

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

The Role of Gender in Higher Educational Leadership

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For the degree of Doctorate of Education,

In Educational Leadership

By

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Dedication

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Abstract

The Role of Gender in Higher Educational Leadership

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Amy Fara Edwards

Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership

The purpose of this research project was to understand how gender informs leadership for women leaders in higher education. Specifically, this qualitative research study examined the backgrounds and leadership experiences of multiple women administrators to better understand the communication factors that contribute to their success. Further, this study sought to examine the various and important ways that interpersonal communication dynamics affected the leadership styles of women administrators in higher education. Data from this study informs current leaders, and future leaders, about the ways in which their leadership behaviors are affected. Eight women executives from different Southern California higher education institutions were interviewed, in-person, with themes such as collaboration, exclusion, and perception being explored. The data from this research study showed how Communication Studies concepts are poignantly and inextricably bound to leadership, and multiple recommendations for future practice are offered to current leaders in order to enhance their success as leaders.

Keywords: women leaders, higher education, leadership styles, gender, stereotypes, gender inequities, feminist rhetorical theory, communication, culture, perception, collaboration, family, interpersonal communication

Chapter I: Introduction

Communication Studies professors spend most of their professional lives trying to understand how communication shapes our lives and how multiple communication concepts such as perception, language, and nonverbal cues, affect the patterns of the social world. Further, each semester, Communication professors help their students uncover and explore their identities and understand how cultural dimensions, such as gender, race, and social class affect their everyday lives. It is the Communication professor's job to introduce students to new concepts that will shape the way they view the world, show students that their identities are relational, and impress upon them that their communication patterns and behaviors are shaped by the social world (Allen, 2001). This way of understanding identity represents social constructionism which posits that the "self is socially constructed through various relational and linguistic processes" (Carbaugh, 1996, p. 30). Like Lorber (2014), foundational theorist of social construction of gender difference, and vital contributor to the transformation of gender studies claims, "gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life" (p. 19). Thus, from the time we are born, we are learning to abide by gender roles and norms, and gender, "like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly 'doing gender'" (Lorber, 2014. p. 19).

The concept of "doing gender" was popularized by West and Zimmerman (1987) where they contend that the "doing" of gender "is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production" (p. 126). Further, they note that doing gender "involves a complex, socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and

feminine ‘natures’” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). It is understandable that these concepts are complex and the Communication Studies classroom provides an opportunity to encourage students to understand their gendered behaviors, find their own mission, infuse their own style, and enhance their own communication competence in their everyday lives. Ultimately, the Communication classroom becomes a place of critical thought and reflection, with the issue of gender at the forefront of many discussions.

Currently, I am a full-time, tenured Communication Studies faculty member and Department Chair at a regionally accredited two-year institution of higher education in Southern California. The college is located close to the Pacific Ocean and is part of a large, culturally diverse city. At this community college, I have learned a great deal about the “business” of higher education; the processes that happen behind the scenes, as well as those happening visibly at the conference table. I have been at the helm of the community college classroom for eighteen years, participating in several shared-governance committees in leadership roles, and I have always been fascinated by the myriad ways in which academia functions. Serving in these multiple capacities has enhanced my fascination with the ways gender seems to play in society and education, especially in the context of educational leadership.

In fact, it was my role as a doctoral student in a Community College Education program that piqued my interest in the process of leadership in higher education as we discussed the successes and failures of various leaders and the ways such persons effectively, or ineffectively, instituted change to a system that had been set in its ways for multiple years. Thus, I am convinced that my Communication Studies background and academic positions, both as a professor and student, have provided me with a unique

opportunity to investigate the role of gender in higher educational leadership. I now have a new mission beyond the walls of the classroom- I intend to enhance my knowledge of leadership and communication in the social world by researching an influential and prominent group of leaders that are typically underrepresented at the academic conference table.

Statement of the Problem

My interest is studying women leaders in higher education currently serving, or who have served, in executive roles within administration. Several community college campuses, as well as four-year institutions of higher education in Southern California, now employ several women executives who are in high-level positions within their districts. According to Cook (2012), the first year of the American Council on Education's college presidents study in 1986 showcased the demographic profile of the "typical" campus leader. The typical 1986 college president was a white male in his 50s, married with children, a Protestant, held a doctorate in education, and had served in his current leadership position for approximately six years. Cook (2012) notes, 25 years later, that the leader profile has not changed much, especially in terms of the race and ethnicity, but that there has been some headway in terms of gender diversity. However, women presidents are still significantly underrepresented in higher education. Next, we look at the specific statistics of women executives in higher education and determine the extent to which this progress has occurred for women in terms of their leadership positions.

In 2007, according to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, women made up only 23 percent of college presidents and only 24 percent of full-time college professors, yet they accounted for 59 percent of master's degree recipients and

nearly 50 percent of the people who receive doctoral degrees. In 2009, according to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, there were a total of 3,723,004 males in higher education executive and administrative positions and only 2,782,100 females. In 2011, Donne G. Kampel, Associate Dean of Faculty at a community college in New York City noted that, of the 2,148 institutions of higher education in the United States, only 494 had female presidents, which is 23 percent (Moltz, 2011). Kampel (2011) also noted that, of all the institutional classifications in higher education, community colleges had the highest share of women presidents, at 29 percent. In 2011, the American Council on Education noted that the percentage of presidents who were women more than doubled from 9.5 percent in 1986 to 23 percent in 2007, and that women were most likely to head two-year colleges rather than four-year universities (Moltz, 2011).

In 2014, 26 percent of institutional leaders were women (Cook, 2012; Lapovsky, 2014; White, 2013). According to the latest data from the American Council on Education, only 26 percent of presidents and chancellors were women, with only a modest increase over the past five years. Further, women, more often than men, held executive positions in associate-degree-granting institutions rather than in those that grant higher degrees; women are 33 percent of presidents and chancellors in community colleges and only 22 to 23 percent in bachelor's, master's, and doctoral-granting institutions (American Council on Education, 2012). So, like Lapovsky (2014) argues, women have increased their share of presidencies by one percentage point every two years. If they continue to increase their share of college presidencies at this same rate, it will take approximately 48 years to hold half of the college presidencies; that is way too

long, especially when women are the ones receiving more graduate-level degrees than men, one minimum qualification for such a position.

Longman and Andersen (2011) document the continued gender disparities evident throughout United States' higher education. They collected data over a 12-year period (1998–2010) and note the trends in the gender composition of the senior-level leadership teams on multiple college campuses. Although their study showed that more women were in leadership positions, like the aforementioned statistics explain, Longman and Andersen (2011) argue that “the disparity in women’s involvement in leadership, across the higher education spectrum, continues to be a challenge” (p. 436). Thus, research must continue in order to understand why there is only a slight increase of women in top leadership positions. We must ask ourselves whether women and men lead differently, and/or whether sexist cultural values are so engrained in our society that women find it difficult to advance. Such questions may be answered by studying the role gender plays in the communication and leadership styles of higher education executives. It is obvious, based on the statistics, that women are advancing into leadership positions, albeit very slowly, and we, as a society, must vigorously advocate for more gender equity in higher educational leadership.

So, in spite of a couple of decades of clear progress in the advancement of women in leadership positions, the last seven years have roughly been static at many institutions of higher education. Feminist organization scholar Buzzanell (1995) asserts that, “gender organizes every aspect of our social and work lives including how we formally and informally communicate in organizational settings” (p. 327). Further, Chin (2011) asserts, that “a gender-neutral view of leadership is insufficient, and we need to consider the

influence of cultural worldviews and socialization on shaping leadership style” (p. 1). Thus, researching such concepts provides an opportunity to study the perceptions of leadership and can offer a rationale for the low statistics of women leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research project was to understand how gender informs leadership for women leaders in higher education. Specifically, this qualitative research study examined the backgrounds and leadership experiences of multiple community college administrators to better understand the communication factors that contributed most to their success. Further, this study sought to examine the various and significant ways that interpersonal communication factors affected the leadership style of women administrators in higher education. Data from this study will inform current leaders, and future leaders, about the ways in which their leadership behaviors are being affected. Being a tenured Communication Studies professor myself, with possible aspirations to move into administration, I was curious to know if being a woman alters the experience for women in executive positions. My hope for this study was to engage readers in a dialogue about women’s leadership in higher education by examining the background and leadership experiences of actual women administrators in order to understand the specific communication factors that contributed most to their success and/or failure. This research study endeavored to show how communication studies concepts are poignantly and inextricably bound to leadership, and that the understanding of those concepts greatly amplifies the success, knowledge, and advancement of women leaders in higher education.

Although the field, in some ways, is saturated with research related to women and leadership, very few studies have been conducted directly linking interpersonal communication and women's leadership. Most communication and leadership studies focus on group communication or organizational communication. This qualitative study aimed to look at the more interpersonal issues women face in order to enhance the value of women in the academic workplace. Thus, in order to understand why women succeed in leadership positions, and to understand the distinct role communication plays in their success, one-on-one interviews were conducted with women executives from specific community college sites in Southern California.

Research Questions

The fundamental research questions for this study were: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication factors shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? These questions allowed for inquiry into the leadership traits and styles, as well as the interpersonal communication behaviors of actual leaders with the desire to document reasons gender inequities still exist today. Like Lorber (2014) claims:

Gender inequality- the devaluation of 'women' and the social domination of 'men'- has social functions and a social history. It is not the result of sex, procreation, physiology, anatomy, hormones, or genetic predispositions. It is produced and maintained by identifiable social

processes and built into the general social structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully (p. 30).

Research from this study will show that, today, our Western higher educational system is organized by historical inequities that construct mediocre roles for the women executive.

Theoretical Framework

A rhetorical feminist perspective framed this study. Feminism “gives voice to individuals marginalized and devalued by the dominant culture and, thus, provides a more holistic understanding of the world” (Foss, Foss, & Griffin, 1999, p. 5). Feminism offers a model for different ways of living in the world, and many feminists now expand this definition to eliminating the oppression of people who may be seen as “the other” in our culture. According to Communication scholar, Dr. Lana Rakow (2005), “Feminist theory in communication is developed and used by scholars to understand gender as a communicative process, with the goal of making social changes important to the well-being of women and, ultimately, everyone” (p. 450). Feminism offers different perspectives that challenge male-dominated views and theories, while giving voice to women and other muted groups in society. Thus, feminism provided an important lens for understanding the communication behaviors and the role of gender differences in executive leadership in higher education.

Rhetoric is traditionally thought of in terms of classical persuasion; however, there are several ways of understanding it today. Many modern feminists define rhetoric as any kind of human symbol that functions in any realm, public or private. The goal for studying rhetoric is no longer exclusively to learn how to persuade others; rather, “it is [used] to understand how people construct the worlds in which they live and how those

worlds make sense to them” (Foss et al., 1999, p. 7). In all situations, people have many options for how they could respond, and understanding how rhetoric functions, enables us “to make conscious choices about the kinds of worlds we want to create, who and how we want to be in those worlds, and the values we want those worlds to embody” (Foss et al., 1999, p. 7). Consequently, using a rhetorical feminist perspective allowed me to emphasize and critique the subordination and/or progress of women and understand how the social construction of reality impacted and, ultimately, created notions of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. This framework provided a powerful point-of-view to highlight differences in communication practices affecting women leaders in higher education.

Overview of Methodology

The research tradition that I used was the multiple case study approach. This research tradition was most appropriate for my study because it provided a greater depth of understanding of the problems, and helped establish meaning across different cases and contexts. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) claim that the multiple case study approach helps maximize variation in order to “represent diverse cases to fully display multiple perspectives about the cases” (p. 104). Hence, being able to interview multiple women leaders in higher education elicited rich data, allowed me to draw multiple conclusions, and helped me “uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43).

There were two specific sampling strategies that I employed in order to set boundaries and frame the study; this combination of strategies included a stratified purposeful strategy which helped illustrate subgroups and facilitate comparisons (Kuzel,

1992; Patton, 1990). In addition, I used a criterion sampling strategy that involved selecting cases and settings that met a predetermined criteria of importance (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990). Overall, the research locations were public, two-year Southern California higher education institutions that employed women executives that met the specific criteria of the study.

Because I used a criterion stratified purposeful combination strategy, all of the sources needed to meet specific criteria. They needed to be women who are in, or had been in, executive positions such as Vice-Presidents, Presidents, or Chancellors. Further, my criteria included women leaders who had been in their positions for three or more years; they could be currently in their executive position, or recently retired from their academic institution. Once the women met my inclusion criteria, they were then organized by strata, or subgroups, to make comparisons for information-rich data to emerge (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990).

The one main data collection procedure was semi-structured, one-on-one, personal interviews. Bernard (1994) writes, “semi-structured interviews work very well in projects where you are dealing with managers, bureaucrats, and elite members of a community- people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time” (p. 210). The interviews were aligned with my research questions as well as the purpose of the study, which was to gain insight on women executive’s leadership experiences. A semi-structured interview was selected as the primary method because, from the outset, it had the potential to elicit rich, thick descriptions, and that gave me the opportunity to clarify testimonials and probe for additional information (Creswell, 2012).

Overall, data collection consisted of eight interviewees each completing a single, in-depth, one-hour interview.

In addition, a variety of strategies for data analysis were used and can be understood in two broad categories: preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis. The preliminary analysis began with transcription which is defined by Davidson (2009) as a “process that is theoretical, selective, interpretive, and representational” (p. 37). I hired two transcribers to transcribe the data verbatim, and worked closely with them to avoid any misunderstandings or errors. I continually reviewed the transcripts, checking for accuracy, and determined that their work was dependable.

Once the preliminary analysis was complete, I moved to thematic analysis which involved generating categories and considering the big ideas or themes that emerged from the interviews. These categories were directly related to my research questions and based, in part, in the literature and the theoretical framework. I exercised good judgment when coding and categorizing the information to accurately report and analyze the findings of my research. I “analyze[d] relationships among the coded data, [and was] cognizant of what was not said or demonstrated in some way” (Glesne, 2011, p. 195).

Limitations

Every study has limitations that are beyond the control of the researcher. According to Simon (2011), “Limitations are potential weaknesses in your study and are out of your control; we find limitations in almost everything we do” (p. 2). In this current study, I was acutely aware of my own bias in this process and how my subjective nature of knowing could have impacted the results of the study (Maxwell, 1996). One limitation was that I am a woman, which many may argue could have greatly affected my study

since there are stereotypes that “women stick together” or, dichotomously, that “women compete.” Although these stereotypes may, in fact, be true in some instances, as a researcher, I was mindful of my own assumptions about gender, communication, and leadership. I am a woman with experiences as a leader which had an impact on how I interpreted data, yet I was able to separate my own experiences from the interviewees’ experiences. I could not stop being a woman, yet I could be mindful that the interviewees may have made some assumptions about my own communication behaviors.

Additionally, my role as a full-time communication studies professor could have affected the way I conducted the interviews and could have impacted the way I analyzed the data. For eighteen years, I have been actively working with the subject of human communication helping students to establish their identities, to understand abstract communication concepts, as well as helping students become more competent and compelling communicators. These skills proved beneficial in my research about gender and communication, yet others could argue this was a problem, or limitation; I know, however, that my background provided a unique opportunity to understand communicative concepts such as nonverbal cues and intercultural communication, on a more intimate level.

Finally, another limitation was time; my results could have been affected by society during the period of time when I conducted the interviews. For example, the economy or social issues of the time could have influenced what the interviewees believed, and their answers may have been impacted by what they were experiencing at their college in terms of operations at the time of the interviews. However, this is also a rich, deep, and informing dimension of qualitative research. Readers will be able to make

meaning about the world from their personal experiences regardless of the broader context of social, political, and economic situations.

Delimitations

Beyond limitations, there were also purposeful delimitations which are “characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of my study; the delimitations were in my control” (Simon, 2011). First, my choice of the problem itself was a delimitation. Although there were other problems I could address, I rejected those issues and narrowed my focus to communication, leadership, and gender. Second, my choice to use feminism as a framework was a delimitation and could have impacted my study. Some could argue that analyzing the data through one dominant lens, such as feminism, could have skewed the final results.

Moreover, the study focused on a very a specific group of women executives within the field of higher education. My criteria were narrow and could have been delimited by the number of women administrators in relevant positions. Some may argue that the results of this study cannot be applicable to other professions, however, my goal was to pay special attention to the nuances and complexities that can be extrapolated by other leaders in other fields that may also be part of their experience. Further, the geographic region where I conducted the study was Southern California, so some may argue the results may not necessarily be applicable to other geographic regions. Finally, the fact that I only examined gender, and not the race or class of the women administrators, for example, may have acted as a delimitation; some groups were excluded from the study, such as men and newly hired executives.

In sum, I chose this course of study because, as a woman in higher education, I was curious about this topic and wanted to understand the experiences of women leaders by letting the women tell their own stories. Also, this study benefits me personally because I continually ponder whether moving into administration is part of my future career path. Ultimately, my hope for this study was to engage readers in a dialogue about women's leadership in higher education by examining the background and leadership experiences of current women administrators in order to better understand the specific communication factors that contribute most to their success and/or failure. This study aims to enhance the value of women in the academic workplace and provide a clear pathway for women in the future.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of four more chapters. Chapter II is a literature review that provides an overview of the concepts and themes within the field of gender, leadership, and communication. Following the literature review, Chapter III, outlines the methodology in great detail, focusing on the setting, sample, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV presents the key findings, with detailed discussions, obtained from the eight in-depth interviews. Finally, Chapter V, the final chapter, will interpret and discuss the results in light of the study's research questions and offer several suggestions for future practice. Overall, it is my hope that this study will contribute to a greater understanding of the impact that gender performativity plays for women administrators in higher educational leadership.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

This qualitative study sought to enhance the value of women in the academic workplace by allowing women to tell their stories. Further, this study delivers recommendations for successful leadership and provides a clear pathway for women in the future. In order to understand the success of women in higher education leadership positions, and to understand the distinct role communication plays in their success, one-on-one interviews were conducted with women executives from multiple Southern California community colleges. The specific methodology of this study is outlined in chapter three, while this current chapter offers literature that showcases that, today, our Western, higher educational system is rife with inequities that construct and adversely impact the role and success of the woman executive. Thus, a rhetorical feminist perspective framed this study. The fundamental research questions for this study were: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication factors shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? In this chapter, I will: (a) define and discuss the theoretical framework, (b) review literature within four distinct themes, and (c) discuss some important gaps in the literature, providing justification for my current research study.

Theoretical Framework

A rhetorical feminist perspective frames this study, which was briefly described in chapter one. Feminism “gives voice to individuals marginalized and devalued by the dominant culture, and thus, provides a more holistic understanding of the world” (Foss,

Foss, & Griffin, 1999, p. 5). Feminism offers a model for different ways of living in the world, and many feminists now expand the definition to include eliminating the oppression of people who may be seen as “the other” in our culture. Ultimately, there are more scholars paying attention to the ways in which feminist scholarship in rhetoric and composition are being applied and transforming the field. Some of these scholars are “also paying particular attention to the implications, not only for knowledge-making, but also for innovations in pedagogical theories and practices” (Kirsch & Royster, 2010, p. 645). Feminism offers a different perspective that challenges male-dominated views and theories, while giving voice to women and other muted groups in society. Thus, feminism provides an important lens through which we can better understand the communication behaviors, and the role of gender differences, in executive leadership in higher education.

Many feminists today define rhetoric as any kind of human symbol that functions in any realm, public or private. Although rhetoric is traditionally thought of in terms of classical persuasion, there are several different ways of understanding it today. The goal for studying rhetoric is no longer exclusively to learn how to persuade others; rather, “it is [used] to understand how people construct the worlds in which they live and how those worlds make sense to them” (Foss et al., 1999, p. 7). Using rhetoric helps to comprehend the fact that people have many options for how they will, or could, respond in most situations, especially in relation to leadership and communication. Thus, understanding how rhetoric functions enables us “to make conscious choices about the kinds of worlds we want to create, who and how we want to be in those worlds, and the values we want those worlds to embody” (Foss et al., 1999, p. 7).

Bo Wang's (2012) article in the *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, argues that over the past three decades, feminist rhetoric has been effectively established as a discipline, and is still a primary element used for exploring new spaces for feminist rhetors. She writes, "Arguably, feminist rhetoric has offered good examples of inventing new tools and experimenting with new methods to challenge the status quo and rewrite the rhetorical tradition" (p. 29). Kirsch and Royster (2010) also note that, the collective work of feminist scholars has formed a comprehensible body of research and practice, and opened up feminist fields of inquiry. Further, they claim that the rhetorical feminist paradigm compels us because it is "an ethos of care, introspection, and attention to the material condition of the past and the present" (Kirsch & Royster, 2010, p. 663).

Furthermore, using a rhetorical feminist perspective allows one to emphasize and critique the subordination and/or progress of women, and understand how the social construction of reality impacts, and ultimately creates, notions of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny which are critical for the study of leadership. Like Kirsch and Royster (2010) claim:

Feminist rhetorical scholars are actively engaging in the push in the field toward better informed perspectives of rhetoric and writing as a global enterprise, addressing various practices in other geographical locations through feminist informed lenses; rescuing, recovering, and inscribing women rhetors both distinctively in locations around the world and in terms of the connections and interconnections of their performances across national boundaries; and participating in the effort to recast perspectives of rhetoric as a transnational, global phenomenon, rather than a Western one (p. 646).

Overall, a feminist rhetorical framework provides a powerful point of view to highlight differences in communication practices as they affect women leaders in higher education.

After a careful review of the literature in the field regarding women in leadership in higher education, it can be said that women leaders are ascending to leadership positions in higher education, but at a slow rate (Clark, 2006; Santovec, 2010; Sarikakis, et al., 2008; Yanez & Moreno, 2007). This literature review addresses some common factors that create barriers to female advancement, and will focus on the plethora of information about leadership styles and models which are based on Communication Studies ideology. The literature in the field provides a lens for understanding the role of gender in leadership in higher education, and also directly correlates to the research questions of this study. The four themes discussed in this literature review include: (a) gender inequities, (b) cultural influences and power dynamics, (c) interpersonal concepts, and (d) styles of leadership.

Gender Inequities and Leadership in Higher Education

Many feminist Communication Studies scholars analyze the multiple gender inequities that adversely impact the woman leader. To begin, the literature showcases communication theories such as Standpoint Theory, by Nancy Hartsock, with borrowed ideas from Georg Hegel, which strives to understand the world from the standpoint of women and other marginalized groups in society (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). All of the literature regarding Standpoint Theory argues that the experiences, knowledge, and communication of people are largely shaped by the social groups of which they are members (Chin, 2011; Littlejohn & Foss, 2011; West & Turner, 2012). In other words, people's assertions and statements are subjective; thus, there is no objective standard for

measuring one's standpoint. The literature on Standpoint Theory provides a practical framework for understanding systems of power and how they shape our communication, thereby giving authority to people's own voices. Ultimately, much of the literature showcases how individuals often rely on unreliable assumptions and stereotypes as they communicate with others, therefore, unfavorably affecting women in leadership positions in higher education (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Littlejohn & Foss, 2011; West & Turner, 2012).

A prominent leader in the field, Alice H. Eagly of Northwestern University, has written extensively on women and leadership (1990; 2002; 2003; 2007). She consistently argues that stereotyping acts as an injurious barrier to female leadership success. She argues that there are prejudices toward female leaders, and proposes that this perceived incongruity between female gender roles and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles, and evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Many of Eagly's studies argue that attitudes are less positive toward women leaders as a result of stereotypes, and that it is extremely difficult for women to ascend to leadership positions, much less achieve success should they do so.

Other scholars in the field help us understand the role of gender. In a groundbreaking piece of work, West and Zimmerman (1987) coined the phrase, "doing gender," which "involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (p. 126). Ultimately, West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that

“participants in interaction organize their various and manifold activities to reflect or express gender, and they are disposed to perceive the behavior of others in a similar light” (p. 127). Thus, “doing gender” means that, in our society, we are creating artificial differences between men and women which ultimately affect people in all of their interactions. Like West and Zimmerman (1987) claim, “In one sense, of course, it is individuals who ‘do’ gender. But it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production” (p. 126). In other words, we must consider gender not as a possession of an individual, but rather, a developing feature of social situations. Overall, West and Zimmerman (1987) provide a solid foundation for understanding the role and the social construction of gender in our society.

Similarly, feminist scholar and rhetorician, Judith Butler (1999) offers great insight on the subject of doing gender, or what she coins, “gender performativity.” Butler’s (1999) text, *Gender Trouble*, is one of the founding and most influential pieces of literature on the subject of gender and sexuality. The text sought to uncover the ways gendered life is barred by certain customary presumptions, “sought to undermine any and all efforts to wield a discourse of truth to delegitimize minority gendered and sexual practices” (p. 3). Overall, Butler’s (1999) theory of performativity helps us understand that gender norms are socially-constructed, and that gender is produced through constant actions and interactions which can produce stereotypes and misconceptions about women and men. Ultimately, the literature in the field demonstrates that gender stereotyping is a real and apparent issue and can lead to what Madsen (2008) suggests as, “internal barriers which women create for themselves, originating from the ‘fear of failure’ and a self-

concept that is linked to internalized traditional female stereotypes such as self-doubt, lack of confidence in one's skills, abilities, and risk-taking" (p. 149). These internal barriers, as well as other gendered external and systematic barriers, are manifested from the cultural beliefs and power dynamics that still persist and are upheld today.

Gender performativity alters our standpoints and intersects with other aspects of our identity. Feminist scholarship highlights the idea that gender differences need to be understood within a variety of contexts and in connection with other systemic and cultural concerns. In other words, our standpoint is not only shaped by gender, but by the intersectionality of other systems; this is imperative to note here because research shows that this interconnection can impact the leadership and communication of women in higher education. Feminists argue that to understand systems of inequality, we must also be mindful of the complexities of other systems such as race, class, and sexuality, and how they intersect with gender to create certain ideas and practices that can be oppressive. Literature in the field provides "a broad range of scholarship by researchers examining how race, class, and gender simultaneously influence and structure the lives, issues, identities, and experiences of people whose multiple statuses cannot be separated or prioritized" (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001, p. 157).

Dr. Jean Ait Belkhir, professor of sociology and creator of the journal *Race, Gender, & Class* and Dr. Bernice McNair Barnett, historical sociologist and Women's Studies general council at the University of Illinois, write, "Race, gender and class represent the three most powerful organizing principles in the development of cultural ideology worldwide" (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001, p. 157). Further, they argue that, "culture constructs views of race, gender and class differently, [so] there is always some social

construction around these three particular differences/similarities, and thus far, that construction has almost always resulted in structured inequality” (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001, p. 157).

Similarly, prominent scholar, social theorist, and distinguished professor of sociology, Patricia Hill Collins, writes primarily on issues involving feminism and gender, and claims that, “Intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another, or, ‘articulate’ with one another” (Collins, 1998, p. 63). She writes often about race and sexuality and how these systems intersect and mutually construct one another and, therefore, alter our behaviors and perceptions. She believes that part of understanding gender is to acknowledge that “all knowledge is constructed within and helps to construct intersecting power relations (Collins, 2012, p. 453). Thus, “within paradigms of intersectionality, any specific social location where such systems meet or intersect generates a distinctive group history or experience” (Collins, 1998, p. 27). Her work, and related work in the field, highlights the fact that “there is gender-based structured inequality in society which benefits men at the expense of women” (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001, p.162). Moreover, “tangible inequalities are a regular feature of American life- they have persisted over time, and they are embedded in social institutions and social systems of society” (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001, p. 162). Overall, these systemic issues impact our communication and perception and, therefore, cultivate a culture that promotes men over women. The next section of this literature review deals directly with this issue of power and how cultural barriers impact the leadership and communication of women leaders in higher education.

Culture and Power Affect Women Leaders in Higher Education

The literature on cultural barriers, as they pertain to female leadership in higher education, is abundant and highlights the idea that many of our organizational policies and norms continue to persist without challenge, and are based on masculine, white, heterosexual, middle-class and middle-age ideals and aesthetics (Allen, 2001; Chin, 2011; Eagly, 2007; Wood, 2009). Studies by Eagly and Johnson (1990) and Eagly (2007) indicate that women leaders communicate with a more feminine style which is based on relationship-orientation, and tends to be more democratic, more or less, than their male counterparts who tend to communicate with a traditional masculine style which is labeled more autocratic and task-oriented. Many organizations tend to value the masculine style of communicating and leading more than the feminine style, which is why many women tend to hold subordinate roles in administrations (Allen, 2011; Chin, 2011).

Brenda Allen is a prominent scholar in the field of Communication Studies who is most well-known for her work in organizational communication and diversity. She has written several ground-breaking books, published numerous articles, and much of her research, within the last eight years, highlights the consequences of gender as they pertain to the workplace. Allen (2011) argues that problems arise for women because gender has been constructed in society in such a way that the historical meanings in the workplace tend to put men into public and more powerful spheres, giving men more responsibility, which allows them to take more credit, fairly or unfairly, for nearly everything in the workplace. Barriers, including cultural myths, fear of failure, the “good-old-boy” network, and pre-determined and prejudiced expectations about the various levels of intellectual and managerial capacity and efficiency, create gender inequities in higher

education (Allen, 2011; Eagly, 2007; Hough, 2010; Yanez and Moreno, 2008).

Therefore, leadership positions remain overwhelmingly male-dominated because the unrelenting persistence of systemic and archaic patriarchy is how many of our organizations still operate today (Allen, 2011; Eagly, 2007; Hough, 2010; Yanez & Moreno, 2008).

Likewise, Communication Studies scholar Julia Wood (2009) views cultural barriers for women as conflicting cultural messages about who and what they should be, and how to behave, so pursuing a leadership career, and being successful in that powerful career, is a constant and arduous struggle. Wood (2009) claims one must critically acknowledge the role cultural barriers play in setting up power differences between women and men. Further, much of the research shows that the “good-old-boy-network” still exists as a cultural barrier for women and, therefore, hinders women’s ascension into executive positions in higher education (Chliwniak, 2010; Eagly, 2007; Hough, 2010). Chliwniak (2010) argues that cultural artifacts in higher education “preserve ‘appropriate’ and different spheres for men and women in academe” (p. 7). Thus, a counteractive vision of higher educational leadership and culture, one that is not seen only through the eyes of males, “would add depth and new perspectives for shared images of post-hierarchical institutional structures in higher education” (Chliwniak, 2010, p. 7). Overall, the literature in the field, in terms of cultural barriers, provides explanations of how notions of womanhood and female communication are continually constructed within our social system and, therefore, influence the internal communicative behaviors of female leaders in higher education. Wood (2013) posits that, “the influence of culture is so pervasive that it’s hard to realize how powerfully it shapes our perceptions” (p. 78). It is

obvious from the research in the field that communicative, organizational, and cultural structures have a direct impact on the success and/or failure of women executives.

Cultural, institutional, and systematic barriers are a manifestation of Neolithic cultural beliefs and dynamics that remain upheld today. Additionally, much of the literature on gender and culture focuses on the “double-bind” as a prominent theme in the discussions.

The Double-Bind. According to Jamieson (1995), author of *Beyond the Double Bind: Women in Leadership*, Psychologist Gregory Bateson formulated the concept of the double-bind in an examination of schizophrenia and found it was a strategy repeatedly used by those with power against those without, and that women were usually the quarry. Jamieson (1995) explains:

Binds draw their power from their capacity to simplify complexity. Faced with a complicated situation or behavior, the human tendency is to split apart and dichotomize its elements. So, [for example,] we contrast good and bad, strong and weak, and in doing so, assume that a person can't be both at once—or somewhere in between. Such distinctions are often useful. But when this tendency drives us to see life's options or the choices available to women as polarities and irreconcilable opposites, those differences become troublesome (p. 5).

Some theorists use the terms “self-defeating traps” or “catch 22s,” however, feminist researchers typically use the term “double-bind” to describe the dilemmas facing women in a professional setting. The bind is the “double yardstick of gender appropriateness and managerial effectiveness [that] often leaves women in an unbreakable, untenable double-bind” (Nichols, 1993, p. 5). In addition, Communication scholar Frechette (2009) discusses gender inequities faced by female leaders in terms of

the double-binds that have been offered to women as dichotomous choices. Frechette (2009) argues, “Academic institutions are hierarchical organizations that offer rewards, status, and privilege, thereby rendering the status of women within these institutions politically and economically vulnerable” (p. 1). The goal of the Frechette (2009) study was to “offer strategies for maneuvering past sexist barricades as a means toward success and equality in academe” (p. 1). This work provides data on binds affecting women in academia such as, motherhood vs. academe, university teaching vs. research, community and university service vs. leadership and professional advancement (Frechette, 2009).

Ultimately, the data revealed that “women’s progress in academe has been thwarted by double-binds that, when overcome, have morphed into other setbacks” (Frechette, 2009, p. 23).

However, she also finds that, nevertheless, women do advocate for equal treatment, regardless of stereotypes and binds, and that women do assert “their rights as serious and worthy intellectuals and professionals whose ambitions and hard efforts will allow them to persevere in the face of new perils and promises” (Frechette, 2009, p. 23). Thus, it is evident that culture and power do, in fact, still adversely affect female leaders and can, therefore, impact several interpersonal factors.

Interpersonal Communication and Women Leaders in Higher Education

Interpersonal communication is also a theme of paramount importance in the literature within the field. Much of the research does not explicitly address or cite “interpersonal communication,” which is why I consciously sought to conduct my study with this focus. However, the literature does speak about women leaders creating and cultivating relationships (Chin, 2011; Madsen, 2008; Rolls, 1993; Wood, 2011). The next

section of this chapter highlights two interpersonal communication concepts: language and perception. Ultimately, language can produce a variety of perceptions, because gender bias, stereotyping, and culture are all in play for the overwhelming majority of women executives. These interpersonal concepts address and denude the interconnected nature of gender, leadership, and communication in higher education.

Language. Judith Rolls (1993) has produced a large body of work in the field of communication as a noted scholar, professor, and researcher. One specific presentation at a communication conference was quite impactful for this dissertation because it revealed a wide variety of interpersonal communication concepts as they relate to leadership patterns and behaviors as well as one's leadership potential. Rolls' (1993) research specifically examines the interconnectedness of language style, gender, and types of leaders; her work connects these interpersonal communication concepts in a way that other scholars have not. Further, Rolls (1993) argues that perceptions of individuals are, in part, based on her or his language style; these perceptions influence an individual's ability to achieve certain leadership goals.

Likewise, Kramarae (1992) has done extensive work in feminist rhetorical communication focusing on language and power as they relate to gender and the female experience. The goal of her work has been to develop communication theory that more accurately defines and mirrors women's communicative experiences, and she argues that language constructs the world according to the words and syntax available (Kramarae, 1992). The labels, Kramarae (1992) maintains, help determine what we experience and, therefore, language can constrain, or liberate, individuals within a particular linguistic structure (Foss, et al., 1999). These constraints and language power struggles can have an

impact on multiple communication processes for leaders in higher education. Rolls (1993) claims, “Language style has implications for leadership potential because listener perceptions vary according to the speaker’s rhetorical style” (p. 6). As such, the specific words a leader uses, or how they use language overall, can impact communication components such as listening and credibility. The literature on the intersection of leadership, gender, and interpersonal communication validates the idea that language can, in fact, act as a barrier to a woman’s success in higher education. In fact, communication scholars agree that the use of language may also have implications for people’s judgements and perceptions.

Perception. Perception is an active process that we use to make sense of ourselves, others, as well as our interactions. All people in society create stereotypes, prototypes, evaluations, and personal constructs based on interpretations of cultural perceptions (Wood, 2013). Much empirical research has emerged in this field analyzing the perceived differences between male and female leaders. One study that promotes women leaders is the Rosser (2010) study that aimed “to examine faculty and administrative staff members’ perceptions of the way female and male managers led their academic units” (p. 71). Rosser (2010) mailed a survey to 1,950 faculty including instructors, researchers, specialists, and librarians as well as staff members including executive staff, administrative staff, technical staff, and clerical employees reporting to 22 deans and had a 54 percent return rate, overall. The survey instrument was designed to gather information about their deans’ effectiveness in fulfilling their leadership roles and responsibilities as perceived by their faculty and staff. Seven domains of leadership were outlined, and were defined by a total of 58 Likert-type items. The seven domains were:

(1) vision and goal setting, (2) management of the unit, (3) support for institutional diversity, (4) interpersonal relationships, (5) the quality of education in the unit, (6) communication skills, and (7) research and community/professional endeavors.

After analysis, Rosser (2010) found that female deans were rated slightly more effective in the significant dimensions of communication skills, research, community, and interpersonal relations when compared to male deans. Further, this study found that female leaders were more likely to enhance the quality of education and promote institutional diversity, and the results of this study also indicated that many groups perceive women to be more effective leaders. However, much of the research on perception and leadership shows that many people perceive men as better leaders simply because they adhere to a more traditional, masculine style of leadership that is labeled “traditional” in our culture. As such, cultural assumptions about the way women and men are perceived to lead their units and organizations continue to be powerful barriers that may affect the study of leadership or, rather, “the opportunity for women to move into, or obtain, leadership positions” (Rosser, 2010, p. 77).

In addition, the qualitative study conducted by Duncan and Skarstad (2005) demonstrated that women managers were perceived differently primarily because of the ways in which they wielded their power. Additionally, these perceptions appeared to be facilitated by the environment of the organization in which women were administrators. Ultimately, the conclusions of the research were that women administrators were more readily accepted and deemed successful as long as they adhered to certain culturally mediated norms such as the way she exercised power, her temperament, and limited directives (Duncan & Skarstad, 2005). Duncan and Skarstad’s (2005) study, like much of

the other literature in the field, also noted that expectations for women leaders were higher than for male leaders (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Madsen, 2008; Wood, 2011). Ultimately, research shows that the perception is that women leaders can, and should, “do it all,” which is not the perception of male leaders. This perception in society tells women that they can and should lead in the workplace, but that they should also take care of their home and their family. Based on the literature in the field, it is evident that women leaders in higher education must attend to, and be mindful of, the archaic perceptions about performance and leadership style in order to not hamper their chances for success in the workplace.

Leadership Styles of Women Leaders in Higher Education

The literature encompasses a significant amount of theory that seeks to understand the role gender plays in group dynamics, and how it impacts and informs the leadership styles of females and males alike. Feminist organization scholar Buzzanell (1995) asserted that “gender organizes every aspect of our social and work lives including how we formally and informally communicate in organizational settings” (p. 327). Further, Chin (2011) asserted that, “a gender-neutral view of leadership is insufficient, and we need to consider the influence of cultural worldviews and socialization on shaping leadership style” (p. 1). Chin’s (2011) study looked at feminine leadership styles, claimed they are intentionally different, and that women were more collaborative and transformational when compared to men. Thus, Chin (2011) suggested that we need to reframe our rhetoric and transform our views of leadership in order to advance and codify more robust theories and more diverse models of effective leadership.

Further, Chin (2011) noted that, while current leadership theories favor transformational and collaborative leadership styles, “organizational cultures often mirror social constructions of gender and ethnicity norms in society” (p. 2). These findings showcase a tension in leadership style that often exists because the organizational culture and the organizational structures that are in place too often mirror the social expectations and biases against women as leaders. Much of the literature in the field shows that many women leaders tend to adopt traditionally masculine leadership styles in order to fortify their ethos or credibility; at times, women leaders feel the need to take on this masculine style to be taken more seriously and enact meaningful change (Allen, 2011; Eagly, 2007; Hough, 2010; Wood, 2013). Ultimately, women are evaluated simultaneously, informally and formally, based on a deficit model; women are seen as deficient in performing male styles. To unpack such claims, it is critical to discuss some historical context for leadership scales and styles because much of the research used to create this foundation of leadership knowledge was conducted using a very questionable deficit base (Coder & Spiller, 2013).

Historical context of leadership models and scales. Throughout the last several decades, the issue of gender stereotypes and leadership characteristics has been a highly researched topic in business management, education, and communication studies. Some feminist rhetoricians argue that women may not hold leadership positions in high numbers because there may be an unfavorable or a disproportionately low representation of gender-neutral information students receive while studying leadership development in higher education (Coder & Spiller, 2013). Students are taught older models which are typically grounded in patriarchal, masculine ideologies.

One popular theory of leadership, taught in most communication classrooms, is Kurt Lewin's (1940) Triangle Concept, representing three leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. An equilateral triangle is used to show the relationships between these three styles of leadership because, by its nature, the points of an equilateral triangle are equidistant. Lewin (1940) claims, none of the three leadership styles exist as an absolute or extreme form; rather, leaders can utilize several characteristics depending on the situation and where they fall on the triangle. Using Lewin's triangle, a person would find a specific area in the triangle between the three points that most accurately represents his or her personal leadership style (Sferra & Paddock, 1980). This foundational leadership scale is seen as more "gender-neutral" than some because the three styles are broader in scope, and the choice of leadership style depends on seeing the leader as a situational variable. Today these styles lend themselves well to a discussion of communication, perception, and the social construction of gender (Coder & Spiller, 2013; Engleberg & Wynn, 2013; Sferra & Paddock, 1980).

In the 1970s, Virginia Schein created the Schein Descriptive Index (SDI), and much of the literature in the field highlights this scale because it was the first to examine the so called psychological barriers that may have been preventing women from moving into leadership positions at that time (Schein, 1973). The SDI was created to test a theory that sex-role stereotypes were acting as a barrier to women's advancement. Although this may seem like a strong point of study, it was developed from sex-role stereotypes from the 1950s and 1960s (Bennett & Cohen, 1959; Brenner, 1970; Coder & Spiller, 2013) during which gender roles were vastly different from today. This leadership scale has

been used in a research study as recently as 2011. Overall, the SDI is rooted in leadership models that are stereotypically masculine-oriented.

Also in 1970s, Sandra Bem, and several of her students at Stanford University, began working on an instrument, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) to evaluate the mental health of individuals with the belief that those who were androgynous would be healthier than “sex-typed” individuals. The group created a list of approximately 200 personality characteristics that seemed to be positive in value, and either masculine or feminine in tone. They also created a second list of 200 characteristics that seemed to be neither masculine nor feminine in tone. Of these “neutral” characteristics, half were positive in value and half were negative (Bem, 1974). In Bem’s (1974) concluding remarks, she states:

It is hoped that the development of the BSRI will encourage investigators in the areas of sex differences and sex roles to question the traditional assumption that it is the sex-typed individual who typifies mental health and to begin focusing on the behavioral and societal consequences of more flexible sex-role self-concepts. In a society where rigid sex-role differentiation has already outlived its utility, perhaps the androgynous person will come to define a more human standard of mental health (p. 161).

Ultimately, both the SDI and the BSRI reinforce a traditional masculine/feminine approach and when used today, do not take into account gender role changes that have occurred over time. These instruments construct what it means to be “masculine” and “feminine” which have changed drastically since the 1970s. So, although these scales claim to accentuate gender in positive ways, they tend to deemphasize, or mask gender,

because these scales were actually created mainly for men because men were the people who held a majority of the leadership positions.

In the 1980s, several studies started to change their tone regarding women in the workplace. Women began to hear and read that in order to get ahead in business, they needed to “act more like men” in order to be taken more seriously (Sargent, 1981). Women also began to hear that a good manager was androgynous (high in both masculinity and femininity), which suggested that they had to incorporate some masculine traits in order to truly be taken seriously in the business world (Coder & Spiller, 2013). Thus, it was then that men also began learning more traditional feminine communication skills to be considered good managers. Rosen (1989) writes:

Women had to change. Traditional feminine passivity, compliance, and dependence had to be put aside and the masculine traits of competitiveness and aggressiveness put in their place. Women had to learn how to compete openly with men, to act independently and to assert themselves into the workplace when the situation required, eschewing the submissive demeanor of the traditional female (p. 210).

As such, there were women of the 1980s and 1990s who would “act like men” in order to get further ahead in business. Nichols (1993) writes that women had to wear “bad suits,” and “talk football,” but still did not make significant headway into leadership positions in many organizations.

Then in the 1990s and 2000s, prominent scholar, Alice H. Eagly, mentioned earlier in much of this literature review, continued to research the role gender played in leadership. She conducted multiple foundational studies (1990; 2002; 2003; 2007), and

one study, conducted with Johannesen-Schmidt (2003), was a meta-analysis of 45 studies on different leadership styles. These styles included transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Their study found that females were more transformational than males, and that women also employed more of a reward component with those they led. The study argued that women's behaviors were scrutinized more closely because they tend to hold executive office less frequently (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2003). Further, this study, and others conducted by Eagly, argued that women were more comfortable in leadership positions when they could simply be themselves and did not need to "act like men" in order to succeed.

Continuing with this same trend, a mixed-methods study by Hough (2010) examined the notion of leadership from different points of view, and used different leadership concepts, such as trait, skills, and situational approaches, to aid in defining the leadership styles of the participants. Hough (2010) says, "even though a large number of researchers have attested to the outstanding capabilities of women—leadership potential for administration, and the ideal of a leader, still conforms to the image of a male administrator" (p. iii). Further, the Hough (2010) study found that, "expectations for leaders are still dominated by male-centric traits" (p. 98). For example, her research showed women were still thought to be less committed and less motivated because they are more likely to quit for family-related reasons. Such literature in the field updates the gendered concepts, yet still shows that gender does, in fact, play a role in the leadership style of executive women in higher education.

Hough (2010) continues to research this area, and conducted another study with Holland (2011), from Texas A & M University. This Hough and Holland (2011) study

focused on identifying “contextual, societal, and cultural factors that have influenced the styles of leadership of female executives in higher education” (p. 1). Their research study profiled the leadership styles of 183 female administrators at senior-level positions at accredited institutions of higher education in the United States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Their research measured the women’s leadership styles in order to identify the factors that positively influenced the success of those female administrators. This study explored the participants’ beliefs with regard to barriers, leadership styles, personal characteristics, and factors affecting women in higher education administration, as well as demographic and institutional information. Findings from the study reveal several common factors that determine success and/or failure for female administrators in higher education, such as the lack of female network opportunities and the lack of female-oriented professional development opportunities.

Another study, Yanez and Moreno (2007), is often cited in the literature because it is a foundational piece of international leadership work. Although international higher educational systems differ, this study offers a unique perspective of leadership and communication in relation to cultural barriers and bias. Specifically, Yanez and Moreno (2007) analyzed the relationship between women’s leadership and their role in the transforming organizations of higher education. Yanez and Moreno (2007) studied eight cases of women who held high managerial posts in Spanish universities. They found that women acted more cohesively and were more flexible than their male counterparts. This research offered keen insight into the innovative role that women play in higher education institutions. It offered further evidence of how, why, and under what circumstances women reach positions of power in university organizations. Finally, their

article offered a look at the social and interpersonal aspects of communication that impact women leaders; it is one of the few articles that provided evidence about the more personal details of women's leadership work connecting leadership and interpersonal communication. This article offered conclusions about women leaders in terms of organizational culture and organizational change; it showcased that women leaders have a difficult time ascending to executive positions and being valued in the positions once they achieve them.

After surveying the literature in the field, it is evident that, in the United States, “women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership and, in fact, women, more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders” (Eagly, 2007, p. 1). Yet, research shows that more people still seem to prefer male bosses over female bosses because of the misogyny and resistance that exists for women. Thus, it is more difficult for women to become leaders and succeed in male-dominated leadership roles because of people's expectations and perceptions of what it means to be an effective leader. People expect women to “act like women,” meaning they employ kindness, warmth, gentleness, and concern for others—traits often labeled as weakness. In addition, women leaders are also expected to “act like men” employing traits like confidence, self-direction, and aggressiveness—traits often labeled as strength. As such, women are instantly at a leadership disadvantage because not only do the leadership opportunities not exist for women, but the women's experience is not even acknowledged as a strength nor as significant and/or desirable. Although these are prominent issues facing women leaders today, it must also be noted that the women leaders' experiences “reflect the considerable progress toward gender equality that has

taken place in both attitudes and behavior, coupled with the lack of complete attainment of this goal” (Eagly, 2007, p. 1). There have, in fact, been strides toward leadership equality in higher education, yet more literature that examines women’s experiences and tells women’s stories must be produced to continue to bolster and enhance the role of women leaders in higher education administration.

Filling the Gaps in the Literature

This current case study is essential because research must continue in order to augment the literature so as to increase opportunities for women’s advancement into leadership positions in higher education. As a result of this literature review, it is obvious that looking at specific communication behaviors of women leaders in higher education is imperative. More research focusing on current cultural practices and internal hindrances will help fill the gaps in the research. Additional research will also help future women leaders understand why women succeed or fail in leadership positions, as well as understand the distinct role communication and rhetoric play in her success. Specific research questions to guide this current case study are: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication factors shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? As Chin (2011) says, “Women are still underrepresented in leadership roles and still considered an anomaly compared to men when in high positions of leadership especially within institutions of higher education” (p. 1). Thus, examining differences between how men and women lead, is often less about *what* they do than in the different *experiences* they face when they lead.

More research in this field, within a rhetorical feminist framework, can help to curtail bias against women and increase the number of women in executive positions in higher education, overall. In the next chapter of this dissertation, the specific methodology of the current study will be outlined.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how gender and communication affect women administrators at institutions of higher education in Southern California. Specifically, this study revealed the leadership and communication factors that alter the ways women lead in higher education. Thus, this study involved the examination of former and present women administrators, and sought to discover the ways that interpersonal communication factors affect the leadership styles of women administrators in higher education. Data from this study informs leaders about the various ways in which their leadership behaviors are affected by gender and communication. Being a tenured Communication Studies professor myself, with possible aspirations to move into administration, I was curious to know if being a woman alters the experience for women in executive positions in higher education. My hope for this study has always been to engage readers in a dialogue about women's leadership in higher education by examining the background and leadership experiences of women administrators in order to understand the specific communication factors that contribute most to their success as a leader.

This qualitative case study intended to look at the more interpersonal issues women face, with the goal of ultimately enhancing the value of women in the academic workplace, and also provide a clear pathway for women in the future. In order to better understand why women succeed in leadership positions and to understand the distinct role communication plays in their success, interviews were conducted with the following research questions: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and

current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication factors shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? Ultimately, data from this study reveals the change in the demographic profile of the higher education leader, and offers a rationale for why women are successful in leadership positions. Studying the leadership traits and styles, as well as the interpersonal communication behaviors of actual leaders, documents reasons gender inequities still exist today in terms of educational leadership positions. Directly following this introduction, multiple methodological components including research tradition, research setting, data sources and sample, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and researcher roles are discussed.

Research Tradition

The research tradition selected to use for my qualitative research study was the multiple case study approach. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) claim that the multiple case study approach helps maximize variation in order to “represent diverse cases to fully display multiple perspectives about the cases” (p. 104). Further, Merriam (2009) argues, that for case study, “the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (p. 43). This research tradition was most appropriate for my study because it provided a greater depth of understanding of the problems, and helped establish meaning across different cases and contexts. Interviewing and observing multiple women leaders in higher education provided the opportunity for discovery in terms of the intersection between gender, communication, and leadership. Ultimately, a multiple case study approach allowed for manifold conclusions to be drawn in order to

help alter policy and practice at community colleges and provide recommendations for future practice to both leaders and academic researchers.

The multiple case study tradition also lends itself to strong, open-ended research questions. Good case study research questions were written intentionally to get the subjects to delve into their experiences and allow for themes and generalizations to emerge. My research questions were directly aligned with the case study tradition, and allowed me to investigate the intersections of gender, communication, and leadership. The research questions fostered in-depth data collection to make comparisons and search for patterns and answers about women's leadership styles and behaviors; using this case study approach stimulated exploration and description of women's experiences. Glesne (2011) claims, multiple case study "allows [for] investigation of a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (p. 22), and the case study tradition also provided strategic value which "lies in its ability to draw attention to what can be learned from the single case" (Glesne, 2011, p. 22). Ultimately, the case study approach helped illuminate the roles gender plays in the leadership styles of women leaders in higher education. A case study tradition allowed my female subjects to acknowledge their unique higher educational executive experiences, and reveal new social understandings of their communication behaviors to provide a heuristic view of women's leadership, overall.

Research Setting and Context

For any qualitative research study, one must outline the research setting and context. Like Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, "Sampling involves decisions not only about which people to observe or interview, but also about settings, events, and social processes" (p. 30). Thus, there are two specific sampling strategies that were employed in

order to set boundaries and frame the research study. This combination of strategies included a stratified purposeful strategy which helped illustrate subgroups and facilitated comparisons (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990). In addition, I used a criterion sampling strategy that involved selecting cases and settings that met a predetermined criteria of importance (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990). Using this combination of strategies engendered strong comparisons and, ultimately, allowed information-rich data to emerge. Next, the specific criteria for choosing these sampling strategies is outlined as well as specific research site descriptions, and a brief discussion about issues of access in these locations.

There were two main criteria for this research study. First, only Southern California community colleges that possessed multiple women leaders in, or were in, executive positions such as Chancellors, Presidents, and Vice-Presidents were used for this study. Second, the criteria included women leaders who were in their executive positions for three or more years or had been in their position for more than three years prior to retirement. This chosen criterion helped provide reliable data that could be compared from group to group. Thus, a stratified purposeful sampling strategy was also appropriate here, in combination with criterion, because it not only added credibility to the study, but “capture[d] major variations [because] each of the strata, would constitute a fairly homogeneous sample” (Patton, 1990, p. 174).

A majority of the interviewees were currently employed in one specific Southern California Community College district that offers degrees and job training certificates in approximately 170 fields, and more than 100,000 individuals are trained each year in workforce skills (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2014). This district, ACC, a pseudonym to protect confidentiality, has been serving their community

since the 1950s, and is a multiple college district. I selected this district because it was rich with women leaders and met the criteria: approximately 50% of the managers and executives were women, including Deans, Vice-Presidents, Presidents, and Chancellors, at the time I conducted the research. These statistics indicate that ACC was a worthy place to study the intersection of gender, leadership, and communication of their women executives.

Two of the interviewees were employed at two different higher education districts, SCC and MCC, pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Both of these districts employ women at all at all levels of their executive teams. SCC has been serving their community since the early 1900s, has minimal turn-over in the administration, and roughly 55% of the executives are women. MCC has been serving their community since the early 1960s, and men are actually underrepresented by about 10% in this district. Based on the most recent data, approximately 55% of the executives are women at MCC. Both of these community college sites were worthy places to study the role of gender in higher educational leadership. Ultimately, as an interpretivist researcher, I purposefully selected these settings because of the women who lead there, and to study “information-rich cases in depth [and] to learn a great deal about issues of central importance to [my] purpose of research” (Patton, 1990, p. 46).

Finally, issues of access must also be defined and discussed. Ultimately, I had access to these three sites that met my specific criteria because of my own personal years in the academic world. I have been teaching Communication Studies for eighteen years and have taught in multiple districts and institutions throughout my career. This experience lends itself to people and places; I have been cultivating relationships for

years at all of these institutions, working with multiple leaders, which facilitated easier access into these sites. Besides my teaching experience, I have also been very active in professional development and committee work at several of these Southern California institutions, so I was familiar with the gatekeepers and negotiators. Overall, my academic career helped to gain access to women leaders at the sites, and my scholarly communication work through the years was also beneficial in creating and maintaining these relationships.

Data Sources and Sample

Qualitative research, according to Rossman and Rallis (2012), has two distinct features: the researcher is the means through which the study is conducted, and the purpose is to learn about some aspect of the social world. My study was designed to obtain real-life experiences of women executives in higher education. The next section of this chapter describes the data source, the sampling strategies and recruitment processes, the characteristics of the subjects, and the means to mitigate the ethical issues involved.

Data source. Only one main data source, women administrators, were used in this case study. Seven of the eight women were currently serving in their leadership position, while one was recently retired from her academic institution. Since my study sought to uncover the role of gender in educational leadership, these women were critical to the study. The women leaders were interviewed in one-on-one settings, in environments that were comfortable for them so that they could easily tell their stories. Six of the eight interviews took place in their respective offices, while the two others took place in restaurants near their community colleges. Further, transcripts, as well as audio

recordings, of the interviews were used to collect data. In order to gather evidence, specific sampling strategies were employed.

Sampling strategies. The sampling strategies that were used in this study included a combination of criterion and stratified purposeful, because the women met my inclusion criteria and were then organized by strata, or subgroups, in order to make comparisons for the information-rich data to emerge (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990). For qualitative research, sampling is purposeful because the objective is to yield insight as well as understanding of the cases under investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 21012). Thus, I used this strategy to recruit women who met my criteria, and who could be easily grouped according to their position in their higher educational institution.

Ultimately, each of the women were recruited in the same way. After screening for the specific criteria and deciding that they did meet my criteria, I sent a formal email invitation introducing myself as a researcher and invited them to participate. I also used a networking sampling strategy, because I used my current academic position, and my professional contacts, to recruit women to participate. Some of the invitations were sent after being introduced by a mutual colleague online. Upon their acceptance of participation, I sent a follow-up email message that included more specific details of the study. This message was clear, concise, and made sure to highlight the benefits of participating in the study, and the expectations of how the study would be used in a variety of academic contexts.

Sample characteristics. Because I used a criterion stratified purposeful combination strategy, all of the sources needed to meet specific criteria. They needed to be women who were currently in, or had been in, high executive positions such as

Chancellors, Presidents, and Vice-Presidents. Further, my criteria included women leaders who had been in their positions for at least three years; they could be in their executive position, currently, or be retired from their academic institution. Thus, all eight of the women meet my specific criteria and consented to being a participant. Even with their consent, however, I must acknowledge some of the ethical issues that could have arisen.

Ethical issues and protecting my subjects. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) claim, “Ethical issues go through the entire process of an interview investigation, and potential ethical concerns should be taken into consideration from the very start of an investigation to the final report” (p. 62). My study specifically asked women to discuss some personal information about their leadership experiences; therefore, protecting the identities of the women who participated in my study was of paramount importance to me, as a researcher. Any risk could jeopardize their reputations, as well as the respect for, and the validity of, the research findings. Thus, as a researcher, I thought “through, in advance, the value issues and ethical dilemmas that may arise during the interview process” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 63).

There are a few strategies that I used to support and facilitate an inclusive and participatory approach to protecting the anonymity of my subjects. First, I conducted the interviews in private locations where outsiders could not infer a connection that our meeting was pursuant to a research study. Second, I protected the identity of the women by giving each of them pseudonyms, as well as disguising any identifiable characteristics, such as their position or academic institution. Finally, in accordance with federal regulations, I submitted my human subjects’ research application to the Standing

Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at California State University, Northridge, for their review and was approved. With these mitigating processes in place, the participants in my study could feel comfortable telling their stories so that the role of gender could be discussed and examined thoroughly, openly, and honestly. Ultimately, I delicately handled all of the data sources and took the above “measures to ensure the confidentiality of the [women] involved in [my] research study while they are being analyzed and discussed with collaborators and broader audiences” (Beck, 2001, p. 53).

Data Collection Instruments

I conducted my research study in order to determine the role gender plays in the leadership of women executives in higher education. Using a small number of women administrators, I conducted personal, individual, in-depth, one-on-one interviews. In this next section, I will define my data collection instruments which include: (a) the research invitation, (b) the informed consent form, and (c) the interview protocol. Clear documents and a strong understanding of the interview process helped ensure that the data collection was conducted appropriately and successfully. The women leaders were interviewed separately, after being invited to participate, via a formal research invitation.

Research invitation. The research invitation provided a brief explanation of the study and its purpose, and was e-mailed to all participants once they were identified as meeting the criteria. The email invitation asked that an interview time be set by the participant and the researcher. This invitation also clearly acknowledged that absolutely no personally identifiable characteristics, such as their names or college affiliations, would appear in the study, in any way. It was made thoroughly clear that participating in this study was completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time. Once the

leaders accepted, and an interview has been scheduled, we reviewed more information about confidentiality and discussed the details of the study noted in the consent form.

Informed consent form. The informed consent form further explained the purpose of the study, and was signed by all of the participants prior to beginning the interview. The consent form stated that participation was voluntary, and explained that there were very limited risks to participating in this study. The only possible risks or, rather, discomforts, associated with the procedures described in this study included mild emotional discomfort and/or embarrassment. Given that the purpose of the study was to focus specifically on gender issues, the interview questions were personal and, for some, possibly sensitive. The women could have felt uneasy about answering some of the interview questions, and were able to decline not to answer any of the questions they feel uneasy about at any time. The informed consent further acknowledged that all of the women's information would be kept confidential by using pseudonyms and storing all of the data in a password-protected computer. Further, the leaders were guaranteed that any written documents, like field-notes or observations, would be de-identified and kept in a locked private file cabinet, accessed only by my key. Copies of the informed consent, as well as the research invitation, can be found in the appendix of this document (See Appendix A and Appendix B).

Interview protocol. Once the invitation was accepted and consent granted, the interview became the primary means for data collection. Thus, the interview protocol was a crucial document for data collection success. An interview protocol is a guide or a list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order (Bernard, 1994). The interview protocol was a very powerful, qualitative data tool because it was the main tool

used to elicit responses and gather rich data in order to evaluate my research questions. Ultimately, the interview protocol was based on my research questions and research purpose (See Appendix C). During the interview, I used member checks to review and gather feedback after the interviews were conducted; doing this ultimately added validity to the data (Creswell, 2012).

The interview protocol included fourteen main questions that were strategically tied to the research questions and were strategically organized to encourage conversation. I grouped the questions into three categories: leadership, gender, and communication. All of the questions were slightly broad in scope and were organized deductively and topically. In other words, I started with more general questions, and then moved to more specific, follow-up questions that related to the three main topics of the study.

One example of a main question was: “How would you describe your oral and written communication style when you lead?” I then followed up with: “Why do you think this is so?” and I then probed the interviewee by asking, “Can you provide an example?” This follow-up question allowed me to collect data from what the executives’ said, and was where notable data emerged. Another example was when I asked the women the main question, “Have you experienced sexism in the workplace? In other words, has anyone ever treated you differently because you are a woman?” Then, based on their answer to this main question, I followed up with: “If yes, in what ways?” or, “If no, does this surprise you?” I also used probing questions here, as needed, in order to get to very specific gender details.

Finally, another example is when I started with a main question about stereotypes: “Do you think there are stereotypes that exist for female leaders?” I then followed up

with “If yes, can you please explain,” and then probed with, “Can you offer some examples?” If they answered “no,” to the main question, I followed up with, “Does this surprise you?” These questions helped uncover whether the women had, or had not, been stereotyped, and allowed me the unique opportunity to understand their executive experiences. Overall, the questions in my interview protocol helped me get the personal and emotional answers, but, in a way, that kept the interviewees comfortable. In the next section of this chapter, I will outline the data collection procedure which was the actual interview, or rather, the “occasion for close researcher-participant interaction” (Glesne, 2011, p. 134).

Data Collection Procedures

In this case study, the one main data collection procedure used was one-on-one, personal interviews. The interviews were aligned with my research questions, as well as the purpose of the study, which was to gain insight on women executive’s leadership experiences. The interview was selected as the primary method because it had the potential to elicit rich, thick descriptions. Further, it gave me the opportunity to clarify testimonials and probe for additional information (Creswell, 2012).

Pre-interview procedures. There are few logistical issues that needed to be addressed as I planned to conduct my interviews. First, I did not provide any incentives or compensation, and was clear about this from the outset. Second, scheduling was another logistical concern. I deferred to the women’s schedules, remaining extremely flexible, and making sure not to schedule the interviews too close to the beginning of the semester, nor too close to final exam week. All of the interviews were scheduled between August and October of 2015. Finally, all of the interviews were face-to-face interviews,

so locations needed to be secured to encourage open and honest communication, as well as privacy. It was of utmost importance to me that the leaders were comfortable in the interview environment. Thus, the interviewees choose the locations; six of the eight interviews took place in their academic offices, while the other two took place at restaurants near their community college sites.

Personal interview process. Glesne (2011) notes, “Qualitative research provides many opportunities to engage feelings because it is a distance-reducing experience” (p. 134). Specifically, this qualitative study used semi-structured interviews as its data collection procedure. Bernard (1994) writes, “semi-structured interviews work very well in projects where you are dealing with managers, bureaucrats, and elite members of a community—people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time” (p. 210). A semi-structured interview allowed me the freedom to probe and follow-up with the interviewees, and, as a researcher, it allowed me stay organized and focused. Glesne (2011) writes, in semi-structured interviews you know what questions you want to ask and are prepared to develop new questions in order to follow unexpected leads that arise. Further, Glesne (2011) notes, that it is critical that you pursue all points of interest with variant expressions. Therefore, data collection procedures were scaled in order to be adapted to a smaller scope in this applied setting.

Overall, I conducted eight in-depth interviews, using the questions developed for my interview protocol. Like the protocol suggests, I began by asking main questions and then supplemented those questions with follow-up questions and probative questions. The interview process was critical to my study’s success. Briggs (1996) argues that interviews are “based on sensitivity to the relationship between the communicative norms that are

presupposed by the interview and those that are more broadly characteristic of the population under study” (Briggs, 1996, p. 94). Thus, I utilized my communication studies background and expertise during each of the interviews in order to stay on-track and continue, “building on what the participant has begun to share” (Seidman, 2006, p. 81).

Finally, during the interviews I jotted notes and used a digital recording device to record the interview with the participant’s prior consent. The audio recordings were transcribed and, in the end, destroyed and redacted to codes and file names. Bernard (1994) suggests that one ask the interviewees if they are comfortable with the interviewer taking notes and advises researchers to take notes because, without notes, one runs the risk of losing a lot of data. Thus, with each of the women’s consent, I jotted down an abundance of notes to help with data collection.

Post-interview procedures. After conducting the interviews, I hand wrote multiple pages of field notes as a way of systematically recording impressions, insights, and emerging conjectures (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In the field notes, I included descriptive information about the settings, actions and reactions of the leaders, and also recorded my personal reflections, ideas, questions, and concerns based on the responses of the interviewees (Glesne, 2011). These fieldnotes became a practical way for me to remember many of the important details from the interviews; the field notes were written immediately after the interviews so that important details were not forgotten. These personal reflection field notes were added to the interview transcripts in order to provide additional context to the interviews, and to make the women’s stories more complete. Data collection for this study took place in the fall of 2015, after receiving final approval from the California State University, Northridge Office of Research and Sponsored

Projects during the summer of 2015. The data collection process concluded in the winter of 2015.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once I collected all of my data, I needed to “manage, organize, and make sense of all of the separate pieces of accumulated information” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 134). At this point in the process, the information was still raw-data, because I had not yet transformed the data into something worthwhile and meaningful. My data analysis procedures allowed me to draw inferences from comments made during the interviews. A variety of strategies were used to analyze the various sources of data previously collected and can be understood in two broad categories: preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis.

Preliminary data analysis. The preliminary analysis began with the transcription, which is defined by Davidson (2009) as a “process that is theoretical, selective, interpretive, and representational” (p. 37). I hired two transcribers to transcribe the data verbatim, while I spent my time coding and analyzing results. In addition, the transcription was denaturalized transcription, which means the text retains links to oral discourse forms. I worked closely with both transcribers in order to align our expectations. In addition, I reviewed several of the initial transcriptions to check for impeccable accuracy, so if any misunderstandings or errors were identified, they were addressed immediately. I met regularly with both transcribers online and in-person, especially at the outset of transcription, to review the transcripts for accuracy, and determine whether the transcriber’s work was dependable. I followed the data analysis process of reading through the transcriptions of participant interviews and field notes to

get a really good feel for the data, and to try and make clear sense of what the women were saying (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Transcription entails a translation, or transformation, of sound and/or image from recordings to text (Duranti, 2007; Slembrouck, 2007).

Ultimately, as a preliminary first step before thematic analysis, I organized the collected data, checked to determine the accuracy of transcriptions, and performed very minor editing corrections to field notes. I familiarized myself with all of the data by first reading, then re-reading, the transcriptions from the interviews to gain an overall sense of the whole before deconstructing it into individual parts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I also listened to the recorded interviews and checked, and rechecked, the transcription and field notes before beginning the full thematic analysis and interpretation. Overall, I “examine[d] each piece of information and [built] on insights and hunches gained during data collection” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 139).

Thematic analysis. The first step in my thematic data analysis was to generate categories and consider the big ideas and themes that emerged. These categories were related to my research questions and were based, in part, in the literature and theoretical framework. This process allowed me to dissect and classify the data in a meaningful way. I then needed to condense the information into smaller parts; thus, I developed a coding system which was part of the reduction process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Coding is “a system of classification—the process of noting what is of interest or significance, identifying different segments of the data, and labeling them to organize the information contained in the data” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 142). Codes were created to describe data patterns, and “coding helped [me] to develop a more specific focus or more

relevant question” (Glesne, 2011, p. 191). As a researcher, during thematic analysis, I exercised sound judgment when coding, and categorized the information to accurately report and analyze the findings of my research. I also “analyzed relationships among the coded data, [and was] cognizant of what was not said or demonstrated in some way” (Glesne, 2011, p. 195). Ultimately, the preliminary data analysis, the thematic analysis, and the interpretation processes lead to the formulation of veritable conclusions, and allowed me to create distinct patterns, make comparisons, harvest explanations, and shape models (Gibbs, 2007).

Researcher Roles

A researcher’s role, her perceptions and bias, must be acknowledged in order for a research study to be complete and thoughtful. Thus, I have been acutely aware of my own role throughout this process and aware of how my subjective nature of knowing can impact the results of my study (Maxwell, 1996). Not only was I a doctoral student enrolled in an educational leadership program during the process of this research study, but I was a female professor and department chair at a Southern California community college. One may argue these roles could have acted as drawbacks, but in this case, they were advantageous to the research because I was able to clearly understand the interviewees and knew I had to be consistently mindful throughout the research process. Reflexivity, and being mindful at every stage of the research process, is vital to the success and relevance of a study. Like Glesne (2011) says, “reflexivity generally involves critical reflection on how researcher, research participants, setting, and research procedures interact and influence each other” (p. 151). From the very beginning I was

conscious of how I conducted myself in an attempt to limit bias and preconceived notions.

First, many may argue that being a female could have affected my study, overall. However, I know that I was able to be thoughtful and attentive to my own assumptions about gender, communication, and leadership even though I am a female. Being a woman with experiences as a higher educational leader could have an impact on how I interpret data, yet I was able to separate my own experiences from the interviewees' experiences and acknowledge that being woman can help the study, more than hinder it. I cannot stop being a woman, yet I was able to be mindful that the interviewees would make some assumptions about my own gendered communication behaviors.

Second, my role as a full-time Communication Studies professor could have affected the way I conducted the interviews, and could have impacted the way I analyzed the data. For eighteen years, I have been actively teaching the subject of human communication, helping students to establish their identities and to understand abstract communication concepts. I have vast knowledge in the field of communication theory, and have regular discussions about the intersection of gender and communication in my professional life. During my years as a professor, I have also been working to become a more competent communicator in the workplace, and teaching my students to be more competent communicators in their lives. I believe these skills were beneficial to this dissertation about gender, communication, and leadership because I had the unique opportunity to understand communicative concepts such as nonverbal cues and intercultural communication, on a more comprehensive level.

Finally, my role as a department chair at the time of the study put me in a leadership role on my campus and helped shaped my frame of reference. Although I was extremely conscientious to keep my own experiences separate, being a leader myself could have guided my thinking as I collected the data. For example, I used my paraphrasing skills from my years as a communication scholar and leader to aid in data collection, rather than hinder it. Thus, I was extremely cognizant not to inject my own experiences during the interviews. Overall, in this situation, I was a researcher first, yet I was also an institutional actor who needed to mitigate her predisposition to the subject. Because I did not want my myriad of roles to affect my data collection and analysis, I implemented a variety of strategies to mitigate my bias; it was not enough to simply be conscientious and thoughtful of one's role as a researcher, but to also implement strategies in an attempt to maintain distance and objectivity while still connecting on an interpersonal level.

There were three distinct strategies I implemented to mitigate my bias and help increase my trustworthiness: thick and rich description, peer review, and journaling. First, thick and rich description, as a strategy, will “draw the reader more closely into the story or narrative to increase coherence and to evoke feelings for and a sense of connection with the participants in the study” (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104). Acting in this way adds credibility to my research and showcases its relevance. A second strategy was to engage in peer review (Maxwell, 1996). I often inquired and tracked my assumptions and interpretations of the data by getting the opinions of trained professionals, such as colleagues and professors. My participant's information was not discussed in any specific ways throughout the entire peer review process. These reviewers simply helped me

enhance my understanding of the data, and helped me gauge my subjectivity and frame of reference while maintaining confidentiality. Ultimately, the peer review process helped me avoid traps and reminded me that issues of perception could have played a role in the process and outcome of my research.

The third and final strategy I implemented was to keep a journal in order to be mindful of my roles and observations throughout the entire research process. Like Watt (2007) claims, “The journal naturally [becomes] a place to bring together participant data, notes on the methodology literature, my thoughts and ideas, and reading responses” (p. 92). Further, writing in a reflective journal “lead to a more sophisticated understanding of not only reflexivity, but all aspects of research methodology” (Watt, 2007, p. 84). I am confident that this journal helped stimulate more conscious thought on my subject. Ultimately, my researcher roles may have yield some preconceived notions, yet my use of multiple, reflective strategies and mindfulness allowed me to facilitate learning and research as free of bias as possible.

Summary

In summary, this chapter covered various topics and issues related to this dissertation’s methodology. A multiple case study approach was used to understand the intersection of gender, communication, and leadership within three community college districts in Southern California. Two specific sampling strategies were employed in order to frame the study: a stratified purposeful strategy and a criterion sampling strategy. Further, in-depth, personal interviews were the main data collection procedure, and all of the interviews were aligned with my research questions which are: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher

education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication factors shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? Finally, the data collected during the interviews was analyzed after being transcribed and coded, while researcher bias was mitigated through multiple strategies. In the next chapter, the findings of the actual study are presented with detailed discussion of each finding.

Chapter IV: Findings

The previous three chapters of this dissertation presented the research problem, the scholarly context of the research topics, and the methodological framework for this study. The research problem, questions, and rationale were described in chapter one. The theoretical framework guiding this study was synthesized in chapter two, as was recent scholarly literature that addressed the specific issues facing women in higher educational leadership positions. Chapter three explained the methodical approach utilized for this research study and described the interview protocol and participants in the study.

This chapter presents data collected using a qualitative, multi-case study designed to understand how gender informs leadership for women leaders in higher education. Specifically, this study examined the professional and personal backgrounds, as well as the leadership experiences, of eight women administrators in order to better understand the communication factors that contribute to their success. Further, this study sought to examine the various and important ways that interpersonal communication factors affected the leadership styles of these women. Once the live, in-person, 50-75 minute interviews were complete and transcribed, and all observations had been documented, the data was read and re-read multiple times, and coded based on the three research questions: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication dynamics shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education?

Interviewing eight unique women executives in higher education provided the opportunity to hear their voices and allow the women to tell their stories. Chapter four presents qualitative interview from two Chancellors, four Presidents, and two Vice-Presidents at community colleges in Southern California. (See Table 4.1 for complete information on the participants and the interviews). Each of the interviews yielded responses indicating that women play a significant role in higher educational leadership. As one woman exclaimed:

I think that education, the changes that have happened in education, and the metamorphosis in education is because of women. Education was predominantly men for so many years, and went on so much the same for so many years. It has to be women coming in that have made the substantial changes. It's certainly opened the door for others... because we created a look of opportunity (Smith).

Table 4.1 Participant Information Matrix

Participant Pseudonym	Community College Position	Length of interview	Month and Year of Interview
Cooper	President	1:02:46	August 2015
Brooks	President	1:16:52	August 2015
Smith	Vice-President	1:28:03	August 2015
Sanchez	Chancellor	1:04:05	September 2015
Mead	Vice-President	1:02:34	September 2015
Garcia	President	47:41	October 2015
Jones	Chancellor	43:16	October 2015
Foster	President	40:57	November 2015
Eight Total Participants		Total Time Transcribed: 484 minutes and 54 seconds	

Each of the women provided unique insights into their experiences as higher education executives. All of the interviews were eye-opening on many levels; there were similarities in their responses, yet there were also stark differences. Chapter four presents key findings yielded from the eight qualitative interviews. The following seven definitive findings emerged from this study:

Finding 1.	Collaborative Decision-Making is of Paramount Importance for Women
Finding 2.	Communication Skills Greatly Impact Leadership for Women
Finding 3.	Gender Inherently Affects Leadership for Women
Finding 4.	Stereotypical Conduct and Exclusion Exists for Women in Leadership Positions
Finding 5.	Balancing Professional Roles and Family Responsibilities is Challenging and Centers Around the Family for Women
Finding 6.	Women Executive Administrators Define Themselves as Educators
Finding 7.	Interconnection Cultivates Strong Interpersonal Relationships in a Professional Context for Women

Table 4.2 Data findings regarding the role of gender in higher educational leadership.

The following discussion presents each finding with supporting evidence describing how the data revealed the finding in this study. The data consisted of a range of experiences, that “brought order, structure, and meaning to the masses of data collected” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 135). This chapter summarizes the data collected in a meaningful way that allows the reader to better understand the reality of academia for women in executive positions at community colleges in Southern California. Several illustrative data excerpts are taken directly from interview transcripts in an attempt to portray the multiple perceptions and capture the complexity of the

subject matter. The emphasis throughout this chapter is to allow women in leadership positions to speak for themselves. The women interviewed were candid and exceptionally detailed in sharing their experiences through vivid stories.

Finding One: Collaborative Decision-Making is of Paramount Importance for Women

After discussing decision-making with the executives, the data revealed that the women leaders consider themselves collaborative decision makers. One woman indicated, “My style is very collaborative. I am very process-oriented, and I want people to go through the process” (Brooks). Although some of the women did not use the word “collaborative” explicitly, they all did, in fact, talk about the desire to include people in their decision-making. All eight of the executives discussed their desire to seek out options, and how those people impacted by the decisions need to be included in the process in order for the executives to get buy-in. One woman stated:

I think [it] is important that you involve people who are impacted by the decisions in talking about the issues, staying issue-focused, and searching for solutions that will work for everybody. If you force it, if you’re autocratic, and force a [unilateral] decision on someone, that they had no part in it, yet it impacts them, people will find a way to get around the decision and sabotage the success (Cooper).

Two other executives said:

My style has always been collaborative, and has always been somewhat participatory...I like to listen to different perspectives, read the material, and finally come to some kind of conclusion and decision. If you bring people along,

if they know why you've made a decision, they may not agree with it, but at least they have a basis of understanding, and why you've done what you've done...if you include people in the decision-making process, they accept that as a sign of respect. That you respect their opinion, their perspective, that you're including them in the process" (Sanchez).

I fundamentally believe in inclusion...it's just kind of my nature, to empower stakeholders and constituent groups to not only engage, but to own processes that will result in decisions. I have no problem making decisions, but I much prefer that my decision-making be informed by the synergistic qualities that [emerge] from the stakeholders and the constituent groups being engaged...I'm not authoritarian. I'm not dictatorial. I may decide the color of the carpet without consultation, but elements of the institution, our mission, our educational master plan, our facilities master plan, our integrated planning, all of that is richly informed by having significant input from stakeholders (Foster).

The data revealed that the women want to be, and feel the need to be, collaborative in order for the best solutions to emerge. The data also revealed, however, that when needed, they will make tough decisions and be decisive. It was clear that collaborative did not mean "push over," but, rather, knowledgeable and firm. Illustrating this, another executive said:

I'm very much...an engaging leader. In other words, I ask opinions of people. I'm very definitive. I really want my managers to feel free to give me their opinion.

But, at the end of the day, I'm going to make the final decision; they may not like it, but that's my decision [which] will be the final decision. I do not flower anything at all, I am very direct and I am a person of my word (Smith).

Another woman said:

I can't describe my style because in order to be effective in any position, you need to approach things in a situational way. I believe that anybody leading anything needs to have enough breadth and depth and skill competencies to know when, and to what degree, to pull which capabilities out of the tool kit and use them. Decision-making depends on the circumstances (Jones).

Further, another woman said:

I do, regularly, have consultation with all employee groups on a regular basis. I try very hard to avoid doing anything impulsively... Yet I'm authoritative... I'm not going to sit on something for a month. I want things to be done and I will get the input if needed, but I will make that final decision and then move on (Garcia).

Throughout the interviews, it was clear that the executives valued good decision-making and understood exactly how they make decisions, because they did not flinch when offering their responses; they willingly provided clear answers, and when they discussed the desire and necessity to include other people on their campuses in their decision-making, it was obvious that they truly meant it. Ultimately, the data revealed that the women make decisions confidently and thoughtfully. They are not easily bullied by others, yet take what others think and feel into consideration. Typically, the only decisions the women would make without consultation with others were personnel issues

that involved privacy and discretion. Like one woman said, “The only situation where I act without consultation of others is a personnel matter; obviously, those I have to decide on my own after an investigation and following the HR process” (Brooks). True collaboration helps these executives lead effectively to maintain a strong, cohesive academic environment.

Finding Two: Communication Skills Greatly Impact Leadership

When the executives were asked about their oral and written communication skills, most of the women expressed confidence in both. Some of the women preferred one style over the other, yet all were able to share how their communication skills play a significant role in their leadership. The women expressed the importance of communication for a leader, and focused on how their communication skills have developed over the years. The women also spoke about how one’s communication depends on one’s values, as a woman. As one leader said, “Well, I think that how you communicate depends on your values. I think that if you value other people...then I think that people will value an opportunity to be communicated with, and to communicate with you” (Jones). Overall, it was evident in the data that all of the women knew that the stronger their communication skills were, the better connection they had to the campus community at-large.

Specifically, for written communication, the leaders spoke about truly liking the process of writing and the importance of getting the content right; they outlined the fact that they strived to make their messages as clear, precise, and factual as possible. For example, some of the leaders said:

I write well, I'm very comfortable writing, and I'm a very logical person, especially when I write. I organize my thoughts in a logical manner, and...in communicating with an entire campus, I was extremely comfortable with written communication as my primary source, and I would describe my style as clear, logical, and frequent (Cooper).

I love to write. So, I think I have a very good report-writing style. I don't know that I have a lot of creative writing...I'm not a super-creative person, but I'm a good writer. I have strong English skills, strong verbal and punctuation skills, I've got good vocabulary—I mean I'm not one of those people who just uses all this, you know, extra vocabulary, but I have a good command of the English language and I love to write. So, I have no problem writing whatever needs to be written because it's just something I really enjoy doing (Smith).

My writing skills are excellent. [Laughs] I think the strength that I learned in graduate school was writing...I've written Grants, I've written speeches for Presidents [and] Chancellors, and that's the one thing, some Chancellors are flowery, some Chancellors are direct and to the point – so I've learned that, 'what's his style?' I don't think I've met – oh I had an Interim Chancellor, [who] was a woman – I was going to say, 'I think they've all been men' (Sanchez).

The data revealed that their strong writing skills help them stay connected with people on their campus. Specifically, the Presidents who were interviewed discussed the

necessity of writing a campus address or newsletter either weekly or, at a minimum, monthly. One President says, “I do a newsletter, fall/spring, and, I have my staff double [and] triple-check it, especially if there’s something that I’m concerned about and it has an impact on the college” (Garcia). Here is how other Presidents explain such communication acts:

I wrote an update to the campus every Monday for my last two years on the job, [on] any issues that came up where people needed a lot of content, so that they could process and think it through. I would share with the campus, weekly, as issues came up (Cooper).

My written Monday Report – I write those almost exclusively. If I do not write it, the person has a byline. Originally, I wrote all of them, so there was no need to put my name. Now we are starting to just put my name because we are getting different people contributing to it. So, just to be clear, I do write them myself. My assistant doesn’t write them. She puts the report together only (Brooks).

I write; people are very impressed with my communication...I write a Monday morning update, and it’s not what’s going on at the College, it’s thoughts about who we are...thoughts about this noble calling that we call education, and everybody’s role in it. It’s that kind of thing. So, people are appreciative, and they call this report out as examples (Foster).

One of the presidents does not write a campus newsletter, but holds open office hours for all campus employees, similar to how a faculty member is typically required to do with students. This executive says:

I hold open office hours...at least one a week where people can come in [with] a question that they want to ask, or they [may] have something they want to share, or they're excited about something, or they're stumped, or if they need to be directed someplace else. So, office hours give people a chance to ask questions with parameters; that is, a person can come in and they can stay for 10 minutes, and, if nobody else is waiting, they can stay until the next person comes (Jones).

This example also shows the power of face-to-face, oral communication. Data revealed that verbal communication was of utmost importance to all of the executives; each of them spoke about dyadic communication, as well as public speaking. The women knew that they needed to be able to talk "off the cuff" because the job demands it, and that their team respects them more when they can speak confidently and with explicit knowledge of the subject. Here are a few of the leader's own voices about the power of their verbal communication skills:

I think I'm a pretty auditory person. I like to have conversations with people because it lets me see their reaction...So, I was a teacher for a long time. I can stand and deliver. And I can do engaging things, and get a group engaged and talking to each other. Think-pair-share is drilled into my brain. And so I'm really comfortable (Mead).

I'm a talker. I'm not obsessive about talking and I don't have to be, you know, front-and-center on everything, I actually prefer, kind of, being a little more in the background and coming to the forefront when I need to...I have no problem speaking in front of a group, I have no problem speaking off the cuff...I don't have to have a prepared speech (Smith).

My oral communication skills are pretty strong. That's one of my strong suits. I am, and this is just from feedback, an excellent speaker. And [my speeches] are pretty motivating and it's [how] I can talk to everybody, and having taught for so long, I know how to teach, I know how to talk to people. So, I think my oral skills are very good (Foster).

In addition to describing their oral communication skills as excellent, many of the women spoke of the desire to keep their oral communication, especially their campus presentations, fun and engaging. One woman discussed adding music to her speeches in order to make the talks more engaging and energetic. She said, "I always associate music, oddly, with the accreditation standards," so she uses music to help tell her stories to the campus. Another leader described herself as being:

Extremely comfortable with people who talk fast [and I am] comfortable with voices overlapping ...that may bother people, but I think it makes [communication] more fun; it's more fun when I'm with other people who I can overlap conversations with and talk very fast with (Cooper).

Overall, it was evident that being an active and dynamic communicator enhanced their leadership in multiple ways. The women have spent most of their careers developing their unique style, and making sure they analyze their audiences and work hard to engage their listeners both in written and oral communication. This finding suggests that women leaders rely heavily on their communication skills in order to be more effective leaders.

Finding Three: Gender Inherently Affects Leadership for Women

All of the executives were asked if being a woman affected their leadership, and seven out of eight women said that, yes, it did. The women gave quick answers like “Yes, it does” and “Absolutely, yes.” One woman put it like this:

I hope so...You work with who you are, and part of who I am is being a woman.

I’m a mom, I’m a daughter, a wife, and all of that comes to work with me. I don’t know that I think that it changes how I think, but gender is real (Mead).

The data revealed several different ways gender impacts their work, and multiple examples were given throughout the qualitative interviews. Three sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis are: (a) disparate treatment for women; (b) socialization of women; and (c) changes in perception of women leaders from the past to present time. These themes highlight particular experiences that these leaders faced in their higher education executive positions.

Disparate treatment. Throughout the interviews the women would express how the perception of women leaders impacts how they are treated. As one executive said, “So, where I think it affects my leadership is the ways in which others perceive women and the way women are supposed to be in the workplace” (Brooks). She continued by sharing a particular incident that happened on her campus. The incident involved social

media, weapons and a student, and the police. When the issue occurred, the President was driving to campus in the morning, so the on-site police were dealing directly with her male vice-president who was already at the college. Once the President arrived on campus, she gave the okay to evacuate the campus and then met with the male police officer, in-person. According to the interviewee's own words:

The police [officer] in command, a male, was already here on campus...we were over at the campus Sheriff Station, the campus had been evacuated, and they were getting ready to do a large briefing. And so, he says to me, 'Oh we'll just take [her male vice-president] in the room' and I said, 'No, you won't. I'm the College President.' [Then] I went in and, of course, I was only one of three women in the room. It was all men. And I just sat and observed and it was fascinating. So, the police officer was willing to walk all over me because I'm short and I'm female. And, I said, 'I don't think so!' Afterwards, after it was all said and done, he came and apologized to me [saying] 'Oh I didn't mean to...' He knew, he must have seen from the look on my face, or when I said, 'No, I'm the College President. I will be going in,' that he offended me (Brooks).

This example seems to indicate that there are deeply engrained assumptions and perceptions, whether conscious or subconscious, associated with women who are in executive roles. Another interviewee indicated:

You know, many communicate with a slightly misogynist attitude – and until you say to them, 'I don't think so,' and you draw the line in the sand, there are instances where they are willing to walk all over you. So, I think that's an issue that women have to be prepared for [in academia] – I mean I have enough self-

confidence to know that I am the College President and that this college is my responsibility, not yours, and you're not going to make that decision (Garcia).

Another woman talked about not being hired for positions, or not even making it to the final interviews, and being told 'You're the best one here, but I won't hire you because you're female' (Mead). This woman continued by saying:

It has given me the ability to work to address issues of diversity from a very personal perspective. I know why women have benefitted more from Equal Opportunity Employment than any other [muted] group. I'm very sensitive to that. And feel very obligated to help bring along more people into the opportunity of leadership. So, it would be, I think, arrogant to say, 'No, it doesn't matter whether I'm a male or a female.' I don't think about it a lot, but I can't imagine it isn't part of who I am or how I respond to things (Mead).

Another President related an experience about a time when a male colleague expressed, out loud, that she was getting things from people because of how she looked at them. She shared the experience like this:

[Once] I overheard a dean say to one of my other colleagues, 'Well, you know, [her name], all she has to do is smile pretty and she will get a grant.' I was livid, and I remember going in and confronting him, and I said, 'You know, with your psychology background, I'm amazed that I'm hearing this' - I think he might've said I wink too much or something. I had to literally explain to him that 'That is not the reason that I get things' (Garcia).

Overall, these interview responses showcase the fact that women are often treated differently than their male counterparts. Women's appearances are often inappropriately

highlighted in conversations, or women leaders are seen as incapable of leading because they lack certain skills. Each of the data excerpts highlight the fact that there is often disparate or unequal treatment for women at the top due to gender.

Socialization of women. In addition to disparate treatment, many of the interviewees also indicated that the socialization of women also plays a role in their leadership, and the perception of them as leaders. One woman said, passionately:

I think women are socialized to be able to bring groups together. I mean, we're socialized to be mothers and mothers take care of people, right? But, mothers are also strict and they're disciplinarians, and there are those kinds of things, too. But, we're socialized to be the hub, to bring people together (Smith).

Similarly, another woman said gender affects her "in the sense that I don't mind being collaborative" (Sanchez). She elaborated:

Being collaborative is part of my nature and I don't know if...being collaborative is peculiar to women, or specific to women, but I know that, in my experience, it seems that women tend to be more collaborative and have been raised that way. And I've seen men tend to be more strident, you know, the norm, you know, women are aggressive, and men are assertive, and all that sort of stuff...I think that what I'm seeing [in my position] is that the men that I work with, who tend to be younger than me, tend to be less patient. They want something yesterday! As opposed to, 'let's go through this process' (Sanchez).

Most of the interviewees seemed to indicate that women tend to be more collaborative, process-orientated, and have a different work ethic, based on the socialization of women overtime. One executive said:

I will tell you, from a practical standpoint, men don't work nearly as hard as the women do. In my VP council, there are three women, and the three women work ten times harder than the men. Any special projects that need to get done—it's not that the men don't do anything— well, some of the men don't do anything at all— [but] some will do some things, but they just don't—it's very hard for them to do their job and to do something 'extra' that's just for the good of the order, whereas, again, I think this has to do with socialization of women. Women are socialized to always do what's best for the good of the order (Smith).

This idea that women work harder than men, or take on more special projects, was also mentioned by other women. One said:

So, I can't tell you the breakdown of CIO's, as a whole, but, at their leadership table, the leadership is now 70% women. So, I'm seeing women saying yes. Now these are killer jobs that take your every waking hour and more, and I don't know if women are willing to work harder, or men are just smarter and saying I don't need to do that extra work? (Mead).

Thus, the unique ways in which women are raised in our society, or the socialization of women, emerged from the data as a poignant way of understanding the multitude of ways in which women lead in academia. Several of the interviewees discussed how the socialization of women tends to govern what women think, how they lead, and also how others view and treat women in power. Here are how three other leaders expressed this ideology:

I think the world is different now, for women, although not totally different.
Women were socialized to, more so than men, to function as mediators,

facilitators, and not to assert, and control, or [use] power over others the way...or dominance...you know, [women are] not socialized to try to be dominant, and that, the fact that we do not have that background, is helpful in a community college setting where people have tenure and people disagree with you, or are nasty to you, or whatever. You're not going to be able to fire them, you have to figure out how to get along with people, and work in the group, so it's more...family is kind of a model, but, nonetheless, it is a family where we all have our roles as siblings, or cousins, or whatever it is we are, and we have to make it work, and women are socialized to make it work in a family-like environment" (Cooper).

I think it's harder for women to become presidents, I'm not going to tell you it's not...I think that more men have been groomed to go into administration. I don't think that women have a strong network, in terms of helping more women. I think that's changing. But, I will be honest, if it wasn't for a woman president encouraging me [to apply for a presidency], I wouldn't have...I was comfortable, you know, I knew everybody where I was, I knew who to call...it's a whole new game when you change colleges (Mead).

Do I think being a woman affects my leadership? Yeah [laughs]. It's very different with my colleagues who are males; the bantering is different, what they talk about is different, how they approach issues [is different]. I'm much more sensitive, I believe, about how somebody's going to feel. That doesn't mean I

don't make the hard decisions, because I'll pull someone in and say, 'That is intolerable and that is not going to happen under my watch.' So, I'm very strong in that regard, and I have very high standards for the institution and everybody who works here. [Yet,] at the same time, I'm very thoughtful about how I'm going to communicate with someone... I think it's just because of the nature of who I am and where I came from (Foster).

Ultimately, understanding the socialization of women, in relation to leadership in higher education, offers a unique perspective on why women are who they are, and why they behave the way they behave. When the executives talked about changes overtime, they provided vast insight into the role of gender and the many changes that have occurred, from past to present, in terms of socialization.

The Past Versus the Present. Another sub-theme that emerged, when generally discussing the ways that gender affects leadership, was the discussion that times have changed for women. Most of the women commented on the fact that there are more women around the conference room table, and more women are, in fact, applying for executive positions. Most of the women mentioned seeing more women's applications and interviewing more women, on a regular basis, for a variety of jobs within the community college structure. Yet, some of the women said:

We still have a very male-dominated system here; if you looked across the district at the number of administrators that are male, versus female, you would find that there are still a lot of men, and just as soon as you start to slip over to having a lot of women, we revert back to men (Smith).

Many of the women told similar stories, talking about the changes in numbers of women in administrative positions, and increased opportunities for women. Like one woman recalled:

From the early days I remember, literally, not being heard when I spoke in meetings, and, I would have to repeat myself...you know, when I was the only one speaking, the person running the meeting couldn't process what I would say, and, so, I would have to turn to the man sitting next to me and have him repeat it and then the person could hear him, so it's kind of textbook things that you hear about the past that actually happened to me...but, today, my experiences are much more positive (Cooper).

The women continually highlighted the fact that more women are, in fact, in leadership positions, now proclaiming, "It is better than it used to be," and, "I see more women at the table." One woman said:

I see a whole bunch more women now than in the year 2000, in leadership roles, whether as VPs or Presidents. I mean, I used to go to meetings and it used to be a bunch of white-haired old men... So, the landscape has certainly changed and I think that has been really incredible to see. And I think the Boards, like elected Boards of Trustees, and certainly in the Community Colleges, you know fifteen, even ten years ago, fifteen years ago, and twenty years ago, there was a hesitancy about hiring a woman... it's now much more the norm. It's accepted (Sanchez).

Similarly, another woman concurred:

I think that there is a broader, much more liberal viewpoint of traditional roles, so I do think that [the perception of women] has changed, yes...very much so...we

have women as the heads of our multiple school districts...the doors have opened for women in a lot of fields, and the people who are making those decisions, boards, whoever it is, are not using their stereotypical expectations of gender to limit peoples' potential (Jones).

Ultimately, seven out of the eight women commented when asked if gender played a role in their leadership that, yes, there are perceptions and attitudes that women experience that most men do not. The one leader who disagreed did say, however:

I think there are stereotypes about which characteristics can be most attributed to which gender, but I don't find them to be valid. I think that everyone has an opportunity to behave in whichever way they choose, and that's their decision.

So, I don't think that being a woman in leadership position has affected my ability to lead (Jones).

Finding Four: Stereotypical Conduct and Exclusion Exists for Women in Leadership Positions

Part of the conversation with the executives centered on two distinct issues that reoccur in the literature: stereotypes and the exclusion of women. Although all of the women claim that stereotypes do, in fact, still exist for women, they are much less prevalent than they used to be. All of the women have been in various leadership positions throughout their careers, so they have witnessed and experienced the changes in treatment and discrimination. Ultimately, the data revealed that these women are experiencing less discrimination today. Stereotypes are less dominant and play less of a role as roadblocks to a woman's success. Like one woman observed, "I think less stereotypes exist now. Actually, a lot less" (Cooper), while another woman said, "I think

there used to be, you know, the notion of the Wicked Witch of the West or something, but that's not as pervasive now" (Smith). Another woman said:

Women aren't the scary witch anymore. You know, the witch, the bitch, the 'you don't wanna work for her because she's gonna be too hard on you.' Those were the stereotypes that were most prevalent then...I just don't hear any kind of comments of women not 'earning their positions' anymore. There's an acceptance of value. You may get [the job]. You may not...Those comments were lingering when I was a young professional... they're not getting the job because, 'oh a woman needed to get it now,' [and] you don't hear the 'she slept her way to the top' comment anymore. Maybe it's elsewhere, but I haven't heard it in Education in a long time. There's a recognition and an acceptance that almost takes away the need for conversation. She earned the job. She's the right person for the job. And, so, I do think in the years that I've been doing this, that they generally accept that decisions are made about individuals, not genders, is of much greater prevalence. It would be a fantasy to say that has completely gone away. But I do feel a shift (Mead).

In addition, one woman said, "[When] you convey a certain air of authority, then those around you respect you, regardless of whether you are male or female...I've never felt like that there was a moment in time where I was overtly being treated stereotypically" (Sanchez). Further, another woman claimed:

Early on, the stereotype was that women were harder on women than they were on men, that it was hard to work for a woman, and that they were tougher on

women. I heard that probably the first half of my Administrative career, I don't hear that nearly as often anymore (Mead).

All of the above comments underscore the fact that woman think stereotypical attitudes and behaviors have diminished overtime, and that they feel much less excluded as a result of being a woman. It is important to acknowledge, however, that there *was* still some data to support the fact that there are certain times when women still *do* feel excluded. One common theme that arose was sports, and the role sports plays in the everyday communication at the office for women. One woman explained it like this:

Well, you know, when I walk into a room...the social milling before the meeting starts - the men are talking, and they're talking about sports. [Men] automatically assume I don't know anything about sports because I'm a woman. I tell them I love football. We start talking about football...and [I] also love the Dodgers. That's part of the respect too. That they see you [as] more than just an Administrator. That you are a whole person. But they think almost immediately, 'You're a woman, you're not going to understand this.' And they love to, you know, Monday-morning ask me about it like a quiz, 'Am I really a fan?' (Sanchez).

Another woman had a similar experience, and felt excluded because she did not have the same love for sports as some of the other administrators on the team. She tells the story like this:

I've also been excluded, because, and this is the classic, so I even hate to say, where I've come from...golfing was a big thing, and I hate golfing, and I know the senior leadership, males, went and golfed. Quite frequently, and I know what

happened there, talking. Also, hockey was a big thing. And on the other hand, things that traditionally women like to do, such as shopping, it's not something that is done to fortify business. I may have a friend, and go shopping with him or her, or go out to lunch, but I'm not talking about business, necessarily. So, it hasn't been discrimination as much as it's been exclusion (Foster).

The data revealed that some exclusion is still experienced by women leaders, specifically, within two very distinct themes: physical appearance and pay inequity. These themes were revealed as current barriers or obstacles for women executives.

Physical appearance. Women's experiences were discussed throughout the interviews, and a few of the women mentioned physical appearance as an ongoing issue. The women mentioned being "inspected" more, in terms of how they looked compared to their male counterparts. One woman was surprised by the reactions she got from people when she became President. She said, "There were associations with my looks, and not necessarily, about my brains" (Mead). As another executive said:

I think for women, in general, that we are, especially in leadership positions, scrutinized a lot more so than male administrators. Especially in terms of physical appearance...she cannot be too short or petite, she can't be too feminine, in terms of not wearing too much makeup, or too much jewelry, or have too elaborate of a hair style, or wear clothing that's too provocative. On the other hand, she can't be too masculine looking, either, or have hair that is too short or clothes that are too plain...I think that's a problem (Cooper).

Further, another executive offers:

I don't think people perceive women who are older, as wiser. I think people perceive men who are older as wiser, but I don't know that people look the same as [at] women, which is why I think more women dye their hair, you know, change themselves physically...so that there's an impression of, youth (Smith).

Further, one leader claims that women, themselves, may, in fact, hinder the hiring process because of their appearance. She said:

[Named woman] is sabotaging herself by how ultra-thin she makes herself look: her eyelashes, and her hair, and all that is just totally undercutting herself. It's hard to take, but she'll never get past the interviewing committee until she tones it down (Cooper).

Ultimately, many of these comments reveal that physical appearance is still an issue for women. Women are scrutinized more for how they dress and each part of their appearance can be dissected by others, especially when they are in a position of power. However, it was invigorating to know that many of the women did *not* address physical appearance in anyway. Much of the literature in the field highlights the objectification of women, but this study reveals that, although physical appearance does still matter, it is not at the forefront of the women's minds. It is not something these women feel objectified by, or discriminated for, on any regular basis. I do believe that the women are still cognizant of their appearance, but they do not feel as judged by it as they did in the past. Thus, some women have been impacted by the stereotype of what a woman should look like, yet it seems the discussion has quieted down today.

Pay inequity. One issue that has not quieted down, but instead has been revved up recently is finances or, more specifically, salary and compensation. This problem, pay inequity, emerged out of this study and was mentioned by half of the women (4 out of 8 women). The other half of the participants did not think of it, nor did they mention it, as an issue. Yet, half women (50 percent) did describe, in detail, how the pay scale is tipped in the male executives' direction. One woman, who did not think there was an issue with women's pay, described the pay scale in this way:

We're paid based on the job we do. You know, a Dean is a Dean. A Vice-President is a Vice-President. We all get paid the same...the standard pretty much is when you come in that you're guaranteed 5% above where you were, [for example, when I got this job] they had to put me in above what they typically bring someone in at, because I wasn't going to get a 5% raise. So, I had to call the President and say, 'I'm not going to get a 5% raise.' He said, 'Oh, well then, we're going to give it to you.' And so I started – typically they don't start Vice Presidents even at Step two, but I came in at Step three, otherwise it would've been a pay cut (Mead).

This statement seems cut and dry and is what most people may believe about the inner workings of the pay scale. However, several of the other women disagreed with the ease of the above statement. These women claimed that there were distinct inequities in where men started on the pay scale and where women started on the pay scale. They discussed how it is not cut and dry, as the woman above mentioned, but rather a very political and calculated event. Four out of the eight women claimed that they have been very concerned about their salaries and the salaries of future, incoming women administrators.

The following anecdotes are based on a salary scale of ten steps. Here is how one woman passionately discussed the issue:

There are four presidents, two male and two females, one-woman President came in on Step 1, and the other woman, who's been in the District her entire career, had been a VP for 10 years, came in at Step 3. And the rule is you get a 5% percent raise over your previous pay...The male who had been a vocational Ed teacher, Dean, VP, and then came into the District for the first time as a President rated in on Step 3. And at this point, I had been on Step 2 and the other female President, who'd been here her whole career, had been rated in on Step 3. So, she came in a Step higher than me, and the man came in a Step higher than me. Even though, when they both became President, I had already been a President for two years. And then, this other gentlemen, who didn't have a background in higher education at all...came in at Step 4. So, I got a two Step raise and went to Step 4, the other female got a two Step raise and went to four because she'd worked a year, the other gentlemen went to Step 4 because he'd worked a year, and this guy just *came in* at Step 4. And by the time I went to Step 4, I had 4 years of experience. So, I would have been there anyway. It is obvious women get disadvantaged. So, this last year, I also got a 2 Step raise, so now I'm on Step 6. But now they hire 3 brand new Presidents, two women and one man. The two women come in on Step 1 and the male comes in on Step 9 and is given a \$10,000 moving bonus! He had no experience as a College President...so he's coming into the job three Steps higher than me going into my 5th year, with no experience as a President and no experience in the District. I say there is something wrong with

the system...why did one come in at Step 9 and the other two come in at Step 1?

And why are the two that come in at Step 1, women, and the one who comes in at Step 9, the male (Brooks)?

This story showcases the feelings and emotions surrounding the issue of salary compensation. This woman was not alone in her discussion of salary fairness. Another woman who is employed in the same district as the one described above, stated:

I'll tell you, there's an inequity in pay. A man can ask for more money and, 9 times out of 10, they're going to get it. If a woman asks for the same thing, 9 times out of 10, she'll have to wait. I really believe that, and I've seen it. And I don't think it's a question of people not valuing you, but I think it has to do with our perceptions that men need more money than women. Because men have families to take care of, and, so, it's not hard for anybody to allow a man to make more than a woman...things that have happened in our district where a man was put into a position, temporarily, and that man was paid at that higher Step, for that temporary position, but I've seen several women, in that same situation, that weren't compensated. And it goes back to that women are always gonna take care of things because it's just our nature. Women won't typically say, 'I won't take that job because of the money.' You will hear a man say it, 'Oh, there wasn't enough money for me to take that job.' How many women have you ever heard say that? Women don't say that. Women look for quality in a job. And it's not to say that men don't look for quality in a job, but we're [women] not taught to ask for more [money]. I think we're very uncomfortable asking for more money, not because we don't think we add value, and not that we don't think we can add a lot

of value, but it's a conditioning. I know, for myself, it has always been so hard to ask for money. I've had so many jobs where I left the job and they hired two people to replace me! It's like, why didn't they just pay me more? I might've stayed (Smith).

Another woman, in the same district as the stories above, claimed:

Oh, yeah, pay is an issue. I know of women who should've been rated in higher, in comparison to others. I know that I argued, in terms of my rating in, because I had been a VP and I was at the top of the scale, and, so, just getting a 5% raise, to me, wasn't significant, so...I was put on Step 3, and I thought, 'I should've been at 4.' And, you're okay with things until you find out that men are higher. Okay? I was surprised with two women that had leadership positions before [coming to this district] that they were not given high enough steps....one of them, I was kind of taken aback, that she wasn't more vocal about it. But, it's happened (Mead).

It is evident that half of the women are extremely concerned with compensation, particularly in one district. It seems that there are some questions about how the Board of Trustees make their decisions about where one starts on the pay scale when they enter into a new position and/or a new district. Thus, fifty percent of the women claimed salary is a real issue for them and other women they know, and the other four participants did not mention or view salary as a problem. One woman, who works in a completely different district, was surprised when I asked about pay inequity. She said, her salaries have always been fair and, "the Boards that I have negotiated with for my salaries have been very generous, and I have never felt diminished by an inequitable ability to get paid" (Foster). Although, not all of the women mentioned pay as an area of concern, it is

obvious that significantly more research must be done to ensure fairness in the academic workplace for women and men.

Finding Five: Balancing Professional Roles and Family Responsibilities is Challenging and Centers around the Family

The data analyzed revealed that family responsibilities impact the women's professional roles and their ability to balance multiple facets of their identity. The literature in the field suggests that this issue tends to be unique to women because, more often than not, women have been, and still are socialized in our culture to manage the home (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Harris & Firestone, 1998; Hough, 2010; Madsen, 2008). Accordingly, most of the women in this study responded that they do not balance the roles well, although they know they need to and do, in fact, try. Some of the women felt that if they did balance their home and work lives somewhat successfully, it was because they were able to compartmentalize or prioritize. These women were adamant that a separation was needed in order for them to feel like no one was being let down at the office or at home.

Further, a majority of the women said that they based their professional choices and work schedules on their family's timeline and activities. So, while many felt balanced, many of the women were making conscious choices to work, or advance at work, based on what their family's needed and when. Many of the women described working on the weekends or late in the evening when their children went to bed. Here are how the executives described, in their own words, their ability to balance their professional roles and family responsibilities:

I think I did a good job being an administrator. [I've been] in administration since my children were 2 and 5...When you have little children, they're not going to wait for you to feed them dinner at 7:00 or 8:00 at night, so, I learned to compartmentalize. When I was home, I was focused on home and my children and husband and doing things that I enjoyed in life for recreation, and, when I was at work, I was at work, and I worked efficiently and didn't waste a lot of time thinking about all the work that needed to be done, I just did it...I think that made it easier to balance (Cooper).

Oh, my home life always suffers due to my professional life. I mean, fortunately, I guess, when I became a President, my daughter had just graduated from [university] and was on her way to make a life [out of the country]. So, she's tons of miles away, and my son...was transferring to [a different part of the state], so, when I first became a President, I was sort of an empty nester...So I could spend the entire weekend working...[and] lately, because of Accreditation, I've been doing it a lot. I try to have some downtime because I did come in and tell everybody that I wasn't sure how many more weekends of this I could do – where I am barely just getting to the grocery store and doing the very bare minimum of what I have to get done (Brooks).

I think balance is carving that time out, and making sure that, at home, people know that when you're home there are certain times, when you're at home, that is only for them. So, if I get a call [from work] at home, I look at the call, and if I

think I need to take it I take it, but I don't take every call I get on my cell phone; just because work gave me a cell phone doesn't mean they own me (Smith).

These stories are similar in the way they discuss the challenge of balancing their professional lives and their home lives. During the interviews, the leaders would explain their need to think about others first before themselves. The women told these stories with great emotion and detail. Here are more experiences from the other leaders related to this finding:

It's easier to discuss now, in retrospect, than at the time, but I remember being married and my husband's career taking off, and for us to make a decision...and we had two young kids, girls. So, we literally made the decision that he was going to grow professionally; he was going to go to the conferences, he was going to travel, he was going to take advantage of those opportunities. And then it would be my turn, at a later point (Sanchez).

I'm not sure I do balance. One of the things that was good for me, is I – I have two kids, now adults, but two kids – and I made my professional moves in synch with their education. For instance, I didn't become a Dean right away – while I was Faculty, I was a soccer coach, and the softball coach, and the team mom, and the Cub Scout assistant leader – so I could teach all day, then I could do all the kids' stuff, and I could grade in the middle of the night if I needed to, but I was available when they needed. So, that felt okay. I didn't mind grading in the middle of the night if I could do what I needed or wanted to with the kids.... And

[then] I got an invitation to be a Dean. And I thought, ‘Okay, I can do this now, I can do my job’...Then, I didn’t become a VP until I didn’t have to worry about my family responsibilities (Mead).

I had a very traditional [trajectory]. Very traditional, and I loved it. No roadblocks, other than self-imposed, I wanted my kid to go to school in one community, from kindergarten through high school, so I put my career on hold, and as soon as he graduated high school, then I pursued more responsible positions. But that was self-imposed (Foster).

I can, [balance] well...you have to be able to prioritize what really needs to get done now versus what you want to do now, because, when you take away some of the stuff that you want to do, but it’s not as pressing a need, you can create time for yourself, and then you can balance. If you cannot prioritize and separate the ‘must-dos’ versus the ‘would-like-to-dos,’ and then realize that the ‘would-like-to-dos’ are also going to take a lot of time, and then you have a choice to make... I think that it’s an individual choice (Jones).

As noted in the statements above, several of the women spoke about the need to separate or prioritize their work and home lives; the need to compartmentalize in order to be successful in balancing their work and family responsibilities. It is obvious from their statements that several of the women felt that their home lives suffer as a result of their academic position, and a lot of their work happens on the weekends or when others are

sleeping. The women were concerned that they did not want their families to feel cheated. One woman even said, “I took moments in time and made transitions that helped me deal with [home] and not feel like I was cheating anybody” (Mead). The women were very cognizant of the fact that the need to try to find balance in their lives. Like one executive said, “I know that I have to take time to walk and to do Zumba, and, sometimes, just to shut off” (Garcia). She continued by saying, “You do have to have a balance, there’s no question...when work controls you, then you are out of control” (Garcia). Another woman said, “I don’t balance well, but that’s okay for me. I don’t think we can do it all. What fell by the wayside for me...was exercise and self, taking care of myself well” (Foster).

Overall, all of the women know that having a personal life is important and have been constantly trying to cultivate it on a regular basis. They admitted it was a daunting challenge, yet a necessary one in order to be successful at the office. “I shoulder so much responsibility, gladly, welcomingly, it’s a lot to shoulder responsibility for [thousands of students], and I worry about it, and I take it home at night and I don’t deny that I am constantly in contact” (Foster). The data revealed that the women were acutely aware of the positive and negative impacts their work had on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Finding Six: Executive Administrators Define Themselves as Educators

Another interesting finding uncovered in the data was that three quarters (75 percent) of the women described themselves as “educators” or “teachers,” although their positions do not have them standing in front of students in a classroom at a podium in the traditional sense. Several of the women began their careers as adjuncts and full-time

professors, so they were aware of the differences in the positions; however, when asked whether they felt their administrative position changed them or impacted how they saw themselves, they explained that, although being an administrator is different than being in the classroom, they still felt that their jobs were to educate students. One woman explained it by saying, “I feel like the same person with a different title. I often say, ‘I’m a teacher on loan to administration’” (Mead). She continued by explaining that when she makes decisions, she thinks about “how it’s going to help students, and how it’s going to help teachers” (Mead). Another woman concurred in this way:

I always see myself as a teacher, as an educator....it is about the students. It’s about being welcoming. It’s about letting them into a better life; a life where they feel more fulfilled. That’s why I do it...because I think I can point people in the right direction (Brooks).

Another woman spoke about her administrative position as an “opportunity for teachable moments for people” (Smith) and explained that, “When a student comes into [her office] and they are really upset about something...I know I have to get up and talk to them. I have to” (Smith). Finally, one woman showcased this idea of executive administrators as educators by saying, “What’s paramount to my leadership is teaching and learning and that overall process and so who I am is that” (Foster). She added that when people ask her if she misses teaching, she tells them, “I teach every day. I teach whether I am talking to my cabinet or whomever. So, my identity is that I am an educator, and one who is grateful and full of gratitude” (Foster).

Overall, all of leaders consider themselves at work for students and student success. They discussed connecting with students as much as possible, and the need to remind other administrators that their jobs are to always facilitate student success in a meaningful way. The data exposed that there was a sense of awareness in their jobs, an awareness that the entire campus needs to know that their Chancellor, President, or Vice-President is in the “business of teaching and learning [regardless] of the job title” (Foster).

Finding Seven: Interconnection Cultivates Strong Interpersonal Relationships in a Professional Context

All of women had nearly identical responses to the question about relationship-building in a professional context. They all discussed the necessity of getting to know people on a personal level, and the need to connect with the people, directly. These leaders also talked about the value of mutual respect, and the absolute need to pay thoughtful attention to those around them in order to enhance interpersonal communication encounters. The women were confident that their beliefs about relationship-building have been imperative in cultivating stronger, more inviting, academic environments. Several of the women described meeting their co-workers off-campus for meals and activities in order to share experiences outside of academia and forge more solid understandings of one another. For example, one woman spoke about a lunch ritual where a group of administrators have lunch, off-campus, in order to socialize. She says, “The one rule we have is that we don’t talk about business. We just socialize” (Sanchez). She claims these luncheons are critical to her workplace success because “it changes how we talk with one another” (Sanchez).

Another woman also discussed the importance of off-campus activities saying, “I tend to bring people together who like to do common things, like hiking, being in the mountains, and stuff like that” (Jones). Moreover, another woman talked about celebrating people and their milestones. She said, “This is a big place, [so] you must take time out to celebrate people. We’re going to rent boats at the Bay to look at Christmas lights, instead of Christmas presents, [and] we do birthday pie for everybody’s birthdays” (Mead). This woman explicitly acknowledged the need to share personal experiences outside of work. She added:

I’ve had [colleagues] to my home...a lot of relationships happen when you just spend time together. I can’t expect somebody to let me know them if I don’t let them know me. And, so, there is a lot of storytelling (Mead).

These aforementioned examples showcase the executives’ roles in bringing people together in order to build trust and find common ground. All of the women expressed that such activities enhance communication between people, and, therefore, create stronger bonds and mutual respect.

Other concepts uncovered by the women in relation to relationship-building included challenging people by setting high expectations, building trust, being forthcoming, being consistent, and sharing. Each of the women described their experiences a bit differently, yet all of these concepts were explored in both implicit and explicit ways. Here are the women, in their own voices, describing their styles of relationship-building in professional contexts:

Relationships and trust come from working together over a period of time. You really can’t tell anything from just a few meetings, or a brief relationship; you

really just have to spend some time together...my style of relationship-building [is] to get to know the person, over time, and build the relationship on working together on whatever it is that needed to be done. And, seeing their strengths as they have a chance to demonstrate them, based on their assignments, and, then, reinforcing that (Cooper).

People know that I'm not going to lie to them, that I will follow through; that following through is very important to me. I believe that I need to be professional at all times. I think the hard part is dealing with people who gossip, [but] I'm professional...I'm not going to say anything that's going to embarrass people, and be loony, and I know that I'm always being judged as a model for the college (Mead).

I challenge people to become the best they can be, to explore their potential. I try to create opportunities for them to do that, and support them to take risks so they can do that. I spend time with people; I tend to take an interest in what they're doing, to the degree that I can. I pay attention [and] I communicate a lot (Jones).

I speak from a reality and truth that is a shared reality and truth for all of the individuals, classified, administrators or faculty, who are employed here...allowing them to understand my values and principles so that trust and respect can be built. Being very, very consistent, I am not erratic, at all, in my approach to things, I am very stable...I love taking risks, and I love institutions

taking risks, but I don't yell, I don't scream, I don't [behave like] 'the sky is falling;' if a crisis is presented, I am very calm. I'm predictable in terms of my values, standards, and expectations. I have high expectations for this institution. I have very high expectations for those individuals who work at this institution; we owe nothing less to our students, and to the taxpayers who have found it within their goodwill to support the Community Colleges. So, it is about expectations and not wavering from those and being very clear about those...it's that tender, loving care, mixed with, 'We're in this together', 'We're going to do it well', and 'We're going to do it right' (Foster).

Finally, one executive truly summed up what most of the women were explaining. She noted that building relationships is about sharing and, therefore, the lack of sharing can breed competition which can ignite unhealthy climates which go against the academic mission of student success. She said:

I think relationship-building, as a professional, has to do with what you're willing to share. Sharing is really important, and I think, far too often, we find people who are not willing to share because they're afraid to share. I think the world is more interesting when we share...but I also think it's important that we share and that we be together. We operate, way, way too much separately. I think it's okay for us to be a little bit competitive with each other, competition helps us to continue to grow and be better, but not an unhealthy competition, not a competition that says, 'I want to step on you, I want to overtake you,' because this is not war. We're not in a war, we're in a family...And you shouldn't try to hurt a

family member, you try to help a family member. If there's something you can do to help a family member, you should (Smith).

All of the women were clearly genuine in their responses to this question. Each of them were thoughtful, and it was obvious they believe what they said, and that they are continually putting interpersonal communication into practice. It was extremely interesting that most of what they were discussing had to do with meeting people where they are, and acknowledging each person's unique standpoint, which is the foundation and theoretical framework for this research project.

Much of the literature in chapter two of this dissertation is directly related to a woman's point of view, or her standpoint, in the academic space. This dissertation showed how Standpoint Theory and Feminist Rhetoric are truly strong frameworks for understanding the role of women in higher educational leadership. With these women's points of view, their voices, academia is richer and a better place to work. However, most of the women do not think of their jobs as work. As one President said so perfectly and eloquently:

I don't say I'm going to work, I say I'm going to school...I cringe when somebody says, 'I'm going to work;' this is school, this is special. I believe in the sacredness of the classroom [and] I believe in the safety of the classroom. This is what I mean by living and breathing education. I truly believe that education is, foundationally, the thing that opens doors to social justice, to mobility, to opportunity, to equity. And if people don't believe that, if it's 'just a job,' then they need to go somewhere else (Foster).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the seven findings uncovered by this study, and presented clear categories in order to offer the reader a comprehensive narrative. Findings were organized based on the research questions of the study, which are: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication dynamics shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? Data from the individual interviews helped prove that gender plays a role in leadership at community colleges in Southern California. As is typical of qualitative research, extensive samples of quotations from the women leaders were included in this chapter. It was my goal to provide readers an accurate picture of each woman, to give voice to their shared experiences, and tell their own stories.

The first finding of this study was that collaborative decision-making is of paramount importance to women, which focused on how the women make decisions in a professional context. The women were very clear that collaboration is essential in order for them to make sound decisions. Ultimately, the leaders are hyper-focused on inclusion and communication. The second finding of this study was that communication skills impact leadership and explored how the leaders use and rely on both their oral and written communication skills on a regular basis. Some of the women felt that they are stronger presenters, while others felt that their writing had the most impact on their colleagues and colleges. These women executives consistently spoke about the need to

communicate clearly, and often, in order for their messages to be understood and their goals achieved.

The third finding of this study was the fact that gender affects women's leadership in higher educational executive positions. Multiple themes emerged within these findings such as disparate treatment for women, socialization of women, and changes in the perception of women leaders, from the past to present day. These three themes offered readers a glimpse into some of the very particular experiences that the women faced in their executive positions. The fourth finding of this study was that stereotypical conduct and exclusion exists for women in leadership positions. This finding focused on the fact that stereotypical behavior has been curtailed over the years, although some discriminating behaviors, prejudices, and attitudes still persist. In this final section, the women described their own experiences, as women leaders, in positions where men have typically been the dominant norm.

The fifth finding of this study addressed the balancing of professional roles and family responsibilities. Here, the women spoke about making career moves when the time was right for their families, rather than when it was right for them. Most of the women remained very conscious of their family's needs, and wanted to make their own professional moves when it would cause the least amount of turmoil in the family. It was fascinating to hear how many of the executives waited for their spouse's careers to take off first, or their child's educational needs to be met first, before moving forward with their own aspirations.

The sixth finding was that women executive administrators define themselves as educators first, which underscores the fact that women in administrative positions see

themselves as teaching and learning agents. Although they do not create lessons plans on a daily basis, they see themselves as people who affect students, regularly and profoundly. Their focus at work seems to be broad, with a focus on the students' well-being.

The seventh finding was that interconnection cultivates strong interpersonal relationships. In this section, the women explained how they find it absolutely necessary to get to know their colleagues, on a personal basis, in order for strong interpersonal relations to develop. They have a desire to really get to know the people with whom they work, and they also want the people they work with to get to know them. Here they talked at length about honesty, sharing, and spending time together. This section accurately sums up the entire chapter because it highlights the interconnection of gender, communication, and leadership, all of which are the ultimate goal of this research study.

In the next chapter, I will provide interpretative conclusions into the above findings in an attempt to construct a holistic understanding of the study. The women's stories have been told, and now I will highlight the implications of the data for women and academia, overall. Ultimately, chapter five offers specific conclusions and recommendations for future practice in relation to the research questions of this study.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand how gender informs leadership for women leaders in higher education. Specifically, this qualitative research study sought to examine the backgrounds and leadership experiences of multiple women administrators to better understand the communication factors that may hinder their success and those that may contribute to their success. Further, this study sought to examine and articulate the ways that interpersonal communication dynamics impact the leadership styles of women administrators in higher education. Data from this study was intended to inform current and future leaders about the ways in which their leadership behaviors are impacted by their surroundings and everyday encounters. Ultimately, this research study shows how fundamental concepts and behaviors, theorized in the discipline of Communication Studies, are inextricably bound to leadership, and that the understanding of those concepts, enhances the success of women leaders in higher education.

This final dissertation chapter will discuss the results in light of the study's research questions. Specifically, this chapter will include (a) an overview of the study's organization and content, (b) conclusions, based on the study's findings, directly correlated to the research questions, (c) the limitations of the study, (d) recommendations for future practice, and (e) a concluding statement. Overall, this chapter provides readers with a comprehensive discussion of this qualitative research study.

Overview of the Study's Organization and Content

Chapter I of this study began with a discussion of the problem that only 26 percent of presidents and chancellors are women, with only a modest increase over the past five years, according to the latest data from the American Council on Education

(Lapovsky, 2014). Although this number is historically much larger than in the past, it is still vastly lower in comparison to men who hold such positions. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to better understand how women lead and to explore whether sexist cultural values engrained in our society prevent women from professional advancement. The research questions devised to guide this study were: (a) What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education? (b) What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators? and (c) How do interpersonal communication dynamics shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education? These questions provide the framework for the discussions throughout this final chapter.

Chapter II of this study focused on literature in the field and explained that a rhetorical feminist perspective, as well as Standpoint Theory, framed this study. Feminism offers models for different ways of living in the world, and allows the researcher to critique the subordination, resistance, and achievements of women. Additionally, it helps the reader understand how the social construction of reality impacts and, ultimately, creates notions of femininity, masculinity, and androgyny. This framework provided a powerful point-of-view to highlight differences in communication practices impacting women leaders in higher education. Standpoint Theory strives to understand the world from the standpoint of women, and other marginalized groups, in society. Standpoint Theory also provides a practical framework for understanding systems of power and how they shape our communication, thereby, giving authority to people's own voices. Many of the discussions in this chapter highlight how a woman's standpoint affects her leadership.

Chapter III explained the methodology of the study in detail and provided an overview of how the research was conducted. The research tradition used was the multiple case study approach because this approach illuminates the role gender plays in the leadership styles of women leaders in higher education. Further, this case study tradition allowed the subjects to acknowledge their unique higher educational executive experiences. The two sampling strategies employed were a stratified purposeful and criterion sampling strategies. They were utilized in order to set boundaries and frame the research study. A stratified purposeful strategy was employed to help illustrate subgroups and facilitate comparisons (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990), and the criterion sampling strategy involved selecting specific cases and settings that met a predetermined criteria of importance (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 1990).

The only data source used in this study came from interviews conducted with women administrators from Southern California community colleges. Eight women were interviewed in one-on-one settings. Seven of the eight women were currently serving in leadership roles, while one was recently retired from her Presidency. Six of the eight interviews were conducted in the women's respective offices on their campuses, while the other two were held in restaurants. Each of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Two transcribers were hired to transcribe the interview data and I worked closely with them to avoid any misunderstandings or errors during transcription. The first step before thematic analysis was to check the accuracy of the transcriptions and perform minor editing corrections to all transcriptions and field notes. Mainly, I familiarized myself with all of the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts to garner an overall sense of the whole before deconstructing it into individual parts (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2008). Next, thematic data analysis was conducted in order to generate categories and to consider emergent themes. The emergent themes related directly to the research questions posed and are also based on the literature and theoretical framework. Finally, I condensed the information into smaller parts by hand-coding the interviews which allowed me to segment, organize, and label the data.

Chapter IV of this study presented seven key findings obtained from the eight qualitative interviews. The definitive findings that emerged from this study were:

Finding 1.	Collaborative Decision-Making is of Paramount Importance for Women
Finding 2.	Communication Skills Greatly Impact Leadership for Women
Finding 3.	Gender Inherently Affects Leadership for Women
Finding 4.	Stereotypical Conduct and Exclusion Exists for Women in Leadership Positions
Finding 5.	Balancing Professional Roles and Family Responsibilities is Challenging and Centers Around the Family for Women
Finding 6.	Women Executive Administrators Define Themselves as Educators
Finding 7.	Interconnection Cultivates Strong Interpersonal Relationships in a Professional Context for Women

Chapter IV provided in-depth analysis and discussed specific details that supported this study's findings. Additionally, the chapter drew on research-based perspectives to explain how the data revealed in this dissertation study was examined. These findings from chapter four are also part of chapter five's forthcoming conclusions and implications section. Both the findings and conclusions are interconnected, and are best understood by answering the three research questions presented in this study.

Conclusions from Study Findings Based on the Research Questions

The research questions for this study provide a framework for discussing the conclusions from the study's findings. Each research question answered is drawn from insight grounded in the data uncovered from the study's interviews. These conclusions flow directly from the dissertation findings and provide assertions based on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered throughout the study.

Research question one. The first research question for this study was "What role does gender play in the leadership style of former, and current, women leaders in higher education?" Based on the interviews conducted in this study, it is evident that gender still plays several crucial roles in leadership although the roles are different than they have been in the past. The data collected in this study revealed that women today are much more valued in the executive academic workplace and are much more represented today. Most of the women interviewed spoke about seeing more women at the conference table and that a woman's ability is less limited by negative perceptions and stereotypes. Although there are less overt sexist behaviors and perceptions being used today, the interview data revealed that there are still some issues with the way women are treated in the academic workplace, and problems with the ways in which women are raised in our society. Findings three and four of Chapter IV go into significant detail to highlight such areas for concern and provide rich description from the women's own voices. Ultimately, participants in this dissertation indicate that women are still treated differently simply because they are women, even though many of the same stereotypes do not seem to exist as pervasively today. While the "wicked witch" or the "slept her way to the top" attitudes seem to have significantly dissipated, in 2016, the women in leadership positions

interviewed indicated that it is still a challenge for a woman to break through that glass ceiling, as evidenced by the current numbers of women who hold those positions and the interviewees' own voices.

From the interviewees' responses to the interview questions, a conclusion can be drawn that the ways in which women are raised and socialized impacts how they communicate and lead. When the women were asked whether gender played a role in their leadership, seven out of the eight women answered, "Yes," and then proceeded to explain how there are perceptions and attitudes that women experience that men, typically, do not. One woman described it like this:

You have to be tough enough to take hits; to have people talk negatively about you, to have people say, 'Wow, she's such a control freak,' or, 'she has to have her way.' People don't speak of male administrators the same way they speak of female administrators. I'm not sensitive about it because I don't define myself by that, and I'm very comfortable with myself; I've been doing this for a long time and I'm crystal clear as to what my direction is. It also helps that I'm not insecure, in that respect (Smith).

From this response, it is evident that understanding the socialization of women, in relation to leadership in higher education, offers a unique perspective on why women are who they are, and why they behave the way they behave. Data gathered from the interviews indicates that gender does, in fact, still play a role in leadership, and may be a valid reason for the slow, gradual advancement of women into executive positions in higher education.

All of the women interviewed spoke at length about a more feminine style of leadership which includes “feminine qualities of cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration” (Eagly, 2007, p. 2). The interviews conducted in this study provided details and examples of how the women in leadership positions nurture their respective teams, and how they believe this is the correct way to lead and govern. Although the women leaders spoke of issues of socialization and stereotypes, they agree that women bring a different, unique set of qualities and skill sets to their positions. They indicated that, at times, women may be pigeonholed, yet their intuition and their thoughtfulness allow them to be extremely productive and more fulfilled at work. While it is clear that some of the challenges that women in leadership positions face have abated, there are still some obstacles women executives face. The notion that cultural barriers or obstacles still exist for women in leadership positions is addressed in research question number two.

Research question two. The second research question was “What gendered and/or cultural obstacles or barriers impact the leadership of women administrators?” This study sought to find out if cultural and societal pressures impact how women lead in higher education settings. From the data analysis conducted in this dissertation study, it can be concluded that, although there are fewer barriers blocking success, there are still some significant obstacles or pressures women face that male executives do not. The interview subjects in this study shared anecdotes and examples about how sexism had affected their careers, as well as the added pressure for them not to fall prey to stereotypes. All of the interviewees adamantly expressed that the stereotypes are false, and they spoke about the need to change the views of women by continuing to understand and explore barriers in order to reduce them. Three explicit barriers revealed from the

interview data examined in this study are: (a) family responsibilities facing women based on social norms of family management, (b) physical appearance, and (c) pay inequity.

Each of these areas act as pressures that impact how the women lead in higher education.

Family responsibilities facing women. The first barrier indicated in the interviews is the family responsibility that mothers in leadership positions may face. Six of the eight women interviewed in this study are mothers, and each of these women expressed their need to focus on their family first, rather than on their own careers. The interview data confirmed that family responsibilities absolutely impact women's professional roles and their ability to balance multiple facets of their identity, thereby acting as an obstacle to their successful leadership. This issue tends to be unique to women because, more often than not, women are expected to manage the home and act as the primary caretaker based on traditional gender roles. The interviewees shared that they are expected to respond to their family's needs before their own needs and ambitions. Thus, it can be concluded that women do this consciously as a result of what society claims is the role of women in our society in relation to their families. Further, six of the eight women said they based their professional choices and work schedules on their family's needs, timelines, and activities. So, while these six women felt emotionally well-balanced between work and home, they were making conscious choices to work, and/or advance at work, based on what their families needed and when. Ultimately, all six women repeatedly expressed that they think about others before themselves; they spoke as though it were a foregone conclusion.

Physical appearance: Three of the women in this study made comments about physical appearance, highlighting that it remains more of an issue for women than men.

This was not surprising; however, what was surprising, or rather, invigorating, was learning that many of the women did not address physical appearance in any way. In the past, a woman's appearance may have been the first topic discussed; however, the data revealed that the objectification of women in power seems to have lessened because it was not the main topic of conversation, and was only mentioned by three of the eight women. This study revealed that, although physical appearance does still matter, it is not at the forefront of the women's minds. It is not something they feel objectified by, or discriminated for, on a regular basis. That is progress. I do, however, believe that the women still remain cognizant of their appearances, and are expected to meet certain norms and expectations based on the United States' definition of beauty; yet, the women in this study do not feel as judged by their appearances as they have in the past. Thus, some women have been impacted by the stereotype of what a woman should look like, yet it seems the discussion has, in fact, quieted down today.

Pay inequity. Another obstacle that is showcased throughout this study is the major discrepancies about women's compensation. Half (four out of eight) of the subjects discussed the fact that women's salaries are less than their male counterparts. Specifically, it was revealed that women started at lower salary steps than men entering into the same job in the same district. Initially entering this study, finances and compensation were not on my radar as issues, nor were starting salaries for women because, during the literature review, minimal issues about pay equity arose. The interviews in this study prove, however, that there are distinct inequities where men start on the pay scale versus where women start on the pay scale. The women discussed how it is not as "cut and dry" as many might believe, but rather a very political and calculated

phenomenon. Half (four out of eight) of the women claimed that they are very concerned about their salaries and will be closely watching the salaries of future incoming women administrators. Although not all of the women mentioned pay as an area of concern, it is obvious that significantly more comprehensive research must be done to ensure there is equity in compensation throughout the academic workplace. This issue will also be discussed later in this chapter.

Research question three. The third research question was, “How do interpersonal communication dynamics shape the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education?” As discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation, much of the literature in the field showcases the critical importance of relationships, in general, yet detrimentally, the literature does not utilize specific interpersonal communication theory as a framework of study. For this study, the interpersonal communication concepts that arose were mainly explored through discussions about relationship-building within professional contexts. The women interviewed in this study all discussed the necessity of getting to know their colleagues on a personal level, and the need to connect with people as candidly as possible. In this dissertation research, it can be concluded that, in order for a woman leader to be truly successful, mutual respect is needed on her campus, as is the need to pay mindful attention to people around them in order to enhance interpersonal relationships. The women interviewed in this study were confident that their beliefs about interpersonal communication, and an added focus on relationship-building, are critical in cultivating stronger, more inviting and invigorating, academic environments.

Other interpersonal communication concepts showcased in the interview data collected included challenging people in their workplace by setting high expectations for

themselves and others, and building trust from the very beginning of their work. The women spoke about honest and open communication, and being seen as people who care about education and student success more than politics. Each of the women interviewed spoke about being forthcoming, being consistent in their decision-making, and overtly sharing what they are thinking and feeling. It can be concluded in this study, that women leaders are consistently mindful of the feelings of others and concerned about making each of their team members feel valued in the workplace. Each of the women interviewed in this research described their experiences a bit differently, yet all of these interpersonal concepts were explored in both implicit and explicit ways. Each of the subjects interviewed spoke thoughtfully, and believed that they work to continually put effective interpersonal communication into practice. It was remarkable that most of what they were discussing had to do with meeting colleagues where they are, and acknowledging each person's unique standpoint, which is the foundation for this research project. Much of the literature in chapter two of this dissertation is directly related to a woman's point of view, or her standpoint, in the academic space. Thus, this study showed how Standpoint Theory and Feminist Rhetoric are truly strong frameworks for understanding the role of women in higher educational leadership. With these women's points of view, with their unique voices, academia is a richer and better place to work.

Overall, this study sought to explore interpersonal communication concepts in order to better understand the communication of women leaders as an enhancement to the field. This study showcased that the women leaders interviewed know they need to explicitly acknowledge the power of interpersonal relationships in order to be highly successful leaders in higher education. It was evident that these leaders believe they are

only successful when they are part of a strong, cohesive team. Each of the women stated, in their own way, that it is impossible for an executive to be successful by herself. She needs a team of people to help the college, as a whole, become successful. As one of the women said:

I recognize that it takes a village, and I'm appreciative of that. So, I recognize people. I don't get an ego. I don't look forward to times when I can use my position in a power of authority. That doesn't mean anything to me (Foster).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of a study expose the conditions that may weaken the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This study has three potential weaknesses inherent in the research design which are: (a) the sample size is small, (b) the cultural backgrounds of the women lack diversity, and (c) time. More details on each of these are offered next in an attempt to minimize the impact on the study.

Small sample size. For the purpose of this dissertation study, only eight women were interviewed. A few other women were potential candidates, however, they were unable to be interviewed in the time allotted for this study. This problem was further exacerbated by the fact that there are not enough women executives in the area where I conducted this study, thus making it difficult to produce a larger sample. This first limitation could be easily altered with a rise in women hired into executive positions in Southern California, and with a longer defined period for research.

Limited cultural diversity of the women: Seventy-five percent of the women in this study were white, while two were of Hispanic descent. The lack of diversity may be considered a limitation of the study. Although this is a problem in higher educational

leadership overall, for this study, the cultural diversity of the women was limited because currently, in Southern California, the majority of the women in executive positions are not women of color. The lack of diversity in this study's location may also underscore a significant problem with the lack of cultural diversity in the field. Further, the number of minority students in the communities where data was collected for this study is extremely high with minority students actually making up the norm at most community colleges in the Southern California area. Yet, too many administrations seem to lack that same representation of diversity. Consequently, women of color were not fully represented in this study because they are not yet fully represented in leadership positions in Southern California institutions. Of the two minority women in this study, one was the first Hispanic to be president of her specific college, which is in the most diverse part of this very diverse county. This woman declared:

There [are] assumptions, if you're a certain ethnic group, that you have certain qualities, or that you don't have other qualities. There are a lot of assumptions that people have, and I think they do a lot of testing to make sure that you do meet those categories...I am the first Latina president of this college...previous to me, there was a woman president, I think there have been three women presidents. Yet, at [named college] that I left recently, there was never a woman president, which is most common in this area (Garcia).

A more robust discussion about this issue of diversity follows in the recommendations section of this chapter.

Time: The third limitation of this study that may have affected the results is the period of time when the interviews were conducted. It is possible that economic or social

issues of the time influenced what the interviewees believed, and their answers may have been impacted by what they were experiencing at their college or university in terms of operations at the time. For example, one of the women was in the middle of the accreditation process. Her campus was writing their midterm report, so a lot of what she had to say related to the experiences she was having in the accreditation process. Another example was a woman who just led her all-college FLEX day the day before her interview; many of her answers related to that days' experiences. Thus, it is possible that the women's answers could have been impacted by what was going on at their respective campuses, and answers may have been different if interviewed during a different time frame. These experiences, however, were also highly beneficial to the study because they offered concrete examples the women could choose from.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Specific recommendations are offered based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of this study. The recommendations that follow are organized into three categories: (a) recommendations specifically for women leaders, (b) recommendations for all leaders, women and men, and (c) for future research. These recommendations have the potential to result in changes in educational policy and practice that may provide an action plan for better understanding the role of gender, leadership, and communication in higher education administration.

Recommendations for women leaders in higher education. Based on the interviews conducted, this study shows that although there are still very real challenges for women, being a woman in a leadership position in higher education is not as much of a hindrance as it once was. The interview data collected in this study offers practical

advice for women who are contemplating positions in administration in higher education. Much of the advice offered by the interview subjects relates to women truly knowing themselves and making the right choices for themselves, at the right time. Many of the women leaders said things like, “Be sure an executive position is what you want,” or “Know yourself, so you can make the right choice.” Although “knowing the self” was an overarching theme, what follows are four recommendations specifically directed towards women.

The first recommendation is that women leaders must continue to become mentors for other women. Many of the women interviewed in this study discussed the fact that a mentor helped them make the decision to apply for an administrative job; these mentors, however, were all men. Women must mentor other women, so many of the issues women face can be discussed with the tried and true knowledge and wisdom of a woman’s experience. Women can speak to other women with a real understanding of the issues women face and can help other women understand and appreciate their communication skills. This dissertation has reinforced the centrality of communication by revealing the subjective nature of defining and understanding leadership. Although women have different leadership styles and different experiences with both male and female co-workers; there are similar goals, trends, and communication patterns in all of the stories the women shared. Each of the subjects in this study highlighted the need for more women mentors in order to help other women aim and prepare for top positions in higher education because of the fact that other women in leadership positions truly understand the role their gender plays in the workplace.

The second recommendation relates directly to the interpersonal communication results of this study. Women need to continue learning and using different coping mechanisms, especially in those moments that are highly stressful because of the negative perceptions and stereotypes perpetuated throughout history. Women need to continue to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, and inner-strength in order to better deal with people and problems. Based on the results of this study, women leaders do, in fact, deal with more sexism and more inappropriate behaviors from others. Thus, women must be prepared for colleagues who only want to work with men. A woman must be able to stand her ground and be confident in the fact that she is the President. Women need to know that it is not about the power she has, but the responsibility she has to lead the college, and to continue to set the path for future women executives.

Further, some sexist behaviors from others may make some meetings difficult. There are times when executives may meet with challenging individuals who point their fingers or say discourteous things in uncivil ways. Thus, executives, Presidents mainly, must ensure that these individuals know that incivility will not be tolerated. Ultimately, a woman must be able to remain cool-headed and rational in order to deal with the more personal side of the job. It is obvious that not all women leaders behave the same; however, this study revealed that women tend to be more collaborative and want to work more interpersonally and directly with their team. Thus, women must be prepared to realize that, with collaboration and interconnectedness, comes the clash of ideas and the rise of emotions. Self-confidence and inner-strength will prove highly beneficial and successful in an executive position in higher education.

The third recommendation, based on the results of this study, is that women need to think about their life timetable, especially if they plan to have children. Where do you want to be and when? Are children in your equation? The results of this study showed that, initially, women make decisions about their careers based on the consideration of their family's timeline. Thus, women executives have to make choices that match for them presently as well as for their future plans. Women executives must be honest about their role in the family and be acutely honest and aware of their responsibilities beyond the academic job. The results from this study reveal that the most successful women truly understand their roles and responsibilities to their families, which means making an honest appraisal of what this means for their careers. Women must ask themselves whether it's a realistic option to "have it all."

The fourth recommendation is that in order for a woman to feel that she has made the right career choice in a job position, she must truly know what the job demands, and strive to apply for a position that is a good fit between where the college is and where they are personally, in terms of outside interests and passions. Women need to take advantage of, and avail themselves to, opportunities to complete different kinds of assignments, especially ones that are broader in focus than their own department or division. Every time a woman contemplates a career move to the next executive level, she should learn more about that job and its responsibilities, and should consider shadowing a person (a woman, if possible) or at least meeting with other women in the position to get an idea of the job and whether her skills and goals match those needed in order to excel in that job. Good advice garnered from this study includes continuing to sharpen your skill set throughout your career and learn as much about potential jobs ahead of time so that

you can be happy and successful in the job. The women in this study highlighted that, when women are happy in their position, when they want to get up in the morning for that job, it means they will be more effective in the job, benefiting the college and the woman, overall. It is evident from this study that women's career choices demand honest introspection and intense dedication in order for them to thrive both professionally and personally.

Ultimately, all of the aforementioned recommendations ask women to be honest with themselves and to make their voices heard. Women need to cultivate a network of people they can trust, both on their own campus as well at other institutions. This can happen by making sure women judiciously apply for the jobs, get the jobs, and then become successful in those jobs. Next, more recommendations are offered to all leaders, women and men, to enhance their effectiveness in executive positions in higher education.

Recommendations for all leaders in higher education. With greater power comes equal or greater responsibility, and whether you are a woman or a man, there are aspects of leadership that are universal. Based on this study, it is evident that a good leader is one who is a coach, a team player, a motivator, and committed to the job and to the entire college. Current and future executives must understand that leading is not about power and making unilateral decisions; rather, it is about inclusion, collaboration, and teamwork which means, at times, not relying solely on positional authority. Many of the leaders interviewed in this study spoke about giving away some of their decision-making control in order to gain enhanced trust and garner deeper respect from their team. This study showed us that leaders need to be able to make tough decisions, but the best leaders

regularly bring people along, communicate extremely effectively, and are not wary of collaboration.

Further, this study also revealed that the most successful leaders in higher education live and breathe all aspects of academia including academic affairs and student services, before contemplating a move into an executive position. The path one chooses in order to get into the executive position does not seem to matter as much as whether they truly believe in the system of higher education itself. A leader needs to be able to truly understand the mission of higher education and be prepared to implement it; it all starts with a belief in what being an educator truly means.

Moreover, an executive in higher education must be able to effectively deal with, and manage, change. Unlike being a faculty member, an administrative position involves constant change that occurs on a regular basis, meaning balancing many moving parts daily. An executive must be able to handle the fact that every day brings new challenges, and to expect the unexpected because you never know what you may walk into the next morning. This study shows that when you get into administration, no two days are the same. The leaders consistently commented that, although constant change is challenging, it is also invigorating because they never know what to expect. One strong piece of advice given by the participants in this study was that if you are a person who likes everything to be the same, do not go into administration. If you do not mind not knowing what tomorrow's challenges will be, community college leadership can be a great place for you.

Finally, the overall recommendation for all leaders realized from this study is the importance of implementing leadership training college-wide on campuses. Nowadays,

leadership training can be seen as generic professional development or an obligatory act based on outside demands. However, there is real value in honest and attentive leadership training where the curriculum is thoughtfully created by the college, for the college or by professional external individuals focused on leadership success. If we truly want to see an increase of women in leadership positions, and continue to see barriers broken down, then we have to continue the dialogue and the training. We need people in academia talking about how academia can strive to do better. Academia is considered a place where individuals are more critical and thoughtful of the world around them. Thus, it is up to higher education leaders and educators to do better.

Recommendations for future academic research. The following set of recommendations are topic areas that demand closer examination by future researchers. These topic areas were generated as a result of the findings uncovered throughout this study, and are based on the limitations of the findings and conclusions. There are six recommendations.

Research recommendation number one. The first research area that could increase the dialogue on gender in administration of higher education is to conduct this same study with a sample of male leaders. The interview protocol would be similar, yet the results may reveal how gender does, or does not, impact the male leader, and in what ways women and men explicitly differ in their approaches to leadership styles and behaviors. Do male leaders ever consider their world in terms of gender? What role does his gender play in terms of his leadership style? Are there aspects of his gender that contribute to effective leadership? In what ways do males in academic leadership positions have to take gender into consideration when they lead? The conclusions that

could be drawn from such a study may make it more clear as to why men continue to be the majority of the leaders in the United States. It would be highly interesting to learn how leadership style and interpersonal communication strategies explicitly differ for men.

Further, it would be interesting to learn about the role a man's family plays in his career choices. Do men consider their family's timeline like women do? In what ways does fatherhood impact the male executive's leadership in higher education? Being able to analyze statistics on male leaders, and offer a rationale for how men's communication style differs from women's in the academic workplace, could substantially challenge what we know and believe about leadership in higher education overall. It is possible that even a mixed-sex sample could offer genuine and profound insights into gender, communication, and leadership.

Research recommendation number two. The second area where more research needs to be conducted is the hiring process of executives on college campuses. More research should be conducted on why more women are not being hired into executive positions and why women are not more represented in the final pools of candidates. Is it merely because of sexism and the genuine lack of equal opportunity? Is it because Boards of Trustees have very particular preferences that impact women more than men? Conducting more research that looks explicitly at hiring practices may offer important answers. Researchers could look specifically at the make-up of hiring committees, hiring documentation used throughout the process, and why there is an increased popularity in using outside PR firms hired by colleges to assist in candidate searches. It would be critical to gather and analyze statistics based directly on the women who are hired and

those who are not. If more information could be gathered about the number of women who want positions, but are not getting them, more answers about the role of gender and sexism may come to light. Ultimately, a researcher may be able to address whether or not there are regions of the country that hire more women or more men. Are there districts that have hiring practices that truly allow for equal opportunities for both women and men?

Research recommendation number three. A third area for future research is the critical issue of pay equity. This study shows that it is at the forefront of women leaders' minds, which makes it a great area for future research. It would be interesting to perform some documentation analysis on the different Boards of Trustees protocols on compensation. Are there explicit criteria that Boards are using to decide why and who starts where on the pay scale? Is this a problem exclusive to California or is it also occurring in other states? A comprehensive analysis of compensation is drastically needed in order for true and equitable reform in educational policy and practice to take place. Pay inequity continues to be a serious problem for women, and more research would help in addressing this issue.

Research recommendation number four. A fourth area for continued research is race, and its relation to executive hiring and leadership practices. Race has always affected equity in the United States, on many levels, and is a complicated and delicate subject especially because it remains a robust feature of American life. It would be very interesting to explore the ways in which race affects executive women in higher education, and the role it plays in the communication behaviors of these women. Many of the studies in the field discuss culture in a broad sense; thus, explicitly exploring race

relations would be a possibility for further inquiry. It is essential, in an increasingly diverse world, to better understand and address the plight of women of color in executive positions in academia because the role and importance of diversity in leadership can explicitly impact higher education institutions and student success.

Research recommendation number five. A fifth area for future research could focus on the family dynamics of women who are married, those who are mothers, and those who are not, and the impact the decisions of marriage and motherhood have on opportunity, leadership, and success in executive positions in higher education. This study would also need to address the issue of sexuality and whether heterosexual and homosexual women experience family dynamics in the same way. It is necessary to conduct more research on how the demands on heterosexual women differ from homosexual women in relation to marriage and parenting. The results of a “family-focused” study may highlight the ways in which family responsibilities help, or hinder, women leaders, and whether or not women effectively manage both their homes and their work places, successfully and simultaneously. This qualitative study uncovered some of these concerns, yet did not go into detail about sexuality and/or parenting. Thus, it is critical that future researchers continue to explore the ways in which having partners and children affects, for better or for worse, an executive woman’s opportunity and career. Many people ask whether women can have it all, whether they can successfully have families and hold high positions in academia simultaneously. Conducting such research to provide answers seems essential to the field. Seventy-five percent of the subjects in this study have children and they often spoke of their families when speaking about their

leadership. Conducting research in this area could help potential leaders understand the myriad ways in which family dynamics and sexuality can impact their work.

Research recommendation number six. Finally, a sixth area of research is mentorship. Doing increased research on mentorship and gender will provide an explanation of the benefits in the academic workplace. Although some research does already exist on female mentorship, it is of paramount importance to update the material and study the impact of mentorship as it directly affects the communication behaviors of women leaders in higher education. When women mentor other women, the ability to engage in dual perspective increases, and discussions may become more thoughtful and purposeful. Women may be able to help other women discuss their gendered experiences and work closely to explore the ways in which gender impacts their leadership and communication. With honest dialogue between women about women's experiences, we may see more advancement of women into leadership positions in higher education.

Concluding Statement

Throughout the interviews conducted for this dissertation study, the women talked about how communication is of utmost importance. It is not surprising that effective communication remains a vital contributor to the success for women leaders. However, this study also revealed that, beyond communication, leadership for women demands the increased utilization of collaboration. Communication and collaboration are essential elements that women in leadership positions utilize while consistently working to combat and negate stereotypes and negative perceptions of women in the academic workplace. Further, women leaders are expected to balance their professional roles and family responsibilities. Women from this study self-identified they were only doing a mediocre

job at this because of commitments to both professional and family endeavors.

Additionally, this study found that women leaders consider themselves successful leaders when they are focused on building relationships and creating strong teams of people who are all focused on working toward a common goal. This research also revealed that gender impacts women in leadership positions, but it does not act as much of a hindrance as it once did. Women do still deal with disparate treatment, exclusion, and physical appearance, but on a somewhat smaller scale. However, issues like pay inequity, family responsibilities, and hiring processes still remain complications that women leaders are forced to deal with on a regular basis. As more research is conducted in this area, it is anticipated that we will see the numbers of women leaders rise at both community colleges and universities throughout the United States.

In conclusion, any woman seeking to be a successful leader needs to make her communication behaviors a priority. Women leaders must understand the subjective nature of perception and begin to look at their team, their work, and their own behaviors with an awareness of standpoint, bearing the overall notion of perception consistently in mind. Analyses of findings from this study indicate that executive jobs in higher education are waiting for women leaders. Although a woman may have stereotypes and sexism confronting her, the more developed and refined her communication skills, the more she will be able to enhance the lives of people around her and successfully lead her college. Women need to be self-aware and continue to reflect on their experiences as women, in an attempt to understand the role gender plays in their higher educational leadership practices. Women should continue to enhance all of their communication skills in order to impact their own standpoints as leaders and impact the communication of

others around them. In the end, the women in this study gave voice to the role of gender in higher educational leadership which keeps the conversation moving forward.

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Appendix A: Research Invitation

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
THE ROLE OF GENDER IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STUDY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

RESEARCHER:

Amy F. Edwards

TO:

Name of the Executive Here

Dear Executive,

I am writing to inform you about a dissertation study that is being conducted at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) regarding the role of gender in higher educational leadership. Amy F. Edwards, a doctoral candidate, is conducting the study as part of the Ed.D. degree requirements.

The purpose of Amy F. Edwards' dissertation study is to understand how gender and communication affect women administrators' in higher education. Specifically, the study will uncover leadership and communication factors that may, or may not, alter the ways women lead. Further, this study aims to look at the more interpersonal communication dynamics women face in order to enhance the value of women in the academic workplace and also provide a clear pathway for young women in the future. Your complete participation in this study would be to participate in one 45-60-minute one-on-one interview with a potential follow-up interview.

Any personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name or college affiliation, will not appear in the study in any way. Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Your time investment in this study is greatly appreciated. If you would like to participate, please contact Amy F. Edwards at aedwards@vccd.edu.

Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Best,

Amy F. Edwards

Appendix B: Consent to Act as a Human Research Participant

California State University, Northridge

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The Role of Gender in Educational Leadership

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The Role of Gender in Educational Leadership, a study conducted by Amy F. Edwards as part of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree in the Michael Eisner's College of Education. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:

Amy F. Edwards
Department of Education
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
aedwards@vcccd.edu

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. John Reveles
Department of Education
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
818-677-7409
john.reveles@csun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to understand how gender and communication affect the leadership of female administrators' in higher education.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are, or have been, a female in an executive position in a community college or university in Southern California.

Appendix B Continued

Time Commitment

This study will involve approximately 45-60 minutes of your time in one day.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur: You will be asked to complete one 45-60 minute interview.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study may include: mild emotional discomfort and/or embarrassment. Given the purpose of the study is to focus specifically on gender issues, the questions will be personal and sensitive. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. All of your information is will kept confidential, pseudonyms will be used, and all of the data will be stored in a password-protected computer. Ultimately, this study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include understanding the female executive perspective on leadership in higher education. You may develop a greater sense of awareness of gender issues in leadership in higher education.

Benefits to Others or Society

This study may benefit future females seeking a leadership role in higher education.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Compensation for Participation

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

Costs

There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES

Appendix B Continued

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.** The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect you. No identifying information will be used, and your institution and/or program will not be identified by name in any published report.

Data Storage

All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. The audio recordings will also be stored in a password protected laptop, then transcribed and erased as soon as possible.

Data Access

The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention

The researchers intend to keep the research data indefinitely.

Mandated Reporting

Under California law, the researcher is required to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information, she may be required to report it to the authorities.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

Appendix B Continued

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. **Participation in this study is voluntary.** You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.

I agree to be audio recorded

I do not wish to be audio recorded

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Researcher Signature

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE **THE ROLE OF GENDER IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP** **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Hello. It's a pleasure to meet/see you. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate it. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose of the interview:

As we discussed, this is our one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study that explores the role of gender and communication as they affect female administrators' leadership in higher education. Further, this study aims to look at the more interpersonal communication aspects women face in order to enhance the value of women in the academic workplace and also provide a clear pathway for young women in the future. During this interview, we will talk about your leadership and communication experiences.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions:

1. What is your current leadership position and how long have you been in this position? (If interviewing a former leader: what was your leadership position and how long did you serve in that position?)
2. How do you make decisions as a leader in your position?
3. How much input from others do you like when making decisions?
 - a. Has there ever been a time you had to make the decision without consultation with others?
4. How would you describe your oral and written communication style when you lead?
 - a. Why do you think this is so?
 - b. Can you provide an example?

Appendix C: Continued

5. Do you think your leadership style looks different than other leaders on your campus?
6. Do you think being a woman affects your leadership?
 - a. If yes: How so? In what ways?
 - b. If no: Why not?
7. Have you experienced sexism in the workplace? In other words, has anyone ever treated you differently because you are a woman?
 - a. If yes: In what ways?
 - b. If no: Does this surprise you?
8. Do you think there are stereotypes that exist for female leaders?
 - a. If yes: Can you explain and provide some examples?
 - b. If no: Does this surprise you?
9. Were there any roadblocks you faced while moving up the executive ladder?
 - a. If yes: Why do you think this is?
 - b. If no: Does this surprise you?
10. Do you ever feel like your home life/personal roles suffer as a result of your professional position?
 - a. If yes: In what ways?
 - b. If no: How do you manage all of your roles?
11. Do you think your identity is altered in anyway because you are an academic executive?
 - a. If yes: In what ways?
 - b. If no: Why not?
12. Do you feel that the perception of female leaders has changed during your time in your position?
 - a. If yes: In what ways?
 - b. If no: Does this surprise you?
13. What advice would you give a young woman contemplating a leadership position in higher education?
14. Do you have anything to add about women and leadership in higher education?

Appendix C: Continued

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help us examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say, but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me via phone or email.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is completely confidential. No part of our discussion, including names or other identifiable characteristics, will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?