneer group when compared to the Transition and Modern Group. The struggles the Pioneer Group faced included finding jobs, balancing family and a career, as well as experiencing assumptions from employers and colleagues based on their gender. Kitzerow also spoke with a focus group of women law school graduates in order to understand their perceptions of anticipated obstacles once they enter the legal field, and whether they feel enough has changed to open more doors for them in comparison with the 65 women. Ultimately, Kitzerow acknowledges the different factors these women faced and attempted to reflect on how the legal field has improved for women and yet how much more is necessary for the legal field to meet the needs of the gendered divide in law.
Pierce's (1995) study, focused on the complex emotional labor that was associated with the legal field and often either overlooked or backed by assumption rather than reality. The idea of emotional labor was that there was a component to legal work, which inevitably required particular emotional choices and even suppression. While this may be true, through Pierce's work Pierce revealed that often this emotional component became gendered thus reinforcing the gendered hierarchy of the legal field. Pierce focused on the fact that there were assumptions of the role and emotional levels one may show as an attorney versus the emotional requirements a paralegal or legal secretary may be expected to portray. For this reason, attorney's have been granted a male viewed emotional range with anger and manipulation being deemed acceptable and more fitting toward males, while paralegal, legal secretaries, and even female attorneys were expected to nurture and be more kind or take on more “kind” approaches to their work (Pierce 3). For these reason paralegal positions, legal secretary positions, and work like family law were deemed more suited for women in the legal field and were seen as more acceptable positions for women (Pierce 3). Pierce examined what was deemed to be a lacking area in terms of understanding why the legal field has remained as gendered as it has despite the equality of women rising in recent years. Pierce observed two large firms, one corporate and one private, in order to interview and work along side males and females in the work place. Pierce gained an understanding of what was required of work within the legal field, and how those in the legal field understood the emotional requirement and gendered burden of a career in the legal field. Pierce added an interview component to the study by interviewing some of the individuals in various positions to understand what these individuals felt about their position in correlation to their co-workers, and whether they felt the hierarchy established in the legal field was appropriate.
Epstein's (1993) study examined the experiences of women in law generally to add to the understanding of the barriers women face in this profession compared to previous studies.

Epstein first took on the task of providing a preview as to what women and individuals of color have experienced in the past in terms of barriers and bias, and described the policy changes of the 70s as instrumental in allowing room for these individuals in the field. Epstein explained that for several years, blacks and women of color were met with resistance from the "gatekeepers" (those with power) in the legal field (Epstein 14). Epstein added that those of color faced a world where they could not conceal the negative perceptions of their abilities due to their physical attributes, which marked them as outsiders (Epstein 15). Epstein noted that over the course of history the legal field and its position in society have considerably changed based on the need or lack of need for lawyers at given points in time, and that it becomes clear that women entering the field has been just as important to that changing context (Epstein 21).

Epstein emphasized this mentioning, "old prejudices are being challenged as women demonstrate their competence in all aspects of the legal enterprise from corporate law to law in the social interest, from legal research to courtroom advocacy" (Epstein 22). Despite the progress women have made, Epstein clarified that her study clearly revealed that issues remain in the way of true integration for women in the legal field (Epstein 22).

Motivation/Experiences in School

Each study looked into the ways in which the interviewees found their way into law. Kitzerow's (2014) findings supported different motivations between groups. The groups following the Pioneer Group found that motivation was not an issue for pursuing a career as social movements for equality in the work place worked in their favor, and they had less of an issue with a family/career balance with the invention of contraception and slightly more support
for women in the professional field (Kitzerow 32). The Pioneer Group was not presented these opportunities and while some may have found support from a peer or a family member to enter the profession, many were told it was not the place for women. Unlike the Pioneer Group, the Transition Group and Modern Group were granted more access to go to law school based on legal interest, financial interest, as well as slightly greater parental support to pursue a professional career. Epstein explained that there was extensive knowledge on males in the legal field and that we must first understand the backgrounds of women in this field in order to gain an understanding of their motivations for taking on this profession and sticking with it despite the barriers before them (Epstein 23).

Despite the positive atmosphere the Transition and Modern Groups faced in choosing to enter law school, this did not stop the three groups as a whole from experiencing negative treatment by professors and male peers. Forty-two percent of the women felt that faculty had treated them differently from male students with most characterizing the treatment as worse. Another 32% felt that at least some male students had treated them differently. Nineteen percent of the women felt that both faculty and male students had treated them differently. (Kitzerow 33)

Epstein explained the barriers women faced going to law school and how different women’s experiences appeared to be when compared to men. Epstein said that often women were left to study on their own when representation of women was low as they were not welcomed into men’s study groups where men were at a greater advantage to share knowledge for classes (Epstein 60). Epstein added, “women students were not participants in the male culture of the law schools, yet they were immersed in a male world in which there was no separate women’s culture” (Epstein 61). Epstein attributed these experiences of women being
left to their own as part of the reason for some women choosing to drop out of law schools, and that as enrollment of women increased this helped to keep women enrolled in school (Epstein 61).

Epstein noted that on top of the exclusionary experiences presented to women, women were also expected to prove their capabilities to professors and classmates before being accepted as having earned their right to be in school (Epstein 63). Epstein added that often-male peers perceived women in school as using the experience to find a husband or taking the place of a male who ought to be there (Epstein 63). The greater the numbers of women entering schools allowed women the opportunity to demand a change in the ways they were treated at school. This can be seen through the women’s groups that have been created to ensure that situations like those the women experienced in the past were diminished or even eliminated at the law school level (Epstein 68). While women experienced barriers in law school and have worked to ensure that these situations do not happen for up and coming women, this did not stop women from having further barriers placed before them once they graduate law school.

Experience Entering the Workplace

Kitzerow examined the struggles of the women in each group to find their position as well as build a career. Kitzerow reported that it appeared men tend to have little trouble finding their first position out of law school, and that their first position has no general effect on their success in the long run. In contrast, women appeared to be held back from finding and holding their first position out of law school as well as using that position to their advantage. This contributed to a disadvantaged Modern Group with large firms in the 70s focused on filling quotas versus considering the advancement of women (Kitzerow 109). In terms of building a career, the Pioneer Group, more so than the other groups, either worked part time or took time
off from their legal career in order to raise families (Kitzerow 64). However, the Transition Group began the push for token women to fulfill “first time” positions which worked to the benefit of the Modern Group who were capable of relying on government jobs, but also used their law school ranks to finally secure jobs in more prestigious firms than had been allowed previously. Many in all three groups had to choose between family and career and ultimately most chose to move to part time positions or take time off from their career while a select few chose to have a career over having a family. Kitzerow noted for any women, it was detrimental to choose to work part time, as this was “prestige limbo” with no ability to make partner despite age and that the choice often garners a decrease in respect from colleagues (Epstein 1999). Most in the study practiced for at least 20 years with connections, law school, and timing all being pertinent to where they ended up at the end of their careers (Kitzerow 103). Balancing all of these factors along with the timing/family issue led one interviewee, Gail, to describe this issue in building a career for females as “the extra burden” women face in the legal field (Kitzerow 95).

Pierce began by evaluating the ways in which large legal firms were organized by gendered work, with men dominating the position of lawyer and women dominating positions such as paralegals and legal secretaries. Pierce noted that it was gender ideology which “tends to support the notion of such a division of labor as natural- women do not posses the ‘killer instinct’ necessary to be lawyers, and men do not have the requisite ‘social skills’ for paralegal work” (Pierce 26). However, as Pierce pointed out, this was not necessarily the case as the gendered division of labor was socially malleable (Pierce 26). Pierce supported this citing that the legal field was once an all-male profession in which men took on paralegal services and at that time paralegal work was not considered a gendered position (Pierce 145).
Pierce raised the concern that since women's integration into the legal field, being positioned in careers like paralegal has emphasized women's position within a field known for its hierarchical structure, especially in large law firms. With women dominating positions such as paralegals, legal secretaries, and receptionists, while taking on what large law firms consider "lower tier" roles, "as a consequence the firm is stratified by occupational status and by gender" (Pierce 29). In Pierce's study, those in non-attorney positions stood out as Pierce noted, "91% are white and 85 percent are female" in contrast with the "99%" white and "88%" males who dominated the attorney positions in the study (Pierce 30). Pierce then went on to emphasize the gendered roles of attorneys versus paralegals in the work place, labeling attorneys "Rambo Litigators" and paralegals as "Mothering Paralegals" (Pierce). Pierce noted that often attorneys were expected to have dominance and control, which were characteristics often associate with masculinity (Pierce 52). This along with the fact that the legal field praised gamesmanship and an adversarial model, where intimidation and strategic friendliness were commended, lead to the career of attorney being viewed as a male gendered profession (Pierce 53).

Pierce highlighted aspects of women experiencing this positional stereotype when the study sat in on courses taught at the National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA). In these courses Pierce overwhelmingly witnessed women being critiqued for either conforming to the masculine ideal of the legal field or not conforming enough to a more controlling form of litigation. Pierce then examined how the paralegal profession was deemed feminine in the legal field and revealed, "these legal workers function to support and maintain the emotional stability of the lawyers they work for, through deferential treatment and caretaking" (Pierce 85). Pierce stressed this noting, "in contrast to the masculinized form of gamesmanship, the emotional labor that paralegals preform is feminized, not only because women do it but because such work is
dependent upon the legal profession” (Pierce 86). It was this structure, with women supporting professional males, which reinforced the concept of the position as culturally appropriate for females because it replicated the expectations of a wife or mother (Pierce 86). This was reiterated by the fact that even males in paralegal roles in Pierce’s study were often perceived as using the position as a stepping stone rather than a career, whereas women were not questioned about remaining in a paralegal career as it suited their character (Pierce 145). It was from these views of how the legal profession was gendered that it then became difficult for a woman to move up in the hierarchy or fit the mold of attorney in the masculine sense.

Pierce then examined the specifics of what was deemed socially acceptable in the workplace for male and female litigators. “Women, unlike men, encounter the double bind between the role of the ‘good woman’ and the emotional requirements of the adversarial role” (Pierce 104). Pierce explored the “limited access” areas for women in the legal field mentioning, “one area in which women lawyers continue to face exclusionary practices in is informal socializing with male colleagues” (Pierce 107). As may be known in the legal field, informal socializing, particularly in a firm, could be one of the most important aspects of the career when it comes to building a relationship with the client and bringing in new clients to the firm, which is highly respected. When women were not granted this opportunity they were greatly at a disadvantage to their male counterparts. Pierce added that this was just one obstacle of many when some of the women studied noted being mistaken for a secretary or having experienced sexual harassment, which all reflected the asserted authority of men above women in the legal field (Pierce 109). This along with the common perception that women were likely to flee or become less productive if family was a concern placed a greater burden on women in Pierce’s study. In fact, a few of the women in Pierce’s study worked to be the exception to the stereotypical rule
by balancing family and career despite little support from the firm. A subject of Pierce’s study described this dilemma saying, “the prevailing view at some firms is that ‘having a baby is a personal decision, rather like vacationing in Tahiti’ and unworthy of significant organizational support” (Pierce 113). Pierce’s study pointed to the notion that even women that occupy the legal field who ought to be considered higher up in the hierarchy are often stereotyped and pushed into positions, which mitigate their autonomy in the firm.

Pierce acknowledged that there were additional expectations placed on women for the “feelings” women were permitted to express in comparison with men in the legal profession. “At NITA and both law firms, women attorneys were criticized for being ‘too nice to the witness,’ ‘not forceful enough,’ ‘too bashful,’ and ‘unaggressive,’ and at the same time they were admonished for being ‘too aggressive’ ” (Pierce 113). Women, unlike men, teetered between being admitted to act in feminine regarded ways, yet were expected to take on attorney like qualities deemed masculine. However, if female attorneys overstepped the masculine boundary they were ridiculed for being “unladylike” and even “shrill” (Pierce 114). Women of color were not an exception to this expectation either. As the only women of color studied, Yolanda, a Black woman, was “dubbed the ‘queen of sanctions’ by the head of the litigation department for her persistence in castigating opposing counsel for failure to comply with discovery requests, pleading with the judge for sanctions and successfully obtaining them” (Pierce 120). This along with jokes made referencing Yolanda as a hostess, further reserved her place as a female in a male dominated profession. This was because these practices reinforced, despite good work, over exemplifying masculine behaviors was inappropriate, and the implication of hostess pointed to her stereotyped proper role with domestic assignment historically granted to black women (Pierce 120). Pierce’s study revealed that women were
further at a disadvantage because this double standard for women added to moderating women’s status in the field. When women chose to accept the norms they were presented with in Pierce’s study they were critiqued for not fitting the legal standard, and when they attempt to embody the skills the legal field considers honorable, they were ridiculed for being too harsh or acting inappropriate even when their actions qualified as a legal accomplishment.

Epstein broke down the discrimination women faced in the early days of finding and securing careers in law and highlighted the changes the career has endured over time. Before the 1970s even women who had outstanding records similar to their male counterparts were met with hostility to allow women into the profession (Epstein 79). These experiences in the search to find employers willing to hire women left women stuck with seeking the sectors of the legal field willing to hire women (Epstein 79). Epstein mentioned, “Women, Blacks, and Jews, and those candidates with rural backgrounds or fathers in blue-collar occupations, all were considered undesirable by law firms” (Epstein 83). In fact, in 1963 of all the groups negatively rated on how employers rated characteristics of law students, females held the most negative rating (Abel 9). This factor, plus the fact that having more than one “negative characteristic” added to low likelihood of employment put some women at an even lower chance of being hired (Epstein 87).

Unattractiveness to employers based on more than one factor of social group status was described as “double impairment” (Epstein 87). While “double impairment” could often work to the disadvantage of someone like a black women who was part of at least two negatively rated groups (race and gender), Epstein noted that there were rare exceptions to this rule in her 1972 study on women of color that held positions in professional settings. In fact, Epstein emphasized that there were times when negative statuses canceled one another out as hiring a women of
color could add to a firm's image of equality without harming the internal structure of the firm (Epstein 87). One woman in Epstein's study described this use of women of color as a "token" (use of an individual from a social group for perceived equality) saying "I am a show woman and a show n***r, all for one salary" (Epstein 87). However, some women of color did not show discontent with this token action from firms, noting it as an advantage over men of color and white women when entering the legal field (Epstein 87). Reasons for this feeling of advantage were attributed to women of color being perceived as less of a threat to white men than men of color, the fact that women of color could be kept in their place due to their double impaired status, and the notion that women of color could be taken seriously over white women due to low expectations of them seeking white men as husbands (Epstein 88). Because of these assumptions, firms were willing to hire women of color without fear of them impacting the structure of the firm. Women of color could expect lower treatment coming into a firm unlike a white man expecting equal treatment, thus it was expected they would not complain primarily because it was also assumed women of color "needed" to work (Epstein 88). Despite this rare exception, women of color just like women as a whole were met with discriminatory practices when hiring that became common until movements for equality required an increase in women in the legal field.

When looking at the areas for which women tend to practice, notable patterns began to emerge. An example of this was the large portion of women that work for the government and the fact that this group was overrepresented in government employment compared to men (Epstein 98). While women previously experienced large divisions between the numbers of males versus female in the work place, the 70s and beyond experienced a large number of women nearing 40% representation in law firm populations (Epstein 98). However, this has not
stopped women from being pushed into particular specialties in all areas of legal work as
“cultural definitions determine the ‘right’ specialty for the ‘right’ person” (Epstein 101).
Gatekeepers of the legal profession often had the ability to help guide women into “women’s
work” by making suggestions and pushes that appear to be decisions made by women, but “by
chance” these decisions happen to fit areas of practice presumed to fit women (Epstein 102).
Examples of these areas were the assumption that women work best and prefer real estate,
domestic relations, women’s and juvenile problems, and probate work (Epstein 102).

Epstein noted that aside from pushes into “women’s work,” women often were forced to
choose opportunities that were granted to them over working in the specialties they would have
preferred (Epstein 102). Even when women did receive the jobs in the areas they truly aspired to
go into, often women found they were given less responsibility than what the job required as
they would only be permitted to write briefs or research, but were not given cases or the
opportunity to go to court (Epstein 103). When women were pushed into “women’s work” it
could also be noted that often what was considered women’s work were areas of law that were
considered lower in rank in the profession (Epstein 111). “The legal system creates conditions in
which women will have less motivation to compete with men or, once inside the profession, will
have less opportunity to rank equally with men or outrank them” (Epstein 111). This practice of
pushing women where they “ought” to be in the legal field has allowed women to remain held
back from obtaining the same status as men, and this was highlighted throughout the many
practices women hold in the legal field.

Despite more women choosing to enter government practice than men, this has not left
them with better opportunities to advancement than other areas of law (Epstein 112).
Government positions were sought out because the field would hire women, but there was an
added benefit, as women felt that they were attending to the public good (Epstein 113). Women noted that this area often meant lower likelihood of discrimination and better hours conducive to family management despite the work not tending to economic incentives (Epstein 113). Despite the large number of women in this area of law, men still held the top positions in the practice and made the most on average. Women’s median income at $8,737 per year compared to men at $13,439 in 1970 (Epstein 115). However, Epstein noted that this low advancement has begun to shift as government made greater pushes in the late 70s and beyond to improve the opportunities of women to do more skill developing work (Epstein 119). Epstein added that while the government has been and still was considered to be the best chance at advancement for women, government practice still have not done much better than other areas when it comes to placing women in top positions. Placing responsibility on the next generation of women to show progress in this area (Epstein 119).

Epstein noted poverty law and the public interest as “women’s work” due to the expectation of women to have a helping nature (120). Because family cases arise in this area of law this too solidified the stereotype that women ought to be doing this work as it conformed to their familial roles (Epstein 123). Additionally, “because poverty law is not justified as training, pays poorly, and brings one into association with clients whom society looks down upon, it is unattractive to lawyers who aspire to prestigious and remunerative careers” (Epstein 124). Despite the negatives that come from working in this area there have been occasional opportunities of women and others to work in other prestigious areas due to their work and dedication in this area (Epstein 127). Epstein also noted that because women have taken on a sacrifice in working in this area they have “brought excellence, energy, and dedication to this important work” (Epstein 129). Just as it matters that women have worked in this area of law,
women have notably helped others by working in areas of law positioned to aid women. It is
from these studies that it can be seen how difficult it was for women to enter into the work
place, but this did not stop women from continuing on in the legal field.

Experience in the Workplace

Kitzerow looked at the overall impact of gender and the mixed outcomes that have risen
since women first entered the legal field. “In the Pioneer group, five of the eight women (62%)
said they would have been treated differently if they had been male” (Kitzerow 163). In the
Transition group:

Nine of the thirteen believed that they would have been treated differently if they had
been male . . . two women, who believed that had been treated differently felt that this
treatment had been inconsistent and gave examples of having been treated both with and
without regard to gender. (Kitzerow 164)

In the Modern group, “twenty-eight of the women (78%) felt that they would have been treated
differently (if they were male)” (Kitzerow 167). Kitzerow noted that some of those who did not
feel being male would have made a difference attributed this to their place of employment or to
being unsure about attributing negative treatment to gender (Kitzerow). However, Kitzerow
added that sometimes women had a hard time being recognized as lawyers mentioning, “often
they were thought to be secretaries until they were identified by someone in authority,” and
“even when recognized as lawyers, some of the women were not seen as competent or credible
on the basis of gender” (Kitzerow 167). Additionally, for those up and coming in the field the
focus group of 10 women revealed, “there was some realization of differential treatment by
gender . . . but few strategies mentioned to deal with it” (Kitzerow 192). Kitzerow identified that
it appeared there were few strategies available to resolve the issues these women now face.
examining continuing barriers women face Kitzerow acknowledged, “there are lower rates of women going to law school and high attrition rates of women in law firms” as noted by Sterling and Reichman (2013), and that this was connected to the problems women face to become partner and receive reward when compared to men (Kitzerow 222). Kitzerow concluded, “in terms of present demands it seems that the most successful women are still those who fit the male model in the legal environment” (Kitzerow 222).

Epstein then examined women in the areas of small private practice. Epstein outlined that often women fell into “women’s work” even in private practice as they were more likely to gain referrals and build networks suited to matrimonial and real estate law, with matrimonial seen as emotional work and real estate law as routine and detailed (Epstein 165). Civil work also proved likely for women in private practice, but it was noted that despite the likelihood of males also taking on these matters, women experienced prejudices about their competence (Epstein 165). Epstein acknowledged that private practice gave women the option to work in areas they may not otherwise work in and the opportunity to set their own hours. However, success was ultimately contingent on building strong networks of clientele and referrals that inevitably would require working with men who, may or may not, hold assumptions about women’s capabilities (Epstein 167). Epstein then looked into the experience of women in areas of practice in large corporate firms. Despite the commendable and rising factor of bringing in women, women were still likely to be passed up for partner positions in these firms, which was a large reason for some women choosing to leave these firms (Epstein 179). “Today about 3.5 percent of all partners are women” (Epstein 179). Because merit and demand for more attorneys has become the greater standard for employing attorneys in this area, large firms have opened their doors to women, which have led to diversity in these firms (Epstein 183).
While women were admitted to these firms, this was not to say that women were not met with discrimination in these firms. Epstein noted while “blatant discrimination has been done away with. Where prejudice continues to exist, its expression is subtle” (Epstein 188). Epstein also mentioned that many of the firms resorted to tokenism when women first were admitted to this area, but that as women were added to the firm it allowed the firm to change and permit women to undermine stereotypes and show their talent (Epstein 193). Women in the legal field continued to find their place, even among areas that were not wholly accepting of them, and in turn they began to come to terms with the need to balance family and work.

**Family Experiences**

Kitzerow found “getting in” was a concern more prominent for women than men. Men were not assumed to be incapable for the various reason women were presumed to be ineffective; i.e. family, emotional tendencies, and inadequacy in comparison with men (Kitzerow 110). Kitzerow dubbed the struggle of balancing work and family as the struggle of “having it all” which can also be considered attempting to be “superwoman” (Kitzerow 110). These gendered stereotypes, which focused on the assumptions of what women were capable of based on their position and expectations in society, combined with the “superwoman” expectation put a burden on women in the field that men did not experience. Kitzerow added, “this question of how to balance work and family and still rise to the top is the main question/problem in the legal world today” (Kitzerow 192).

When looking at the private lives of these women Epstein explained the greater expectation of women to put in more work in relationships and family life and how this puts more pressure on women in the field. Epstein noted the restrictions of time and the struggle women faced in being able to give their loved ones attention when work was so demanding.
Epstein also noted that often the greatest struggle was managing the demands of caring for a child while balancing work (Epstein 358). Epstein added that this factor was an issue for many women from the beginning of a career, as they must decide whether to have children due to the demands of their work (Epstein 359). Time was a large factor as well as some individuals seeking partners who were willing to help with the role of parenting rather than passing the role off on the mother (Epstein 366). Epstein concluded that this issue ultimately caused struggle for women who did not feel they were managing as the workplace was typically focused on production and did little to resolve the issue (Epstein 379). While women continued to find their way in balancing family with work life, women continued to take on roles of leadership crucial to their success.

Leadership Positions and Mentorship

Despite the barriers the women Kitzerow interviewed experienced, many were capable of presenting what they deemed achievement in the field. The Pioneer Group focused on success in obtaining and maintaining employment, the Transition Group focused on case and client success, while the Modern group emphasized content and or feeling as though they contributed toward justice (Kitzerow). Most groups were pleased for their choice to enter the legal field, but there was more avid discontent from the Modern group in comparison with others (Kitzerow). This contradiction between women feeling content for their work in the legal field, while experiencing these barriers when compared with men was known as the "paradox of the female lawyer" (Kitzerow 135). As Kitzerow noted, timing, finances, family expectations and much more worked against women's ability to feel successful, thus making it surprising that women found content when so much was ridding against them (Kitzerow).
While Pierce noted that women could be pushed into a small space to act within the legal profession, some women attempted to reshape the adversarial role (Pierce 121). These few women in Pierce’s study focused on their practice and trying to push an “ethic of care” strategy, rather than focusing on what men tended to take on as “an abstract notion of justice” (Pierce 122). This meant that women were more concerned with how moral dilemmas were resolved in their work, rather than whether or not one particular side won (Pierce 122). Aside from those who either conformed to or attempted to distance themselves from the adversarial model, Pierce found that “58%” (Pierce 141) of the women he interviewed split roles by balancing being adversarial while implementing an ethic of care. This finding in Pierce’s research revealed that there were three ways in which women approached the emotional labor of the profession, meaning that women did not unconsciously accept the social norms established in the legal field (Pierce 141). Pierce added that women’s “alternative practice of law, which values an ethic of caring and mutual respect, and their efforts to create a more humane office environment at once challenge and disrupt the male defined adversarial role and norms for professionalism” (Pierce 142).

Epstein looked at the positions held in professional associations and women’s experience in those positions. Epstein described the vast array of bar associations in the U.S. and the services they provided in aiding attorneys in skill and other areas, but mentioned that only recently have women been welcomed to serve in positions within these associations (Epstein 248). Epstein sited the pursuit of women to enter these associations as a regulatory and increasing habit in order to recover from past discriminatory treatment in the field (Epstein 251). However, Epstein also mentioned that men still overwhelmingly hold the leadership positions in these associations (Epstein 251). Epstein added that “... up until the 1970s and into the 1980s,
women were barred from full participation at decision making levels, and they were seldom elected to prestigious committees or to executive posts" (Epstein 254). Epstein then observed the difference and impact of Women's Bar Associations as many women who struggled to find a space in the pre-existing associations began to resist the issues they faced. Epstein noted that while the need for women-only bar associations has declined with bar associations now accepting women, these divided associations still allow room for ladder climbing that other bar associations fail to properly address (Epstein 260). Epstein mentioned with optimism “Women are now part of the establishment bar: they are more visibly active in it, and they should become more important to it as time goes on” (Epstein 261). Epstein concluded that the addition of women in these associations could be considered a large step as this was the height of the social circle for the legal profession, and thus could allow better integration into other areas of the practice (Epstein 261).

Epstein set a “prognosis of progress” for women in order to address women being seen and feeling as though they were outsiders. A feeling of cognitive dissonance was detrimental to women’s happiness because reaping all the benefits the legal field had to offer were relocated to insiders (men) (Epstein 265). Epstein explained that this negative feeling could lead to ambivalence in women and that there were still barriers that could only be solved in an informal matter rather than legal action (Epstein 266). Epstein added that this feeling restricted women from an “ability to act the way other lawyers-male lawyers- do” (Epstein 267). Epstein noted that while working to deconstruct our cultural expectations of women would inevitably aid a change in this profession, it was women and men who held higher positions that could help relieve this feeling of ambivalence by helping young lawyers move up the ladder (Epstein 297).
When addressing coping mechanisms for women in this profession Epstein explained “Self confidence, assertiveness, and self-assurance are traits women virtually need in order to crack the male professional establishment (Epstein 305). Epstein added that this could be difficult as studies show women struggle with self-image more than men (Epstein 305). However, Epstein found that women lawyers seemed to hone self-confidence despite the experiences they had over their careers primarily because there was satisfaction in attaining status in the legal field as a woman, rather than focusing on the negative experiences they felt (Epstein 309).

Studies on Women of Color

“Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law” (Executive Summary)

The American Bar Association (ABA) launched the Women of Color Research Initiative in 2003 (Crockett 43). It was from this initiative that several studies have been conducted in order to better understand the experiences of women of color in the legal field. The ABA Commission on Women in the Profession has vowed to continue to look into these experiences and promote success strategies for women of color within law finns (Visible Invisibility 11). The first phase of the research initiative in 2006 focused on asking women of color about their experiences in the law finns and comparing those experiences to the experiences of other groups in the profession (Visible Invisibility 9). The study attempted to answer questions on the intent of women of color entering the field, the retention rates of these women, and why it appeared these women were so persistent (Visible Invisibility 5). The initiative’s co-chairs Brown and Reeves introduced the study explaining why these study questions needed to be addressed by noting, “until the Commission on Women undertook this study, women of color in law finns have been consistently invisible and often ignored in spite of many of the diversity efforts underway. Our progress on diversity generally has been slow, but our progress with women of
color has been even slower” (Visible Invisibility 7). The co-chairs pleaded that firms “have to have an understanding of the talent drain that is occurring in their women of color ranks” (Visible Invisibility 7).

The study conducted via survey garnered 920 responses, which include the response of women of color, men of color, white women, and white men who all held attorney positions in law firms (Visible Invisibility 9). These surveys along with four focus groups helped to highlight how women of color’s experience dramatically differed from attorneys in the other race and gender groups. “Nearly half of women of color but only 3% of white men experienced demeaning comments or harassment” (Visible Invisibility 10). This in addition to the fact that, “seventy-two percent of women of color but only 9% of white men thought others doubted their career commitment after they had (or adopted) children,” as well as several other factors help highlight the difficulties women of color may experience in the legal field in comparison with men (Visible Invisibility 10). Other issues women of color appeared to face in comparison with white men included women of color feeling as though they had to disprove preconceived notions, experiencing exclusion from networks (internal and external), having mentors who did not ensure their integration into the firm, being granted less case load opportunities which hindered experience, as well as reported feelings of receiving unfair performance evaluations which held them back from advancement in the firm (Visible Invisibility 10).

With these career obstacles, women of color felt they had to regulate their gender and racial identities, which added to a stressful work environment (Visible Invisibility 10). However, the hurdle’s women of color faced did not stop there, as women of color reported being mistaken for individuals of lower status such as secretaries and court reporters, and data from the study reflected that those of color on average made less than their white counterparts
The barriers women of color faced between white men were then combined with the fact that men of color and white women had noted advantages over women of color. Men of color mentioned having felt less of a discriminatory impact on their career in comparison with white women, and data reflected that white women only slightly received better salaries than men of color (the slight variation was statistically insignificant) (Visible Invisibility 10). These barriers that women of color reportedly faced were what served as an explanation for why women of color may choose to leave the profession over time.

The study suggested that the negative experiences women of color faced made them reconsider their career and seek more worthwhile opportunities, with only “53%” of women of color choosing to remain in law firms while “72%” of white men chose to stay at their place of employment (Visible Invisibility 10). It was from this recognition of why women of color leave the legal field that the commission developed a list of recommendation for firms in order to better integrate and retain women of color into the firm. These recommendations suggested firms:

“Address the success of women of color as a firm issue not a women of color’s issue. Integrate women of color into existing measurement efforts. Integrate women of color into the firm’s professional fabric. Integrate women of color into the firm’s social fabric. Increase awareness of women of color’s issues through dialogue. Support women of color’s efforts to build internal and external support systems. Stay compliant with anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and hold people accountable for non-compliance.” (Visible Invisibility 11)

Researchers concluded that it was with the implementation of these strategies that firms should begin to not only improve the experience of women in the law firm, but also begin to recognize
the success women of color may be capable of producing (Visible Invisibility 11). While these recommendations were sturdy starting points for the research initiative study, the commission entered phase two of its research in order to promote an in-depth path to integrating women of color into the legal field.

"From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful: Success Strategies for Law Firms and Women of Color in Law Firms" (Executive Summary)

In phase two of the Women of Color Research Initiative (2008), the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession provided a detailed outline of what firms should be doing in order to accelerate diversity in the work place. These success strategies that are highlighted in this study were informed by the previous phase of the study as well as advice from a group of women of color who have experienced success in law firms (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful 5). The study reflected on the experiences of women of color serving on diversity boards as well as having experienced barriers while making it to the peak of their career (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful). These reflections on their experiences then allowed the women to provide insight into what they felt the firm should be doing to aid women of color and what they felt women of color should be expected to do in turn. The study broke down the experiences on the women from education to career noting that while some women followed slightly easier paths to becoming partners in their firm, most at some point or another experienced barriers along the way (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful 8).

The study then broke down the women’s experiences within their firms diversity committees, whether that meant helping to create the committee and or serving on the committee. In these experiences women noted a variety of feelings about how well the diversity committees at the firms they worked for actually functioned. “Some felt that, after a flurry of
activity, the committee within their firm became stagnant and ineffective; others felt that committees within their firms were functioning well but not doing all that they could be doing” (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful 10). The group of women then discussed the crucial role mentoring plays in the success of attorneys in terms of client building and learning, as well as how mentorship was not currently successful for diverse groups of individuals (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful 11).

It was based on the experiences of this group of women that the study then conceptualized the feedback that these women reported in order to form a list of success strategies for integration in law firms. Some of the success strategies for law firms included: reaching out to women of color in recruitment, developing concrete ideas, creating channels for networking, developing quantitative measures for distributing work equitably, helping develop young lawyer’s skills, and providing space for unbiased attorney evaluations (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful 14). The success strategies for women of color included: working to believe in themselves, giving excellence in order to garner success, creating mentors, accepting help, networking, developing skills, taking care of themselves, and speaking up and make one’s self visible (From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful 14). While these strategies may serve to improve the situation of women of color in the law firm, the commission recognized that law firms were not the only areas of the legal field in which women of color experienced these barriers to advancement, thus the Commission pursued phase three of the study.

“Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments” (Executive Summary)
Phase three of the Women of Color Research Initiative (2010) stepped away from the law firm, and looked into the experiences of women of color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments. This helped to clarify how the experiences of women of color may differ within the field. While the study found many similarities in terms of high retention rates between the law firm data and this data, the study found that there were differences in the satisfaction of women of color in corporate settings compared to law firms as well as differences in the degree of perceived bias in the work place (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 7). The study noted that the pipeline of diversity in the legal profession as a whole has decreased in the last ten years despite the crucial role recruitment and hiring play in encouraging diversity (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 7). There was not one area in the field that was limited to this retention problem of women of color, thus the study continued to frame their research around this problem.

The study acknowledged that some argue that the reason women of color turn away from this profession was due to the slow rate at which women of color reach leadership levels, while others suggest wage disparities have a greater impact on career choice (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 7). Whatever the reason may be for avoiding the profession, the study voiced concern that even when women of color choose to enter the legal field it still could prove detrimental, which could be reflected in the low retention rates of women of color compared to their colleagues. Even when women of color in the corporate area of law reported feeling they had a few more opportunities compared to women of color in law firms, this did not stop women from choosing to leave Fortune 500 law departments at alarming rates for similar reasons stated in the previous phases of the study (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 8). The study added
that “legal employers that offer female attorneys of color greater options in developing and advancing their career without shortchanging their familial obligations will ultimately have greater success in retaining these employees” (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 8). The study went on to highlight the issues that mentorship and compensation still create for women of color, even within corporate law, as mentors were available to women in corporate law but did not help to improve promotion and success of women of color and women remained at a disadvantage compared to men in compensation for their work (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 9). The study also recognized how retention causes a greater issue to advancement, as there were few women of color in high ranks to look up to and women of color in Fortune 500 legal departments still faced issues with being denied promotions due to race and or gender (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 10). Finally, the study reviewed the bias and inequity of the corporate workplace based on responses and found that women of color were more likely to report feelings of racial bias compared to white men, men of color, and white women (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 11). Additionally, white women were more likely to report feelings of gender bias, with white and colored men reporting incredibly low numbers of this experience, and women of color still reporting those experiences, but not to the same extent as white women (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 11). Even with this slight peak of white women having noted experiences of gender bias, the study explained, “women of color were more likely consistently to report the negative effects of racial, ethnic, and gender bias combined across all bias categories” (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 11). Not to the studies surprise, the majority of the female attorneys of color in
these corporate positions still experienced and reported barriers and bias across their time in the workplace. It was from these experiences that the women of law firms and the corporate practice still expressed their willingness to uproot their position for a job that would better suit their needs as women of color and for some as mothers and wives.

While women of color faced these challenges some make arguments that this was simply due to their qualifications being lower than that of their colleagues. The study described this as "reverse discrimination" which was defined as, "the false assumption that diverse candidates are inherently less qualified and, conversely, that white males are inherently qualified" (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 12). However, based on the studies findings in all three phases the Commission insisted that it was not that women of color were less capable, but that the barriers they faced inevitably put them at a position lower than white males and that corporate legal employers must be prepared to address this assumption (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 12). The study concluded mentioning that corporate legal departments were at an advantage to address the issues women of color faced, as they would be able to insist outside counsel be diverse (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 113).

The study supplied a list of recommendations for legal firms based on responses from the third phase of the study and added that the previous success strategies of the legal field were just as important. Some of the recommendations for these legal departments included: involving leaders of the company to develop integration plans, integrating the ability to develop and advance attorneys as a leadership competencies, fostering networking and camaraderie, communicating diversity policies, and holding departments accountable for ensuring diversity (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 114). The Commission
added, “to attract and retain the best and the brightest legal talent, and enhance opportunities for the greatest success, corporate law departments (and law firms) must work to reduce attrition and promote the career satisfaction of all lawyers” (Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments 113). While surveys and commentary proved necessary in examining the experiences of women of color in law firms, often this could be buttressed by a woman of color using her own voice and position to explain what women of color would like to see from firms, which can be highlighted by Crockett’s (2013) article on this matter.

Alone on an Island: The Realities of Practicing Law for Women of Color

Crockett’s (2013) article for the state BAR journal began by mentioning that since the recession the progress of minority integration has been down. The article discussed women of colors’ experience with this hiatus in integration and more specifically, “the extraordinarily high attrition rate of women of color and the consequent underrepresentation of this demographic within the partnership ranks of major law firms” (Crockett 42). Crockett emphasized that women of color were found to be the “underdogs” of the legal field who go “underpaid, underestimated, and undervalued” in the legal profession (Visible Invisibility 2006). Crockett alluded to this feeling woman of color experienced as undervalued by reflecting on the fact that more than 75% of women of color left private firms in the late 1990’s within 5 years of employment, and 86% left within 8 years (Visible Invisibility 2006). Crockett added that firms could only improve retention rates by understanding why women of color often leave firms.

Crockett granted that women of color are outsiders to the structure of the legal field due to the low numbers of women of color in the legal field and thus low numbers of experience. “For example, because women of color are often the first within their families to enter into the legal profession or attend graduate school, they lack the insight non-minorities have with respect
to not only the need to attain stellar grades, but more importantly, the ability and understanding of how to access the materials necessary to ensure success, such as fully vetted course outlines that are often shared only among their white classmates” (Crockett 44). This put women of color at a greater disadvantage when compared to other groups, as other groups represented larger numbers within the profession and thus had the opportunity to build this knowledge in their network rather than resorting to leaving the profession. Without providing an environment welcoming of women of color to learn and succeed, Crockett asserted that this contributed to how firms failed to understand the reasons women of color leave a particular firm and thus failed to be capable of addressing the issue.

Crockett determined that firms must recognize the barriers women of color face in advancement, which included, but were not limited to, socioeconomic factors and the limitations women of color face when seeking mentors and sponsors. Crockett concluded, “women of color do not want a handout; we do want a hand up, and the same opportunities as our nonminority counterparts” (Crockett 46). With this “hand up” approach, Crockett suggested firms and individuals could improve by following the success strategies brought forth by the ABA studies.

Review of Leadership Practices and Theories

In Leadership: Theory and Practice, the Sixth Edition, Northouse explained the various theories and practices that point to leadership as a process, which could be learned and implemented in various situations. Northouse described several approaches relevant to the leadership practices presented in this study. The following described the leadership practices examined by the researcher. Transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and team leadership were various leadership theories that have been studied and observed throughout past
research. These theories, among many others, helped describe the various ways leadership could be understood. In Northouse’s study of leadership, leadership was defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse 5). This definition reflected that as a process, leadership was a transactional event between followers and a leader who both learn from one another, and leadership was focused on how a leader could impact followers (Northouse 5). Northouse also pointed out that in order for leadership to occur there must be individuals willing to work toward common goals and these goals should be selected and pursued together (Northouse 6). Many theories of leadership were derived from this vision of what leadership required and what the purpose of leadership was, as opposed to what something like management required and what its purpose would be in a given setting.

Transformational leadership coined by Downton (1973) and studied by Burns (1978) attempted to address the process of leadership as “a process that changes and transforms people” (Northouse 185). “It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals” (Northouse 185). This theory recognized the needs of followers and the leaders ability to influence followers to meet goals, and could be used in one-on-one or group settings (Northouse 186). Transformational leadership was “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse 186). The goal of this leadership was to aid followers in reaching the height of their potential, and could be synonymous with charismatic leadership as this type of leadership promoted characteristics of desires to influence, having a strong sense of morals, and being confident which all aid to influence their followers (Northouse 188).
When viewing leadership one could view a continuum in which transformational leadership is one of the most hands on leadership styles, requiring much action from the leader to influence rather than a hands-off/behind-the-scenes approach (Northouse 190). The factors of transformational leadership included: idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration (Northouse 193). Bennis and Nanus (1985) have surveyed groups to determine models of leadership and found that transformational leadership included leaders with a clear vision, who could be considered social architects in their community, create trust, and create deployment of self by emphasizing their strengths (Northouse 197).

The strengths of this type of leadership were that there was a wide variety of research on this type of leadership, it was intuitively consistent with societies views of a leader, it treated leadership as a process between both leaders and followers, was a broader view of leadership compared to previous more concise theories, this type promoted needs, values, and morals of followers, and there was evidence from reports that pointed to this type of leadership as effective (Northouse 202). Criticisms of transformational leadership consist of the fact that it was broad, and thus did not provide clear definitions of the factors required by this leadership type, the measurements for transformational leadership were challenged for accuracy, it treated leadership as something innate rather than something that can be learned, there is no research that could show a direct causal link to changes in followers and the organization, it could appear elitist based on the leader’s role and power in the situation, it continued to have a leader focus over followers, and this type of leadership had the potential to be abused if a leader had the wrong intentions but retained the power to influence (Northouse 204). This broad leadership emphasized ideals and while it was questioned whether it could be taught many organizations, focused on promoting the visionary concept of this leadership. While this type of leadership
could serve followers and put leaders at the forefront of influence, another approach sought to put leaders behind the scenes and focused on follower abilities.

A leadership theory that attempted to resolve the approach of leaders being seen as necessarily at the forefront in order for leadership to be effective was servant leadership presented by Greenleaf (1970). “Servant leadership emphasizes that leader’s be attentive to the concerns of their followers, empathize with them, and nurture them” (Northouse 219). Ideally servant leaders should be concerned with their followers and empowering them to accomplish goals, while being ethical and being primarily concerned with the group and society overall (Northouse 219). Greenleaf’s definition of servant leadership focused on the choice of the leader to serve first and then lead, meaning self-interest was set aside and leadership was viewed as a behavior that could be learned (Northouse 220). Often servant leadership focused on empowering the less privileged and consisted of ten characteristics which included: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Northouse 223). This leadership theory emphasized the process of building followers to accomplish goals by allowing leaders to encourage followers without taking responsibility for follower success, and turning those followers into other leaders who could serve as well in order to build a community of individuals who could create social change (Northouse 225). This could be reflected in a model from Liden, Panaccio, Hu, and Meuser (2011), which illustrated servant leadership’s factors which contributed to this type of leadership and its goals (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Model of Servant Leadership

The antecedent conditions in this model of servant leadership recognized that leadership was contingent on the context of the situation, recognized that leader attributes were what helped to influence followers, and that ultimately success was based on how receptive followers were to this type of behind the scenes supportive leadership (Northhouse 226). Similar to the factors laid out in servant leadership, the middle column of the model emphasized the need for these leadership behaviors for influence and effectiveness (Northouse 227). Ultimately these behaviors and antecedent conditions recognized the ultimate goal of three outcomes from this leadership. These outcomes included improved follower performance and growth, increased organizational performance, the continued goal of creating a societal impact through passing this leadership on, and recognized the central need for leadership of this type to empower followers and use leadership as a continued process (Northouse 231).
The strengths of this leadership included that the theory was centered on altruism, it emphasized sharing control and influence with followers rather than leaving these powers to leaders, it recognized that not all organizations or followers would be capable of accepting or employing this leadership based on their goals and ideas of leadership, and the measurement of servant leadership had become consistent in research (Northouse 234). Some weaknesses of the theory included the contradictory nature of a leader who did not hold all the power to influence and the primary sources of control in an organization, there was not enough theoretical data to make precise conclusions on the core of servant leadership, the theory could be too altruistic, and conceptualizing was not seen by some as an actual behavior of a leader (Northouse 235). This theory was general enough to be learned and emphasized morality. While there were weaknesses it served as an ideal leadership type for many groups if leadership was to overreach the basic goals of an organization (Northouse 236). A step away from this background approach to leadership was leadership in which the leader was at the forefront but remained consistent with their values and transparent with their followers.

Authentic leadership focused on “whether leadership is genuine and ‘real’ (Northouse 253). This leadership type has emerged from the recent troubles of seeing leaders as liars and feeling leaders cannot be trusted (Northouse 253). Authentic leadership had no single definition among researchers as some focused on the intrapersonal relationship of the leader and their development, or the interpersonal process of leadership created between follower and leader, and or a developmental perspective focused on the idea that this form of leadership could be nurtured (Northouse 254). The developmental perspective presented by Walumba, Avolio, and Weber (2008) focused on leadership behaviors that could be developed and found that the main
components included “self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency” (Northouse 254).

There were both practical and theoretical approaches to this type of leadership with practical findings of leadership presented by Robert Terry (1993) and Bill George (2003). Robert Terry’s approach presented a how to do leadership form of authentic leadership by asking what was going on, what we were going to do about it, and using one’s true self to answer those questions correctly (Northouse 255). Bill George’s approach focused on the characteristics of authentic leadership and presented on how individuals could develop these characteristics (Northouse 258). These characteristics fell within the dimensions of authentic leadership presented by George which included heart (dimension) as it related to the characteristics of compassion (characteristic), purpose connected to passion, values related to behavior, self-discipline as it connected with consistency, and relationships correlation with connectedness (Northouse 259). The theoretical approach on the other hand was centered on University of Nebraska research that has been complied but was fairly recent. This theoretical approach was centered on Walumbwa and associates (2008) model of authentic leadership, which focused on the positive psychological capacities (confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience) and moral reasoning of leaders and recognized that critical life events lend to self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency that has allowed for authentic leadership to occur (Northouse 265). The end goal of authentic leadership was to increase the perception of the leader as trustworthy through transparent and value driven leadership and apply those qualities to pursue the common good (Northouse 267).

The strengths of this approach included that it addressed the concerns of non-trustworthy leaders in society, it could be taught, it was prescriptive, there was a moral component, and the
measurement was consistent. The weaknesses of authentic leadership were that it was still fairly new and needed work, the moral component had not been clarified, there were concerns about including positive psychological capacities, and it did not clarify how this approach aids organizational outcomes (Northouse 269). Despite being in the beginning stages this approach emphasized a leadership type that had been explicitly called upon in our current society and helped leaders recognize their growth over time (Northouse 270). While this approach failed to acknowledge how this approach is to aid organizational goals some theories have made this the highest concern of leadership.

Team leadership was concerned with recognizing the common goals of a team and recognized how members were interdependent and must coordinate to meet these goals (Northouse 287). This form of leadership focused on organizations that worked in team task forces and focused on leadership as conducive to team effectiveness (Northouse 289). The team leadership model “provides a mental road map to help the leader . . . diagnose team problems and take appropriate action to correct these problems” (Northouse 289). This model emphasized the need for strong communication skills and focused on analyzing internal and external situations and then implementing behaviors to ensure the team was effective (Northouse 290). This is reflected in Hill’s model of team leadership presented by Northouse (see figure 2).

Figure 2

Hill’s Model for Team Leadership

a. Note: This model reflects the types of leadership decisions one would make in order to produce team effectiveness (Northouse 293). The model then breaks down the types of leadership actions one would consider once a decision has been made about what needs to be done to produce effectiveness in the team (Northouse 296). From there it is hoped that the decisions and actions of the leader lead to the desired result of problem solving and increasing team performance and achievement (Northouse 298). Ultimately this leadership focuses on team improvement based on the team’s current state (Northouse 303).

The strengths of the theory included the fact that it was designed to work with real organizations. It worked as a guide for leaders, recognized that one might lead a different way in a given situation the team is dealing with, and helped when determining team leaders. Criticisms
of the theory were that the model did not include all behaviors a leader may employ, the theory was complex, and often there was more than just one leader causing the theory to become even more complex with intersecting leadership (Northouse 307). The end goal of the theory was to provide a way for leaders to increase effectiveness in their team and with the team leadership approach leaders had the foundation to ask the right questions to form decisions on what to do next to make those expectations a reality (Northouse 307).

III. Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of women of color in the legal field and determine whether these practices instructed others on how they may succeed in the legal field. The method of this study consisted of nine, 60 minute, interviews with women of color residing in the same state. These subjects had either practiced in the legal field as attorneys and or had experience as paralegals. The interviews were loosely structured in which the researcher asked a series of questions that transcended into dialogue about the interviewee’s experience in the legal field, and their perceptions of leadership (Appendix). The sample was generated through the State BAR, the State African American BAR, and various individual women of color in specific firms. Snow-ball sampling occurred through internship contacts and those supplied by subjects. This effect allowed the researcher to meet 2-3 subjects in a given week, thus all interviews occurred between April 11, 2016 through July 8, 2016, which amounted to nearly five weeks in which interviews took place.

All subjects were provided with pseudonyms in order to protect identities, and all interviews were recorded and took place in a location of the subject’s choice for comfort and availability. The pseudonyms were in alphabetical order from interview one to interview nine for an understanding of when each woman was interviewed, and how the researcher’s
conclusions were built. Three of the nine interviews took place over the phone due to availability and or location restrictions.

During the interview process the researcher kept a note pad to log recognized patterns between subjects as well as connections to leadership practices. The researcher reviewed all recorded interviews after completion of the interview process in order to review additional differences, patterns, and leadership practices that would be relevant to this study. The literature review served as supplemental to provide insight into what could be expected in interviews, whether there were consistencies and inconsistencies with previous findings, and whether there were experiences, achievements, and benefits of having women of color in the legal field that had yet to be recognized. In addition to literature on studies of women and women of color, the researcher used previous knowledge and literature on leadership practices. This information was used to analyze the results of the study and determine whether there were leadership practices women of color implemented in the legal field. This process of triangulation between the interviews the researcher conducted, the literature review, and an inspection of leadership theories has allowed the researcher to analyze the results and form conclusions relevant to the research questions presented.

IV. Results

Motivations/Experience in School

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of women of color in the legal field; therefore the researcher first examined and compared the backgrounds of the nine women interviewed. These women came from a range of backgrounds as noted by the synopsis introducing these women in the table of contents. Each woman specified their reasoning for pursuing law at the time they did and for most it came down to being able to
provide for their family. For example Bianca explained that her daughter was two years old so she chose a law school that could be close to home and flexible to work with her family. Christina emphasized the need to make a living thus she pursued paralegal work and then moved on to legal work later in life with the worry that her son would not be able to adjust to her being so busy and gone all the time. Christina added, “Every year I told myself I would wait to go to law school until my son was ready . . . it was a fear of what was going to happen to my child.”

Ashley explained that law was something that fell into her lap while working with a public utilities commission as a confidant suggested she pursued law. Ashley at the time bought a Law School Admissions Test book, which sat for 11 years. When Ashley’s husband had moved for a job Ashley ran into the book unpacking and out of the need to find a job she determined at the time it was a great idea to pursue law. Others such as Diana as well as Felicia emphasized that going to law school was simply always the plan as that was a long time dream that they wished to pursue or always knew they wanted to do. Gloria unlike the others emphasized a family tie to the importance of legal work as she said, “I had an interest in the 8th grade because my father said he always wished he had become a lawyer.” This tie to her father sparked Gloria to pursue law and work toward that goal ever since the 8th grade. Though Heather could not specify why she chose being a lawyer over a doctor, it was her mother’s push that lead Heather to truly believe she could accomplish what she put her mind to and for her that ended up being the legal field. Irene was inspired by a show she used to watch as a child that made her realize that being an attorney was the track for her and from that time on she pursued this career. While the women of this study ranged in reasons for going into law or the timing at which they entered the field each had their own personal ties to their decision making and for
some like Ashley, Bianca, and Christina timing was everything as it related to when they would pursue their careers.

Many women spoke of a range of experiences in law school both good and bad some easily noting instances of issues based on gender or race while others spoke of their law school experience as pleasant and full of diverse individuals. Three women (Felicia, Emma, and Gloria) attended the same law school at or around the same time, and for each the description was that the environment was diverse and welcoming. For example Emma mentioned that her experience in school was pleasant and that she did not feel any instance in which she was underestimated as a female or due to her racial background.

Others spoke of negative experiences in law school or spoke of the barriers women of color from less privileged areas experienced as they were at a greater disadvantage than groups expected to be at law school. Christina noted the issue of going to night school and how being a non-traditional student could hold an individual back from experiences others would have received. Christina added that the school was slightly segregated by race and gender and she recalled a black female law professor from Yale who did not receive the same appreciation from male peers, as a male professor would have been treated. Christina also spoke of recognizing being challenged for intelligence as a female as she encountered a male professor who “would never refer to me by my own name” yet referred to her by her name once the course had concluded. Christina, in making this distinction, points to a common occurrence the researcher experienced as many women would, over the course of interviews, add that they could not be sure that the treatment they were receiving was gender or race based but that it was clear they were being treated or perceived differently.
Ashley mentioned that in her experience, while a push for minorities in law school had become popular, she was still aware she was one of few in comparison with the majority. Bianca emphasized a need to recognize the background of women of color and other minorities as they inevitably felt out of place because they often were not brought up in homes that prepared them to take on something like the legal field. Bianca added “I felt somewhat at a disadvantage because it felt like non-minority’s had already figured it out and I was behind them so I would get information from them, but they already had it so I was two or three steps behind.” Bianca also made noted that she did not think non-minorities recognized this issue for minorities and would only have noticed if they were the only non-minority in the room. As a note Diana attended a paralegal program as opposed to law school, and unlike the other interviewees, she described a classroom setting that was female dominant and added that often it was known that the men were on a law school track despite being in the paralegal program.

Experience entering the Workplace

The women interviewed were asked about their experiences as it related to finding work out of law school and what those initial experiences were like. Ashley’s experience began in a direction she had not intended as she was approached to clerk for a judge as the First African American, let alone first African American Female, to clerk at the state level in the state for which she resided. Ashley first spoke about the new wave of law firms taking women of color to address the lacking number of minorities and the issues this raised for males who felt challenged by this, as feeling as though they were being excluded. Despite this animosity this did not stop Ashley from listening to her Dean who suggested pursuing the clerkship, despite her need to make money. Ashley said, “the clerkship was important for the sake of the community.” Ashley spoke of the issue presented by being a minority clerk as the first African American State
Supreme Court justice joined the court at the same time thus; “often individuals assumed I was his wife rather than a clerk because of my age as well as my race.” Bianca said “I had no desire to work for a large firm because of my family position, so the idea of being in a smaller firm was more attractive,” thus she entered a small law firm for about less than a year when she was asked to join a larger law firm after working on a case with an individual who currently worked at the larger firm. Bianca said she initially said no but later reconsidered the offer. From that time Bianca went to work for the large firm just a year out of law school working with labor and employment cases and added that she worked for close to seven years at her firm before becoming the first black female partner. Christina spoke of her first job out of law school in which she worked as a government relation’s executive, she added, “I wrote and proposed legislation that affected the county.”

Diana’s first job out of school upon completion of her paralegal studies was a paralegal position for a circuit court as she was promoted from her original position as a docket clerk, which she maintained for two years. Emma explained that out of law school she went to work for a medium size law firm upon completing the BAR and remained at the firm for 2 years. Felicia, similar to Ashley, clerked at the state Supreme Court for two years upon completion of law school and then moved on to a large firm, which she ended up leaving in order to work for a small civil rights firm. Gloria described working for two separate firms in her first years out of school first working on divorce cases and then turning to insurance, while Heather said her first work out of law school entailed working for a big city law department. Irene described being approached by a county to work in the prosecutor’s office but declined as she had already accepted an offer working at a firm as a lawsuit litigator in which she focused on labor and employment cases. Irene worked these types of cases for the last 14 years of work as an
attorney. Irene was the only interviewee to describe leaving law school with a job at the same current firm, as all other interviewee’s had changes in employment following their first job out of law school. None of the women described trouble-finding work out of school and most described experiences of attaining high-level internships while in school as well as being approached for jobs rather than searching for jobs once they had graduated.

Experience in the Workplace

The research subjects were then asked to describe their current positions and the experiences they have had as women of color in these positions. In order to emphasize the treatment some of the women incurred at their current positions, they contrasted that treatment with some of the places in which they previously worked to emphasize the different experiences they have had over the course of their time in the legal field. Ashley began by explaining that out of her clerkship she went to her first law firm primarily because they were willing to pay so much money despite her thought of entering public service. Ashley worked in litigation at the first firm but left her job to follow her husband who received a new job. It was then that Ashley began developing her corporate work that her current position resembles. Ashley described this work for minorities and women as “rarified air” for individuals around the world because this line of work was primarily reserved for white men. Ashley then described that while her litigation work was rewarding it was her corporate experience that has allowed her to work with large companies and be in a position very few get to see and experience.

Some experiences Ashley had when entering corporate legal work included being mistaken for the receptionist and asked for coffee and being talked around rather than talked to during meetings. An example of Ashley’s treatment early on includes her description of clients asking associates whether they agreed with her opinion despite her being a partner and thus
ranking higher in the office. Ashley also mentioned the occasional transaction in which business was handled over the phone and described a situation in which a lawyer, who had not met Ashley in person, was on the phone with her and was asked about his vacation that led him to tell her, “it was a beautiful vacation but you have to watch the blacks.” Ashley mentioned that had he seen her he likely would not have said that and her relationship with him would have been considerably different. However, the greatest experience Ashley described before entering the large corporate firm she is now a partner at, is the situation in which a long term client she had been working with for around a year, met her for the first time in person and fired her the next day. Ashley said, “I asked why and the client claimed that they were not comfortable with me after they had worked with me for a year and a half before seeing me.” However, when she moved to her current firm she brought this issue up in order to be “transparent,” and told them she never wanted to work for a client in which the firm would allow them to kick her off a file because of a request such as the one in her previous place of work. Ashley added she was lucky that her new firm assured her this would not happen if she were brought on. Ashley added though she is thankful for the assurance of the new firm to employ her with that demand she did make note that she is the only women of color at her firm.

Bianca then went on to explain her experiences primarily at her current place of employment and contrasted this with the work she did when she left her current place of employment in 2013 and returned a year later. Before leaving her firm in 2013 Bianca noted an experience as an associate in which she was asked to work on a case involving racial discrimination in a class action suit. Bianca described having to represent the company that was being sued for having nooses hanging at their work site which led to the suit and ended up asking a partner to be removed from the cases saying, “I just could not do it.” Bianca left the
large firm she had worked in since 2001 to become the general counsel for an education public sector group primarily because she enjoyed that work. During that time she described wishing to help student and being motivated because the organization was a start up, but she was chose to leave a year later because the organization was flawed lacking proper policies. During her time three internal audits were launched and discovered that it appeared the organization was in a kickback scheme, which lead to Bianca spending her last 6 months turning over information to the FBI. At this time her previous firm was looking to create a new position trying to bring “human capital under one umbrella” thus she was hired as a partner again as a director of professional development. Bianca added that at her time with the large firm she did not always feel she could asked to be removed from a case as there were times when a client requested an African American female to be on a case merely for optics. While this was awkward and was not enjoyable Bianca claimed she used it to help teach and speak for minorities and females. Bianca added that being in a large firm “it is so stark in terms of a lack on minorities and minority females” which thus led her to become a mentor to others because she was at one time the only minority female at the firm.

Christina described her experiences since she began working for the county prosecutor. Christina explained while waiting to be hired at the county prosecutors office she reverted back to a paralegal and was told by others that the individual who made the decision to hire individuals on as attorneys had a preference toward white individuals. However, Christina could not be sure that her race played a role in how long it took to finalize her hiring. Christina then spoke of her experience once she was hired and added that she did not think that she was treated differently in the courtroom due to race or gender. However, Christina noted that as a mother there was not a consideration for having children and being on time to court in this male
dominated field. Christina also described having peers that questioned her competency due to her position in comparison with her peers though she again did not believe this was because of her gender or race.

Diana described her experience as a paralegal and what it was like as the first paralegal at the school she was hired to work under. Diana explained that in her work at a courthouse she was working with people that did not want to be there, and emphasized that she recognized the need to be “fluid in your communication style” to meet the needs of those coming in at the courthouse. In contrast as a paralegal at the university she learned to be conscious of who she communicated with as she was to keep information confidential while working with several individuals from different departments. In her current position at another university Diana now works with clinical placements of students and thus conducts very different work which has again made her aware of the need to “fine tune different skills.” Diana went on to explain that she never felt in any of these positions that gender set her apart in her work, she did however recognize that she was aware that she generally is the only person of color at the table. Diana does not feel she was treated differently because of her race but added that she brings a different lens to the table. An example of this was her work on search committees to fill positions; in these cases Diana described situations in which she could recognize the names of inner city schools and occasionally were minority applicants. In these situations Diana explained she ensured she was not confrontational when she recognized bias in these search groups but would ensure she asked why an individual felt that way. Diana added, “sometimes people wouldn’t have a solid argument but they would just feel a certain way” for this reason she mentioned her surprise of how open people were when she was non-confrontational. Diana then spoke of being the first paralegal at the university she worked for and how this was new territory for her
especially without a predecessor to follow in their footsteps. Diana spoke of building a network while at her place of employment mentioning, “I took the initiative to ask counterparts at other universities for help, from there I was building a network so we could bounce information off of one another.”

Emma then described her experience in her line of work as an attorney at a university’s office of legal affairs department. Emma explained that often she was not assumed to be the attorney either due to race or gender or even potentially due to her age. Emma mentioned a time she attended a deposition in probate court and an older white gentleman assumed she was the court reporter, additionally she added, “I was the only women of color in the room.” Similarly, Emma described often being assumed to be of a different race when clients first met her and that she could tell based on the visual surprise in their face. For this reason Emma added “I always make an effort to dress professionally and put people at ease and gain their confidence with quality and expertise.” Emma also brought up her feelings about feeling as though she was not paid fairly due to her race and gender. Emma mentioned, “I don’t get angry when people at the office assume I am the secretary but I do get angry when my employer doesn’t pay fair and engage in poor decision making.” Emma mentioned when she felt this injustice in pay she tried to fix the issue at a past place of employment by asking her employer, an individual she felt comfortable approaching, how wages were determined. Emma said while “they were honest it wasn’t what I wanted but they were honest” as this situation was not about race or gender. However, Emma also mentioned currently feeling under paid for her work as she began to be assigned another attorneys work with no returned compensation for the added experience nor was the other attorney’s wage lowered for doing less work. Though Emma added she does not feel she could now approach her current employer as she felt that they would not be receptive
and she noticed a lack of advocacy in her current place of employment. Emma added that
“dealing with 20 years of litigation practice is time consuming and personally draining; when
you want an environment of trust and respect one of the biggest challenges is managing this
when you have a boss who has not built that atmosphere.”

Felicia’s experience in the workplace, unlike Diana’s appeared to be an environment
welcoming to raising concerns. Felicia described having a flexible work environment in which
she was capable of moving around her schedule and even at one period moving to part time
work to be with her kids. Felicia did however add that she often had to struggle to fight against
assumptions made about her due to her youthful appearance. Felicia also added there were times
when clients were uncomfortable working with an African American or a woman, or a judge or
opposing counsel treated her different, though she said her current firm has been accepting of
these concerns she has had. Felicia even explained a situation with opposing counsel in which
she made it pretty uncomfortable for her to be in court and had issues with her raising these
concerns with the court but her office supported her in that situation. However Felicia added
“there were times where I felt I underreacted or should have responded to a given situation
because in those situations I felt I had absorbed an injury when I did not raise my concern.”

Gloria’s experience is unique as she has her own firm. Gloria first started talking about
previous work and her choice to stray away from medical malpractice and her work at the public
defenders office due to the moral implications. Gloria then described that when running for
judge she recognized race discrimination and that it was not just running for judge that showed
her this but her awareness of other firms who attempted to be diverse though with a lack of
success. Gloria described that she experienced blatant racism while running for judge as she was
often perceived as the “angry black woman” and that in one fairly liberal city she was passing
out cars and a white female took her card looked her in the eyes and threw her car out to ensure she saw her throw it out. Gloria however did mention the public defenders office made her feel welcome due to the diversity as “it made a world of difference.” Gloria also described working as a judicial attorney and experiencing “surprised looks in an African American doing that type of work, there was an invisible hurdle to gain respect of other attorneys.” Gloria also mentioned that in private practice “It’s about selling yourself and I have noticed that white males and females are more likely to get respect in terms of what a client is willing to pay.” Gloria even added that gender has hurt her in the past with clients who felt they could not work with her as they would be distracted and other times when she was retained because of an attraction a client had with her.

Heather’s experience at her place of employment, similar to other women, described often being the only women or individual of color in a room. “I remember going to a mediation tribunal . . . when I walked in there was barely a place to sit . . . like many cases I was the only black person in the room and the only female in the room despite the large number of people in the room.” Heather also mentioned experiencing being excluded from “the old boys network” and thus pushed to ensure this did not intimidate her. Additionally, Heather added that she recognized that often race played a greater factor than her gender as she found herself not assigned to specific cases in her expertise or clients failing to respect her. Heather said “I had to prove myself over the years and change the climate of this treatment.” Heather has noted that slowly she has seen this change even in largely white courtrooms in which individuals are becoming more comfortable regardless of race. Heather added that she sees unconscious bias far more on the basis of race because “clients want attorneys who reflect their make up” and gender does not necessarily challenge that in many cases. Heather also mentioned that once she proved
herself capable of what she was expected more individuals were less likely to question her abilities.

Irene described some of her experiences in employment litigation and started with one of her first experiences in litigation. Irene explained that she had a very confrontational opposing counsel along with finding out racial slurs were being used by the opposing counsel to refer to both her self and her African American client. Irene approached the opposing council but he denied it thus they filed a Motion with the court regarding opposing counsel’s “abusive behavior”. From this motion opposing council also made religious slurs about a processor being Jewish and filed complaints about Irene’s co-counsel and herself with the Attorney Grievance Commission. During that time her firm supported her decision to file the motion and though both motions ended up being dismissed Irene and her co-counsel won the case they had worked on. Irene also spoke of working domestic violence cases before her time with the firm and how she had developed a special affinity as the majority of the individuals she worked with were women. Irene described the need to be aware and to “be bigger, be the professional and show the good work you are supposed to exemplify” even in situations in which you want to stoop to others level.

Leadership Positions/Mentorship

The women then described the various positions they have held in things like BAR Associations, special boards, as well as the mentorship opportunities they have held over their careers and their techniques for successful careers. Ashley explained that since her time at her current firm she has become partner and added “I try to talk female colleagues out of part time because taking off will slow down your track to partnership while you will still be doing the same work load.” Ashley also spoke of whom she seeks out when she needs to resolve a
problem and mentioned that in her case her peers use one another to lean on and ask what they think about given cases, as they work together. Ashley mentioned she takes on daily leadership positions in her career based on what is expected of her and ensuring she can help clients by using her relationships skills to resolve problems and create an environment where “perspective are facilitated.” Ashley has also served on an extensive list of committees and boards which range from two board of trustee positions, two board member positions for organizations, chair of two other organizations, treasurer of a board of trustees, a member of 7 organizations, and a mentor for a Women’s Leadership program. Ashley has also received various awards including the national Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education aware, a Recognition award, and a Presidential Citation. Ashley emphasized the need to be willing to be led as an individual in this field, the need to be effective while understanding what people need, and ultimately the need to build strong relationships.

Bianca’s experience was covered with a plethora of association positions but initially started with her position as the first black female partner at her current firm. Bianca described being Chair of Women for the firm she currently works for between 2009-2012 as well as serving as Diversity Director in 2010. Bianca mentioned that most positions she has held were not sought out. Bianca served on a state community resource board, a county bar association, a county bar trustee, as well as the chair of a board for Alternatives for Girls. Bianca said that it took a male partner to push her to pursue positions that represent people “like her.” Bianca claimed she tried to remain strong that she did not intend to be this activist but to support her daughter but her friend told her “you’re in a positions and because you’re in this position this means you have to,” and ultimately added that she had to pace the way. Bianca said this comment did not really stick until a year or two later in a diversity and race session for the
county in which it hit her that she may not appreciate the pressure that was required of her but she added “if not me then who.” Bianca emphasized this meant collaboration was ever important in this field but it also meant that she would not rely on excuses for her success. Bianca said it was important in the culture of the legal field to build this collaboration while still challenging thought that is slow to acknowledge a need for a change. Bianca added she was aware there were not a lot of mentors who “look like us” and that there was an ever lasting need to be open to mentors who do not look like you while still being your “authentic self.” Bianca said it was from these actions of be willing to challenge, collaborate, and work hard that meant that the culture of the legal field could and would change.

Christina then described the positions she has held over the course of her work and in contrast with other women her choice to primarily work without relying on peers. Christina mentioned that often she has been independent and did not particularly rely on others for help. Though she did note she would go out of her way to help other colleagues Christina also mentioned spear heading a program that would teach protestors how to protest without breaking the law and ensuring their rights are not violated. Christina has also helped others run for judge somewhat serving as campaign manager in certain instances. Christina has led projects at the National Council of Black Lawyers in various situations. Christina said it was her confidence that often lead her to be in roles of leadership and her push to be a perfectionist while learning to delegate and let others light shine. Christina added it was important to “known your reputation proceeds you” for this reason she encouraged individuals specifically women of color to get the leg up on negative stereotypes by proving people wrong. Christina encouraged individuals in this field to avoid giving individuals something negative to talk about or given them fuel to the fire. Christina added that black women were no longer at a major disadvantage in this field as
they once were though she still felt the need for women of color to be given positions on merit and competency, not on popularity or the need for diversity. Christina mentioned that in most of her positions she felt the need to fit in based on what race or gender ruled the employment atmosphere.

Diana spoke at length about the need for mentorship for women in not only the legal field but in general as well as the need for teamwork. Diana said, “there has been teamwork in every position I’ve ever had because I want a good output that will benefit everyone.” Diana also emphasized her practice of thanking everyone that collaborates with her in order to let him or her know she appreciates their contributions. From this, Diana added that it was important to put on different lenses for different people she works with because this helps address and avoid conflict due to the need for “life’s different hats” while working. Diana also mentioned working on a Women of Color Collaborative networking reception, which was brought on by the university that she worked at and she implemented and hosted the event. This was Diana’s first time being the co-chair of a professional development conference. Diana also volunteered as a section chair to grant scholarships to those pursuing paralegal programs. Diana added, “it took a lot of work but the outcome was definitely rewarding.” Diana then emphasized the need to intentionally build networks and take interest in those who take interest in you, no matter whether they are women of color or other individuals. Diana added that she actually implemented this suggestion by mentoring first generation women of color and she started to build that relationship to allow them to learn more. Diana added that it was also the mentee’s responsibility to maintain these relationships because this work requires a mutual effort. Diana emphasized how important these mentorship are and how they could aid to the success of these individuals.
Emma similarly spoke of the various positions she has held in her time as an attorney and how she prefers to help bring people together. Emma said “in the office I am the person calling to bring people together and meet face to face.” Emma added that she believed she was “very collaborative” and that this included developing relationships outside of the office if that was what suited the individual she needed to work with to make things happen. Emma mentioned that though she has not sought out formal leadership roles she was often approached for advice and counsel and that she has lead search committees and considered her self to be a thought leader. Emma adds that she preferred to address systemic issues by bring people together with “clear deliverables.” Emma emphasized the need to build “effective networks of support from people who share and who don’t share your lived experience.” Emma even mentioned needing to value support of others who do not look like you and to challenge those who do not think women are capable in this field.

Felicia has had experience serving on the district committee of the state BAR and taught at the Institute of Continuing Legal Education. Felicia also spoke of informal leadership such as overseeing staff when cases were assigned to her and most importantly building and repairing client relationships when necessary. Felicia described this process as troubleshooting and that it requires one to be decisive. Felicia added, “you need to be able to work well with others and be sensitive to the perception of others and have a certain amount of confidence and willingness to stand behind those decisions.” Felicia emphasized that one must know they cannot always be a people pleaser, but you should also be willing to go against the grain in this field. Felicia reiterated the need to build relationships and understand people as a litigator and that she has developed these skills through trial and error or “by fire.” Felicia has also mentioned being willing to go to various individuals for problem solving and that anyone can be a mentor to a
women of color in this field not just those who identify as women of color. Overall, Felicia emphasized that this was the mentee’s job to reach out and seek mentorship but also be aware that some may not be willing to mentor you and that this was okay because others would want to help you.

Gloria’s experience in leadership positions primarily existed in result of being the founding member of her private firm. Gloria mentioned that in her line of work everything was a process in which everyone works together. Gloria added even when she worked in the public defenders office she found the interns necessary to success. Gloria said it was “all about team work, the more people on a team the better you could be.” Gloria added her expectations changed base on who she was working with as a client with a parent expects something different from what her colleague may expect. Gloria mentioned she had been the president of a county association, has been elected to state BAR positions, has been the commissioner for a county and the Vice President of the Negro Business and Professional Women’s club, and sat on various other committees for unions and has sat on a board of directors county 100. Gloria has also served as president of a county BAR association and added that now was the time for African American women to lead issues by being represented in groups such as the one’s Gloria has worked on over the years. Gloria mentioned some of her work included insuring there would be individuals to replace her once her work was complete and make sure they would be prepared for those positions. Gloria added that she felt as thought “there was an added responsibility for African American female leaders but the more you lead the better you get and the more likely people will look to you to do it.” Gloria added women of color work hard to “show you will be good at what you do.” Gloria added one of her strengths in work was the ability to read people and give people what they need by finding out how to relate to them.
Gloria added finding a mentor was important and primarily one you would like to emulate to set goals for one’s self in this field.

Heather mentioned one of the most important aspects African American’s must meet was the expectation to prove one’s capabilities. For this reason Heather has become part of an intentional mentorship program in her firm in which she has mentored new female African Americans in the firm as the firm has previously done with young males. Heather emphasized that her efforts help make individuals like these women not only feel competent but comfortable in the firm. Heather also mentioned similar to other women in the study that often everyone works together no matter what year of practice. Heather also mentioned that she has been on the diversity committee, the salary and bonus committee, as well as a shareholder evaluation committee member and the hiring committee at her firm. Heather even added she has serve on the board of directors for two three-year terms. Heather describes her leadership as an even-tempered objective person who develops this skill “to get people to listen and organize.” Heather added one of her greatest accomplishments was when she received an award from her peers acknowledging her as a respected advocate. Heather suggested that individuals should try to make their own mark in the field instead of fitting in. Heather said “assert who you are in a respectful way so you can be reckoned with but not in a confrontational way.”

Irene emphasized how even in her work the majority of work she did entailed working with others. Irene said she was welcoming to others coming to her with questions and asking partners questions when she had a problem. For this reason Irene describe her self as a teammate slash mentor. Irene also added that it was important to seek out mentors in this field. Irene said “I make sure those working know I am available and that I am willing to look things over.” Irene mentioned she has been on the firms recruitment committee, the diversity committee, and
that she has done pro bono work. Irene also mentioned she has been part of the state African American bar association board of directors and was still serving as part of their clerkship and scholarship committee members. Irene also accepted a position on a Retirement Committee’s Board of Directors, has served as a trustee of her church and leader of her church’s youth church, and has served on a domestic violence organization despite all of these positions vying for time with her work and family. Irene said “she is willing to fight and convince other she is empathetic at the same time” as this can show you can be assertive without being overbearing. Irene emphasized that individuals should, “never forget who you are and what your end goal is even if others are telling you what to do.” Irene added seeking out mentors was “invaluable” and could be from a range of professions and groups of people.

**Balancing Family with Work**

Many of the women had children and had some form of support system to balance work and family. However, many still noted the struggle of meeting these needs to balance family and work. This is noted by Ashley who mentioned, “a personal challenge is trying to maintain a family, raise children, and be a wife while doing this job . . . it’s really tough.” Few mentioned experiences where balancing family was not much of a concern, but Felicia did mention that she did not experience this often because she homeschooled her children and she was in a position at her firm where she had room to perform her work maintaining a family balance. While Felicia was outside the scope of this issue, many women mentioned that despite facing the work family balance they found that they were expected to push through it, and added that even if it was not a specific expectation, they felt they owed it to themselves to perform their work just as anyone else in their firms and practices would. This is emphasized by Bianca who said she wanted to ensure that her choice to be at every event for her child did not let anyone question her ability to
complete her job just as anyone else would. However, Emma also summed up what some mentioned as a need for the legal field to address “the working mom challenge.” Emma added that she was not sure if the family divide with work would get better unless there was more diverse leadership in which those who could influence could experience the challenge of balancing a family and could advocate for change. Each individual emphasized the time required of a job in this profession and for most of the women family concerns pushed this time commitment to an all time high causing the women to adapt to fit the needs of their personal and professional lives.

Most of the women interviewed worked in various areas of the legal field with large and small firms, ranging from a paralegal to a woman in her own practice, and many experiencing several different areas of law throughout their careers. For these women, success pushed their careers to top positions both in their place of work and within the community with a strong emphasis on making the field a better place.

V. Discussion

The Goal of this research was to identify whether women of color implement similar achievement oriented leadership styles that instruct a path for those in the legal field and those seeking to enter the field. Upon review of the results, the researcher has recognized that there were clear patterns of the ways in which women of color lead in the legal field and that this was despite similar and differing experiences over the course of their work. Key patterns emerge from the dialogue of these women interviewed which would reflect that these women often felt some form of oppressive behavior in their time either in law school, entering the field, juggling a family, or within their career paths that result in a pattern of common practice to overcome these obstacles. Additionally, the positions these women have held as well as their suggestions
for those up and coming in the field are distinctively similar, and reflect on how important it has become for women of color to be in this field to pave change in the practice.

Many of the women’s experiences in school into their careers indicated an authentic leadership style. That is that these women lead through the values they believe in, sought the common good and focused on successful behaviors as the driving force for all that they do. This was indicated in every single women interviewed as each women either described their values to be in line with ensuring their family first, the need to value other’s success, as well as the value of developing relationships in the work place. Individuals who emphasized a family first perspective were primarily Ashley, Bianca, Felicia, and Diana who all emphasized their need to be successful for their children’s sake, and that this drove them to pursue law and continued to drive their decision making in their career. Nearly all interviewees mentioned the need to value relationship building in the legal field and to be the individual implementing that value. Aside from Emma, who currently does not have that experience in her new place of work, she emphasized the need to work together in school. Most mentioned valuing others success via mentorship as Ashley, Bianca, Diana, Gloria, Heather, and Irene all mentioned valuing mentorship and being a part of that process. It is based on these reoccurring values in most if not all of these women that these women have indicated a path toward authentic leadership. Most, and more specifically Bianca, were unapologetic about their family or other value based mentalities and emphasized that if they were unable to practice with their values at the forefront that either passion would be lost or they would move on to other endeavors. Felicia even said, “if an environment was toxic I would have less of a good reason to stay even where some situations may be better to stay in for short term resume building.” It was this mentality of most of the women to value their place in their profession and use their values to guide their decision
making that indicated that these women lead with their values and allow others to become aware of those values through their daily actions.

Interviewees also exhibited a transformational leadership style based on their push to aid others in their development. Those who were increasingly interested with being a part of the mentorship process, and thus exhibited this leadership style, include Ashley, Bianca, Heather, Diana, and Irene. Because these women did not just mention the need for mentorship but pushed to be the mentors of others and specifically women of color they worked to transform their follower abilities and in tern transform the legal field. This was emphasized in interviewees such as Diana who sought to reach out to young women of color who were first generation college students in order to help cultivate their success.

These women wanted to see others succeed, and not just those that look like them. These women recognized the value of others up and coming in this field as Bianca noted the need to learn from those younger and help those who are older understand where the field needs to go. These women thrived on seeing their followers succeed and knowing they have contributed. This was reflected in Bianca's comment “if not me then who,” as though she was aware that if she does not help women of color when the field was already lacking this support and representation then it was likely that these women will continue to be held back. It was this sense of responsibility toward others and their development reflected that these women hold a strong interest in transforming the skills of others in order for them to become successful in the field. These women used motivational communication and exhibited personalities that clearly seek to influence their followers to adapt and create the change they wish to see in the legal field.
Few but some women in the study also portrayed a servant leadership style, which although subtle greatly impacted the outlook of women of color being willing to be behind the scene for the improvement of the legal field as a whole. These women include Bianca in the early years of her career, Gloria, and Ashley. These women exhibited servant leadership in that they often were not seeking to be at the forefront of a leadership position but rather encourage and foster follower’s skills. This was reflected in Ashley when she encouraged others to remain as full time employees in order for these women to cultivate their skills and pursue partner positions. Ashley in this case was not concerned with being seen as a leader, but simply trying to help her peers in the right direction for their success in order for them to be able to reach leadership positions that would thus lead to greater numbers of women in partner positions in the firm and potentially in other areas of the legal field. This practice was known as allowing the skills of the follower to thrive so that they can then become leaders who influence a vision for change. This can be seen in Bianca as she mentioned that early in her career she did not seek leadership positions but simply held positions because she felt the need to do so to represent those like her. Bianca emphasized that she was not seeking to be this pioneer though she was willing to help others and work with those coming into the firm who were women thrive for their own sake. Bianca then began to recognize through her friend who pushed her to become aware of the need for her to be in leadership positions, that for women of color leadership is something that happens whether you want it or not and whether or not that means being in formal positions or simply being a role model by helping others recognize their capabilities. Gloria was also a servant leader at times as she recognized that it was her duty to ensure others success could be fostered so that other women of color could become an integral part of committees and organizations for representation purposes. Gloria spoke of helping others rise to
her position in committees to help change the culture of the community’s women of color ought to be involved in for the sake of the legal field.

Team leadership, aside from authentic leadership, was one of the most common areas of leadership women of color exuded in this study. Those who specifically mentioned team or team work included Diana, Gloria, and Irene though all of the interviewees emphasized the need to work with others and collaborate such as Ashley, Bianca, Heather, etc. These women exuded team leadership as they recognize all individuals involved in their work as an integral piece of accomplishing goals. Similarly they saw themselves as teammates in this process not just individuals leading the team, though some have had those experiences. Gloria, for example, described everyone down to her secretary as a necessary part of completing cases and getting things done in her private practice. Diana emphasized teamwork the most and spoke of how all the work she had ever completed required working with others and communicating effectively in order to suit her teammates needs. Irene spoke of her team leadership in terms of the fact that all cases she ever works on requires working with others and that she is not shy to ask for help when she needs it or give help when a college requests the help. These women described reflecting on their environment in order to work with specific individuals in order to foster effective goal oriented teamwork. It was for this reason that many of the women in this study exhibited some form of team leadership within their legal practice.

VI. Conclusion

It is through these leadership styles that it became clear that these women have put forth success strategies that inform others and help create a path for success. Based on the various other positions these individuals selflessly pursue in their busy schedules, their push to cultivate skilled followers, and implement their leadership in an effective way has shown how these
individuals have changed the way the legal field operates. As the literature review revealed women were often at a disadvantage when it comes to family, entering into the legal field, and climbing the leadership ladder and this is emphasized when race becomes an intersected factor. These women reflected these similar experiences to those of the literature review as they mentioned the struggle to balance family, their choice to push and prove others wrong, as well as their push through themselves and mentorship to ensure women of color retain leadership positions. While the experiences of these women reflected that getting to where they are now was no easy task it was the resilience and determination to give their best in their own practice which helps pace the way for others. These women have noted that it is becoming easier for women of color to enter the field and climb the ladder, though it can be seen through these women and their own practices that it is likely that the interviewees and people like them are the individuals who have helped this change occur and continue to take hold.

While these women have experienced negative experience based on gender, race, or sometimes situations in which they were unsure whether race or gender was at issue, these women overcame the obstacle placed in their way and have adapted and changed the legal field. These women have emphasized pushing to meet expectations in order to ensure that assumptions cannot be made about women of color in this profession. However, at the same time, these women are ensuring they reach leadership positions and cultivate other young leaders so that the field can continue to adapt to a more relational profession that focuses on diversity in a realistic way.

While most of these women would say that often they were simply trying to provide for family or reach the height of a career, their actions speak volumes. The work of the women of this study has shown their devotion to ensuring followers have the skills necessary to thrive in
this environment. The values of these women have influenced their push for change and has allowed them to set standards for others to meet and exceed as the legal field continues to allow more women into the practice. For this reason most of the women displayed hopeful expectations for where the field is going. Bianca, Ashley, and Emma all mentioned that as we begin to change the way we view the roles of those in the legal field we will become more understanding of the roles that family play in the practice, the benefit of having a diverse community in the legal field, and the need to empower those in the field rather than allow them to struggle because of circumstantial difference in upbringing or life experiences.

Implications of Research

This research can be instructive toward those looking to understand how those who are historically minorities in the professional field come to be successful and help cultivate success for generations to come. With this is the implication that as more of these individuals enter the field, the culture of the field is ever changed and enhanced by diverse viewpoints and success strategies. Because this research shows that women of color have a pattern of leadership in the legal field this may mean that other fields ought to be studied for the leadership practices of minority groups who historically have been discounted in the field. This is because findings of shared leadership traits can help determine what it would take for other minorities to thrive in the professional environment as well as instruct how important changing these fields are to increase the success of the practice overall. The women in these studies have reflected that they promote a benefit to the legal field in questions of race and gender issues and that they can help cultivate relationships in a way that the literature review of women in law eluded to but had not emphasized in practice. This leads to the conclusion that women of color help cultivate more collaborative environments in the legal field and that including these women in the practice is
key to diversity training beyond a simple professional seminar or pamphlet, as these women can share their experience and opposing viewpoints through their practice. Additionally, these women have shown that when given the opportunity they help reduce negative stereotypes reproduced by institutions and pave a path that reflects the importance of all as an integral piece of the whole in any profession. For these reasons further research on minorities in professional fields is crucial to the success of minorities overall and the success of the fields to adapt and become socially aware.

This research suggests that women of color thrive in team oriented, value laden, and influential mentorship environments. Thus success strategies for women of color in the legal field include using their values to instruct their decision making, seeking and creating mentorship opportunities for the sake of the field and the sake of one’s own success in the long run, and taking on the skill of collaboration as necessary in one’s work. If these women take on these strategies and are given the opportunity to uses these strategies as the legal field ought to recognize, these women are at a heightened level to succeed and ensure that the legal field allows others this capability in the future.
Appendix

- **Interview Questions:** The researcher’s structured interview questions began to change as more subjects were added to the pool. The following reflects the questions that remained constant in the study as well as the questions that became tailored as patterns were recognized.

  - **Consistent Questions-** Discuss your racial background, ethnicity, and preferred gender, Discuss your role, title, and/or affiliation within the legal field, Please share your history in context with your work in the legal field, Discuss any times in which you felt your race/ethnicity, gender, or both had an influence on your work within the legal field, Describe a time when you felt challenged in your career and how you met this challenge, Discuss times in which you worked with others in the legal field to reach a goal, Describe your role in correlation to your peers within the legal field/your place of work, Describe a time in which you were to take on a role of leadership within the legal field (formal or informal), Describe what you perceive your leadership qualities to be (formal or informal) and how do you think these qualities influence your legal work.

  - **Revised Questions (** indicate an addition)-** Please share your history in context with your work in the legal field **this should include your reason for choosing the legal field, where you went to law school and what you experience was like in law school, as well as your previous career positions before reaching your current position, Please share your observations and memories related to your work in the legal field **Share any defining moments you have experienced in your career and what, if anything, that your learned from these moments, **Do
you have children and if so, did you have a form of support to raise your family while working. Describe whether raising a family while working in the legal field proved challenging and whether your work environment was either uplifting or condemning of your family life. Describe how often you work with others in your place of work to complete goals. Describe your role in correlation to your peers within the legal field/your place of work i.e., are you a mentor, do you accept mentorship from others, when questions are presented are you the one asking for help, helping others, or equally distributing accepting and giving help. What if any suggestions do you have for a women of color pursuing a career in the legal field?
Bibliography


