

THE GENDER GAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SENIOR WOMEN LEADERS AT FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to take a thoughtful look at the gender gap in higher education, more specifically at the level of university president. The gender gap exists still in 2018, as women and other minorities continue to struggle to attain senior administrator positions, and ultimately to level the gap. The findings offer a unique view of the obstacles and challenges women face as they aspire to the presidency, and likewise several strategies that other young women can utilize to achieve career success.

This qualitative, phenomenological study was based primarily on confidential interviews with eleven senior women leaders. The eleven participants are senior administrators at four-year universities; nine are current presidents, and two are chancellors both who served as former university presidents prior to their current roles. Prior to the presidency, the women all held various other leadership roles leading up to their senior appointments. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, analyzed, and coded for emerging themes.

Several themes emerged from the research that fell under two broader categories. One category is the obstacles and challenges the participants faced throughout their careers, which can serve as lessons to the women that will continue to persevere long after them. The second category is the strategies for success these women have in common to have achieved senior leadership roles. The categories will then be broken down to sub-themes that each participant regarded as an important element on her journey to success.

KEY WORDS: Higher education, senior women administrators, gender bias.

DEDICATION

I

would like

to dedicate this

work to all the young aspiring women

who are wondering if and how their dreams are achievable.

The answer is, "Yes, they are."

And to my daughter.

I hope that no barriers stand in the way

of you achieving your own dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of the participants who graciously agreed to take part in my study. Your willingness, openness, and desire to affect change for others is appreciated more than you know. I deeply admire the strength you each possess and your tenacity to achieve something that so few women and have to date. May your experiences and stories add legitimacy to the cause and improve the available literature, while benefiting young leaders to come.

To my dissertation chair, Dr. Roxanne Cullen, I would like to say thank you. Thank you for sharing this journey with me and guiding me to the end. I am very appreciative in that you never tried to deter my vision, and let me write what was in my head and my heart. My gratitude extends to my committee members: Dr. Susan DeCamillis and Dr. Cameron Brunet-Koch, for their assistance and support. I must also recognize the fourth pseudo-committee member, Dr. Tracy Nichols Busch, for her enthusiasm toward the topic and insightful feedback.

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Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not give homage to the women who paved the way for the rest of us. To the brave women who put themselves directly in the path of danger for the progress of all in this fight for equality. To the suffragettes, the resisters, the marchers, the mothers and daughters, the trailblazers, the writers, the feminists, the politicians, the educators

and to so many more.... I thank you. We are forever indebted to your courage and steadfast vision. You have taught us well.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

For more than two centuries, American higher education was an exclusively male environment (Penney, Brown, & Oliveira, 2007). Although women now earn the majority of all college degrees and are well represented in entry and mid-level positions in most sectors of the economy, they have made surprisingly little progress in advancing to chief executive positions in higher education (American Council on Education, 2017a). Despite identical education attainment, ambition, and commitment to career, men still progress in their careers faster than women (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995). There has been some progress achieving gender equity for women, but there is still considerable work to be done, particularly in the area of leadership. According to Acker, all institutions that have been developed by men and where men are the working majority, women hold subordinate positions (1992). Women represent a mere 30% of the nation's college and university presidents (ACE, 2017b). In addition, female administrators feel constrained by policies and procedures that were designed by and for men.

Women are also less likely to hold senior administrative positions of academic dean, executive vice president, and/or provost that mostly commonly serve as pathways to the presidency, with women representing only 16% of executive vice presidents, 19% of deans, and 23% of provosts (ACE, 2008; King & Gomez, 2008). Because of the shortage of women in leadership, many colleges and universities are now seeking to design programs that develop leadership skills of women administrators (Madsen, Longman, & Daniels, 2011). The Women's

Network Executive Council, a branch that falls under the American Council on Education (ACE), plans to lead the effort to raise national awareness of the importance of achieving equality of women in leadership positions in higher education.

In 2014, a roundtable discussion of over 50 representatives from organizations that support women's leadership agendas was held. Four main initiatives were established with the specific goal of increasing the number of women in senior leadership roles in higher education.

The four goals were:

1. Generate a national sense of urgency elevating the need for advancing women in higher education leadership positions.
2. Encourage governing boards and other higher education institutional decision- & policy-making bodies to consider practices for recruiting and hiring women to chief executive offices.
3. Achieve women's advancement to mid-level and senior-level positions in higher education administration by building capacities in women and in institutions.
4. Suggest practices and models that recognize success in advancing women in higher education. (ACE, 2018, para. 3)

More now than ever before, higher education institutions must develop additional women administrators to lead through the difficult times that await in higher education. Increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions has a direct correlation with better organizational performance according to the White House Project's Benchmarking Report (2009). In addition, the Catalyst Studies showed an association between the presence of women directors on boards with better decision making and financial results (Joy, Carter, Wagner, & Narayanan, 2007). Programs such as HERS Institutes, an intensive residential leadership and management development program for women, has helped to advance women, with 14% responding they have moved into more senior leadership positions (White, 2011). However, even with programs such as HERS, shortfalls still occur that need to be addressed, which is the gender-based

obstacles that remain in place at in the workplace. Furthermore, the underutilization of women in the workplace obstructs progress and future development of higher education institutions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A woman's path to leadership positions in the workplace is paved with many barriers, including a very thick glass ceiling. The *glass ceiling*, a phrase introduced in the 1980s, was used as a metaphor for those invisible and artificial barriers women may face. In 1991, the U.S. Congress found that, despite a dramatically growing presence in the workplace, women and minorities remained underrepresented in management positions in business and that those artificial barriers were inhibiting their advancement (Johns, 2013).

According to Blount, male dominance in educational administration in the United States began in the 1920s and is prevalent still (1999, p. 60). Historically, women sought out programs and further credentials at universities but were more likely to enter careers other than administration due to a lack of recruiting programs available to help them find employment (Stockard and Kemper, 1981). Women who benefited from fellowships and other university-sponsored programs, however, experienced barriers. Eagly found that women leaders were evaluated differently and less favorably than men even when performing the same leadership behaviors (2007a). Therefore, social perceptions and expectations often result in more exacting standards for women and ethnic minorities than those applied to white men. Gender bias continues to infiltrate every segment of our society today, having a devastating impact on women's careers. When a woman is not paid the same as a man for doing a job, it is not only unfair to her, but it cheats her entire family.

While the data reveal advancements for both women and people of color in the U.S. workforce, these trends are not reflected in senior-level positions in higher education (Athey,

Avery, & Zemsky, 2000; Burbridge 1994; Johnsrud and Heck 1994). Women continue to be underrepresented in senior leadership positions, even though they have made up the majority of higher education's undergraduate clientele for more than 25 years (Ndiffer, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The absence of women in senior leadership positions in higher education also makes retention and recruitment of future women leaders more difficult (Cook, 2001; Walton & McDade, 2001). According to ACE's *The American College President 2017* report, only 30% of the nation's college and university presidents are women, just a four percentage point increase since 2011 (2017b). Given the slow increase in women leaders in higher education, it is predicted that more than 30 years will pass before women can reach equality with men in terms of college presidencies (Gatteau, 2000).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the gender gap, with a special focus on higher education. The emphasis was on how women currently working in senior leadership positions achieved their status and what recommendations they have for women who aspire to senior roles in higher education. All 11 participants in this study were presidents of four-year institutions.

First, obstacles and challenges experienced by senior women leaders as they endeavored to the role of president were identified to provide lessons and advice to upcoming generations. Second, success strategies shared by the participants were shared to illustrate exactly what it took for the subjects to overcome adversity and reach their desired role as university presidents.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation study is significant and necessary for a number of reasons that pertain to the advancement of women in higher education. Women's salaries have historically been lower than men's and have never caught up. Acker observed that in all institutions created by men; men tend to dominate, while women held subordinate positions (1992). Even though a small percentage of women have attained the role of president, several of the participants interviewed for this study said they were never taught how to negotiate salaries and knew that they had accepted less money than they deserved. Women do not take credit for their accomplishments and will accept less acknowledgement than they deserve. According to the AAUW, at every level of academic achievement, women's median earnings are less than those of men and appears to be larger the higher the education level (2014). Organizational behaviorists have consistently found that an inequity in wages among employees affects morale and a variety of other problems related to job satisfaction, turnover, and in overall performance (Choi, 2015; Grey-Bowen, & McFarlane, 2010; Hassan, 2013). Moreover, this study showcased how the pay gap affects more than just women and is a societal problem.

Second, after conducting a comprehensive literature review on women leaders in higher education, the researcher was able to conclude that work-life balance has not been achieved by women and is an obstacle to career success in many cases. According to Hewlett, gendered stigmas attached to work-life balance policies in the workplace resulted in the formation of a second glass ceiling for women (2002). This new barrier forced women aspiring to career advancement to excel in the workplace, often at the expense of raising a family or struggling with work-life balance, both of which could derail their chance of advancement. Due to traditional views and the perception that work-life balance policies are only a women's problem, workplace culture remains largely unchanged (Hochschild, 1997; Kottke & Agars, 2005). As a

result, women fail to take advantage of said policies as they are concerned that their participation will be seen as a weakness, and ultimately hinder career advancement (Bailyn, Drago, & Kochan, 2001; Clutterback, 2004; Drew & Murtagh, 2005, & Hochschild, 1997). Moreover, this study's findings helped to demonstrate that work-life balance is a barrier for women and helps to encourage organizations to modify expectations and support women in the workplace.

Third, women's voices as leaders are less represented in the literature and studies, which are traditionally focused on models of male leadership styles (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Kezar, Carducci & Contreras-McGavin, 2006; Nidiffer, 2001). Before 1990, conventional definitions and theories of leadership were largely based on the experiences of male college presidents (Wheat & Hill, 2016). Aggression, authority, confidence, courage, and strength are a few characteristics commonly associated with leadership, based solely on traditional masculine ideals (Eddy & Cox, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001). It was not until the 1990s and 2000s that literature emerged from the field of women's studies and higher education leadership. Feminist scholars argued that the conceptions of masculine leadership and male imagery created an inherent advantage for men to reach leadership roles, but presented a disadvantage for women (Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009). When university women presidents were initially studied, although they were achievement-oriented, they were found to lack confidence, and some held stereotypical views of women's leadership limitations (Madsen, 2008). Therefore, in addition to this study, further studies must be conducted that give a voice to women in leadership, describing not only their leadership style, but their path to leadership for others who aspire to these positions.

Fourth, many institutions of higher education have slowly begun to embrace bias reduction programs. However, percentages of women in senior positions remain low, so the need for continual support of Affirmative Action initiatives still exists. Women constituted less than

5% of U.S. college presidents in 1975 (Touchton, Shavlik, & Davis, 1993), increased to 9.5% by 1986, and represented 26% of all college and university presidents in 2011 (ACE, 2012). Despite women's gains in presidential appointments, among all institutional types, women remained the least likely to lead doctorate-granting universities, as they represent only 22.3% of public and private presidencies (ACE, 2012, p. 11). Companies can implement bias-reduction programs and develop policies that attempt to level the playing field. Research showed when companies think about candidates in groups, it helped managers to compare individuals by performance, rather than gender as a factor (Turban, Freeman, & Waber, 2017). In addition, the findings of this study will provide aspiring women with other alternatives to overcoming obstacles in their current career paths.

Fifth, according to the literature, female mentors and role models in senior roles in academia are very limited. The women senior leaders who participated in this study attributed career milestones to someone that encouraged or mentored them throughout their careers (Reis, 2015). Historically, women were more likely to enter careers other than administration due to a lack of recruiting programs available to help them find employment (Stockard and Kemper, 1981). Mentors were critical in learning and the development of identity (Blackhurst, 2000). In addition, mentors were believed to be people with advanced experiences and knowledge; thus, their role provides upward mobility and support to a mentee's career development (Eddy, 2008; Ragins, 1997; Twale, 1992). Reasons for the shortage were attributed to lack of women in senior leadership positions, the reluctance of male leaders to mentor, and an unwillingness by other women, as they were inundated with requests (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Young, Cady & Foxon, 2006). As more women enter the ranks of senior leadership in higher education, future studies must occur to document and make available their stories for generations to come.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This phenomenological study gleaned information obtained from recorded phone interviews with 11 women presidents serving at four-year universities across the United States. Once permission was granted, an invitation email (Appendix B) and an Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) with interview questions (Appendix D) were sent to each participant. The researcher acted as the primary research instrument to collect data through open-ended interview questions. Throughout the research process, the anonymity of the informants and their affiliated organizations were kept confidential and names were replaced with pseudonyms. Furthermore, the coding spreadsheet, interview recordings, transcripts, and other research data were handled with discretion and kept at the researcher's home. Once completed, materials will be destroyed, erased, or shredded. To help ensure validity, participants were able to review their profiles to confirm accuracy was conveyed by the researcher.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited in that it was contained to the stories of a select number of women serving in presidencies in four-year universities across the United States. The focus of the study was phenomenological, based on the participants' experiences that emerged from their own views and perceptions. The study was limited to a relatively small sample of women who responded and accepted being included as part of the study. It is worth mentioning that findings should not be generalized to women serving in other roles outside of higher education or at other institutions. Moreover, the strength of the study relied heavily on the researcher's interview questions and skills, as well as the participants' willingness to disclose those certain aspects of all experiences that have led them to their current positions.

Definition of Terms

Important terms used in this study, are defined as follows:

1. **Bias Reduction Program** — An example of an affirmative action program.
2. **FTEs** — In higher education, FTE refers to full-time equivalency for the purpose of a work year. A calculation is based on the sum of credits carried by all students enrolled in class at a particular level, divided by the number of credits in a full-time load.
3. **Anchor Institution** — Enterprises such as universities and hospitals that are rooted in their local communities by mission, invested capital, or relationships to customers, employees, and vendors.
4. **Imposter Complex** — (also known as impostor phenomenon, fraud syndrome or the impostor experience) is a psychological pattern in which individuals doubt their accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a “fraud.”

Organization of the Study

This dissertation will be organized into six chapters. Chapter One includes the introduction of the issue and the problem purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, overview of the research methodology, limitations of the study, and organization of the dissertation. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature, including an examination of the history of women in leadership, gender equality roles and theories, an assessment of the gender gap in academia, and suggestions for how to keep women in leadership roles. The methodology section of the paper, which focuses on the research design, research questions, and procedures, and IRB protocol are discussed in Chapter Three. Research data and findings are presented in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four also includes individual profiles of the participants in the study. Chapter Five focuses on the emergent themes and connects the data to the researcher’s interpretation and analysis. Finally, Chapter Six includes a summary of the study, findings and conclusions, and closes with recommendations for future work.

SUMMARY

Although women now earn the majority of all college degrees and are well represented in entry and mid-level positions in most sectors of the economy, they have made surprisingly little progress in advancing to chief executive positions in higher education (American Council on Education, 2017a). Although there has been some progress achieving gender equity for women, there is still considerable work to be done, particularly in the area of leadership. Higher education institutions must develop additional women administrators to lead through the difficult times that await in higher education. Increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions has a direct correlation with better organizational performance according to the White House Project's Benchmarking Report (2009). The absence of women in senior leadership positions in higher education also makes retention and recruitment of future women leaders more difficult (Cook, 2001; Walton & McDade, 2001). According to ACE's *The American College President 2017* report, only 30% of the nation's college and university presidents are women, just a four percentage point increase since 2011 (2017b). Given the slow increase in women leaders in higher education, it is predicted that more than 30 years will pass before women can reach equality with men in terms of college presidencies (Gatteau, 2000).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Presently, women in higher education are still underrepresented in senior level administrative positions at the university level. Acker (1992) observed that in all institutions created by men, males tend to dominate, women hold subordinate positions, and is still supported in today's literature (Brescoll, 2011; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Institutions of higher education are certainly no exception. For the women who must compete with men for promotions and recognition, they often face gender stereotypes and double standards. The underutilization of women in the workplace impedes not only women's career paths, but also all of higher education's growth and future development.

This chapter will begin with a review of the literature, which showcases a chronological history of women in leadership beginning in the 1920s. Next to be reviewed is the evolution of gender equality, the gender gap, and the competing theoretical perspectives concerning prejudice toward women in leadership roles and theories, specifically in higher education. Occupational segregation and the glass ceiling will be defined and explored further. Pay gap will be defined and studied as to whether there is a correlation between earnings and sex segregation. Finally, successful women leaders will share the suggested changes that need to be made in the workplace to assist in keeping future women in their roles. The purpose of this review is to provide an understanding of the previous research in this area as well as providing suggestions for future female leaders.

HISTORY OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Historically, women have made up a majority of the teaching profession, yet the low percentage of women in educational leadership positions continues to be an issue (Yoder, 2001, p. 815; Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003, p. 303; Eggins, 1997, p. 22; Kolb, Williams, & Froelinger, 2004, p. 2). According to Farley, male dominance in educational administration in the United States began in the 1920s and continues today (2014). Also, during this time in America, women were enrolled in undergraduate colleges at the rate of 47% (Schwartz, 1997). During this time, school districts were faced with a huge shortage of teachers and funding. School districts decided to hire women as teachers with fewer qualifications than men. However, since male teachers were college-educated, they claimed the managerial roles (Blount, 1999, p. 58). Women stayed in lower-ranking jobs, creating inequality by the increased status and pay of men.

Men's and women's experiences in higher education became more similar in the 1930s and 1940s, when women filled the space left by white men who went to fight during World Wars I and II (Geiger, 1999; Glazer-Raymo, 2002). Positions of deans of women advanced in higher education by the 1930s (Schwartz, 1997). Also at this time, women represented more than 40% of the undergraduate body (Nidiffer, 2001).

In 1955, the phrase *women's liberation* was invented by French feminist writer, Simone De Beauvoir, in the book *Second Sex*. Also, by the mid-1950s, female undergraduate enrollment had declined to only 21% (Farley, 2014). The dean of women position was combined with the dean of men to create a new role known as dean of student personnel. Women were thought incapable of holding this new position, which ultimately led to them being phased out the dean's role at the university level (Schwartz, 1997). In addition, as cited in Farley (2014), women were removed from positions in academia, similar to factory workers, because returning veterans were given priority for higher education (Schwartz, 1997, p.516; Chliwniak, 1997; Glazer-Raymo,

2002). A way of thinking developed in the 20th century that women were incapable of learning science and were thought to be skilled only in the humanities, languages, and possibly applied social sciences (Nidiffer, 2003, p. 17). Consequently, when an area of study was “feminized,” its value then appeared to drop.

The 1960s gave way to legislation which guarded against unequal pay as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which is an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act. This law states equal pay for equal work involving equal skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions (Gunderson, 1994). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made discrimination illegal, and Title VII specifically went on to safeguard against discrimination in employment practices based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Although anti-discrimination laws were enacted to safeguard women’s access to higher education, the laws did not specifically protect against employment discrimination until 1970. The Women’s Equity Action League (WEAL) filed the first charges of sex discrimination in academia, which urged the federal government to enforce the Executive Order Against Colleges and Universities (Chamberlain, 1998, p. 15). Slowly thereafter, women began to outnumber men as both undergraduate and graduate students (Chliwniak, 1997; Nidiffer, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In addition, women made fairly significant gains as faculty, staff, and administrators during this period (Glazer-Raymo, 2002). As talented leaders and managers become more sought-after in the workplace, literature regarding the 1970s explores how women’s participation grew modestly in several customarily male occupations, such as sales (Herrick, 1973; Miner, 1974).

Higher education administration careers sought by women in the 1980s were limited partly based on lack of enforcement of Affirmative Action programs. Women sought out programs and further credentials at the university level; however, women were more likely to

enter careers other than administration due to a lack of recruiting programs available to help them find employment (Stockard and Kemper, 1981). Women benefited from fellowships and other university-sponsored programs, however, experienced barriers in their university programs, such as lack of financial support and professors doubting their potential aspirations (Marshall, 1984).

Demographic trends in the 2000s show that the United States' workforce has shifted to include more women than men and slow steady growth for people of color (Burns, Barton & Kerby, 2012). While these data revealed advancements for both women and people of color in the U.S. workforce, these trends are not reflected in senior-level positions in higher education (Athey et al., 2000; Burbridge, 1994; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994). According to ACE's *The American College President 2017* report, only 30% of the nation's college and university presidents were women, just a four percentage point increase since 2011 (2017b). Given the slow increase in women leaders in higher education, it was predicted that more than 30 years will pass before women can reach equality with men in terms of college presidencies (Gatteau, 2000).

ROLES AND THEORIES ON GENDER EQUALITY

According to research, gender and people's expectations about managerial behavior may play a role in the workplace, particularly in leadership roles (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008). In fact, so much so, that books were written in the 1970s for women that desired management roles. *The Managerial Woman* by Hennig and Jardim (1977) and *Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women* by Betty Harragan (1977) were supposed to help women act like male leaders to gain acceptance (Helen-Conroy & Wenniger, 2001). However, leadership behaviors when displayed by a woman may be viewed less favorably than when the same behavior was performed by a

man. This occurrence has led to many legal cases throughout the years focused on gender discrimination, such as breastfeeding in the workplace, discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, and fair labor standards (Alteri, 2015). *Gender-role theory* states that people develop expectations for their own and others' behavior based on their own beliefs about the behavior that is appropriate for men and women (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klousky, 1992). Research suggested that women in leadership roles, and oftentimes, their credentials alike, are evaluated unfairly (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, 2007a). In addition, women's behavior while in leadership roles may be regarded as more extreme than that of their male counterparts; they may be seen as more aggressive, dominant, or controlling (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Gilligan's work constitutes the primary study of gender differences which might have implications for leadership styles, including the fact that young girls were encouraged not to compete with boys (1982). Lawrence Kohlberg was Gilligan's colleague at Harvard who developed a theory of moral development using hypothetical moral dilemmas in his work with adolescent boys (1981). Kohlberg's findings defined morality as justice or fairness reasoning, referred to as the justice/rights mode. Gilligan continued his work by studying a group of women considering abortion. Her study found that when people described themselves in relation to others, it was two distinct orientations; gender differences are similar to the moral orientations. Gilligan, Lyons, and Saltonsall furthered the study by interviewing 72 community college CEOs, 50% women and 50% men. The interviews were analyzed for themes and behaviors, which led to identifying 27 competency categories. Gender differences were identified, such as women excelled in optimism, decisiveness, and an interest in developing people, whereas men excelled in self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-control. However, the political awareness and information and gathering competencies showed that gender differences did not exist amongst

the CEOs in the study. Care and connection — characteristics that have been viewed as predominately female — became a factor in men’s leadership styles that could potentially allow for men and women to work better together. Likewise, the concept of servant leadership involves unconditional employee support and was shown to have the most positive effects on team effectiveness (Duff, 2013). The movement of women into more leadership positions in higher education may be an influencing factor toward this more humane way of leading.

Eagly and Karau’s *role congruity theory* states that there are two prejudices toward female leaders. It is believed that women have less potential for leadership than men, and secondly, leadership behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men (2002). Sex-role spillover is the carryover of gender-based roles into the workplace. Women in traditional jobs who work a great deal with men faced the problem of being seen by men as sex objects, whereas women in nontraditional jobs found themselves on the receiving end of sexual harassment, uneven work distribution, and lack recognition of performance (Van, 2006). The incongruity between how people view the female gender role versus the leader role was likely to be most extreme at the highest levels of leadership (Eagly, et al., 2002). Women are often left with only two options: conform to gender role, which may ultimately result in failing to meet their leadership requirements, or conform the other way to their leader role, which means failing to meet their perceived gender role. Furthermore, emotional double binds were competing expectations about emotional displays where individuals can display emotions that satisfy either gender or work role expectations, but not both (Geer & Shields, 1996). Other scholars refer to this as the “double bind of the female manager.” This is explained as managerial work-role expectations conflict with gender-role expectations, resulting in lower performance evaluations (Eagly & Carli, 2007b; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002). One

significance of the double bind is that a woman can be a good manager or a good woman, but not both. Research supported that the more leadership traits a female leader displays, the more negatively she will be viewed because she has strayed from the female gender role (2002).

Women can have much more to deal with since they are not socialized to compete or stand out in the same ways that men are.

Contrary to the work of Eagly and Karau, other research has called for a redefinition of the leader role to place greater emphasis on participatory leadership approaches, which is key to success in an increasingly diverse economic environment (Powell, Butterfield, & Bartol, 2008). Since the approaches are more aligned with feminine gender role over masculine, there has been a call to support the “women’s way of leading” (Kark, 2004). Furthermore, the stereotype of an effective leader may have changed now that has been identified to be more aligned with traits associated with women, than those of men (Powell, et al., 2008). Bias occurs when two groups of people act identically but are treated differently. Research suggested that gender inequality is due to bias, not necessarily differences in behavior (Turban, Freeman, & Waber, 2017). The implication was that gender differences may not be about how a woman acts, but in how other people perceive her actions. Those actions are not limited to only in-office perceptions, but very much out-of-office expectations, as well. According to the research, these conflicting views suggested a theory about overall sex effects on leaders that would showcase an advantage for leaders of either sex is not justified, but instead sex effects may be clearer with respect to particular leadership styles (2008).

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The term “work-life balance” is relatively new, first coined in 1986, although it has been talked about for many years prior (Phipps & Prieto, 2016). Work-life balance continues to be an

issue in the United States today. According to the 2013 Better Life Index by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Americans worked longer hours, took fewer vacation days, and had less leisure time than people in many other developed countries (OECD, 2013). Furthermore, there is an unequal distribution of life responsibilities between the sexes resulting in women faced more domestic or household responsibilities than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007b; Moreno-Colom, 2015), which has been identified as a barrier to workplace advancement (Eagly & Carli, 2007b).

Theoretically, if men and women are equal in the workplace, their rates of when they leave the workforce should be comparable, but that is not the case. Women are leaving the workforce at higher rates while men are advancing. In addition, men were perceived as more responsible when they have children or familial obligations, while women were viewed as being less committed to their work (Turban, et al., 2017). As Figure 5 illustrates, 31.6% of women alter their career, as compared to 16.3% male to care for a dependent (ACE, 2017a).

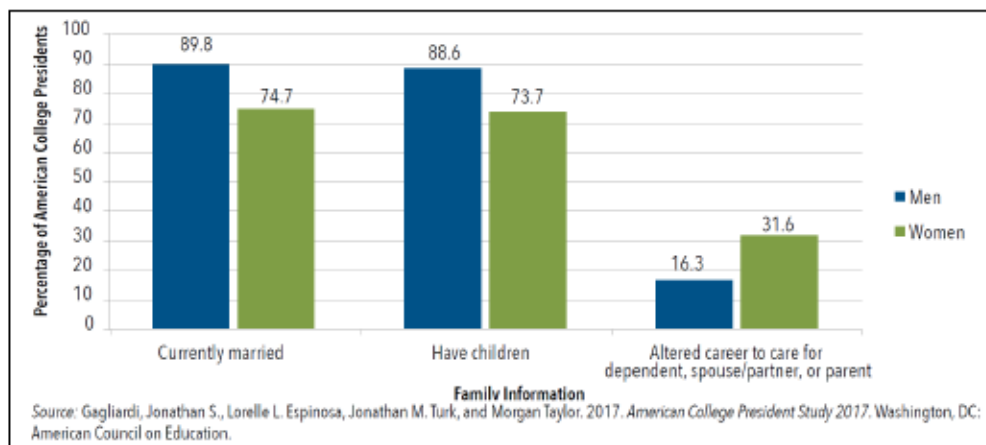


Figure 1: Family Characteristics of Presidents, by Gender Identity

Women presidents were less likely than male presidents to be married or have children and more likely to have altered their careers for their family (ACE, 2016). A series of empirical studies identified the movement of women across occupations of different gender composition,

which came to be known as the “*revolving door*” theory. It was found that even though women successfully moved into male-dominated occupations, they were pressured to leave due to existing institutional and informal social controls (Corcoran, Duncan, and Ponza, 1984; DiPrete & Soule, 1988). Thus, despite more than 30 years of equity strategies in a range of male-dominated occupations, including manual trades and IT, political correctness and quotas have done little to change underlying gender relations in organizations and occupations (Smith, 2013). Women felt they need to prove themselves and yet they still felt unwelcome in the workplace (Smith, 2013). It is especially hard for women who are pioneers to a particular male-dominated profession. Being sexually harassed by one man, despite what might have been an otherwise supportive culture, was enough to make women feel so unsafe that they needed to leave the workplace (Smith, 2013).

The work-family role system is a set of gendered expectations that is conveyed early to young men and women which may influence the direction of their future careers. The socialization of women makes them feel obligated to assume more family responsibilities than men. Women are still expected and often feel that they need to put their families first at the expense of their own careers. No matter how successful they were in the workplace, their families were considered their primary jobs (Kimmel, 2004). Given the demands placed upon women leaders, studies showed that women are more likely to suffer “mom-guilt” (Gatteau, 2000, p. 40; Gatrell, 2014). For women who wanted both a career and a family, balancing these two priorities often becomes one of their biggest challenges, often referred to as the *motherhood penalty* (Eagly & Carli, 2007b). Based on familial and societal influences, women were more likely than men to select jobs based on social meaningfulness, rather than the occupation’s monetary prospects (Eldridge, 2010; Collin & Guichard, 2011). The lack of information and

exposure to the content of a specific field could potentially deter a woman's choice of the field she enters.

Occupational Segregation

Occupational segregation is known as the distribution of workers across and within occupations (Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2014). According to the literature, it was difficult to eliminate gender inequality in the workplace as long as forces such as occupational segregation, based on gender, are still present (Wynene, op de Beeck, & Ruebens, 2015). Furthermore, occupational sex segregation has been one of the most commonly used indicators in examining gender equality in the workplace. This kind of segregation often occurs in patterns, either horizontally or vertically. *Horizontal segregation* refers to the concentration of women or men in certain occupations or sectors. The term *vertical segregation* describes men's domination of the highest status jobs.

Women often experienced (visible or invisible) barriers to entering the higher ranks of the organization, a phenomenon labeled as the "glass ceiling" (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995; Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002). According to Gaskell and Willinsky, 1995):

The Glass Ceiling is a concept that betrays America's most cherished principles. It is the unforeseen, yet impenetrable barrier that keeps minorities and females from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements (p. 5)

The glass ceiling is the overwhelmingly most popular general metaphor for women's lack of access to leadership. The term first appeared in print in 1984 in an *Adweek* interview with Gay Bryant, but the concept gained widespread recognition after it was used in a *Wall Street Journal* article by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986), who characterized women's failure to advance to executive positions as crashing into an invisible obstruction, the glass ceiling. Morrison's study

of the “glass ceiling” revealed differences between men and women based on psychological, emotional, and intellectual qualities (1987). However, the study also revealed that there were many contradictions in the expectations of women, as opposed to men in the workplace, such as women were supposed to be ambitious, yet not to expect equal treatment (Morrison et al., 1987). While the glass ceiling was invisible from the bottom, it was powerful from stopping women from reaching equality with men later in their careers (Schreiber, Price, & Morrison, 1993; Fink, Lemaster, & Nelson, 2017). Although women today no longer face the same glass ceiling in the narrowest sense of the term, meaning a complete lack of access to leadership positions, it is clear that women still faced important barriers to entry into these positions (Baretto, Ryan & Schmit, 2009).

It also remains clear that the notion of the glass ceiling is still represented in the experiences of many women. The metaphor has resulted in new research which tries to explain the underrepresentation of women at the top. The *glass slipper* refers to a woman’s lack of aspirations for power (Rudman & Heppen, 2003), while the *glass cliff* describes the instability of women’s leadership positions (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). The *sticky floor* metaphor characterizes obstacles that women face much earlier in their career paths. Sociologist Catherine White Berheide coined the metaphor to illustrate the difficulties of women who remain in low-paying, low-status positions and fail to advance (Carli & Eagly, 2016). The sticky floor image refers to discriminatory practices slowing women’s advancement, including occupational segregation practices that place women in dead-end jobs. The discussion of the sticky floor emphasized that many women never hit their heads on a glass ceiling because they did not have opportunities to advance to any level of leadership. In addition, there was evidence that women experience sexism at work from male colleagues and that marginalization is accentuated by other

differences such as age, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability (Anderson & Williams, 2001; Howie & Tauchert, 2002).

Trumbull concluded that gender discrimination in the workplace still exists despite decades of equal rights legislation and that it represents a failure involving nearly half the workforce (2007). Eagly and Carli stated that it is not simply glass ceilings that keep women from achieving power roles in organizations, but a multifaceted web of interpersonal challenges that women face at every level in the workplace (2007b). Furthermore, their work suggested that obvious barriers have been replaced with subtler processes that create, and worse yet, sustain gender differences in power in work relationships. Women are less likely than men to be perceived as having power. The literature suggested this is an example of an emotional double standard. Emotional double standards involve the use of different expectations and standards for evaluating men's and women's emotional displays in the workplace (Ragins & Winkel, 2011). Lewis (2000) found a significant link between leader gender and anger when subordinates were asked to evaluate leader effectiveness. Male leaders were not penalized for expressing anger; however, in contrast, female leaders who expressed anger or sadness received lower evaluations than those that showed no emotion. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton said, "If you get too emotional, that undercuts you. A man can cry; we know that. Lots of our leaders have cried. But a woman, it's a different kind of dynamic" (Dowd, 2008). The barriers faced by women hoping to break through the glass ceiling may be intensified by the gendering of emotion in the workplace.

Pay Gap

As defined by the American Association of University Women, the pay gap is the difference in men's and women's median earnings (2014). In 1960, women earned 59 cents for

every dollar men earned (Webb, 2010). According to economist at Cornell, Francine Blau, nothing happened to the gap from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s. Then 1980s stood out as a period of increases in women's pay, but it was much less impressive after that (Leonhardt, 2006). After the Equal Pay Act was passed, women made 77 cents for every dollar earned (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 2002). In 2005, university-educated women between 36 and 45 years old earned 74.7 cents in hourly pay for every dollar that men earned in the same group; a decade earlier, women earned 75.7 cents (Economic Policy Institute, 2015b). More recently, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that women earn 79.2 cents to the male dollar (2015). Based on the past rates of wage growth, it is thought that women's wages will not reach equality until at least 2051 (Lowell, 2006). The Equal Pay Act has done little to address the issue of sex segregation because it is limited to gender income differences of those individuals occupying the same position (Grey-Bowen, & McFarlane, 2010). Sex segregation is the division of labor based on gender and is arguably the main reason a pay gap exists. According to Kanter, an employee's salary is based on the person's status and not what he or she may contribute to the organization (1997). In other words, a person's ranking in the corporation hierarchy and organizational structure will ultimately decide how much they are compensated (Kanter, 1977).

Equal pay is not merely an individual or women's issue, but an economical issue for the country, as it affects families' spending. Between 1967 and 2010, 64% of mothers brought home at least a quarter of the family's earnings, which was a two-thirds increase (AAUW, 2014). Furthermore, about one-third of employed mothers were the sole breadwinners (2014). The gender gap can contribute to poor living conditions, poor nutrition, and fewer opportunities for youth. According to a study by Pew Research, working-age American men and women differed very little in their total work time, but when it comes to leisure activities, there was a gender gap

(Drake, 2013). As Daly states, “In as much as women’s work is consistently linked with lower power, prestige, and material rewards than men’s work [...], men continue to enjoy advantages in the control of their time by virtue of their status advantages” (1996, p. 153). According to the Center for American Progress, higher wages for women brought greater prosperity to families (2009). If the gender wage gap were closed and had women’s wages grew in line with productivity from 1979–2014, the hourly wages of the median woman would have been over 70% higher (Economic Policy Institute, 2015a). This highlights the importance of ensuring equity in wages between men and women.

As a general rule, earnings increased based on years of education — for both men and women (Carnvale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). However, education is not an effective tool or guarantee against the gender pay gap. For an average woman with a bachelor’s degree, due to the pay gap, she stood to lose over half a million dollars in her lifetime (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). According to the AAUW, at every level of academic achievement, women’s median earnings were less than men’s median earnings, and appeared to be larger the higher the education level (2014).

There is an exhaustive amount of research theorizing the cause and size of the gender gap and pay gap. A justification of the pay gap is the difference in human capital investment in education or work experience that exists between men and women. The heart of the argument is that individuals with more human capital were of greater value to employers because more knowledge means increased productivity (Grey-Bowen & McFarlane, 2010). Eagly and Carli stated that women must also build social capital, network, and form relationships at all professional levels (2007b). The notion that women must mimic this process that males in corporate settings has already been established. With that said, women have since closed the

human capital gap and in some instances, have attained higher levels of education than men, yet the pay gap still exists. Most researchers concluded that occupational segregation is a contributor of men's higher compensation in the U.S. (Blau & Kahn, 2007). Occupation, race, age, marital status, and child-bearing status also affected the size of the gender gap (Bayard, Hellerstein, Neumark, & Troske, 2003). Monks & McGoldrick (2004) examined the gender pay gap among the top five salaried individuals at private higher education institutions. They found a 13% average pay disadvantage among women versus men. However, the pay gap could be justified down to a 10.4% differential when accounting for differences in the types of institutions and occupations that women help compared to men (Monks & McGoldrick., 2004.) For example, women administrators may be less likely to gain employment at larger research-oriented universities, therefore downgrading them to lower-paying positions at smaller institutions. Nevertheless, after controlling for the aforementioned variables, approximately half of the gender pay gap overall remained and could not be explained merely by education or other subjective measures (Carline, Kidd, Rooney, & Denton, 2013).

The country of Iceland recently took matters into their own hands by being the first country to make it illegal to pay a woman less than a man (Domonske, 2018). Companies in Iceland are now required to demonstrate that they pay male and female employees fairly or face daily fines. Of course, pay equity is also considered illegal in the United States; however, Iceland was donned as the first country to enforce equal pay standards. The key is this new law does not put the burden of proof on an employee to prove she was discriminated against, but rather the burden is on companies to show that their pay practices are fair. The policy change is in response to much frustration that gender equity laws were not actually moving the needle on the actual

pay gap. Furthermore, the new law was passed approximately a year after nearly half the seats in Iceland's parliament were won by women (Domonske, 2018).

There are several things women themselves and special interest groups can do to eliminate or narrow the pay gap: (1) hire women to be leaders and managers in positions of power that pay high salaries, (2) promote women's conferences to discuss and develop solutions to address issues, (3) mentor other women to become leaders and managers, (4) provide funds and resources for women's causes dedicated to narrowing or eliminating the pay gap, and (5) women can empower themselves and assert their equal status as individuals.

Gender Gap in Higher Education

Does the gender gap matter? The research overwhelmingly agreed that it did. Findings in regard to the presidency and academic leadership roles in higher education indicated that women are underrepresented in all leadership ranks (Morley, 2013). Literature suggested the lack of female career advancement in the workplace had to do with gender, and not one's qualifications (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2016; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). As stated by Gillet-Karam in a study on transformational leadership, they found that both men and women community college presidents were effective leaders; however, they illustrated differences in behavior (2017).

One theory for the gender gap in higher education starts with a student's choice in college major. Zafar (2013) analyzed data from Northwestern University sophomores used to determine if a choice in college major attributed to the gender gap. Zafar concluded that major choices are extremely complex, and that it has to do with how the students form their beliefs. The data suggested that students have well-formed expectations by the time they reach college, which explains why male students choose engineering and female students choose education, for example. Zafar posited that, in order to change this, beliefs must be changed early, such as

female professors acting as role models to female students (Zafar, 2013). However, the study also found that simply raising the expectations of women may not be enough to eliminate the gap, and the theory that women may have lower self-esteem and were less confident than men was also proven null by the data (2013).

Women must exceed criteria needed to even be considered for a position such as higher education presidency. Society's view toward appropriate male and female roles, such as myths that women are too emotional or too physically weak, can be a challenge. In addition, women receive little to no encouragement to seek leadership positions. Lack of mentors and social networks, especially in certain fields are limited. Women also have higher attrition and slower upward mobility. Conflicts may exist with long work hours and family responsibilities which equates to no work-life balance and other negative perceptions that go along with being a working mother. In addition, other norms that still exist in higher education that could be barriers to women is the antiquated tenure-track standards, pedagogical practices, and marginalizing certain subjects that are deemed male-appropriate in academia.

In terms of educational equity, barriers such as the SAT college entrance exam preparation test have been identified as unfair to women. Girls earned higher average grades in high school than boys, yet had received lower average SAT scores (Rosser, 1989). Phyllis Rosser conducted a study to discover that girls received approximately one-third of the National Merit Scholarships, while boys received two-thirds (Rosser, 1989). The contentious issue was that girls scored lower on their SATs, which was used as the sole criterion to qualify for many scholarships. In 1989 a case was brought to the ACLU on behalf of high school women in the state of New York, where the judge ruled that exclusive use of SAT scores to award merit scholarships discriminated against girls and ultimately has under-predicted women's academic

achievement. (Rosser, 1989). In 2015, women averaged a score of 496, while the average score for men was 527 (Elsesser, 2016). There has been a call made to revamp the exams based on gender bias. An example of a biased question is in the verbal section where students were asked to analyze a 19th century argument that a woman's place was in the home (Elsesser, 2016). Questions posed in this manner imply a stereotype and can impact a woman's performance on all questions, not just those that mention gender.

As the female student body population increases, so does the need for women leaders to properly respond to their needs. If the past argument has been that leadership styles are the same between men and women, then the gender gap should be corrected for ethical reasons alone. However, if leadership approaches between the genders are indeed different, the gender gap could potentially hinder possible institutional improvements based on the lack of diversity (Seltzer, 2017). According to the literature, women's leadership style fostered collegial environments which offers empowerment to institutional members (Vecchio, 2002; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Krishnan & Park, 2005; Eagly, 2007a; Vinkenburge, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Scholars agreed that a leader with a more inclusive style could provide institutions with fresh ideas and values steeped in cooperation, community and relationship-building (Nishi & Mayer, 2009). There are three models that could be used to explain the under representation of women in leadership positions in higher education. The meritocracy (or individual perspective) model looks to women for cause, such as personal traits, characteristics, and deem women unwilling to play the game or apply for those jobs (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). It's not that women lack the desire for power, but that they use power differently, and quite often to empower others. The second model, organizational perspective (or discrimination) explains how educational organizational structures and practices

discriminate against women (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). The third model is the social perspective (or woman's place) model. This model emphasizes cultural and social norms that would encourage discriminatory practices (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996).

While these characteristics to describe women's leadership styles are valuable, women leaders still faced high attrition and slower career advancement than men, particularly in higher education (Seltzer, 2017). The data showed that women were not ascending to leadership roles given that they hold a greater share of the entry-level, service, and teaching-only positions than their male counterparts. This was true for all women when looking across degree-granting postsecondary institutions, and the trend is worsened for women of color (ACE, 2017a). The pipeline myth is the dogged idea that there are too few women qualified (e.g., degree holding) for leadership positions. This is indeed a myth because, in fact, data indicated women are moving through the pipeline and being prepared for leadership positions at a greater rate than men, as women have earned half or more of all baccalaureate degrees for the past three decades and half of all doctoral degrees for almost a decade (ACE, 2017a). Also problematic in terms of earnings, is that men made more than women at every rank and in every institution type except two-year private institutions (2017a).

Although some research suggested that stereotypes are not quick to change (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, & Lueptow, 2001), the social environment with respect to women has changed (Duehr & Bono, 2006). The horizontal representation of women in the U.S. workforce has significantly increased, although numerous studies have found that there is still a substantial underrepresentation of women at high-level positions (Wynen, J., op de Beeck, S., & Ruebens, S., 2015; Duehr & Bono, 2006). Over the past few decades, gender equality has become a focal point for public policy. However, despite the long-standing commitments of the Equal Pay Act

of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and several more recent initiatives such as the Paycheck Fairness Act, gender equality in the workplace generally still fell short (Yamagata, Yeh, Stewman, & Dodge, 1997; Wynen, et al., 2015; Duehr & Bono, 2006).

Research on schema change shows that once schemas are established, they were very resistant to change, even in the face of disconfirming evidence (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000). Epitropaki and Martin (2004) stated that “unless specific interventions and conscious efforts by management for schema change happen in an organization, organizational members’ schemas are likely to remain stable” (p. 295) This has led to a dramatic change in the perceptions of female employees by male managers. In contrast to real stereotype change, a quite different interpretation of the results is that male managers have simply learned that they are expected to view men and women similarly at work. Given the social climate in modern organizations that stressed equal employment opportunities and diversity, it is possible that male managers’ responses to the survey reflected socially desirable responding (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Managers’ “politically correct” attitudes may be masking unidentified, implicit stereotypes that lead to subtle sexism. Recent research has demonstrated that implicit racial stereotypes predicted discriminatory behavior, particularly in conjunction with a climate for racial bias (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005).

SUCCESSFUL WOMEN LEADERS AND HOW TO KEEP THEM

A gradual change in gender stereotypes may be occurring due to changing social roles (e.g., more women at work and in management and executive positions). Many companies have moved towards organizational interventions, such as diversity training aimed at decreasing gender stereotypes and other prejudiced attitudes (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Organizations spend billions annually on diversity training, and in a recent survey of Fortune 1,000 companies, 88%

reported providing diversity training on gender (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Diversity training is aimed at increasing awareness and appreciation of differences between individuals or decreasing stereotypes held by organizational members. When focused on gender, the aim is typically to identify stereotypes and promote inclusion, rather than highlighting differences between men and women (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004; Duehr & Bono, 2006). The governing board and senior staff should annually review the institution's commitment to diversity to evaluate how well it is working.

In addition, companies can implement bias reduction programs and develop policies that attempt to level the playing field. Research showed when companies thought about candidates in groups, it helped managers to compare individuals by performance rather than gender as a factor (Turban, Freeman, & Waber, 2017). Diversification on hiring committees helps to ensure a search will be expanded to the broadest range of qualified candidates (ACE, 2017a). If universities hire search firms, they should ensure the firms have a reputation for providing diverse pools of candidates. Companies can also pay special attention to workload. Social pressures push women to balance work, family, and the unequal amount of housework to advance. Companies can modify expectations to better support working women without forcing them to choose "family or work" (Turban, et al., 2017). Although some companies in the United States value work/life balance, other nations such as the Scandinavian countries tend to focus more on family values and offer free on-site daycare, for example. Furthermore, coalitions can be formed to challenge negative assumptions about women and their abilities and instead model effective leadership styles (Helen-Conroy, et al., 2001).

Many women presidents that have been interviewed say that they attribute career milestones to someone that encouraged or mentored them throughout their careers (Reis, 2015).

Good leadership fosters confidence and growth in those they lead or mentor. It is likely that these women encountered good leadership on their pathway to the presidency. Companies need to identify issues surrounding gender and tailor a solution to their specific problems. Fundamental questions exist, such as, “What about our company culture has limited women’s growth?” Only when companies seek hard data can they measure outcomes of both behavior and advancement and transition to the stage of finding solutions. Public institutions should pay particular attention to the declining number of women leaders. Among all the sectors, academia is the only one that has this trend (ACE, 2017a).

SUMMARY

In brief, women have made up a majority of the teaching profession historically, yet the percentage of women in educational leadership positions continue to be underrepresented (Yoder, 2001, p. 815; Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003, p. 303; Kolb, Williams, & Froelinger, 2004, p. 2). A review of the previous literature leaves much to be desired regarding the status and experiences of senior women leaders in American higher education. There still remains a gap in research in terms of what it takes for women to achieve and to remain in visible leadership positions. Other doctoral researchers (Flannagan, 2002; Rosynsky, 2002) agreed that there is little information available to women that want to learn about how to become effective and successful leaders in higher education. They have recommended additional inquiries about how other women have been successful navigating issues such as gender stereotypes.

Nonetheless, some scholars have argued about the double standard of women leaders being forced to respond to the male-dominated culture within the workplace (Yoder, 2001). To support that claim, a series of empirical studies identified the movement of women across occupations of different gender composition, which came to be known as the “*revolving door*”

theory. It was found that even though women successfully moved into male-dominated occupations, they were pressured to leave due to existing institutional and informal social controls (Corcoran, Duncan, and Ponza, 1984; DiPrete & Soule, 1988). Women have had to work harder and expend more energy, which has delayed not only their individual success, but the success of institutions, as well.

Furthermore, it was suggested that obvious barriers have been replaced with subtler processes that create, and worse yet, sustain gender differences in power in work relationships. Women are less likely than men to be perceived as having power. The conclusion is that the continual development and transformation of the higher educational system in the United States requires the leadership and contributions of the community, which includes women, as the majority sex (MIT, 2001). Therefore, strategies should be employed to encourage women to seek out leadership roles in higher education as a profession.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study examined the gender gap in higher education, more specifically the positions of president and chancellor at the university level. This chapter describes the purpose of the study, research design and rationale (including the researcher's role), selection and description of participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the gender gap in higher education and how women in current leadership positions achieved their status. What were their secrets to career success? What specific skills are necessary to be a successful leader, and do they differ in terms of gender? What are some of the obstacles or challenges women may face as they climb the ladder in higher education? Why were some women able to overcome obstacles or challenges associated with breaking through the glass ceiling? And lastly, have they had mentors throughout their careers and what impact did they have? Considering the open-ended and exploratory nature of the analysis, the researcher chose to employ a qualitative phenomenological strategy for the study. Chapter Three will provide details of the research methodology through the following sections: research design, participant selection, data collection, interview structure, and data analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RATIONALE

According to Patton, qualitative studies vary by type, purpose, and quality (2002). Qualitative data consist of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions and feelings, and knowledge” obtained through interviews, “detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, actions” recorded in observations, and “excerpt quotations, or entire passages” extracted from various types of documents (Patton, 2002). Based on Patton’s description, this study was an in-depth, open-ended interview narrative data collection. Qualitative data is data that is not easily reduced to numbers. The intent of qualitative research methods is to describe a process or experience, and the goal is to make meaning of experiences or phenomena by following data as they emerge (Cruz & Tantia, 2016). Furthermore, participants were chosen based on relevant information they possess that will guide the researcher’s study (i.e., they are considered the experts on the subject matter). Research questions then proceeded to drive a much deeper understanding of a phenomenon with questions that generally answer *how* or *what*. The type of qualitative research approach used to address a specific research question depends on what is being studied. The research in this study resulted in tactics that demonstrated how each leader paved their way to success, the identification of barriers that women as university presidents experienced, as well as strategies that helped them overcome said obstacles.

According to Patton, two popular forms of qualitative methods are phenomenological and case study approaches (2002). A method in qualitative research is the means used to conduct the study, then describes how the data were collected and analyzed. The methodology or phenomenological approach in this study will be phenomenological research and the methods used will be interviews. According to Merriam, phenomenologists place emphasis on the subjective aspects of people’s behavior (2002). Patton stated, “Phenomenology serves to

describe one or more individuals' experiences of a phenomenon" (2002). Phenomenology believes that people interpret everyday experiences from the perspective of the meaning it has for them.

Participants

According to the most recent national statistic available (ACE, 2017a), U.S. presidencies held by women in higher education are underrepresented, particularly in four-year institutions. As shown in Table 1, *Percentage of Presidencies Held by Women, by Institution*, when compared with two-year institutions, both public and private four-year institutions show much lower representation of presidencies held by women. Therefore, determining how some senior women leaders managed to succeed in the four-year higher education environment is essential to the recruitment of more women presidents.

Table 1: Percentage of Presidencies Held by Women, by Institution Type (2001–16).

Institution Type	2001	2006	2011	2016
All institutions*				
Doctorate-granting	13.3	13.7	22.3	21.8
Master's	20.3	21.7	22.8	29.1
Bachelor's	18.7	23.3	22.9	27.9
Associate	26.8	28.7	33.0	35.8
Special focus	14.8	16.4	20.5	30.6
Total**	21.1	23.0	26.4	30.1
Public				
Doctorate-granting	15.7	16.0	23.9	23.2
Master's	20.9	23.1	22.9	30.3
Bachelor's	18.2	34.4	27.5	32.8
Associate	27.0	28.9	32.3	36.0
Special focus	22.0	29.0	21.4	40.0
Total**	23.9	26.5	29.4	32.8
Private Not-for-Profit				
Doctorate-granting	8.7	7.6	20.7	19.6
Master's	19.6	20.3	22.5	28.6
Bachelor's	18.8	21.1	22.3	26.3
Associate	27.6	34.0	40.7	34.8
Special focus	13.7	13.4	17.8	29.3
Total**	17.9	18.7	21.9	27.2

* Includes public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit institutions

** Total includes institutions classified as "Other," which includes institutions not included in Carnegie Classification, such as some state higher education systems.

Source: Gagliardi, Jonathan S., Lorelle L. Espinosa, Jonathan M. Turk, and Morgan Taylor. 2017. *American College President Study 2017*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

An excellent participant is considered to be someone who is an expert in the experience or phenomena under investigation, is willing to participate in the study, is articulate, has time to share their experiences, and is a source of rich information for the researcher (Morse, 2007; Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009; and Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the purpose of this study, an excellent participant was considered to be a woman who either currently or previously held emeriti status at a four-year university, as a provost or higher position, such as president or chancellor. Purposeful sampling was used to find participants to meet the guidelines set out in the study. All participants in this study met the outlined criteria and were subsequently chosen for the positions they held and their expertise. The researcher made a conscious decision to reach out to people of color; however, the response rate was very low.

An email (Appendix B) was sent to the president's office of approximately 50 women at four-year institutions where they serve as senior administrators. The researcher contacted numerous president's and provost's offices across the country and internationally at four-year institutions in an attempt to secure volunteers to aid in the study. The researcher also mailed letters in order to increase the sample size. When the participants accepted the researcher's invitation, the telephone interview typically followed very shortly after.

The result was a total of 11 interviews with current or emeriti female university leaders — presidents or chancellors — conducted between February and April 2018. The minimum number of participants was established prior to the study. For the purpose of this study, the minimum sample size was 10. Completeness was achieved when more than 10 interviews had been conducted and it was determined by the researcher that new categories and themes had stopped emerging. All participants who held the selected positions were eligible to participate in the study and an informed consent form, (Appendix C) is on file for each.

Data Collection

Before the process of individual interviews was initiated, the researcher attempted to collect as much background information as was available about the participants and their respective institutions. The researcher reviewed all biography information, including websites, news articles, and resumes prior to each interview to gain more familiarity with each subject. The majority of institution information came from their websites or from the participants themselves during their interviews.

Data collection took place in the months of February, March, and April 2018. Because of the participants' demanding schedules and the random selection process, all interviews were conducted and recorded in a secured location by phone, rather than face-to-face.

Interview Structure

The main purpose of an interview was to obtain a special kind of information (Merriam, 2009). The researcher attempted to find out what is "in and on another person's mind," according to Patton (2002, p. 341). Interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection, and at times, interviewing is also the only way to obtain data (Merriam, 2009). In this study, a total of 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews allowed for structured questions to be asked; however, they also allowed for flexibility in wording and order, according to Merriam (2009). Each interview began with brief introductions and a review of the scope of the research study. Each participant was also reminded of their rights and provided a consent form (Appendix C), which was then signed and received prior to the interview. Following the interview, the researcher provided the participants an opportunity to review their responses prior to paper submission.

All 11 interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded using an IOS app. The participants were informed that they were being recorded and permission was granted by each. The interviews ranged in length from approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Considering the sensitive nature of the study's topic and significantly low percentage of the overall candidate pool, it was decided that the researcher would omit individual names of interviewees and the institutions they represented. Recorded interviews were transcribed immediately following each interview by either the researcher or a professional transcriber and exchanged using a protected Dropbox folder.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. The inquirer compiles raw data then subsequently findings emerge that make sense in new ways when seen and understood as part of a greater whole. Richardson stated that qualitative analysis and writing involves making sense of our relationship to the world, helping us to discover things about ourselves, as we discover items of interest, as well (2000). A major challenge of qualitative analysis is making sense of large amounts of data. No formula exists for determining significance or duplicating the researcher's analytical thought processes. According to Patton, as the documenter, all one can do is their very best, with their full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what that data reveals given the purpose of the study (2002).

Interviews with each of the 11 participants were transcribed by either the researcher or a professional and then analyzed by the researcher. Qualitative analysis was conducted manually, without using a computer software program. The researcher thought it was important not to impede the process by distancing herself from the text. The data was thoroughly reviewed, then codes were assigned to the material. Interviews were coded using labels, words, and phrases, also

called indexing. The most important codes were chosen, then themes were created by bringing several codes together. Many of the initial codes were either absorbed or dropped altogether. From this point, the researcher conceptualized the data by grouping the themes, then labelled them under two broader categories. One category that was analyzed is the obstacles and challenges they faced throughout their careers, which can serve as lessons to the women that will continue to persevere long after them. The second category was the strategies for success these women had in common to have achieved senior leadership roles, oftentimes being the first women in their organizations to do so. The categories were then broken down into three or more sub-themes that each participant regarded as an important element to her journey to success.

These categories and connections were the main result of the study (i.e., its new knowledge about the world from the perspective of the participants of the study). The first category that emerged from this study focuses on those specific obstacles and challenges that presented themselves as many of the 11 participants set out to break through the glass ceiling in higher education to the role of president. Four sub-themes emerged: (a) environments not supportive of women (b) work/life balance, (c) sexism, and (d) women's lack of confidence and negotiating skills. The second category focuses on four success strategies applied by the 11 women presidents. The four sub-themes include (a) work ethic, (b) mentorship, (c) servant leadership, and (d) authentic self.

Research Questions

The purpose of the interviews was to address the following research questions: (See Appendix D).

1. What factors contributed to your career success?

2. What are some of the obstacles or challenges women may face as they climb the ladder in higher education?
3. After controlling for several variables and subjective measures, approximately half of the gender pay gap still exists, and cannot be explained merely by education level. Do you have a theory on the pay gap?
4. Does your institution currently have a bias reduction program or other policies that attempt to level the playing field between the genders? If not, do you think one is needed?
5. Have you had any mentors throughout your career, and what impact did they have?
6. What advice do you have for current or aspiring women leaders to help them success as top-level decision-makers in higher education?

SUMMARY

In brief, the researcher put forth a best faith effort to produce a study that represents senior women leaders in higher education across the United States. In addition to using transcribed interviews, the researcher received final approval and adopted any edits the participants wished to include for additional credibility. The researcher remained close to the data, which was thoroughly reviewed and coded. The most important codes were chosen, then themes were created by bringing several codes together. The researcher conceptualized the data by grouping the themes, then labelled them under two broad categories. These categories and connections were the main result of the study, in other words, the new knowledge about the world from the perspective of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROFILES OF ELEVEN SENIOR WOMEN LEADERS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four includes a composite profile of the 11 senior level women administrators who participated in the study, followed by their individual profiles based on in-depth interviews with the researcher. In addition, to protect the anonymity of participants, easily identifiable information has been purposefully excluded, modified, or replaced with aliases.

COMPOSITE PROFILES

The 11 participants are senior administrators at four-year universities; nine are current presidents, and two are chancellors who both served as former university presidents prior to their current roles. According to the 2014 Carnegie Classification of Higher Education Institutes, three of the participants serve at master's-level universities, while one has a profession focus with graduate coexistence. Two are baccalaureate institutions; three offer moderate research, and two are research extensive universities, as illustrated in the following figure (IUCPR, 2015).

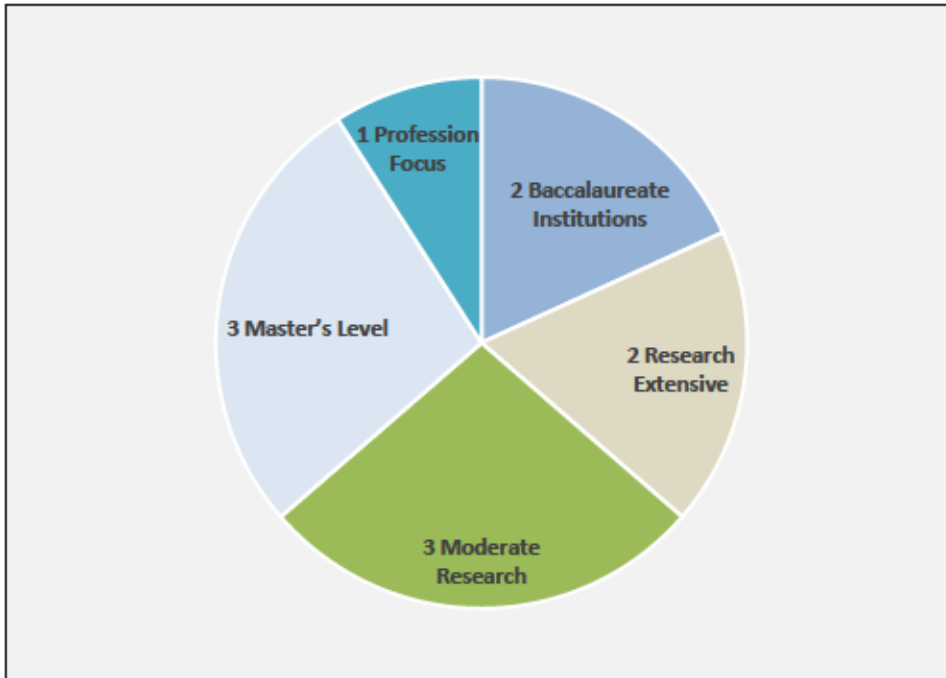


Figure 2: Participant Institution Type

Although the majority of the research participants have served in their current roles for fewer than five years, almost all have also served in administration roles prior to their current presidencies. The outlier, in terms of time served, not only served in her role as president for 20 years, but was also the first president of her institution. In addition, five of the 11 presidents were also the first women to hold that title at their institutions, while one was the first woman to occupy the presidency in 117 years. The average length of years in higher education administration for all research participants is 31 years. Every participant was already working in higher education when they began their presidencies, and four of the 11 were promoted from within their current universities. All eleven women hold doctorate degrees; nine of which are doctorates of philosophy; one juris doctor, and one doctor of medicine. Four majored in leadership, education, or policy, whereas the other six specialized in disciplines ranging from the sciences to business administration, such as accounting and biology. Of the participants, 55% (6

of the 11) were full professors at one point in their higher education careers. The ages of the participants ranged from mid-fifties into their seventies, with their average age being 56 years old. Ten of the eleven are Caucasian, while one is from a minority group, as illustrated in the following chart:

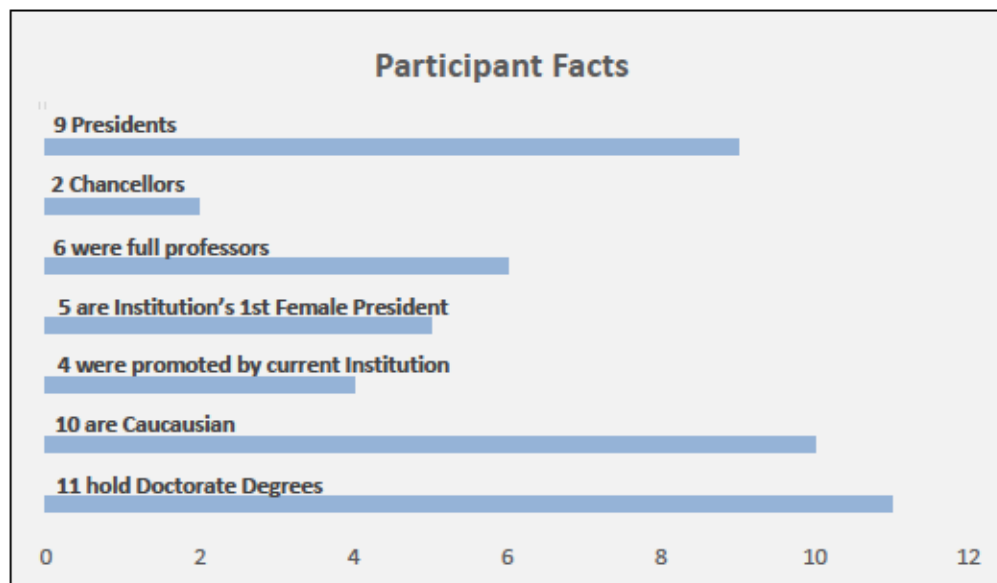


Figure 3: Participation Facts

Not all participants disclosed their marital or familial status; however, the majority did offer remarks about their children. A few were very open about their personal lives, mentioning the balance they needed to maintain between their families and their careers.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILES AND INTERVIEWS

Cathy: Work Ethic is Key

Cathy is the president of a Midwestern state university that defines itself as student-centered with an emphasis on teaching. Several professors from her institution have even received special recognition by the Carnegie Foundation. Cathy's higher education career began in residence hall life; then she moved to a small liberal arts college to become an assistant dean.

Her career then took her on the path to becoming a faculty member, a department chair, and then eventually a dean. From there, her career did not slow down as she moved to administration to become the vice president of academic and student affairs, provost, and finally a university president.

Success Factors

Without a doubt, Cathy attributes her career success to hard work and drive, although she does point out that a little bit of luck may have factored in. The luck she referred to is from the support she received from supervisors. She stated, "I'm fortunate to work for men who went out of their way to be sure I got professional development opportunities." Included in those opportunities was one program within her own institution designed to prepare future presidents. Also integral to her success was not only that Cathy was supported, but that she was also nominated by her supervisors for special projects and awards, which allowed others to also acknowledge her achievements. Lastly, Cathy recognizes the commitment that her state system of education took to eliminate the gender and racial gaps in both pay and positions. A few years ago, the profile of the presidents in her state's university system would have been predominately white and male; today half are women and 30% are of color, according to Cathy. She attributes this feat to a recently retired chancellor, to whom she reported.

Obstacles and Challenges

Cathy was quick to say that she had a hard time thinking of the common barriers that people might mention. For example, that women aren't taken seriously, that they are sexualized in the workplace, sexually harassed or assaulted in the workplace, or discriminated against because of gender. However, she does make mention of "subtle sexism" behaviors that have affected her. She specifically referred to her peer group, which is comprised of five colleges

within a short distance of one another, although with only one female president. She expanded by stating she notices ways in which male colleagues interact differently with her than with each other. Cathy also went on to say that she noticed barriers to women in the public discourse, i.e., "...the way people talk about Hillary Clinton, for example, or other prominent female leaders." She added, "It's a reminder to us all that if people are saying those things, thinking those things public figures, then obviously those things exist in our culture and are probably directed at me, as well." She believes the "behaviors are hard to call out" because one may appear "hypersensitive or over-emotional." She wishes these behaviors and barriers did not exist but did not feel they have held her back in her career.

Another barrier Cathy addressed is discrimination in pay. Cathy recalled a story from when she was a faculty member years ago and served on a gender equity study. What she found was that she was being paid significantly less than her male faculty counterparts. She ultimately received a rather large adjustment in pay, as did many other women at the university. She stated that her theory on the pay gap is this:

...studies occur year after year and the number of women who get adjustments get smaller and smaller, so I do think awareness levels have been raised and people are making more of an effort to ensure they are not discriminating with salaries.

Lastly, Cathy notes one additional barrier by briefly referencing the fact that she was a single parent for 11 years and found balancing parenting to be challenging prior to her remarrying.

Mentorship

Mentors were admittedly of great importance to Cathy, as she did not necessarily see herself possessing leadership potential. Cathy could think of three or four mentors who impacted her career, all of whom initiated first contact. As she recalled, they could see the potential Cathy

had to become a leader. Furthermore, Cathy stated that she felt like she lacked the confidence to pursue leadership roles, but that it was the encouragement and support she received from others that urged her to consider taking the next step in her career: “Early on it was self-perception, but later in my career it (mentoring) had more to do with opening doors for me — nominating me for positions or introducing me to people who could be advantageous to my career development.”

Cathy could not recall ever having a woman as a mentor throughout her career. Therefore, she did not speak to any perceived differences between men and women’s mentorship styles, per se. She has had wonderful relationships with female colleagues; however, in terms of mentors, it just happened to be that most leadership positions in four-year universities were held by men.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

Cathy has a tremendous work ethic and believes there is no substitute for hard work and doing the best job one can in their current role. In addition, she believes in going the extra mile by stretching beyond current duties, building new skills, making new relationships, and demonstrating that one can do more. If nobody takes an interest in someone at work, as her mentors did with her, be confident enough to seek someone out who could be a trusted advisor and help open doors that may not, otherwise.

Elizabeth: It’s All About the Data

After 30-plus years of working at her institution, Elizabeth had been extensively involved in the university across numerous positions. Serving the university through the roles of a staff member, professor, and various administrative roles gave her a sense of insight into its history, culture, and special place in the state’s economic development, while simultaneously allowing her to hone her skills in administration, faculty politics, fundraising, and building supportive

constituencies. When the opportunity arose to join the pool of potential candidates for university president, Elizabeth decided to accept the challenge even though the university did not have a history of female presidents. “I wanted the search committee to have one possible candidate to consider who simply cared deeply about the university,” she said.

Success Factors

Elizabeth summed up her career success by emphasizing her “willingness to say yes.” She admitted that she did not always necessarily feel qualified or well-trained for that particular opportunity, but her willingness to simply say “yes” made all the difference. She recalled a time where she was approached to serve as an interim high-ranking administrator and remarked “Well, there are much better people than me to select from.” She ultimately took the role and encourages other women to also say “yes.”

Obstacles and Challenges

Although this was not necessarily Elizabeth’s own circumstance, she felt work-life balance can be the ultimate challenge for many women, so much so that she states, “...I think that becomes sometimes insurmountable, or it stops them at a certain point in their life and in their career.” She has had very talented direct reports that had family obligations pulling at them, which she feels impacted their ability to say “yes” to their careers and may have prevented them from climbing the ladder.

Elizabeth briefly addressed hostile work environments. Although this was not her own experience, she has spoken to female colleagues and is aware of inappropriate behavior. She believes universities should continue to disseminate climate surveys to get a better picture of “...what things look like and what actions are needed.” She also said it was one thing to

empathize as another faculty member, but as a president, it is very important that the right steps are taken to address the situation.

Another challenge or obstacle Elizabeth made mention of is in terms of the women's pay, as compared to male counterparts. She believes women are not typically very aggressive or may lack the skills needed to negotiate salary properly. She feels it should be up to women to understand the data and to be aware of equitable salaries in their fields. She referenced a story where her administration looked at salary within the college. In response to the situation, her fiscal officer developed a tool that would help department chairs look at the salary of faculty, not only to look at male versus female, but years of service, multicultural variables, etc. They were able to identify a number of situations that required them to take action to remediate the situation to make the salaries more equitable: "Data gives us so many new opportunities for conversation and for now it really makes everything much more transparent, the way now we have access to data to look at these issues." For herself, she felt that she could always take in the data and receive a fair result. For instance, she has said to her supervisors, "I'd like to show the market data for my position across our peer universities or across the universities that are most aligned with the work that we do here." She reflected that every time she chose to do that, she was well-received in that conversation "...because data is how decisions are made, especially in administrative positions."

Mentorship

Elizabeth recognized that mentors come to us both formally and informally. She spoke about some of her work in research labs and having her eyes opened up to science for the first time. Her mentors were critical to opening her eyes to certain opportunities. She also learned the value of hard work from one of her mentors, citing that mentors are one thing, but "if you aren't

willing to do the work, it's difficult to have significant impact." Her most important mentor was the individual who served as the dean prior to her being named, and interestingly enough, was her only female mentor. She mentioned that having a female mentor is a "comfortable experience," and that "you come from a similar understanding of how you interact sometimes with people." She noted that this mentor was a very talented individual taught who taught her that it is okay to be a problem solver, but that sometimes individuals did not want their problems solved: "They just wanted someone to listen deeply to what their problem was and to respect what that problem was." Oftentimes, one's role as a leader becomes the willingness to deeply listen to others. She stated that "Every step of the way, each mentor is teaching you a new set lessons or helping you expand your horizon in a new and exciting way, so that you build on those experiences and what you're learning."

Words of Wisdom and Advice

When asked if there was any advice she would give to aspiring women in higher education, Elizabeth once again refers to the data. Her response:

So, if I had advice for young women — and I think young women in higher education are doing this much better now — is that you've got to stand up for yourself. You've got to know the data yourself. What are the starting salaries in the department? How does that compare to the salary that you're being offered? As you move forward with success, how are you being rewarded? When is it appropriate to talk to your supervisor or your department chair about your salary and what would be appropriate? Again, recognition for great success that you may have had. So just encouraging women to be a better negotiator about their own interest I think is key to helping change this — this issue.

Elizabeth also believes the recommendation of a great book to any young aspiring person is helpful. She makes special reference to *The Servant Leader*, by James Autry (2001). The author mentions six things he believes about leadership, the sixth item being "leadership requires love." When speaking with women graduate students, they said many of their supervisors told

them they could not be a caring person and still be a leader. She rebuked that statement with a quote she remembers from the book: “Leadership is about bringing your spirit to work, being your best and most authentic self.” In addition, she feels women should be who they are and in order to do that, they must know and honor themselves. Again, digging deeply and being authentic is very important. People are not to put themselves down when someone pays them a compliment by saying something such as, “Oh, it was nothing.” Honoring oneself and not hiding talents allows a person to be a great servant leader.

Ruth: Just Do It!

Ruth is also the first woman to be president of her four-year university, located lakeside in picturesque New England. The institution holds a unique philosophy that emphasizes a holistic view of the student, so they can go on to serve as leaders in their communities and organizations. Ruth is known for her volunteer leadership and is a recreational runner and appears to be a good match for this organization and community. Ruth has worked in a range of positions in higher education, including admissions, housing, hall director, and senior vice president for student affairs prior to becoming a university president. Ruth considers herself to be competitive, citing that she grew up in a house of six children, all male and older, which she believes allowed her to be comfortable with many different leadership styles. She is also distinctive in that she possesses two doctorate degrees and has been the recipient of several distinguished local and national awards.

Success Factors

When asked to identify what variables factored into Ruth’s success, she hesitated at using the term “journey.” Namely, Ruth believes each person’s path to whatever their role is, “is just so different.” In fact, when looking back at her own career path, she questioned if she would take

that same path if she were to do it again, simply because she believes that people all evolve and with it, so do one's opportunities. Ruth cautioned young people not to be so strategic in terms of their future plans. Instead of looking too far ahead to the ultimate goal, perhaps consider working really hard in one's current role and then be open to the next opportunity that arises: "There's a balance between being strategic and also being present in your current position." She also credited each of her degrees to opening new windows of opportunity. Because her familial situation at the time did not allow for her to be mobile in her job search, she decided to obtain additional training instead. She stated she also understood that to move up in higher education, credentials matter. By pursuing her second doctorate, she felt that it certainly made an impact and helped her to stand out while interviewing for the presidency. She also credited her devotion to volunteerism, which happened to align with the university's values.

Challenges and Obstacles

In terms of challenges, Ruth specifically made reference to women negotiating equitable salaries as she said "traditional thought" still very much exists in some workplaces. She cited an example of a board of trustees weighing the decision of a salary offer for an incoming female president that may take a woman's husband's salary into consideration, while a male candidate may have a stay-at-home wife. She specified for her situation, "They're hiring me; they weren't hiring the two of us." She also acknowledges that her male predecessor made significantly more than she did in her first contract, but she has since corrected for that gap. She did so by reviewing similar schools in terms of size, full-time equivalent — which also included benchmarking her against 60 schools — then adding on years of experience and performance metrics. Institutions need to understand the cost of recruiting and training a new president versus retaining someone that is doing well in the job and appears to be a good fit.

Mentorship

When asked about mentoring, Ruth acknowledged that she loves programs that involve female-to-female mentorship. However, she was quick to say, "...your mentoring can come from anyone. It can be male or female, and so don't be so narrow in thinking that." She emphasized this point by stating that there will be more women leaders in the coming future, so for male students and even mentioned that with her own son, the odds are they will one day work for a female, so it's good to know both (sexes) can be good mentors. Ruth recalled with each of her degrees a male that she worked for encouraged her to pursue additional credentials, not necessarily early on in her career, but later when she "found the right people." With that said, in terms of searching for her own mentors, Ruth "...looks toward people that have it figured out." People have to stay true to their personalities and "...do not have to change who we are to become more like the position." For instance, she used the example of women wearing high heels. She stated, "We didn't sign up to wear a suit every day. That was then. You can wear whatever you want as president."

Words of Wisdom and Advice

Ruth had three main pieces of advice for women aspiring to leadership roles in higher education. First, she believes one should pursue their credentials as soon as possible, and should not wait because it only gets harder: "It gets more complicated especially if you raise a family. It never is easy." She sees women that are in their forties that are just now going back to finish their degrees or decide that it's not worth going back in some cases. She believes it's easier if women only focusing on their career without family matters factoring in, if possible. In her own case, she did not have the luxury of building a "robust career" (referring to early on), so she made sure not to burn bridges while "...building a reputation in one zip code." Second, Ruth is a

big fan of planning. She said to get a plan, get a strategy, and figure out how long it will take. Again, don't wait to obtain those credentials, as there will never be a good time.

Third, Ruth says to "pick the right partner." She articulated that her husband knew when they began dating many years ago that she was interested in pursuing a doctorate degree. He knew very early on that she at least had aspirations to work in a high-level position in higher education: "You have to pick a partner that's as interested in you achieving your goals as you are...." Ruth indicated that he was and continues to be very supportive as they juggle the responsibilities of their high-level careers in different states at the moment. She summarized her advice to future leaders by stating, "If you think you want to do something, do it, and find a way to do it. If it's not the right fit, then you have lots more time to figure out what it is you want to do."

Hillary: The Will to Become President

Hillary recalled how higher education has been important to her since her early origins. She shared the story of her childhood, which was challenging. Her father was a farmer who died young, leaving her mother with four small children. Her mother had not graduated high school because she needed to care for her family after her own mother had died. She then remarried, and the family became combined, adding more children to the mix. It was important to Hillary's mother that all six of her biological children would earn college degrees, which they have since accomplished. Early on when she was applying to her master's program, she wrote in her personal statement that she wanted to be a college president. Moving ahead to present day, Hillary is the president of a four-year university with a student population under 10,000 located in the Midwestern United States. She is the ninth president of her institution and the first woman to fill the role. Prior to her current appointment, she served in a number of public and private

college and universities. Her consulting roles have included projects on strategic enrollment management, retention, and developing effective communications. She stated that higher education has changed her life and the trajectory of her children's lives, as well.

Success Factors

In terms of success, Hillary feels there is no substitution for hard work. She notes that when she grew up, things were earned; nothing was handed out to people. As a first-generation college student, education was impressed upon her at an early age. She went to college in the 1970s and did not see any female administrators or women in leadership positions, except for one associate dean. She had a meeting with her when the administrator told her that she could also serve in a leadership role. Hillary described it as an aspirational moment for her. When she applied for her master's degree, she wrote in her personal statement that she wanted to be a college president by the time she was 45 years old. Although life and family choices were factored in, Hillary did not meet that specific age, yet she kept the big picture in mind, along with her goals. She eventually reached the presidency by aiming for the top and deciding it was the right time, the right institution, and the right fit. She stated, "I'm not a person who sets goals just to reach goals...they have to make sense to me and they have to be in alignment with my values."

Challenges and Obstacles

One obstacle Hillary pointed out is that men and women are socialized differently, in that women do not give themselves the credit they deserve. For example, women tend to doubt themselves in terms of preparedness and credentials instead of just going for the promotion. Hillary said that she works with a lot of men who think they are ready regardless. Women believe that they must work really hard to prove themselves because oftentimes their voices are

discounted if a majority of men are in the room. Early on in her career, Hillary felt this to be true. However, she found that once women represent about 30%, the “turning point” was reached: “Then you’re not a novelty anymore, and then people don’t look at you like...they start to look at the ideas and the comments versus the person.” She went on to say that she does not believe women’s work is valued as much as men’s, generally. If a person closed their eyes and imagined what a president looks like, Hillary believes in most cases that they would not picture a woman. She said that is just how people have been trained in the world. She wholeheartedly believes the pay gap is real, but also believes that women could “...do well by helping coach other women on negotiation tactics.”

Mentorship

Hillary recalled a male mentor early on in her career who was very supportive of her, including allowing her to work part-time and bringing her daughter to work when needed. She stated that she did not necessarily have female mentors or role models early in her career and saw women more in competition with each other. However, once she began graduate school, she met very strong women that were bright and capable. Furthermore, they were very supportive of one another. She has known two of the women for 40 years now, and they are still in touch with each other today.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

As mentioned previously, Hillary believes women need to believe in themselves, believe that they can be leaders, that they can make decisions, and be effective. She referenced Sheryl Sandberg next by suggesting that women “lean in.” When part of a group or an activity, be a part of it: “...don’t sit on the periphery, don’t sit on the sidelines. It’s the old adage, if you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.” She also says that women need to be generalists. She encourages

women to branch out and not to stay in one specific area of expertise. Lastly, she suggested women get involved in professional organizations because "...often on your own campus, the higher you go, the more difficult it is to have confidants." In a professional organization one can get the support needed and develop trusting relationships.

Sandra: Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

Sandra has more than 30 years of experience in higher education. She considers her path to be different than that of most of her peers, as she was able to achieve faculty tenure with a juris doctor, rather than the traditional PhD. She became chair of the faculty assembly, and then began to be recognized for various other administrative jobs, such as associate provost for faculty affairs and executive vice president and provost for academic affairs, prior to becoming president. Sandra's institution is located in the Midwestern portion of the United States. It has a small student population, but a large number of non-traditional students at their non-residential university in the state-run system. Forty percent of its students take classes primarily on a separate main campus within the state.

Success Factors

Sandra's two watchwords are *persistence* and *patience*. She admitted that it helps when people see something in others and can encourage people at turning points in their career. With that said, Sandra believes an individual must be open to possibilities, even within existing positions. She said it is about seeing where those opportunities and possibilities are and then deciding to go for those things that will provide more knowledge and skills. In addition, she places a great deal of emphasis on positivity and optimism. She also credited "encouragers" throughout her career [which will be addressed in more detail in the Mentorship section]. Lastly, even though she felt her terminal degree may have been a challenge at times [addressed further

in the next subheading], she believes it was also an advantage that helped her become successful ultimately: “Sometimes it pays off because they don’t take you as seriously, and so they don’t see you coming.” She referred to the fact that she possesses a JD, and with that comes the superior negotiating skills she has been able to employ to her benefit.

Challenges and Obstacles

When asked this question, Sandra wasted no time by responding with the challenge for women trying to balance demanding careers while raising young children at home. Sandra recollected her own days of raising three children. She did not believe that she could devote the time she thought it took to be a good administrator while her children were young. She says that it was “her conditioning as a woman,” where she believed a woman needed to work extra hard to ensure she “does not get discounted or dismissed.” She sees it as something that “definitely held her back from an administrative career.”

Another challenge Sandra referenced was the fact that she did not have the “proper credentials,” according to some faculty to necessarily become an administrator. At times she felt like it would be an uphill battle trying to “win over” the faculty because she did not have her PhD and did not go through that process having earned her JD. However, she did become a full professor and likewise when she applied for the presidency, she had already been working at the institution and was able to demonstrate her knowledge of academics and commitment to the institution. With that said, she does believe there is a certain amount of “discounting of women that still occurs.” She says they believe they can take advantage of woman in comparison to male colleagues.

Mentorship

Sandra did not believe that she has experienced more sustained mentoring relationships, but that at critical points in her career when she was thinking of making a move, words from an encouraging person in her life was helpful. In fact, Sandra recalled when she was wavering on whether or not she would remain working in academia when a person said to her, “I think you should give it a try. If you don’t like it, you can always come back, and you will have had a rich experience that will inform your future.”

She also recalled another experience in her past where she served on a special board as a faculty member, where following the completion of the project, two chairs reached out to her. They said that they were happy with the way she had represented the faculty and recommended that she pursue administration. At that point, she had been a department chair for seven years and was definitely interested. She was then encouraged to participate in the HERS leadership development program for women in higher education, which she considered to be great for mentoring purposes. She confided in another woman who was a provost at the time (who is a president now) that she was not sure if she was ready. The woman suggested she apply for just one job to see how it goes. Sandra applied for the job of associate provost and was selected. When the presidency became available, she realized she was very interested. The two-year interim president became her most sustained mentor that she could recall. He kept saying to her, “You’re destined to become the next president.” In addition, he made sure she had experiences and stretched assignments so that she would be ready.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

As mentioned before, Sandra felt that it is deeply important for women to learn to negotiate: “I think women do sometimes think that they shouldn’t ask for more or don’t ask for

more or are worried about what people will think of them, which men really don't care about that at all." In addition, she believes men do not typically shy away from taking on assignments.

"Women should not be afraid to ask for additional assignments, nor should they be afraid to aspire to a higher level job," she stated. She expands by saying if someone puts it out there in the universe that they want to be president, which helps define where they want to go: "...you might change your mind along the way, but you'll still go farther than if you hadn't aspired to that."

Sandra also believes mentors are important, "...but that you can't just wait for them to come along; you have to be intentional about seeking them out and you also can't be discouraged." She remembered a story where she was going to lunch with someone with the goal of asking them to be her mentor, but before she could, they made it clear that they were not interested in that. Her advice was not to get discouraged by people and that the right person will eventually be found. In addition, she says that women must know themselves and when they apply for a position, they should make sure it is the one they really want. She specified, "I realized being a president isn't a job; it's a lifestyle." Applicants had better love their institution, as it needs to be a place that matches their personality.

Elena: Love What You Do

Elena was a former university president at one of the nation's largest and most distinguished universities focused on teaching, research, and service. She held this position for five years prior to becoming executive vice president at a southern institution, where she would ultimately end up in her current role as regional chancellor. As mentioned, Elena currently serves as a regional chancellor of a university system that includes three separately accredited institutions, which serve more than 50,000 students. Elena has also served as a former senior vice president and provost for academic affairs, vice president of research, and held dean and

associate dean roles during her career. Besides administration, she was also a professor and associate chairman. Elena has had an extensive career in higher education where she has held numerous leadership roles, served on various boards, and received many accolades recognizing her achievements along the way.

Success Factors

One thing that was evident right away when speaking with Elena is that she is a very driven person. She believes that one needs to be committed to what it is they are doing, and they have to love what they are doing. In addition, she stated that "...women have to work very hard, probably harder than most men...working long hours and not saying no when opportunity comes." For her, she likes the challenge of doing new things, new challenges, meeting new people, and building networks of new people. She also believes it's helpful to be "highly visible." She expands by saying, "...not trivial things, like university committees, but major things such as external boards and committees...." One is then able to gain exposure and visibility, "...and that's where people hear you...so if people don't know who you are, they don't know that you might be somebody who could move on to another position." She also mentioned her research activity as something that enabled her to be highly visible.

Challenges and Obstacles

Elena feels challenges for women may depend on the type of environment they are in. She provided examples of some of the issues. For instance, in terms of her former presidency, she recalled the loyalty of individuals to that organization, and how they believed they "owned" that university, so to speak. She believes that some people think it's hard for a woman to manage such a large university, in particular, one that has a large athletic division. She provided an example of being criticized in the newspaper for not wearing the school colors every day. She

feels this was largely due to her being a woman and that a male president would not have been held to the same expectation. In another example, “If you do something that is courageous, you are criticized, whereas a man doing something courageous is complimented for being bold and aggressive....” She provided another illustration of moderating a panel discussion. They had just talked about challenges, and she said to one of the female panelists, “Do you think if you were a man, you would have been evaluated differently?” The response from the panelist was, “You gotta be kidding me!” In other words, of course she feels she would have been treated differently if she were a man. The chancellor also noted that this woman was “extremely attractive,” which she believes her male counterparts were thinking, “Who is she? Is she here to serve the coffee?” Elena concluded this portion by saying that it depends a great deal on the support a woman has and the institution they work for.

Another challenge Elena feels specific to women is that they are not as astute at negotiating salaries as men. She believes many women are often excited to receive leadership roles, period, that they forget or do not know how to negotiate properly. She feels “...it’s terribly important for particularly young women not to accept something just because they think they might not be deserving and they feel so lucky to have that opportunity.”

Mentorship

Elena has had mentors throughout her career who, admittedly, have all been men. She believes that women are often competitive with one another, but not all the time, as she herself mentors young women. She feels it was natural to have male mentors because she worked in a medical school. She credits her greatest mentor as a chairman in her medical school. He had a national reputation for his career, and upon being invited to give a paper at a meeting, would delegate to Elena: “He pushed me as a young assistant professor into a number of very important

things I could not have done on my own..." She feels that he significantly helped her to grow in terms of her own career. She has had other role models who may not even be aware that they were role models to her at the time. She states that they were leaders around her and she would watch them and ask herself "if she could do that," or "if she would have handled a particular situation in the way that they had." Even though she had several mentors and people to support her, she "...thinks people saw that there was potential because I was willing to work."

Words of Wisdom and Advice

To answer this question, the chancellor directed the researcher to a PowerPoint presentation she had just delivered to a large faculty audience on leadership. Elena stated that leaders do not set out to be leaders, but that they have years of "...unconscious preparation that becomes conscious, only as one begins to recognize the value of diverse experiences working with many types of people and organizations." She also expanded by providing several examples of "unintentional leadership," such as chairing committees, being an officer in a professional organization, or serving on a review panel. The aforementioned activities require organizational skills, judgement, interpersonal relationships, and time management.

In addition, she believes it's important for individuals to recognize opportunity and fit, and then position one's self for the role. She stated that self-promotion or marketing one's self is an opportunity to be set apart from others and to present one's self well. One way to do so is to "look the part"; "You will not get a second chance at a first impression." Lastly, Elena considers research to teach numerous leadership skills, such as a sense of self-authenticity, developing confidence and trust in one's own judgement, learning how to deal with ambiguity, and how to take risks.

Rose: Transformational Leadership

Rose is the chancellor of a highly diverse urban research university with a total enrollment of just over 12,000 students. As an anchor institution, the university engages in high-impact scholarship and education in its city and beyond. Rose has had an extensive career in higher education, spanning more than 35 years. This was not her first presidency, as she has served in two prior president's roles before spending five years at her current institution. In addition, she has also been a provost and executive vice president for academic affairs after having served as dean at a nationally recognized university. In addition, Rose is a full tenured professor, author, and recipient of numerous awards.

Success Factors

Rose believes the most important contributing factor to career success is to “have a really supportive environment of people who share the same values and interests.” Additionally, she feels it helps to have many women in that environment. Rose recalls that the institution where she was tenured did not employ many women; however, at her next institution there were many women in senior positions, “which substantially influenced the institution and community.”

Challenges and Obstacles

Rose referred to the first challenge for women in senior positions as “the challenge of small numbers.” It is the challenge of residing in a fairly representative position that comes under frequent scrutiny and not having a network of other women present. Further, she stated that there is no question that underrepresented groups in leadership means that “somehow there is less latitude of acceptance for a range of behavior; not that you cannot overcome it, but it's an important thing to know.”

Rose also speaks about the ability to pursue institutional transformation. She expanded by citing an opinion piece written by Anita Hill that mentions the notion of bringing “outsider values to insider positions.” It is the capability of being able to “...feel that you have a role in transformation to make an environment your place.” She also noted that challenges in and of themselves can be positive.

Mentorship

Rose reveals that she has had mentors throughout her career, however, believing firmly in the role of “lateral mentors.” Rose explained that these are individuals who are in the same type of position. They are mostly colleagues who are people to bounce ideas off of and collaborate with. She also has a close circle of other presidents but does not solely rely on them.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

One piece of advice Rose offered is to “don’t feel that you have to check your identity at the door.” She feels there is always a push to get people to conform, yet she cautions that they should not do that as a leader, and that people should remain themselves. Furthermore, she says that “you need to push for transformation of institutions in order to...rather than trying to normalize to some prototype that may not fit who you are and what you want to do.” In addition, Rose feels that aspiring women leaders should not believe everything about “the received wisdom of those who’ve done it before.” She went on to say that things change, context changes, “...and the way former careers were led, may not be the way future careers are led.” She also cautioned that upcoming leaders should not feel pressured to have to reproduce what the person that went before did. Finally, she stated that it’s important to “...understand the context, the history, and the identity of the institution... and the community, to know that you cannot just plow through that.” Women must find places that allow them to be the best they can be.

Gloria: Servant Leadership

What stands out first about Gloria is her remarkable career spanning more than three decades in higher education and the medical field. Gloria completed her undergraduate education and medical school in the 1970s. She then went on to complete two residencies and was also a medical staff fellow in the 1980s. Shortly after, Gloria became an assistant professor in a university pediatric department. Gloria moved around the Midwest until she reached a university where she would spend the next 20 years. She became a full professor, then pursued various administrative roles. She served as an executive associate dean for research affairs and an interim vice president for research administration. She then moved to another Midwest university where she became the executive vice president for medical affairs. Gloria then went back to private industry for a time as senior vice president of a global pharmaceutical company before arriving in her current role. Gloria currently serves as president for a public university where she plans to focus “to ensure that a vibrant, nurturing, stimulating and resource-rich environment that exists so that faculty, staff, and students will work with the board and the community to take the University to its highest possible potential.”

Success Factors

Gloria stated that the most important factors of success for her have been outstanding mentorship, support, resilience, determination, and a little luck. In terms of luck, she elaborated by saying it’s about being in the right place at the right time and taking advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. She expanded by saying that she’s referring to a time in her career where she was “trailing her spouse” on different occasions. She was able to make the best of the opportunities she found herself in, even if they were not her first choice.

Obstacles and Challenges

She responded by saying that she does feel there is still some evidence of bias, which includes gender discrimination and stereotyping. She also believes women, more so than men, experience self-doubt. She states, "...this may lead to the imposter complex...which I think can be a self-limiting issue." She also recognized that internal and external obstacles can stand in the way and disadvantage women, particularly so in largely male-dominated fields. She explained that in medicine, women's work is constantly rated lower than that of men: "Evaluators objectively rate women as lower performers, and during assessment of women, they typically require more proof of a woman's skills, than that of a man's...to prove professional competence." This is one reason she believes women often feel that they need to perform better.

She also noted the difference between men and women when deciding whether or not they are qualified for a job. She used the example from various studies that when 10 criteria are required for a particular job, a man may look at that and say, "I have three of those; I think I'm ready to take that on." A woman might say, "I have seven, so I'm not yet ready to take that on because I'm missing three." The example she says refers to a woman's self-confidence, or lack thereof: "Some are external; some are environmental; some are internal; and they're all challenges." Another challenge is the gender pay gap. She just completed an analysis aimed at women physicians for a talk she did at the American Medical Women's Association. The gap for female physicians increased in 2017 over the gap in 2016 (Doximity Physician Compensation Report, 2018). In addition, there is no area in the country, either by women physicians' specialty or by type of career that women get paid more than men (2018).

Mentorship

Gloria was eager to credit her parents as being her first mentors. Her father was a civil rights leader and her mom a nurse and homemaker. She stated that both her parents valued two types of education: classical education — going to school, for example, and non-classical education — museums, arts, and culture. She said that her mother had very high expectations and knows that she is the reason she became a physician.

She also shared what she terms as one of her signature themes, which is the “mentor quilt.” She said she did not have one ideal mentor many years ago, so she devised a concept that there is no one single mentor that perfectly satisfies everyone. Therefore, she came up with an idea about 35 years ago that one should develop a quilt of mentors: “Each patch on your quilt can be a mentor that serves another important function for you.” One patch could be a professional mentor; another could help with childrearing; and another might help a person to manage their finances, ethics, relationships, etc. Thus, the thought is that eventually a person will end up with a wonderful patchwork of mentors who could be this quilt. She noted she never discards any of those patches, but just keeps adding to them.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

She answered this question with one of her mottos, which is “Shoot for the stars, and if you miss, you will still land on the moon.” She explained by saying that many people never achieve their number one goal, but if they land on the moon, “...you don’t have to tell people you were aiming for a moon landing...but what’s wrong with a moon landing; that’s a pretty good achievement.”

She also follows lifelong leadership principles she frequently refers to as the 8C’s:

1. Moral compass: Knowing right from wrong and oneself.

2. **Compassion:** Feeling empathy; many others have it much worse.
3. **Courage:** Being unafraid to fail or to be wrong.
4. **Contribution:** Daily work that impacts and benefits others.
5. **Commitment:** The hard work and diligence needed to achieve goals.
6. **Communication:** Critical to every interaction and to success.
7. **Collaboration:** People cannot succeed in isolation; others' perspectives are essential.
8. **Creativity:** In other words: innovation, which is even more important than intelligence.

Sonia: Words of Wisdom

Not only is Sonia the first female president of her institution, but she was the inaugural president of the institution, as well. She has served for approximately 34 years and plans to retire in the imminent future. As she described it, she was engaged in the process of helping the organization to change from being a hospital-based diploma school to a degree-granting institution all those years ago. She said that she never grew up thinking she wanted to aspire to such a role; however, one of her mentors convinced the board that she was indeed the right person for the job. The university now boasts enrollment of approximately 2,200 students, both undergraduate and graduate, and 95% graduation rates with an average GPA of 3.56. Sonia decided that she had accomplished most of the goals she set out to, and this next goal would be another five to seven years, "...so now it's someone else's turn."

Success Factors

Sonia said it is important to be in the right place at the right time and to work with people who have a clear idea of what the institution needs. Another important factor to success Sonia points out is, "...not to be bound by tradition." She said that too often people appoint those who are just like them, which results in having a weak team. She said that she prefers to appoint from

within, because one can then build a team knowing what people's strengths and weaknesses are. She went on to say, "...if you have a good leadership development process and you encourage your leaders to develop people who are working with them, you really have a pretty successful organization."

Obstacles and Challenges

She began this answer by sort of chuckling and saying, "I think that men often underestimate me because I'm a woman." However, she quickly expands by saying, "I think that I have almost always been able to take advantage of that." For her, she has decided to make that challenge an opportunity. She recalled that it happened a lot more when she was younger. She said that she found those situations to be readily dealt with by simply "...holding your own." She also stated that women make the mistake of thinking they need to behave the way men behave, when rather they just need to be themselves. She explains that women need "...to do good work, don't be ashamed to be better compensated, or to do it differently."

Mentorship

Sonia has had many mentors throughout her career, admittedly so, none of them have been female, but she has certainly mentored young women. Furthermore, she has a circle of confidants and a couple other friends who are presidents, but she doesn't socialize with other presidents very often, because as she puts it, "they're kind of putting on airs and it bugged me." She was more likely to get together with a couple of them to go to dinner or simply catch up on the phone.

She recalled a mentor she had while transitioning the college many years ago. She said that he was brilliant and a leader in the community college system, who had an "erosive" style. She described his style as being "like water on a stone; he just kind of moved along and gently

moved me along, too.” Another mentor of hers said to her, “You know, sometimes it’s better to apologize, instead of asking for permission.” Sonia believes that it is unknown where one will learn or who would be the teacher.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

As a president, Sonia shared that when she reviews a resume of someone looking for a position, she likes to see upward mobility in the same place. In other words, she does not like to see that someone has advanced in their career by moving on to another institution. She believes it says a lot about someone if they have been recognized where they are and given an opportunity to advance. Likewise, she says it is important when interviewing to be sure to interview the institution as well. She adds that it is important to do one’s homework. In addition, in terms of higher education, she also notes it is not possible today to have a balanced budget by tuition alone; students can’t afford it, “...so you have to try new and different things and different ways.” She finds the work challenging and exciting, but says firmly, “...you have to balance the budget, ladies.” She went on to say that she finds it inexcusable that a president can convince a board that it is okay to run a deficit. In fact, she believes this is one reason why the average presidency is so short.

Margaret: The Willingness to Change

Margaret earned her business degree in the 1980s, worked for a public accounting firm for three years, then attended graduate school to earn her PhD and became a professor of accounting. Before serving in her current role as president of a premier liberal arts college, she had worked at her former institution for 22 years where she held several positions in administration. She served as the first female chair of a particular department, an associate dean, and as a vice provost of financial and academic administration. She also served as interim, and

was then named executive vice president and provost, becoming the first woman at that institution to serve as their top academic officer. She has now served in the president's role for the last four years, giving her nearly 30 years of experience in higher education.

Success Factors

Margaret attributed at least part of her career success to "...starting at a place that allowed her to grow and to develop." She recalled it being "a supportive place that wanted to see her do well," because she was a graduate, and one of their own. She was able to take on new roles without having to make a major move, which helped in terms of not having to choose whose career won out over her spouse's career. Her former institution was large enough she says that she was able to "...do different things and demonstrate leadership skills and capabilities." She was able to "...jump right in and get the work done," as she explained, because people already knew her and had worked with her before. In addition, because her spouse was a professor at the same institution, she recalled the flexibility of their schedules, allowing them to split the childrearing responsibilities while having a young family and the demands that came with it.

Obstacles and Challenges

Margaret was very candid as she explained a personal obstacle is embracing other people's responses to changes. She made it well-known that she embraces change easily, however, mostly when it's self-initiated change. She recalls that in her younger days she was "frustrated by the lack of willingness for my colleagues to consider that there might be a better way to get things done."

She stated that she cannot recall any instances that have prevented her from doing what she wants, but that is not saying that she has not had sexist comments aimed at her in certain

roles. She continued by stating that she has a southern drawl, and that she has had people tell her that she "...can get away with saying things that other women wouldn't...because it sounds sweet and almost more proper." However, she continued that they can be surprised when she is not sweet and takes a strong position on something: "I guess they expect women not to argue, but I haven't gotten fired from anything." In addition, she said, "...women aren't good at negotiating, and there are people who take advantage of that." If they can pay women less, they will. She also recalled a time long ago when they were going to have to make cuts, and a department chair stated that it should be a woman because her husband had a really good job. Margaret stated, "It had nothing to do with her capabilities, and everything to do with what her husband did."

Mentorship

Margaret has had several mentors and credits them with contributing to her career path. She remembered an accounting professor when she was an undergraduate whom she had a close relationship with. He encouraged her to get into a good school that did not require a master's degree, that way she could pursue her PhD, which is the research degree. She also mentioned a vice president of human resources who helped ensure she chaired a university-wide committee, a position which gave her access to the president. In addition, the CFO invited her to various meetings so that she could learn how the university worked. This is where she learned about university finances, in addition to human resources and enrollment. Furthermore, the CFO helped her to "... sharpen her skills in terms of understanding leadership and management in higher education."

Words of Wisdom and Advice

Margaret believes that “developing institutional thinking is one of the most important things leaders can do, and whether it helps them to move up or not, it helps them to do their own jobs better.” Furthermore, she stated that people have a tendency to dismiss areas that are not their own, such as student life or enrollment management. She said that internally, it lets people know how interested they are in terms of working across campus: “If someone can talk at a high level and with an understanding of all the different pieces [...] that make a university work, then that shows a level of expertise that not all people are willing to study up on.”

Eleanor: The Benefits of Networking

Eleanor has more than 25 years of leadership experience in higher education. She has served at several institutions where her roles in administration include associate vice president and vice chancellor of strategic planning. She also held higher education leadership positions with several state-level higher education boards. Eleanor has been in her current presidency since 2012. It should be noted that she is also the first female president to serve at her institution, notably with a majority female cabinet.

Success Factors

Eleanor stated that the primary factor that helped propel her to where she is in her career today is the American Council on Education’s Women’s Network. She currently serves as an executive member for the network. When she first became a member, she was not yet a president; however, she had expressed an interest in doing so. The network provided her with great coaching and mentoring opportunities. She also believes that earning her doctorate in institutional research drew her to learning about data and planning assessment. She continually looked for new opportunities and projects which led her to grant work and other things that

provided necessary experience needed for a presidency. The final factor for her personally is having worked in higher education at both the state and institution level. Although most of her career was in state colleges and universities, she has also had the opportunity to work for two state system offices. She believes that experience to be invaluable because she had a chance to see the higher education system from different perspectives in each role. She stated, “I had opportunities to work with legislators and other policymakers, and of course that is one of the key roles a president is going to play.”

Obstacles and Challenges

Eleanor believes she has been fortunate in her career overall. She thinks it is important for young women and girls to have leadership experiences from a very young age: “I think the more we can help young women and girls develop their leadership...it can help them hone the kind of skills and self-confidence that will help propel them into positions of leadership.” She stated that men are more willing to say, “I’m going to go for it,” than women who may not see themselves as ready to assume high-level positions. In addition, she noted “...men are not hesitant about amounts they propose [in terms of salary], whereas women will probably be willing to accept less when negotiating for salary or benefits.”

Finally, Eleanor wanted to circle back near the end of the interview as she recalled another challenge for young women. She remembered having spoken to some women who have found that making their ambition known may actually create certain challenges. For example, if they do not have a supportive supervisor, they could be seen as a threat for announcing their intentions to pursue doctorate degrees or to climb higher in their careers. Although she did not necessarily see herself in those terms, she felt it should be a recognized challenge for others.

Mentorship

Eleanor mentioned that she has had mentors tied to the Women's Network. She has also had the opportunity to work closely with several university presidents. As an example of her mentorship, if there was a project coming up, her mentors might ask her to take the lead on that particular project. She also believes mentors have opened doors for her and allowed her to meet people that have assisted in her current role and to make future connections.

Words of Wisdom and Advice

Eleanor's initial response was, "Ladies, we need your expertise." Because university presidents are only represented by 30% of women, "we still have a long way to go," she stated. She says it is important to take opportunities presented, to go above and beyond, and to work on special projects. She further stated, "Don't be afraid to take on those leadership roles that may be presented to you like that." She also said to try to find ways to develop experience in budgeting and finance, working with data, and planning. She feels being able to understand data will be important to future presidents. Additionally, she noted that it is important to receive experience in fundraising and advancement. Referencing her own service on non-profit boards and boards of cultural organizations, Eleanor encourages women to look to community and civic organizations to gain fundraising experience if that is not possible in their current campus role. Equally so, she said to focus on diversity: diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity. She feels "more expertise, more experience, and taking the lead on special projects" will give women a more solid foundation to move forward. Lastly, she said to "believe in yourself and persevere."

SUMMARY

Obviously, each of the 11 women interviewed have their own unique stories. There are also identified similarities that some or all of the women share that have emerged. One pattern

that has seemingly emerged is that they all credit particular individuals, call them mentors, and/or their institutions with aiding in their overall career success. In addition, each woman also acknowledged their hard work — even tenacity in some cases — to prove themselves as equivalents in the workplace. Experiences and perceptions differed in terms of the impact that the gender gap may or may not have had in each account. Furthermore, instead of being adversely affected by obstacles and challenges that may have redirected their career paths, these women all overcame those challenges and persisted to attain great achievements. Because of their hardships, they have grown in their own strength and determination, and therefore inspire others.

CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGENT THEMES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss in further detail themes that emerged while speaking to the 11 women participants about their experiences becoming presidents of universities. The themes fell under two broader categories. One category that will be analyzed is the obstacles and challenges they faced throughout their careers, which can serve as lessons to the women that will continue to persevere long after them. The second category is the strategies for success these women have in common to have achieved senior leadership roles, oftentimes being the first women in their organizations to do so. The categories will then be broken down to three or more sub-themes that each participant regarded as an important element to her journey to success.

The first category that emerged from this study focuses on those specific obstacles and challenges that presented themselves as many of the 11 participants set out to break through the glass ceiling in higher education to the role of president. Four sub-themes emerged: (a) environments not supportive of women (b) work/life balance, (c) sexism, and (d) women's lack of confidence and negotiating skills.

The second category focuses on four success strategies applied by the 11 women presidents. The four sub-themes include: (a) work ethic, (b) mentorship, (c) servant leadership, and (d) authentic self. The aforementioned themes illustrate exactly what it took for the subjects to overcome adversity and challenges such as gender bias and focuses on skills and strategies that can be employed to overcome and achieve success.

OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

Environments Not Supportive of Women

One noticeable challenge that all of the participants in the study mentioned was environments within institutions that were not supportive of women. This statement has many manifestations, including an institution's lack of other women in leadership roles, a poor campus climate toward women in leadership, and unsupportive supervisors, to name a few. Hillary, for example, went to college in the 1970s. At that time, she was not aware of any women presidents of four-year institutions, and few, if any, senior women administrators. In addition, Hillary felt she was not able to meet any female mentors or role models due to the lack of women in senior roles in higher education. Rose very much agreed and described the experience as "cutting her teeth," at her first institution. She recalled an Anita Hill reference from an article where she speaks about the notion of insiders with outsider values. It is important that women feel they play a role in transformation, so they are comfortable in their environment.

Ruth echoed this sentiment as she recalled male supervisors very early on in her career saying to her, "What's your hurry?" in regard to furthering her education. Many of her male supervisors had not earned a PhD; therefore, they may have felt intimidated by her ambition. Ruth believed it is much easier to be a woman in leadership when men and women have equal representation within an institution. Hillary stated that major decisions are made without female representation when women do not have a place at the table. Margaret's experience may support what Hillary, Rose, and Ruth claim, as she felt very supported at one institution and feels lucky that she did not need to leave to find that backing. In addition, her institution was large enough where she also felt she was able to grow, since leadership already knew her abilities. However, she noted that higher education's known lack of willingness to change may have something to do

with female underrepresentation in senior positions. On the other hand, Gloria referred to herself as a “trailing spouse” throughout much of her career. She was married to a prominent doctor and oftentimes took positions that were not her first choice. She believes remaining flexible is key, even if the opportunities are limited.

During Sonia’s interview, she made a comment about not being bound by tradition. In other words, “do not try to imitate the person that vacated the role you are striving to obtain.” She said that men consistently underestimated her, and that should be a weakness that women use to their advantage. Many of the women shared stories of either their supervisors or board of trustees that undervalued their work in comparison to a man in the same role. Sandra, for example, said that she was made to feel lesser by the faculty when she took over the presidency because she did not possess an academic PhD. She felt that she needed to continue to work harder to prove that she was just as committed as a man is to the role and institution. However, with that said, she also agreed with Sonia that she can use that to her advantage, “...underestimate me, and they won’t even see me coming.” She considers herself to be quite an experienced negotiator and recounts using this to her advantage in many aspects of leadership roles. Likewise, Elena recalled when she spent time in a local newspaper as president being criticized because she wasn’t wearing the school colors all the time in public. She felt this was just part of people questioning whether or not a woman could lead a university, in particular, one with a large athletic reputation. She also believes that if it were a male president, the color of his clothes would not have been newsworthy. In addition, almost all of the participants have some type of gender bias study that occurs at their institutions. More evolved institutions base their equity studies on positions, not on the employee’s gender. In fact, Ruth recalled hearing about a woman co-worker’s salary being discussed at a department meeting, to which a male leader

made the comment that her pay should be cut (or her position) because she had a spouse that earned a good living.

Eleanor believes it paramount that young girls have leadership experiences from a young age. This will assist women with the overall confidence needed to break into underrepresented leadership roles in higher education. She said that as president, when search committees come to her with no women finalists in the pool, she asks them to take another look. Gloria also felt this was important, in addition to creating a friendly and supportive workplace for women. Addressing diverse inequalities is typically the work of offices such as the office of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Gloria felt that the single most important thing to a working mom is reliable daycare. As a new president, Gloria will attempt to attract quality employees by offering a friendly work environment which offers parental leave, on-site childcare, flexible hours, and breastfeeding stations for nursing mothers. At Elizabeth's institution, every college has a half-time faculty advisor to prevent pay and promotion inequities. As many of the participants experienced pay gap in higher education (to be further discussed in upcoming section), it is important that funding remain intact for offices of diversity and inclusion.

Work-Life Balance

For the participants, like many career-oriented women, certain concerns exist about climbing the ladder, particularly in male-dominated fields. The women struggled, trusting that they could balance the demands of work and family life. For the past 100 years, women have fought for their positions and strived toward equality. Women have learned to multitask, juggle childcare, and do the shopping and cooking, while proving themselves by working harder than men in the same positions. Additionally, in today's world there is an inherent desire to nurture longevity so that women look good, which society does not place the same burden on men.

Women somehow also manage to fit in time to go to the gym, get facials, and practice yoga — all in the quest to “have it all.”

Seven of the 11 women point out that it was easier to focus on a career and schooling with fewer family obligations. As Ruth stated, “Seek degrees early. Don’t wait because family complicates it.” Sandra offered that when she had a family with three young children at home, she did not feel that she could devote the time to being an administrator. Her conditioning told her that she had to work extra hard as a woman to prove yourself “...to ensure that you were not discounted or dismissed.” She did not enter administration until her youngest child went away to college. Sandra felt that the same applies to advanced education. She did not feel that it was feasible to enter a doctorate program while her children were at home. She believes that it is still challenging for professional women to manage careers and family today. A notion also exists that women deliberate more in terms of what is best for their children rather than their career being priority. According to Hillary, she did not want to disrupt her children’s lives while moving while they were in high school.

Both Hillary and Cathy were single parents and discussed the struggles they had to endure. Cathy recalled being a single working parent for 11 years. She said the struggles for work-life balance still remained even after she was remarried but became more bearable. Hillary shared that she did not have a supportive spouse when her children were young. Specifically, her spouse did not support her becoming a college president. However, what made all the difference to her was a supportive supervisor who allowed her to work part-time while working toward a doctorate degree. He would even allow her to bring her child to work during the 1980s, which was very rare for that period. On the contrary, according to Ruth, she picked the right spouse. She said that her spouse knew her aspirations early on and supported her. With that came

negotiations between the couple, which led to her pursuing additional training and degrees while she “trailed her spouse” and his career, so to speak. Margaret shared a similar experience with her spouse. She said, “It makes a difference if a male spouse does not derive self-worth by being the breadwinner.” According to Margaret, he was fine with the fact that she made more money than he did. Gloria also recounted her own tale of trailing her spouse. She said that she did this on four separate moves, and she was not always able to choose her own career path due to the moves. However, she says that she made the best of the opportunities, even though they may not have been her first choice of positions. She believes by remaining flexible, adaptable, and resilient she was able to make the best of each situation. She also believes these characteristics helped her during a personal low when her husband passed away. She said, “Everyone has setbacks in life which make you stronger.”

Much of what women struggle with in terms of work-life balance centers around schedule flexibility and reliable daycare. Ruth stated that working long nights and weekends is not exactly conducive to family life. Much of this statement refers to the fact that reliable daycare is difficult to secure, even more so when the hours are non-traditional, which can be required of a president. Margaret felt that she did not necessarily face the same struggles other women may have because both her and her husband were faculty at the same institution. They were able to set their schedules so that they were conducive to raising children, meaning one of them was almost always home. Gloria also emphasized the importance of daycare. As she is currently in the first year of her presidency, one of her early goals is to achieve more diversity in her workforce by becoming a friendly institution. She believes the workplace will become sought-after and attract quality employees if she is able to offer flexible scheduling, parental leave, breastfeeding stations, and on-site daycare. “To a working mother, daycare is the single

most important thing in my opinion for working mothers to be successful in their career and in their life,” Gloria stated.

Although work-life balance for women can affect their ability to say “yes” to opportunities, Ruth wanted the reader, particularly young women, to know that it is possible to have a family and stay married to the same person. She said that sometimes the demands of the job will lead to divorce, but it does not have to be that way. She also felt that institutions of higher education can help by embracing women as senior women administrators and accepting that their husbands may serve in a different type of a role than male president’s wives traditionally have. Many “first ladies” are in charge of landscaping of the campus or a first lady’s clothing closet, for example. It is not fair to believe that husbands of female presidents will also be interested in those types of things, particularly when they have their own careers. She also said that institutions need to remember that “...they hired her, not the two of us.”

Sexism in the Workplace

According to nine of the 11 women presidents interviewed in this study, sexism in workplace culture still exists today. The other two women did not explicitly reveal whether they believed sexism still exists or not; they simply did not comment on the topic. Nevertheless, whether intentional or not, it is drilled into women that they are not as valuable as men in the workplace, illustrated in various ways, some implicit while others are more explicit. Sonia recalled interviewing for a senior administrator role, when a board member asked her if she thought she could fulfill the position because she was a woman. Sonia’s response was, “I’m sure you asked this very same question to all of the male applicants, as well?” “Of course,” she said, “I was not offered that job.” In another instance, Cathy said that she recognizes sexism in the workplace exists, however, feels that in her experience it has been “...a subtle variety of daily

sexism.” She provided an example of how male colleagues in general interact with her differently than they do with each other. She described it as “trivializing.” She also made mention of public discourse, meaning the way men speak openly about Hillary Clinton or other prominent females. She stated, “...if they will say that about them, they are sure to say it about her behind her back.” In addition, Cathy said that she does not point out the fact that the behavior is sexist, because she “...does not want to be labeled as hypersensitive.”

Margaret, Hillary, Sonia, Elena, and Gloria all mentioned how women are underestimated in the workplace by their male colleagues. Sonia stated, “Men underestimate me because I am a woman. I think I almost always have been able to take advantage of that.” Margaret described herself as having a southern accent which some have called “a sweet southern drawl.” Margaret said that some have also said she can get away with saying things that others cannot, due to this drawl. On the contrary, she said when it is time to become firm, men become surprised because they have underestimated her, and women in general, and expect woman by nature not to argue. Hillary said that her voice as a woman has been discounted over the years because she was always only one or two women represented at the table. She believes that once 30% representation is reached, it becomes a turning point and things change somewhat: “You’re not a novelty anymore.” Gloria agreed that there is still stereotyping in academia and that women’s work is consistently rated lower. She also believes that women can be taken advantage of in largely male-dominated fields, where they need to work harder to prove themselves.

Sandra, who has 30 years’ experience in academia, also firmly believes that a woman has to work extra hard to make sure she is not discounted or dismissed. She recalled her own story where she became involved in an equal pay lawsuit. She worked for a college system backed by

a religious order. One of the colleges was for men and the other for women, ran by monks and nuns. The men's college faculty could send their children to any college in the country and receive a payment equal to the amount of tuition at their private college. On the other hand, the women's faculty were limited to only send their children to school internally at their institution. She recalled that it was a huge difference in tuition and opportunity, so they ended up involved in a lawsuit.

According to Ruth, women need to achieve their graduate degrees early in their careers. She recalled earlier in her career that males in more senior positions would not necessarily encourage her to pursue her doctoral studies asking, "What's your rush?" She now believes that because they were lacking this credential themselves, they were in fact intimidated by her drive. However, later in her career, she believes that her relationships changed where she developed male mentors that had a big impact on her career success. Elena's experience as she applied for the presidency involved questions and doubt about whether or not women can be successful being in charge of a university, more specifically, one that has a large athletic presence. She remembered serving as president at her former institution where the local newspaper would write stories where she was criticized for not wearing the school's colors one time. She remembered thinking, "would they have written it the same way, if it were a male president?" She went on to say, "If you are a woman leader and you do something courageous, you are considered odd, whereas a man is complimented." She said it is a different standard for men and women, and definitely a bias involved. She also believes that support from the institution and the board are key.

Women's Lack of Confidence and Negotiating Skills

Historically, women are the sex known for not giving themselves enough credit, which is perhaps one reason women have not earned full respect in the workplace. According to Hillary, “we discount what we do and over-count what men do, frankly.” She reasoned that this is due to the way men and women are socialized differently. Elizabeth agreed and said that women often will not take the credit they deserve and will say things like, “Oh, it was nothing,” of their accomplishments. Many of the 11 participants mentioned that they needed a “nudge” of encouragement to consider applying for leadership positions in academia. Sandra stated that she was not sure if she was ready for leadership in academia, but that a friend encouraged her to try it. They said, “If you don’t like it, you can always say at least you tried it.” Gloria supports this claim by referencing studies that have been conducted on gender. For example, the one she recalled provided both men and women with 10 criteria needed for a position they may be interested in. If men only possess a percentage of the 10 criteria, they will apply for the position. However, women are more likely to question themselves or not apply at all if they do not hold all 10 criteria. Eleanor said that women question whether or not they are ready for “fill in the blank”; whereas, men already believe they are, whether it is true or not. Gloria believed this displays a lack of confidence women have in their own abilities. Most of the women also agreed that women have to work harder than men to get ahead or to be recognized in the workplace.

Gloria said that women face moments of self-doubt, more so than men do which may lead to the imposter complex or syndrome, which can be self-limiting. The syndrome she refers to is a psychological pattern in which people doubt their accomplishments and have a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud. Rose encourages women to be themselves and said, “Don’t feel that you have to check your identity at the door.” She went on further to say that women are always under a certain amount of scrutiny, but that numbers help. In other words, the more

women employed, particularly in senior positions at an institution, makes it easier for other women to have a voice and feel confident. In addition, the more women working for other women will also show positive results. Ruth agreed by saying, "Let people have their personality. If you think you want to do something, do it." Ruth's comment also referred to the stereotype that in order to be a successful woman and be taken seriously, one needed to wear a skirt suit and high heels. She suggested women should just be themselves and be confident, and says, "We didn't sign up to wear a suit every day." She believes that times have changed even for what is expected in the president's role. For Ruth, she believes some of her confidence has to do with the fact that she was raised in a family with five male siblings. She said this helped to make her comfortable around men and to understand their different leadership styles better.

All of the women participants felt that young women need to develop leadership skills and experiences from a young age. Eleanor stated that self-confidence develops when women believe in themselves and persevere. Hillary advised women to set far-reaching goals and to work toward them. She said that she had to improve on herself and her person early on. She encourages women to "lean in." She tells women not to sit on the sidelines, but rather to be visible and present in every conversation. Sonia expanded on that sentiment by sharing a story where a mentor once told her "...it's better to apologize instead of asking for permission." Sandra has used being underestimated to her advantage. She said faculty have given her a hard time in the past because she did not go through a traditional PhD process; instead, she holds a JD. Although, she said that she just takes it in stride when she is being underestimated by colleagues. Not only do women need to develop leadership skills and confidence, but Elizabeth felt that women also need to stand up for themselves. She said to "...honor yourself and don't

hide your talents.” In terms of women’s confidence as it relates to gender bias, Cathy offered the following advice:

I would say be aware that gender still affects the way people perceive of you and how they interact with you, but don’t be consumed by it, it’s smart to know all of the forces that are out there that may affect you as a leader, and gender is one of them, but I would encourage young women who want to become leaders and move up the career ladder to not overemphasize the affects that they will have on their career. Don’t look for things. Don’t look at everything as gender bias. It’s not helpful. Don’t dismiss sexism in the workplace, but not helpful in your career path if you see everything through the lens of gender bias.

It stands to reason that if a woman lacks confidence, she most likely also lacks the ability to negotiate well. Again, the participants felt that this was an important area for young women future leaders to develop and grow. They also felt that women’s lack of negotiating skills has attributed to the pay gap that exists in higher education and throughout industry. Elena remembered, “...in my era, women were just excited to be offered the position, so negotiating was not even a consideration.” Eleanor stated that women’s salaries have historically been lower and have never caught up. She said most men are not shy about salary amounts they propose, whereas women are willing to accept a little less when negotiating for salary and benefits. Sonia recalled when she became an administrator she found out that when she worked as the director of the school of nursing, some faculty were making more money than her. She asked her boss who responded that they had been there longer than her. Likewise, Cathy recalled being part of a faculty union 24 years ago where she sat on a gender equity study. She said when counting statistically for every other factor, her salary was substantially below the male faculty members in the same department. As a result, she received a large salary adjustment, and so did many other women, in fact. She said “...they tend to not take women as seriously,” and no one ever taught her how to negotiate, so she partially blames herself. However, she calls the behavior

“unconscious.” For example, at one time it was a standard assumption that men are associated with being the primary wage earners. However, she now believes that awareness levels have risen over the years. In her own case, the gender disparity and pay gap is being addressed at the president’s level. In Cathy’s system, half of the presidents are women and 30% are people of color, so as a result, she felt they are moving closer to reaching diverse representation. Ruth also mentioned being paid less her first year in the presidency, but that the board corrected for it since. She said that they may view women as part of a couple, therefore, decide to pay women less. However, she stated, “They are hiring me, not the two of us.” She asked that the board look at her salary and compare it to similar institutions with similar size. She said that she chose her variables well and was benchmarked against 60 comparable schools.

Elizabeth, Margaret, and Sandra shared similar stories about gender equity studies at their institutions. At Elizabeth’s institution, her fiscal officer developed a tool to assist department chairs to review the salary of faculty in many different scenarios, including men versus women. They identified a number of situations that clearly required them to take action to remediate the situation, that is, women earning less. Elizabeth tells women to know their data and equivalent salaries going in to negotiations. She said, “Data also provides opportunities for conversation and makes things more transparent.” She attributes much of their success to staffing half-time equity advisors in every college. These are faculty whose job it is to evaluate policies. Margaret felt that women can be taken advantage of because they lack negotiation skills. The dean of faculty at Margaret’s institution is an economist who created a metric that predicts employee pay. The model is not based on individuals, but rather on the position, regardless of sex, allowing it to be free of bias. Likewise, Sandra’s state system was an early adopter of the Hay System of Compensation, which is specifically designed to try to negate gender bias because it rates a job

on certain factors, and all jobs are rated on the same factors. The focus is to specifically eliminate any type of gender bias. She went on to say that her state has the highest percentage of working women, particularly working women with children, of any state in the union, which is partially ascribed to the fact that there is such a strong focus on things like pay equity in the state.

Gloria works as a president in academia but has an extensive medical background. In terms of pay gap, her experiences are more focused in the medical field. She stated:

There is no area in the country, where women physicians by specialty, or women physicians by type of career [where women make as much as men]. So, whether you're talking academics or private practice; whether you're talking about women CEO positions or any level, women are paid equal or out paid as compared to men in every single domain and are significantly above women. The average gap for female physicians in 2017 increased over the gap in 2016. The gap for CEOs for average physicians was 26.5 percent, which is an average of \$91,284. The gap in 2017 is up 27.7 percent or \$105,000.

The information Gloria references is from the Doximity Physician Compensation Report (2018). Gloria further stated that a study performed by the Association of Women Surgeons says that at the current rate of change, women will not reach pay equity in surgery until 2152.

Finally, Hillary and Sandra appear to be the outliers. They both felt confident in their negotiation skills. Hillary said she negotiates well and mentors other women on how to do so, including her daughter, who is now a skilled negotiator as well. Sandra possesses a JD and said that she uses her negotiation skills to her advantage. She went on to say, "There was a book that came out years ago, in the 1990s or maybe around 2000, called *Women Don't Ask*. I think it lays out a very compelling case. There's lots of work on gender and negotiation..." She said that there is a lot of hidden unconscious gender bias about it [the pay gap].

SUCCESS STRATEGIES

The second major theme category focuses on four success strategies applied by the 11 women presidents. The themes that emerged include: (a) work ethic, (b) mentorship, (c) servant leadership, and (d) authentic self.

Work Ethic

When the presidents were asked the final interview question, “What advice do you have for current aspiring women leaders to help them succeed as top-level decision-makers in higher education?” the first and most common response was “hard work.” Many of the responses from the participants illustrated how humble several of them are in life; however, they all speak openly about the amount of work involved in becoming a leader. In fact, all 11 participants specifically mentioned the amount of work it takes to become a college president, which requires consistently going above and beyond job expectations.

Elena said not only does one need to work hard, but that women need to work harder than most men. She said, “Work long hours, don’t say no, and take opportunities as they come.” She also suggested to be committed to what one does and to love it. Elena said that for her she likes new challenges and doing new things. She believes being highly visible and networking are keys to success. At one point during the interview she laughed to herself and said that she, “believes she has good ideas, but that they are always much better when somebody else acts on them.”

Sandra said to be willing to extend and to try new things. She also said to seize opportunities that are present and having the right experiences helps. Also, ask for stretch assignments. She said for the presidency, she was able to prove her commitment, knowledge, and understanding of how academics works.

Gloria believes that factors to success are outstanding mentorship, support, resilience, determination, and some good luck. She said that she remained flexible and adaptable even when job prospects were not her first choice (while she trailed her spouse), and that it helps when workplaces are also flexible and friendly. However, she believes that having setbacks in life helps people to triumph and makes them stronger. Rose agreed that there is no substitute for hard work. She also encourages women to push for transformation of institutions to get them to care about the things that individuals serving as president also care about.

Hillary shared the story of her upbringing. She recalled her father dying young of polio, and her mother never graduating from high school. Her mother was widowed with four children, then remarried a man with five children of his own, and they had two more children together, making a family of 11 children. It was very important to her mother that all of her children received degrees. The importance of education was stressed, and all six of her children earned advanced degrees. She believes that higher education has changed her life and the lives of her own children. When she wrote the personal statement for her master's program, she wrote that she wanted to be a college president. Hillary said that she has the ability to see the big picture and views herself as a leader. She said that she has always aimed for the top, which means that she has had to be strong-willed and strong in her leadership. She felt that she has to prove herself as a woman, as well. When others reach out for help when they are experiencing difficulty, Hillary tends to "hunker down" and handle it herself. She also said to lean in when part of a group, and not to sit back or shy away from difficult tasks. Hillary stated:

...if there is a difficult situation, you bring in a woman, usually because the appearance is still that they will soften things; they'll give a human touch. They also, especially in the financial side, work really, really hard and dig in more than the men do and try to figure out what's going on in the specifics, so on....

Hillary also said to branch out midway through your career, and not to stay in one area of expertise. She said that if a person does not understand, they must ask questions. Hillary added, “So, I would say trust yourself, know that you are capable. You’re going to have to work hard, but you’re working hard anyways, so just work hard on moving yourself forward.”

Ruth said that there is a balance between being too strategic and having a plan. She said not to overthink it to death but do have a plan. She suggested to young people, if one does their job well, the next job will follow. Ruth moved through her own higher education experience rather quickly and recommends that route to others before other responsibilities arise, such as children. She said that every degree along the way opened another door for her. She felt that building a reputation known for being hard-working is vital because higher education is a small community and oftentimes can dictate your salary.

Cathy agreed that there is no substitute for hard work. She said that her strong work ethic and drive to achieve helped her to succeed. She also believes a little luck was involved, too. She would tell upcoming leaders to do the best job they can no matter what role they are currently in. Moreover, she would tell them to stretch themselves and to take on leadership positions that are not required, but to view them as opportunities to learn new skills and to demonstrate what one is capable of. She suggested this approach be handled with intention and balance.

Elizabeth said that women must be willing to take on new opportunities and responsibilities even if they do not necessarily feel qualified or trained for that particular opportunity. She said be willing to say “yes,” regardless. And she noted that hard work is certainly part of the formula to success: “If you are not willing to work hard, it is difficult to have a significant impact.”

When it comes to developing a strong team, Sonia said she preferred to build a team and promote from within. She prefers so, because one should already have an idea of what people's strengths and weaknesses are, and a person already knows if they are a fit. She believes firmly in institutions employing leadership development plans to foster new leadership. She also said to be sure not to surround one's self with people who are similar. She looks for upward mobility at one institution where they are recognized and given an opportunity to advance. She said not to give up and do more than asked, but never volunteer for more than you can handle: be selective. She also said to find one's path and chose it, but to take time and do it right. Put effort where it counts and go the extra mile. She also suggested that women just be themselves; they do not have to do things like a man would do it. Lastly, as president, she said to prioritize balancing the budget. She believes this is why the average presidency is so short because they cannot do that most important task. She finds this work challenging and rewarding.

Margaret said that women "just get stuff done." She believes it is important for women to develop institutional thinking and understand areas outside of one's own unit. She also believes there is a benefit to develop other skills such as a CPA license or law degree so that when talking to the college's board of trustees, people "...don't sound so academic and can speak industry." She also suggested as a president or even if one is aspiring to be a president, to make friends with the individuals in the legal department.

Eleanor said to work hard and try to get a lot of varied experiences in higher education. She noted to ask questions and figure out how to understand and interpret the data. She added that networking, looking for new opportunities and projects, provided direct experience for her to be competitive when applying for the presidency. She recommended gaining experience working with policy-makers and legislators. She also suggested chairing committees and taking on special

projects are essential to growth. And lastly, she felt experience in fundraising, advancement, and possibly athletics are added bonuses.

Mentorship

One of the most unmistakable themes that emerged from this study was the role mentors played in the participants' careers, as many of the women contribute a large part of their success to mentors. Although very few of the women had female mentors, because of the lack of senior women administrators while they were rising in their careers, they agree that gender did not matter. Two of the participants felt that women mentoring other women makes for a "comfortable" experience; however, they were quick to point out that they were not opposed to male mentors.

Hillary commented that when she went to school in the 1970s, she had no role models at all and knew of no women presidents. She did however recall one female assistant dean that said, "You know, you can do this, too." She said it was like a light bulb went off and she thought to herself, "Yes I can." Similarly, Ruth shared that she was not encouraged early on by her supervisors, but later found the right people. Hillary recalled a supervisor in the 1980s that wanted her to be the next dean. She said in order for that to happen, she needed to work part-time and bring her daughter to work with her. He allowed her to do so, which she remembered being very unusual for that time period. Later in her career, she has had a couple other mentors, including women friends and colleagues who she considered to be lateral mentors. She expanded:

But yeah, clearly there's a strong group of women who support each other and I think early in my career — well, maybe in high school or college — I saw women more in competition. Then once I got to master's level graduate school, I met the strongest women I've ever been around who were really bright, really capable, and really nice and supportive. That was truly an awakening for me to be around people who were supportive

and all these other things at the same time, and it changed everything. In fact, recently two of those women and I got together in Florida for a reunion. We've known each other for forty years, so that was neat.

Likewise, Rose recounts her mentors, and believes firmly in lateral mentors. She defined this as people in the same kinds of positions as her own, and for her it has always been a group of women colleagues that are people she can bounce things off and collaborate with. Similarly, Sonia said that one should be open to mentorship, although she does not “hang around” other presidents. She said she finds them sort of off-putting and that they can put on airs, which can bother her at times. So, for that reason she said her mentors are friends. She also serves as a mentor to other women.

On the other hand, Eleanor was able to work closely with presidents, which was a very positive experience, as she recalled:

...throughout my career I've had opportunities to work closely with several university presidents, one as assistant to the president for a particular point in time. Others, I worked closely with the presidents on planning issues, so I had the opportunity to observe presidents, work with them, try to understand the kinds of information that they needed and wanted to see in order to make decisions. I also had a chance to evaluate some things that may work better than others but having the opportunity to learn from presidents.

Many of the participants recollect terrific mentor experiences. Sonia said she had great mentors. She remembered one particular mentor that she called “brilliant.” She said:

Yeah, I mean I don't think I ever saw him in kind of a confronting way. He was just kind of like water on a stone, he just kind of moved along and gently moved me along certainly. He was delightful, and he guided me. He was just gentle yet very competent leader – not forceful.

Elizabeth felt she has also had great support from mentors. One of her most important mentors taught her that while she really enjoyed solving problems, oftentimes individuals did not want their problems solved. Instead, they just wanted someone to listen deeply to what their

problem was and to respect what that problem was. She went on to say that "...my mentors have had a tremendous impact on me personally and professionally."

Both Ruth and Sandra agreed that there is value to be had from formal mentoring programs. At the time of our interview, Ruth was mentoring a young woman from the NCAA in a formal mentoring program. She said that moving ahead more women will fill senior positions, and men, like her son, for example, will one day ultimately end up working for a woman. Thus, she felt it is good to show her children and her mentees, that it is possible to do both — have a family, stay married, and to have a career. She stated:

I now in my career have many female colleagues that I look up to and look to for advice and counsel, just because we share a similar role and understand the complexities of being a president and being a female president. But working through my career, I just wasn't exposed to that many (women leaders) and the few that I was were so tapped by every young person.

She went on to say that she is happy being someone's mentor, and she very much loves programs where women mentor other young women; however, she cautions not to be so narrow in thinking that mentoring cannot come from other sources, as well. She said "mentoring can come from anyone. It can be a male or female...."

Similarly, Sandra pointed to the HERS Institute development program as a formal program that really helped her see her own potential. She recalled it being "...an amazing three and a half weeks, living in a dorm with a bunch of other women and potential administrators, and having this really intense experience...." She said she was assigned a coach who is now in her second presidency. She said they met together and she reviewed her CV, and while Sandra was still feeling unsure of her potential, her coach said, "I think you are ready, but apply for one job. Just apply for one job and see how it goes. That will tell you a lot." Sandra applied for one job, and she got it, as associate provost. From there someone said to her, "I think you are ready for

the next step to become a provost.” Sandra applied for that job and was interested when the presidency became available. She worked with the two-year interim, who she refers to as her most sustained mentor, who kept telling her, “You are destined to be the next president.” He also made sure that she had experiences and stretch assignments so that she was ready for the role.

In addition to believing in the importance of mentors, Sandra also believes that sometimes you cannot wait for mentors to come along, and that one has to be intentional about seeking them out. She recalled a story of when she was a young professional and someone suggested a person for possible mentorship and introduced the two of them. They got together for lunch and the first thing the person said when they sat down was, “don’t expect me to be a mentor.” She said, “Well, that made for an awkward lunch!” She said not to get discouraged if that happens, or if a person does not find the right match right away. It is better to be intentional and to wait for that “fit” to come along. Cathy also credited mentors for giving her the next opportunity on the career ladder. She said she has always had great mentors and supervisors, all of whom have been male. She said that they approached her when they saw something in her, which was important because she, much like Sandra, did not see herself as someone with leadership potential. She remembered them going out of their way to ensure she received professional development, including the HERS Institute, which was designed to prepare women to be future presidents.

Likewise, Eleanor believes the primary factor that really helped to propel her to where she is today is the American Council in Education (ACE) Women’s Network. When she first became a member of the network, she was not a president. At that point, she had expressed the desire to be competitive in a presidential search. She has been a member of ACE for seven or eight years, and through that council, she met a number of colleagues and future mentors. She

has had opportunities to work closely with several university presidents, once as an assistant to the president. She had the opportunity to work with them on planning issues, to observe them, and to try to understand the kinds of information they need and want to see in order to make decisions. For example, if there was a project coming up, they might ask her to take the lead, which placed her in a leadership role that would help develop skills that are ultimately important in senior leadership. She had both male and female mentors and says they were different but would not really draw any distinctions between them. And lastly, she felt mentors have opened doors for her and helped her to have met people that assisted her throughout her career.

Margaret shared a similar story of supportive supervisors who have contributed to her career path. She gave an example of the vice president of human resources who helped to make sure she chaired a university-wide committee so that she would have exposure to the president. In addition, when she worked in the provost's office, the CFO invited her to every meeting he was part of, so she could learn how the university worked. She said that he was always highly collaborative, and there was never a contentious CFO/provost relationship. She emphasized that he could have been territorial and did not have to include her in meetings, a practice which greatly benefited her career. She also learned about the university finances, human resources, and enrollment services, as those things were under his purview. Additionally, she spent time with the general counsel learning about university risks and how to work with lawyers. Margaret said the fact that someone can talk at a high level and have an understanding all the different pieces that make a university work shows a level of expertise that not all people are willing to learn about. Because of these attributes, when it came time to name a provost, she was the only one in that office who knew how everything worked and had established good relationships.

Elena's mentor experiences were also by all males, which she believes may be related to the fact that she was in a specific study in the medical field, dominated by men. She said that she finds many times women are more competitive with one another, which may be another reason she may not have had female mentors. However, with that said, she knows this is not always the case because she herself loves to mentor young women. She said that she "loves to see them become successful and to see them grow in what they do." Her greatest mentor was very comfortable with himself and had a national reputation for what he had accomplished during his career. When he was invited to give a paper at a meeting, he would often volunteer Elena to give the paper for him, as her own. As a young assistant professor, she recalled him encouraging her into a number of areas that she would not have done on her own.

Hillary also found women to be competitive with other women. She stated:

...clearly there's a strong group of women who support each other and I think early in my career – well, maybe in high school or college — I saw women more in competition. Then once I got to master's level graduate school, I met the strongest women I've ever been around who were really bright, really capable, and really nice and supportive. That was truly an awakening for me to be around people who were supportive and all these other things at the same time, and it changed everything.

Elena also noted that in addition to being supported, she says that she had mentors, but also role models. She differentiated the role models from the mentors, because mentoring was a very intentional effort, however her role models may have not even known that they were her role models. She would watch leaders and say to herself, "Can I do that? Is it something I thought was good?" or, "Do I do that?" In addition, she said if women make themselves visible, people will support them for moving up and being willing to work.

Gloria is fairly unique and has a story unlike any of the others. She is the only participant who claims her parents as being her first mentors. She remembered that they were great at both

guiding and supporting her and being great role models. However, she is like the other participants in that most, if not all, of her mentors were also male. Gloria has a medical background, also. During Gloria's interview, she seemed excited to share one of her signature themes, which she calls "The Mentor Quilt." It's a concept she conceived approximately 35 years ago when she did not have a great mentor and needed one. The concept is that "there is not one mentor that perfectly satisfies everyone because you cannot have a clone of you as a mentor." She explained:

...you should develop a quilt of mentors and whereby on your quilt you will have patches of mentors. Each patch on your quilt can be a mentor that serves another important function for you. So, one patch might be a mentor who could be a professional mentor. For me, it might be a scientist who helped me with my scientific career. Another patch on your quilt could be a mentor who might have helped you with your childcare needs. Another one might help you with helping to manage your finances. Another one might help you deal with your relations. Another one with how to take care of ethical issues. Another one might help you with if you want to learn how to be a good servant leader, etc. So, then eventually you will end up with this wonderful patchwork of mentors who could be this quilt for you. When I became a widow, I could add another patch on my quilt. A widow mentor — I actually had several — and so today I wrap myself up in this fantastic, luxurious, warm, comforting quilt which I keep adding to. Now, I have president mentors who helped me be a better university president.

Gloria said she needed to come up with this concept because many years ago her favorite mentor had an affair, and it made her want to discard him as a mentor. Then she realized, "You know what? I don't have to discard him. I can keep all the great qualities and discard the ones I don't like." She expanded by saying that no one mentor fills all her needs, but at least she has this great quilt to draw from. She said it's a great concept and has worked really well for her and she's shared it with many people around the country.

Servant Leadership

Many of the participants professed in their interviews that they think women are better at getting things done than men, and that they do so in a more caring manner. The principles of

servant leadership include listening, empathy, awareness, stewardship, and the commitment to the growth of people and building community. By volunteering to participate in this study, the contributors demonstrated their commitment to servant leadership.

As a mentor herself, Elizabeth said that she always recommends a book when she's talking to young female leaders, which is *The Servant Leader* by James Autry (2001). She further shared:

I love this book and the thing that I always say to them is on p. 20. He has six things he believes about leadership. On p. 21, the sixth item is "Leadership requires love." ...last fall, I was talking to the women graduate students in the Department of [____]. They said that so many of their supervisors had told them that they couldn't be a caring person and still be a leader. And I don't believe that to be true, and neither does James Autry.

She went on to say that the author makes another point, which is "Leadership is about bringing your spirit to work, being your best and most authentic self." She tries to give young women the message they should be who they are and know their selves deeply. She said they should think deeply about who they are and what they want to be, so she thinks being authentic is important.

Elena provided an example of servant leadership by sharing a memory of an all women panel that was part of a student success lecture series at her campus. The researcher asked about any commonalities that may have come from the series, which included a superintendent, a woman from the hospitality and hotel industry, and a journalist. Elena responded:

Yes, there were many commonalities, but the most compelling was that "everybody was in their job to do something for somebody else, and that all of them talked about what they did — not to move themselves ahead, but what they did to make a difference, and that's really the important thing." I think that's what women think about all the time is how do we do our jobs to make a difference for somebody else, and that to me is very important.

Margaret, Sandra, and Sonia believe in some fashion that women “just get stuff done.” Sonia believes that women are called in to “clean up messes,” particularly where the college budget is concerned. Margaret also felt that women and mothers “get things done.” She recalled a mentoring experience she had where she learned to sharpen her skills in terms of understanding leadership and management in higher education. She said she simply asked questions because she really cared and was invested in what she was learning. Sandra talked about her own patience and optimism being critical turning points in her career.

Ruth recalled her own career in terms of providing advice to other young women who aspire to be a university president. She believes in part that her dedication and 20 years of volunteerism at a large non-profit community service organization was a distinguishing characteristic when she applied. She said that her affiliation helped to advance her family and desire to be involved as a community member, and ultimately, it helped to advance her career as well. In addition to volunteerism as an attribute of servant leadership, Ruth also believes women think of others first naturally, as some of the other participants also mentioned during their interviews. Ruth had an example of her own salary dealings when she first became president. She said she knew it was not the best deal but decided to negotiate later, and now it is water under the bridge. She believes women are more forgiving than men and that scenario would probably have been handled differently if it were a man moving into the role. She did what she felt was right for the university at that time and said she has no regrets.

It was Hillary’s desire to make a difference in the world. She feels higher education has been really important from her early origins. She also believes that women are brought in to clean up messes. She says:

But my point is, if there’s a difficult situation, you bring in a woman — usually — because the appearance is still that they’ll soften things, they’ll give a human touch. They

also, especially in the financial side, work really, really hard and we dig in more than the men do and try to figure out what's going on in the financial specifics, and so on...

She also believes that because of socialization, women do not give themselves the credit they deserve and consistently discount what they do in the workplace. Women also want to see other women succeed. Hillary provided an example of the Moving the Needle nationwide initiative by ACE: It is their goal to have 50% women university presidents by the year 2030.

Authentic Self

The essential question to this study is how do women who aspire to the level of presidency break through the glass ceiling to level the gender gap to attain senior administrative roles in higher education? Eleven women — all who have achieved the level of university president — were interviewed and asked what qualities they felt attributed to their success. The results indicate many areas of duplication. The participants provide several examples of how being their authentic selves aided them in their overall success and career longevity. Nearly half of the participants are the first women to be serving as presidents of their institutions, and others were the first female chairs of their departments.

Elizabeth referred to the James Autry book, *The Servant Leader*, when she spoke about being a caring leader. He said in the book, "Leadership requires love." Elizabeth added, "You can be a leader and still care" (2001). She also referred to a quote in the book, "Leadership is about bringing your spirit to work, being your best and most authentic self." She also quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-trust is the first secret of success" (Emerson, 1967). Elizabeth said that she tries to give this message to young aspiring women. She said one has to know one's self deeply, and that a person must make a commitment to question and think deeply, so being authentic is important. She also went on to say that women have a tendency to put themselves

down and they might not even realize it, by saying things like, “Oh, it was nothing.” Thus, she says people should be mindful of those instances and decide to honor themselves by not putting themselves down and owning their talents. Rose believed that women in senior roles feel like they are always under scrutiny, even when they may not be because there is such a small number of them. She likened it to being in an underrepresented group. She stated:

...do not feel like you have to check your identity at the door. There is always going to be a push to try to get you to do that and you have to be yourself and care about things you care about. You have to push for transformation of institutions in order to support that, rather than trying to normalize to some prototype that may not fit who you are and what you want to do.

Ruth adds that women need to be allowed to have their own personality. In other words, women do not need to change who they are to become more like the position. She says, “We didn’t sign up for you to have to wear a suit every day. That was then. You can wear whatever you want as president.” She says sometimes the job takes so much energy that instead of wearing skirts and heels, it is okay to choose to wear Naturalizer shoes and dark clothing. Eleanor’s advice to young women is to believe in themselves and to persevere. Similarly, Hillary also encourages young women to believe in themselves and to trust that things are going to work out. Hillary says the second thing she would suggest is from Sheryl Sandberg, which is to “lean in.” She says when a person is part of any group, they should be part of it. Do not sit on the periphery or on the sidelines. She says it is like the old axiom, “If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.”

The participants also agreed that hard work, including going above and beyond what is required, is highly recommended if a person wants to be successful. Gloria provided an example of when she was a “trailing spouse,” and made the best of her opportunities although they may not have been her first choice. She said that she remained flexible, adaptive, and highly resilient,

and that she always made the most of her circumstances. Sandra, Cathy, Hillary, and Sonia all agreed that aspiring women should not be afraid to ask for stretch assignments to become more visible and to showcase one's strengths. In addition, Ruth suggested women build a reputation as a hard worker. She also said it is a good idea to have a plan and to strategize, but not to overthink things. She said that people's paths can be different, but that mostly everyone receives some kind of career advice along the way. She said to focus and to be really good at one's current job and to ignore people who are trying to keep you down. Lastly, Ruth stated that credentials sometimes do matter. She believes, at least in part, that having her second doctorate degree helped her to stand out when interviewing for the presidency. Likewise, Eleanor recommended looking for new projects or opportunities, such as chairing committees that ultimately provide experiences important to be competitive for the presidency. Eleanor also credited her own success to having worked at both a state and institutional level which provided her a chance to see higher education from different perspectives. She said, "You don't have to follow a traditional trajectory to the presidency." Sonia agreed that young women should not be bound by tradition. She went on to say that women should take their time and do their jobs well. She encourages women to develop a clear idea of what their institution needs and that being promoted at the same institution is important. Sonia said it can be perceived as a negative if the only way someone can get promoted is by leaving their current institution. Lastly, Sonia summarized some advice by saying, "do not bad mouth others; do not burn bridges; do not appoint people around you who are just like you; and remember to interview the institution, which should include many questions."

Margaret and Ruth agreed that in their experience change is difficult in higher education; however, institutions should be preparing for more women in charge. Ruth believes that her male students and son will be working for a woman someday and are ready for that, so organizations

should be as well. Cathy provided an example of a chancellor who helped to affect change in to the demographic make-up of a state university system. She said a few years ago if a person would have looked at the profile of the presidents, it would have been predominately white males. However, today half are women, and 30% are people of color. She said, “The chancellor is a great testament to the power that somebody makes it a priority can having in changing that statistics we are familiar with.”

Margaret expanded by saying not to dismiss areas that are not one’s own and that women should develop institutional thinking. For example, it is important to understand what student life is trying to accomplish as they work with our students and enrollment management tradeoffs that have to be made. She said in order to interview for a presidency, women must be able to talk at a higher level and understand all the different pieces that come together to make up a university. Sandra suggested women tell themselves, “Someday I would like to be president.” She said a person might change their mind along the way, but they will still go farther than if they had not aspired to that. She went on to say that a person must know themselves and make sure that when they apply for a position, they are ready, and it is one they really want. She said, “It may lead to some heartbreak if you really want it,” [...] “but the presidency is not just a job, it’s a lifestyle.” Sandra and Ruth both stated that they live and breathe for their institutions, so to be prepared for that lifestyle and to make sure that the institution is a good fit for those reasons.

SUMMARY

Research findings presented in Chapter Five support claims from previous studies, add new material, and shed new light on the subject of senior women administrators in the higher education university setting, particularly at the level of the presidency. Through continual comparison of the 11 participants’ stories, significant themes immersed. Chapter Six will review

results and relevance of the study as it pertains to the current literature and consider future implications of the study. A picture can now be formed of what it takes to become a university president as a member of an underrepresented group — that is, women — and some of the daily experiences they encounter now that they occupy this role.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

To examine what it takes for women to aspire to the role of president at a four-year university of higher education, a phenomenological qualitative research study was conducted. The study was an in-depth, open-ended interview narrative data collection (interview questions listed in Appendix D). Participants were chosen based on relevant information they possess and experts in their fields that guided the researcher's study. Of the 11 participants, nine are current presidents, and two are chancellors who were both former university presidents prior to serving in their current roles. In addition, five of the 11 presidents were also the first women presidents of their institutions.

According to ACE's *The American College President 2017* report, only 30% of the nation's college and university presidents are women, just a four percentage point increase since 2011 (2017b). Given the slow increase in women leaders in higher education, it is predicted that more than 30 years will pass before women can reach equality with men in terms of college presidencies (Gatteau, 2000).

Historically, women have made up a majority of the teaching profession, yet the low percentage of women in educational leadership positions continues to be an issue (Yoder, 2001, p. 815; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003, p. 303; Eggins, 1998, p. 22; Kolb, et al., 2004, p. 2). To account for this discrepancy, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made discrimination illegal, and Title VII specifically went on to safeguard against discrimination in employment practices based on

race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Higher education administration careers sought by women in the 1980s were limited partly based on lack of enforcement of affirmative action programs. Women sought out programs and further credentials at the university; however, women were more likely to enter careers other than administration due to a lack of recruiting programs available to help them find employment (Stockard & Kemper, 1981). Women often experience visible or invisible barriers to entering the higher ranks of the organization, a phenomenon labeled as the *glass ceiling* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995; Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002). Trumbull concluded that gender discrimination in the workplace still exists despite decades of equal rights legislation and that it represents a failure involving nearly half the workforce (2007).

After thorough analysis, eight themes emerged from the research and participant interviews. The themes fell under two broad categories: obstacles and challenges and success strategies. The first theme under obstacles and challenges is *environments not supportive of women*. This emerging theme focused on the various career paths each of the 11 participants experienced and the important role the institution plays in their overall success. Obstacles the participants described ranged from lack of other females working in administration roles, being bound by traditional values of the institution, having to work harder than men in the same roles, being judged at a higher standard, and lack of friendly workplaces that offer flexible schedules for working mothers. According to the participants, having women already employed in the organization is key. Campus climate surveys completed on a regular basis also help to provide administration with information on how their institution is doing in the support of women at their respective institution. Lastly, women feel their organizations could be more supportive by offering parent-friendly solutions that offers flexibility to the working mother (or parent).

The next theme under obstacles and challenges was *work-life balance*. This important theme emphasized the challenges women face when they choose to have a family and want to pursue a career simultaneously. Many of the women interviewed felt that it was not feasible to raise children and manage their career aspirations, therefore, waiting to further their career until their children were grown. Much of what working mothers struggle with centers around schedule flexibility and reliable daycare. The obstacle work-life balance presents for women is a lessened ability to say “yes” when opportunity presents itself. In addition, women have to pull double duty in the workplace to achieve senior roles when compared to men. Choosing a supportive partner is one recommendation by the participants in an effort to achieve desired work-life balance.

The third prominent theme, *sexism in the workplace*, draws attention to the fact that sexism in the workplace, more specifically in higher education, still exists today. Sexism in the workplace can be both implicit and outwardly more explicit at times. Women are judged harsher than men in terms of workload and are held to a different standard. They have to work harder to ensure that they have a place at the table and that their opinions are not discounted or dismissed, as oftentimes they are the minority representation. In addition, women are continually questioned if they are up to the challenge of a presidency and its demands and criticized unfairly compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, a pay gap still exists between men and women senior administrators in higher education. A more implicit and subtle variety of sexism also exists as men speak about women in public discourse, which can often be demeaning and trivializing in nature to women. If women attempt to point out this double-standard, they are often labeled as being, “hypersensitive” and accused of overreacting.

The fourth finding under obstacles and challenges was *women's lack of confidence and negotiating skills*. Because of the way men and women are socialized differently, women often will not take the credit they deserve professionally; whereas, men display more confidence. Furthermore, women tend to need encouragement to pursue promotions and leadership roles in academia, as they question if they are ready for all aspects of the potential role. In addition, women question their leadership styles and whether their personalities will be a good fit for the institution, while men do not. In lacking overall confidence, oftentimes that also equates to lacking the ability to negotiate a fair salary. The participants had to begin their careers in an era where because of the scarcity of women in leadership positions, many of them were just happy to be considered for senior roles. Additionally, women in senior roles were so few that teaching negotiating skills to young and upcoming women was not commonplace. Most of the women interviewed believe that awareness levels have risen in recent years in terms of gender disparity and the pay gap.

The first emerging theme under the category success strategies was *work ethic*. In fact, the researcher noted that work ethic was the most mentioned success strategy when asked what advice the participants would have for other women aspiring to the presidency in higher education. All 11 contributors said that to become a president, they had to consistently go above and beyond job expectations. Not only is hard work a requirement, but most of the women thought that they also had to show that they worked harder than men for their contributions to be noticed. Based on the collective experiences of 11 women presidents, the following pieces of advice were offered to women seeking positions in senior leadership:

- Work long hours
- Chair committees and take on special projects
- Be committed to what you are doing and love it

- Network and be highly visible, i.e., “lean in”
- Be willing to try new things and take on stretch assignments
- Be flexible and stretch yourself
- Be strong-willed and strong in your leadership stance
- Branch out midway in your career
- Do your job well and have a plan to keep moving forward
- Do the best job you can no matter what role you are in currently
- Embrace diversity
- Push for transformation of institutions so that they begin to care about what women care about
- Be yourself.

However, women should not:

- Surround themselves with people just like them
- Stay in one area of expertise for too long
- So “no” to opportunities when they present themselves
- Shy away from difficult tasks
- Let others take the credit that they deserve
- Overthink things
- Volunteer for more than you can handle
- Do things as a man would do them
- Sound very academic when talking to the board. Learn industry speak, too.

The next theme under success strategies is *mentorship*. Many of the women interviewed in this study credit mentors with attributing to their career success. Although almost all the

participants shared that other women mentors were difficult to find early on in their careers, they agreed that gender in mentoring does not matter. Several of the women shared their collective experiences of being mentored by men who were able to see them as professionals, and more importantly, as their equals. The participants also felt that formal mentoring programs can be beneficial, such as the HERS Institute, which a few of the participants mentioned having attended. They were able to network and make connections that proved to be advantageous to their futures. Lastly, the women provided advice on being intentional about seeking out mentors. They said it can oftentimes be difficult to find one mentor that fits every need, so their advice was to use more than one mentor to meet those various needs.

The third theme, *servant leadership*, embraces leadership principles focused on stewardship and developing the growth of others. The leadership style became popular and was featured in James Aury's best-selling book entitled *The Servant Leader* (2001). Several of the participants referenced the book when speaking about their own leadership styles and lessons they tried to impress upon aspiring women they mentor. The notion is that not only can someone be caring in a leadership role, but that leadership requires love. True leadership is not only about advancing the mission of oneself, but also how to make a difference to somebody else, which is what women do. Many women identify with the servant leadership style, as they tend to care deeply about others and about performing their jobs well.

The last theme to emerge under success strategies is for women to *be their authentic self*. Each woman represented in this study and the 30% who have achieved the level of university president have proven that they did not need to "lead like men" to achieve their own success. The presidents in this study said they felt it was important that women know their selves deeply if they are interested in becoming a president one day. There is a level of scrutiny that follows

women leaders around, so it is imperative that they are confident in themselves and their abilities to remain successful and to lead efficiently. Along those lines, they also said a part of being one's authentic self means portraying confidence and taking credit for one's own accomplishments. By staying true to their identity, the women also helped to achieve transformation at their institution, other than portraying a stereotype that does not exist in today's world.

The following section will compare the results drawn from this study with existing literature and a discussion of the major findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher set out to answer the question, "Is there a gender gap in senior positions, more specifically at the level of presidency, at four-year institutions of higher education?" The answer is a resounding "yes," considering that only 30% of all college presidents are women. Once that essential question was answered beyond doubt, the purpose of this study became to answer and determine how some women succeeded in ascending to the presidency and what advice they would have for others hoping to do the same. This study focused on the interview contributions of 11 women who currently serve or have served as president of a four-year institution in the United States. Through the data and findings presented in Chapters Four and Five, all the research questions in Chapter Three have been answered. While several of the findings are worth mentioning, the following are the most important conclusions from the researcher's point of view.

A. Women's lack of negotiating skills has attributed to the pay gap that exists in higher education and throughout industry. As a general rule, earnings increase based on years of education — for both men and women (Carnvale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). However, education is

not an effective tool or guarantee against the gender pay gap. According to Kanter, an employee's salary is based on the person's status and not what he or she may contribute to the organization (1997). Even though a small percentage of women have attained the role of president, many of the women interviewed said that they were never taught how to negotiate salaries and knew that they had accepted less money than they deserved. Women's salaries have historically been lower and have never caught up to men's. In addition, men have more outward confidence than women. Women do not take credit for their accomplishments and will accept less acknowledgement than they deserve. According to the AAUW, at every level of academic achievement, women's median earnings are less than men's median earnings, and appears to be larger the higher the education level (2014). In short, women can learn about negotiation skills, but if exclusionary policies and practices remain in place, barriers will continue to exist (Eagly & Carlie, 2007).

However, according to the women interviewed, many of their institutions now recognize the gender disparity and are correcting for it with measures such as equity studies of roles, rather than individuals to guard against pay inequity.

B. Women have yet to achieve comprehensive work-life balance. Women are still expected and feel that they need to put their families first, often at the expense of their own careers. No matter how successful they are in the workplace, their families are still considered their primary jobs (Kimmel, 2004). Men are perceived as more responsible when they have children or familial obligations, while women are seen as being less committed to their work (Turban, et al., 2017). Several of the women interviewed waited to pursue either doctorate programs or senior administrative positions until their children were raised and left the house. This issue can be compounded for single working mothers. In addition to raising children,

women often find themselves “trailing spouses,” as they pursue their ambitions. This can slow the progress of women attempting to break through the glass ceiling, as they do not have the ability to accept top positions, but rather settle for lesser opportunities. According to Gaskell and Willinsky (1995), “It [the glass ceiling] is the unforeseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and females from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements” (p. 5).

Workplaces are recognizing the benefits of becoming family friendly and are starting to offer flexible scheduling, on-site daycare, and breastfeeding stations and parental leave. Companies can modify expectations to better support working women without forcing them to choose “family or work” (Turban, et al., 2017).

C. Hard work, in fact the need to outperform men, is an effective strategy used by women in senior-level positions to achieve success and to prove their ability. Although anti-discrimination laws were enacted to safeguard women’s access to higher education, the laws did not specifically protect against employment discrimination until 1970. In the 1980s, women benefited from fellowships and other university-sponsored programs, however, experienced barriers in their university programs, such as lack of financial support and professors doubting their potential aspirations (Marshall, 1984). Each participant said that one must work hard, even harder than men in most instances, to achieve senior leadership roles. They said to be confident, be visible, and do not say “no” to opportunities. Since women have not been socialized to compete and stand out in the way men are, women have more to deal with.

D. Although more women have attained leadership roles, a double-standard in the workplace still exists between men and women. Research suggests that women in leadership roles, and oftentimes this includes their credentials, are evaluated unfairly (Eagly & Karau, 2002;

Eagly, 2007). In addition, women's behavior while in leadership roles may be regarded as more extreme than that of their male counterparts; they may be seen as more aggressive, dominant, or controlling (Eagly & Karau, 2002). One of the women interviewed stated, "If you are a woman leader and you do something courageous, you are considered odd, whereas a man is complimented." She said it is a different standard for men and women, and definitely a bias involved. Eagly and Karau's role congruity theory states that there are two prejudices toward female leaders — it is believed that women have less potential for leadership than men, and secondly, leadership behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men (2002).

To combat these tendencies, many companies are moving towards organizational interventions, such as diversity training aimed at decreasing gender stereotypes and other prejudiced attitudes (Duehr & Bono, 2006).

E. Senior women leaders utilize mentors and networking as a strategy to achieve career success. Women presidents that have been interviewed in studies say that they attribute career milestones to someone who encouraged or mentored them throughout their careers (Reis, 2015). Although very few of the women in this study had female mentors, typically because of the lack of senior women administrators while they were rising in their careers, they agree that the gender of their mentor did not matter. The role of the mentor was to offer encouragement and support, so that women could understand they could be leaders, too. Women tend to lack the same confidence as men and question their abilities. Mentors encourage and provide the "nudge" needed to take a risk and acknowledge the credit they deserve for their accomplishments.

F. In order to be successful, women need to live an authentic life. Women leaders have embraced the attributes of servant leadership and already know the benefits of caring and exercising empathy when they lead. Care and connection — characteristics that have been

viewed as predominately female — are now accepted factors in men’s leadership styles, a change that could potentially allow for men and women to work better together. Gilligan’s work constitutes the primary study of predominantly accepted gender differences that might have had implications for leadership styles, including emphasizing that young girls should not compete with boys (1982). This study has found that women do not have to embrace traditional male leadership styles in order to be successful.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based on the research findings drawn from the study, the researcher recommends further exploration of areas that could build upon these conclusions and add to the available literature:

- There is a need for additional research of women administrators, as most of the literature focuses on faculty overcoming barriers (Rosser, 2000). There is vast difference between faculty and administration roles, including the fact that faculty are, or have the ability to become, tenured; whereas, administrators are “at will.” In addition, the literature appears to be more available for women overcoming barriers and closing the gender gap at the community college level versus at four-year universities.
- Demographic information was intentionally left out of this study for confidentiality purposes; however, a future study could provide a different type of outcome. Demographic information plus a larger sampling may reveal information or characteristics that vary by geographic region or of the institution’s environment as it relates to acceptance of women in leadership roles.
- Almost half of the participants were the first women to be presidents of their four-year institutions. In a decade, a study across generations could be conducted to compare the career path of women in their 50s and 60s to those in their 30s and 40s and whether the obstacles and challenges were similar.
- A study of the “first men” or rather, husbands/spouses of female presidents. Historically, duties have been expected or “assigned” to the first ladies or spouses of male university presidents, such as landscaping and the grounds, or creating a clothing closet for students who face socioeconomic challenges and cannot afford interview attire. Many of the spouses of female presidents already have careers outside of their wives’ role as president, so the question becomes, “what role in the university could the husbands play?”

- Compare and contrast similar institutions that employ many women in leadership roles versus those that do not. Analyze the variables that influence campus climate for women to aspire to leadership roles. Identify specific steps needed for some institutions to become more accepting of women in these roles.
- A study that focuses on women of color. Was their struggle to overcome obstacles the same as first time presidents who are Caucasian? How many years did it take women of color to catch up in regard to percentage of positions held and pay?

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, 1010 Campus Drive FLITE 412F- Big Rapids, MI 49307

Date: June 13, 2017

To: Dr. Sandra Balkema and Tami Wolverton

From: Dr. Gregory Wellman, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application #170503(*Obstacles and Challenges Faced by Senior Women Leaders in Higher Education*)

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*Obstacles and Challenges Faced by Senior Women Leaders in Higher Education*" (#170503) and determined that it meets Federal Regulations Expedited-category 2F/2G. This approval has an expiration of one year from the date of this letter. As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until June 13, 2018. Should additional time be needed to conduct your approved study, a request for extension must be submitted to the IRB a month prior to its expiration.

Your protocol has been assigned project number (#170503), which you should refer to in future correspondence involving this same research procedure. Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations. Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

Understand that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights with assurance of participant understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document and investigators maintain consent records for a minimum of three years.

As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual reviews during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,



Ferris State University Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Version 1.2015

APPENDIX B: EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear [Name]:

My name is Tami Wolverton, a Student Academic Affairs Director from Ferris State University, and doctoral student at FSU, as well. I am preparing to conduct my dissertation research on the topic of women leaders in senior positions at the university level, and am requesting your help.

I am hoping to learn more about the experiences and perceptions of women who have achieved securing a senior leadership role at the university level. My goal is to contribute to scholarly literature, as there appears to be a gap in studies of women leadership at the university level.

Would you be willing to spend an hour with me in an interview, sharing your thoughts and insights on this topic?

All responses and information you provide will be confidential, and I will not use any names when reporting data in my dissertation. In addition, you will have an opportunity to review your responses after the interview, before they are included in my research.

If you are interested in participating, the interviews will be held either at the college of the participant or via phone call at a date/time that is acceptable to the participant and researcher – ideally within 4 weeks. I would really appreciate your participation and am looking forward to learning more from you.

If you have any questions please feel free to reach me at my office (231-591-2418), on my cell phone (231-920-1437), or email me at wolvertontami@gmail.com. Please let me know if you are willing to participate as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Tami Wolverton
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: The Gender Gap in Higher Education: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Women Administrators at Four-year Institutions

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Tami Wolverton, Ferris State University Doctoral Candidate

EMAIL: wolvert@ferris.edu

PHONE: (231) 920-1437

FACULTY ADVISOR: Dr. Sandra Balkema

EMAIL: balkemas@ferris.edu

You are invited to participate in this research project conducted by Tami Wolverton, a student in the Ferris State University Doctorate in Community College Leadership Program. The purpose of the study is to delve into the “glass ceiling.” The study will be designed to explore women in senior positions at the University level, their journeys, and perceived perceptions to achieving success.

As a participant in this research, you will be asked to participate in one interview via phone call or face-to-face that should take approximately one hour. Signatures will be obtained via email prior to conducting interviews to ensure that participants know what they are agreeing to. Consent forms will then be emailed back to researcher once signed, encrypted, or provided in-person prior to conducting the interviews.

There are no foreseeable risks to participate in this study. However, if you should feel uncomfortable with your participation, please alert the investigator immediately and you may discontinue participation.

There is no direct benefit to you in participating in this research. The information you provide may benefit available scholarly research and other women who may wish to pursue a path such as yours.

Your interview responses will be kept confidential, and pseudonyms for participants will be used in the dissertation; no person or participant institution will be specifically identified in any portion of the study. Participant information, job title, and current employer will be gathered for demographic profiles only and will not be used to describe or link specific information to the participants. The interviews will be audiotaped, and transcripts will be transcribed by the researcher, securely maintained, and password protected.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study, and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. You may also refuse to answer any of the questions in the interview without any consequence to yourself or the study.

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions about this study, please contact the Principal Investigator: Tami Wolverton, Ferris State University Doctoral Candidate or Faculty Advisor, Dr. Sandra Balkema, listed above. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Ferris State University Institutional Review Board, 220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308, Big Rapids, MI 49307 (231) 591-2553 or IRB@ferris.edu

By signing this document, you consent to participate in the interview portion of this research study. Please ask for a copy of this document if you wish to retain a copy of this consent for your records.

Sincerely,
Tami Wolverton
Doctoral Candidate
Ferris State University
Doctorate of Community College Leadership Program

Researcher Signature

Date

Participant Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What factors contributed to your career success?
2. What are some of the obstacles or challenges women may face as they climb the ladder in higher education?
3. After controlling for several variables and subjective measures, approximately half of the gender pay gap still exists, and cannot be explained merely by education level. Do you have a theory on the pay gap?
4. Does your institution currently have a bias reduction program or other policies that attempt to level the playing field between the genders? If not, do you think one is needed?
5. Have you had any mentors throughout your career, and what impact did they have?
6. What advice do you have for current or aspiring women leaders to help them success as top-level decision-makers in higher education?